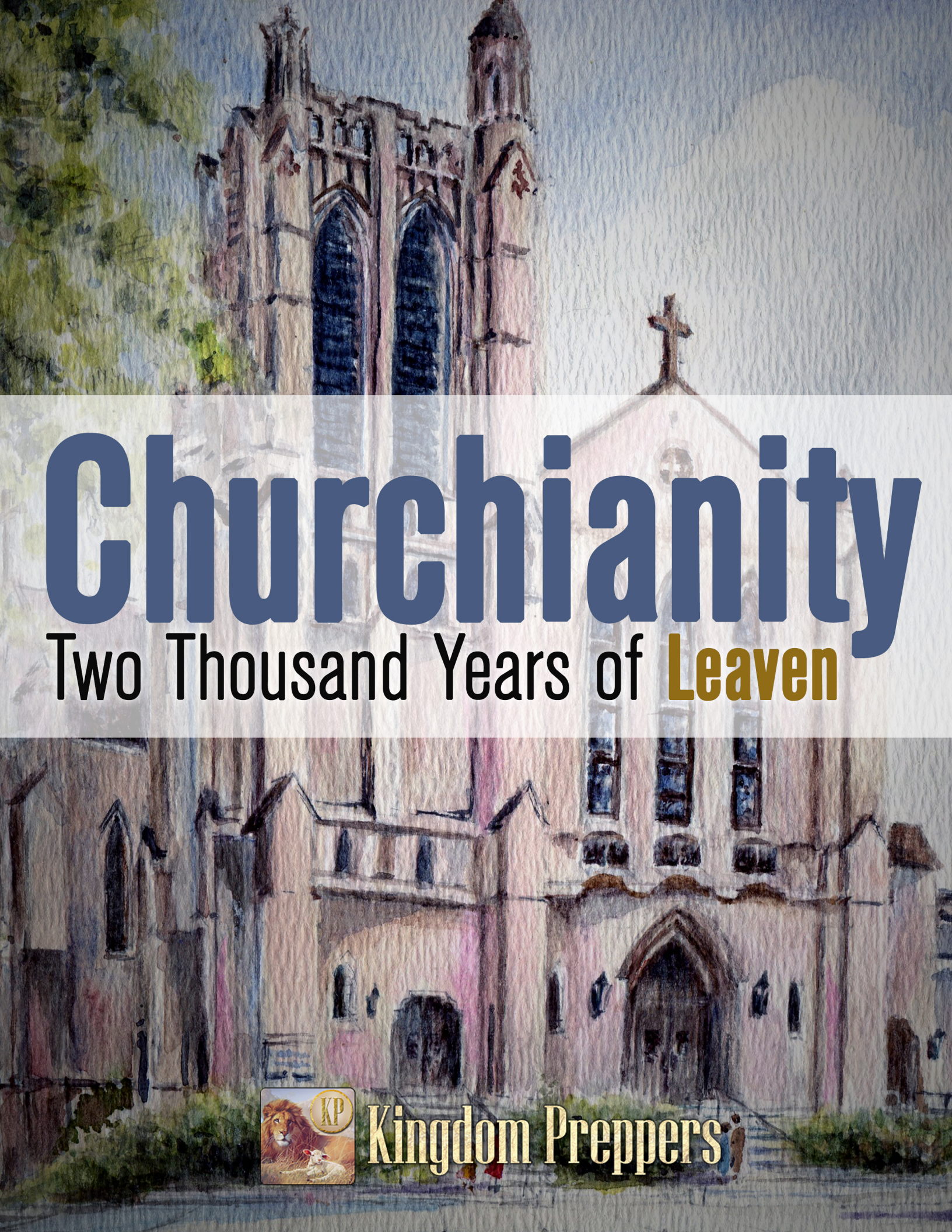

Churchianity

Two Thousand Years of Leaven

Kingdom Preppers

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CHAPTER 1

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

LONG BEFORE THE Crusades, the land of Palestine was the scene of strife and conflict between powerful nations that battled for its control. Positioned strategically at important crossroads that connected Egypt to Mesopotamia and Asia Minor to Arabia, Palestine was viewed as an important strip of land by envious onlookers over many centuries. The people who inhabited this region, therefore, had to suffer the brutality of war, invasion, bondage, and even exile, repeatedly.

Then, in the fourth century, BCE, with the entrance of Alexander the Great and his conquering Macedonian army, a new power controlled the region. But Alexander soon fell ill and died, leaving behind a vulnerable empire that quickly splintered. The rise of the Greek Empire was prophesied in the Book of Daniel of course, and in chapter 8, his vision of a ram and a goat coming to blows was interpreted by the heavenly messenger Gabriel as follows:

> 20 The two-horned ram represents the kings of Media and Persia. 21 The shaggy male goat represents the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes represents the first king of the Greek Empire. 22 The four prominent horns that replaced the one large horn show that the Greek Empire will break into four sections, with four kings, none of them as great as the first.
>
> —Daniel 8:20 – 22

Before all was said and done, however, Greek influence, mingled with pagan elements borrowed from conquered civilizations—a concoction widely known as Hellenism—swept through Palestine and its surrounding environs. At its core, Hellenism consisted of a belief in various deities derived from different nations and peoples. This ideology was largely rejected by the Hebrews of the day, but the Romans and many of the people they conquered, lived by it. So it was an evil the Hebrews had to struggle against on a daily basis. But after the Greek occupation, they eventually lost that struggle.

A rebellion broke out in the second century BCE when the Maccabees revolted against their Greek rulers. Their ultimate victory resulted in a century of independence under what became the Hasmonean dynasty, but the eventual successors of the victorious Maccabees gave in to the overwhelming sway of Hellenism. Many of the Hebrews who were strict observers of Torah protested against the Hellenistic rulers and were persecuted for their efforts.

This internal Hebrew strife was seen as weakness by the Romans, and, seizing on the moment, general Pompey marched in and conquered Palestine for Rome in 63 BCE, breaking the grip the last independent Maccabee, Aristobulus II, held over the region. When Aristobulus II was deposed by Pompey, this set in motion prophetic events that would leave Rome as the ruling

power in Palestine at the time of the first coming of the long-awaited Messiah. For the next two millennia, Rome's influence over the world would never wane, though the nation itself would eventually collapse, reemerge as something entirely different, and, over time, lose the immense power it once wielded.

So, with the stage firmly set for the Roman Empire, it is under its iron rule that a major set of prophecies regarding the Messiah find their fulfillment. As chapter two of the book of Luke opens, we are given details about the Roman power during the time of Yeshua's birth. We learn who its current emperor was, and even the governor of one of its conquered states:

> 1 At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken
> throughout the Roman Empire. 2 (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was
> governor of Syria.)
>
> —Luke 2:1 – 2

By the time Yeshua was full grown, on the cusp of his immersion by his cousin, John, we are given new details about the Roman powers of that day:

> 1 It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pilate
> was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas was ruler over Galilee; his brother Philip
> was ruler over Iturea and Traconitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene.
>
> —Luke 3:1

With this, we see that Roman rule was near absolute in Palestine, via tetrarchs based in Syria (particularly Abilene), client kings firmly established in Galilee in the north and Judea in the south, and other legates, puppet governors, and various and sundry government officials sprinkled here and there throughout that part of the empire. Roman culture infused everyday life for much of its citizens, and that culture was mixed with that of the recent empire it had conquered: Greece, creating a Greco-Roman ideology.

As stated, Roman influence would be carried well into the future, as we see governments throughout time, including many countries of our day, have based their civil laws on the ancient Roman law code, and structured their governing bodies on the pattern of the Roman senate (think parliament, Congress, etc.). But more than that, when we look at Rome's army, culled from the Roman citizenry who made up the legions, and the auxiliary composed of non-Roman tribes, we see more similarities in our modern armies. Roman soldiers were the military police of the day, a constant presence throughout Rome's vast territories, always on hand to quell disturbances and keep the peace, as it were. When they weren't engaged in military campaigns, the Roman army was tasked with building roads and other public works, much like our Army Corps of Engineers today.

The official language of the Roman government, Latin, not only became the language of the church from the second century onward, but also of many so-called Christians of that era. The Romance languages of Europe and Central and South America descended from Latin; Latin is also the language built into the modern American judicial system, and is the basis for scientific names found in biology as well as many words in English. Since Rome built its culture on that of the Greeks, however, making for a Greco-Roman mixture, as stated, Greek language and

customs were also prevalent in the realm.

Though Rome's influence was widespread and its control nearly absolute, not all endured this quietly. The Hellenistic successors of the ruling Maccabees, those who adopted the name Herod, incited rebellion by pushing forth pagan policies and practices that upset Judahites who were devoted to upholding the Torah and the belief in the sole Creator, Yah. When Yeshua was still a child, history records one such uprising (though a failed one) against Herod's son and successor, Archelaus. The only mention of Archelaus is found in the book of Matthew. After Heord's death, Joseph has a dream while in Egypt and is told by a heavenly messenger to return to the land of Israel. So he got up and returned with Yeshua and his mother. Then Matthew records:

> 22 But when he learned that the new ruler was Herod's son Archelaus, he was afraid....
>
> —Matthew 2:22

Due to the Judahite revolt against him, Archelaus had to call in the Roman army to supress it, and the army ended up destroying a Galilean city and killing many Judahites, including their leader, Judas the Galilean. It is to this historic event that the Pharisee Gamaliel refers in cautioning the Sanhedrin to be tolerant of Yeshua's emissaries.

> 35 Then he addressed his colleagues as follows, "Men of Israel, take care what you are planning to do to these men! 36 Some time ago there was that fellow Theudas, who pretended to be someone great. About 400 others joined him, but he was killed, and his followers went their various ways. The whole movement came to nothing. 37 After him, at the time of the census, there was Judas of Galilee. He got some people to follow him, but he was killed, too, and all his followers were scattered."
>
> —Acts 5:35 – 37

Commenting on Acts 5:37, The Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary has an entry under Judas the Galilean, which states that:

> "The enrollment or assessment for tax purposes here in view was that under Quirinius during his governorship of Syria in A.D. 6 – 7. [...] Judas of Galilee [was] a founder of a fourth sect or school of philosophy among the [Judahites]. Those in this party agreed with the position of the Pharisees in all matters [...] except that they acknowledged [Elohim] alone to be their governor and [master] and were passionately devoted to liberty. With the support of a Pharisee named Saddok, Judas vigorously opposed the enrollment under Quirinius and engendered strife, violence, and bloodshed."

This is the same Roman census and the same Syrian governor, Quirinius, mentioned earlier in Luke 2:1 – 2.

Uprisings became common among the Judahites following the Roman occupation. Many longed for the fulfillment of prophecies that promised deliverance from foreign rulers, who seemed to swoop in one after the other going back to Assyria and Babylon. But, failing to understand the timing of the prophecies, many were disillusioned by what seemed like a long

delay in that deliverance coming about, so some Judahites decided to take matters into their own hands and force the fulfillment of those prophecies through open revolt. This led to the rise of the Zealots, a Judahite sect that violently opposed Roman domination. They were said to be the principle players in the great rebellion that broke out in 66 CE, which led to the destruction of Jerusalem four years later.

The oppressive occupations by various foreign powers did not only give rise to Judahite sects that fomented insurgencies, the suffering derived from those occupations also forced Judahites to splinter into factions that held widely varying views on Torah. This seemed to necessitate the creation of several official parties, therefore, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, members of which formed much of the Sanhedrin, a Judahite council and powerful governing body that met in Jerusalem.

The Pharisees—who figured prominently in the life of Yeshua during his final years on earth—sprang out of the Babylonian exile. Following the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the subsequent exile of the nation of Judah, Judahite worship no longer centered around the temple. In fact, their worship setting was so radically altered by their captivity that it reshaped Judahite interpretation and application of Torah. What developed was a scribal movement, where the new focus was the preservation of both scripture and written oral tradition, as well as their strict, legal observance in an external sense, with new rites and ceremonies being introduced.

The Pharisees rose to become the primary teachers of the law among the first century Judahites. The name Pharisee is derived from an Aramaic word that means “separated ones,” which speaks to the attempt on their part to live a set apart life dedicated to Yah, via strict, legal observance of Torah according to their own interpretation. But they failed to see the spiritual aspects of the law and were blind to the prophecies that pointed to the Messiah, who often stood right before them. They also held to a unique but distorted oral tradition that pushed them further off the course of truth; a tradition that is honored in modern-day Judaism, which is practiced by descendants of the Khazarian Empire and is largely embodied in the Talmud.

The Sadducees, who rose to prominence a bit later, date back to the priestly aristocracy of the Hasmonean dynasty, when the descendants of the Maccabees ruled. Unlike the Pharisees, they rejected the oral tradition and adhered strictly to their interpretation of the Torah. Their beliefs, however, differed widely from that of the Pharisees and other Judahite sects. The Sadducees, who were part of the Judahite aristocracy, or ruling class, in Yeshua’s day, took charge of the temple in Jerusalem, with the backing of the Romans. And while the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem itself in 70 CE ended the line of the Sadducees, the Pharisees continued as a party long after.

Be reminded: of all the various sects that sprung up within Judah, the Pharisees and Sadducees are specifically singled out by the Messiah, who, when speaking of their false doctrine, cautioned his disciples to beware. Though the disciples mistook his comparison of leaven for what is found in bread, Yeshua bore with them and repeated his statement until they comprehended its full meaning:

> 11 “How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” 12 Then they understood that he did not

tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

—Matthew 16:11 – 12

Those with spiritual discernment will take special note of this exchange, not missing the important prophetic implication. The Pharisees and Sadducees, by and large, were not to be trusted, yet their false teachings—and teachings akin to theirs—would spread like leaven throughout the earth for the next two millennia. We covered this topic in our enhanced scripture study video, *The Pure Convocations*, in the Feast of Weeks section.

The diaspora of the nation of Israel, which eventually impacted all twelve tribes, forced pockets of Hebrews to form communities wherever they went. And within the Roman Empire, this led to the establishment of various synagogues, which sat at the heart of many Israelite communities that had grown accustomed to worshipping away from a temple setting. This form of diaspora Israelite worship is integral to the history of Christianity, for it is through what became Judaism that Christianity, in its earliest form, was able to spread throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. Many Gentiles were drawn to the synagogues in those Israelite communities at the time of the emissaries; and it was the emissaries who provided them with an introduction to the Messiah. The book of Acts, chapters 10 and 11 illustrates this point.

Ironically, the Hebrew culture provided one of the most important assets for nascent Christianity: the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The need for a Greek version of Scripture came with the expulsion of the Israelites from their homeland. Assimilation into various nations led to the loss of their native language, and since the Greeks left their stamp on societies within the borders of what became the Roman Empire, that left new generations of Israelites with little choice but to learn Greek. East of that territory, Aramaic was adopted by other Israelites in the diaspora, and therefore a translation of Scripture was called for in that language.

The Greek Scriptures were known as the Septuagint, or *Version of the Seventy*, named for the seventy-two Israelite scholars tasked with its translation in the third century BCE. It was widely used by early Christians in their missionary efforts, many of them Gentiles who began to outnumber the Israelites in this new belief. The word Christian itself, which originated from the Greek, would soon embody a set of beliefs and practices that looked far different from its Hebraic root, which the original twelve emissaries, and Yeshua himself, taught. Christianity, therefore, developed and spread throughout the Greco-Roman world as a result of Gentiles, irrespective of its origins within a sect of Judahites. And its spread was so broad and thorough that by the fourth century CE, the Roman Empire adopted it as its own religion.

Thereafter, Christianity evolved yet again, and was eventually dispensed to the wider world in various forms during the Papal Empire and following the Protestant Reformation. But, according to Yah's perfect order, Scripture reveals that the nation of Israel was to be a light for the other nations. The Israelites were to bring the message of salvation to the world:

6 He says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

—Isaiah 49:6

This passage has yet to be fulfilled, absent the taint of doctrinal leaven brought on by Christianity and other religions. After Yeshua's death, resurrection, and ascension, it fell to the emissaries to preach the good news of the Kingdom and proclaim the truth about Yeshua being the promised Messiah. They were to awaken and gather more Judahites to their numbers along with sleeping Hebrews from the other "lost" tribes who had since assimilated into other nations. This went well in the first few years that followed the ascension, and the emissaries held to their Hebraic faith while embracing the new turn of events, that being the Messianic element.

We also see this illustrated in early chapters of the book of Acts, where circumcision was still an important covenant practice, as well as the observance of Torah-ordained convocations such as Unleavened Bread. These and other Hebraic elements would live on in the early assemblies, perfectly enfolded with the Messianic truth. But the subsequent execution and forced removal of the original emissaries and other prominent figures such as Stephen—left a vacuum of power that was quickly filled by others who did not share the view that all, Hebrews and Gentiles, were to fully live their lives by the precepts of Torah, as commanded by Yah himself.

> 15 For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations.... 29 You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them.
>
> —Numbers 15:15, 29

There were two major assemblies established during the work of the emissaries: one in Jerusalem and the other in Antioch. Many of the believers in Jerusalem who held to the new Messianic faith were scattered following the persecution that was unleashed after the stoning of Stephen. This left the assembly in Antioch as the other main base of operation, where Hellenized Hebrews and Gentiles alike fellowshipped under the new name, "Christians."

> 26 (It was there at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.)
>
> —Acts: 11:26

With so many Hebrews and Gentiles from varying parts of the realm attracted to the Messianic message, disputes erupted concerning several Torah principles that had long been held as cemented truths. Circumcision was one item; foods sacrificed to idols was another. Encountering the vast number of uncircumcised Gentiles and Hebrews who had lost their way in the diaspora, forced some of the leadership to call these principles into question. Disputes like these caused certain allowances to be made concerning the law, wherein Gentiles were afforded a different, more relaxed set of rules to live by.

These disputes eventually led to a split between those who labored in the field to awaken new believers, and thus, going forward, the focus of the missionaries was forever divided. By the end of the first century, many of what used to be Hebrew assemblies became Christian churches, which were dominated by Gentiles who relished the idea that the church leadership did not require them to observe the whole of Torah.

As a result of the split, as well as infiltration by leaders and congregants who were staunch adherents to Hellenism, variant false teachings sprang up in the assemblies and pagan practices

were introduced to the worship. We see evidence of this in the first few chapters of Revelation, where Yeshua, by means of a prophetic vision, has John write a series of letters to several established assemblies rebuking its members for their immorality and pagan practices, and essentially for losing their way, as it were. The work of the doctrinal leaven was now fully underway, and its effects would not be reversed, nor its progress slowed, for the next two millennia, fulfilling the representation of the two leavened loaves at the heart of the Feast of Weeks.

The death knell to the Hebraic roots of the Christian movement, however, came with the martyrdom of the last leading emissaries, and, finally, the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem itself, in 70 CE. Hebrews were also banished from Jerusalem altogether following the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 CE, thus ending the reign of Jerusalem as the geographical center of the Messianic movement. Thereafter, Christianity would be severed nearly entirely from its Hebraic root and would cease to resemble the body of beliefs and practices that stemmed directly from Torah, which the emissaries and Yeshua himself, originally intended.

At some point, just prior to the close of the first century, many non-Messianic Judahite synagogues excluded Messianic believers from their membership. This left the few remaining Messianic Judahites barred both from traditional Judahite circles as well as the new Christian movement, which had since distinguished itself from Judahite practices while still claiming the Hebraic Scriptures as their own. With the expulsion of Judahites from Jerusalem by the Romans after 135 CE, the assembly in Palestine also became mostly Gentile. The last three strands of Judahite Messianism known to us, therefore, are these:

The Elkesaites, the Ebionites, and the Nazoraeans.

The Elkesaites, quite different from any other group, were Gnostic in the extreme. They owe their name to a supposed prophet who figured prominently in a Gnostic book of revelation that originated around the second century CE. The Elkesaites inspired future groups that preserved Gnostic thought and practices, which are also a result of the doctrinal leaven Yeshua spoke of.

The Ebionites were Judahites who were not fully Messianic, though they held that Gentile converts had to submit to Torah. They believed some truths concerning Yeshua and held him to be the Messiah, but they rejected certain aspects of his birth, life, and pre-existence. They also ate no meat and performed ritual washings. They cherished the book of Matthew, but also produced their own Messianic accounts and Acts of the Emissaries.

The Nazoraeans, on the other hand, while strict adherents to Torah themselves, accepted Gentile converts without requiring them to submit to the same Law. Despite the compromise, the Nazoraeans also vanished from history.

Aside from fragments that shed some light on the preceding, little of the history of Judahite Messianism remains. Hebrews who embraced the Messiah in those early years soon faded from the scene entirely, being overshadowed by the new Christian movement that was largely Gentile. And it would be Gentiles who would carry its message to the world, either by point of the sword or more peaceful missionary efforts. But the message that was carried was loaded with leaven.

CHAPTER 2

PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM

WITH THE REJECTION OF Yeshua by the Judahites on a whole, and the subsequent suppression of the efforts of the emissaries—that being the Messianic movement—Jerusalem's fate was sealed. Many Messianic Judahites had heeded Yeshua's warning when he foretold of the destruction of Jerusalem. Companies of Judahites fled the city well beforehand, but a great many—political rebels for the most part—stayed to resist the Romans and attempt to free Jerusalem from their grip, just as the Maccabees had done against the Seleucid Empire.

Rome dispatched an able general to end the Judahite revolt in Jerusalem. In 67 CE, Vespasian marched into Palestine and effectively put down pockets of resistance throughout Galilee. But in 70 CE, Vespasian was made emperor, thus he returned to Rome to rule. This left his son, Titus, in charge of the ongoing war against the Judahites. In February of 70 CE, Titus began the siege of Jerusalem. The Judahites managed to resist him till May, when he finally broke through the new northern wall. A week later, the Second Wall around the markets was breached, and fighting broke out around the temple itself. Three of the Good News books record the same event, but Luke in particular states that, just prior to Yeshua's death:

> 44 It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.
>
> —Luke 23:44 – 45

The curtain of the temple was torn, from top to bottom, allowing all to see inside the apartments. This was done in fulfillment of a prophecy recorded in the book of Daniel:

> 27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering....
>
> —Daniel 9:27

The curtain of the temple being torn should have brought a decisive end to the custom of sacrifices on earth, as Yeshua, the great sacrifice, had become the substance of that shadow representation. Despite this, however, sacrifices continued to take place in the temple after his death, resurrection, and ascension, and the last such sacrifice was offered on August 6, 70 CE of the Roman Calendar. Even with the systematic bombardment of the temple courts by Titus and his Roman army, the Judahite rebels, comprised of the radical Zealots, still put up a fierce resistance. They somehow believed that Yah was still on their side. One false prophet even predicated that the Most High would intervene at the last hour to save the temple and its valiant defenders. But Yeshua's prophecy would not fail. By August 28, the Romans broke through to

the temple's inner courts, where they were met by six thousand Judahite Zealots prepared to die for their cause. Even the priests—the only ones still allowed inside the temple—put up a resistance.

Once raging fires began to consume the temple itself, the fight went out of the Judahites, and those who survived either fled in horror or watched helplessly as their last hopes went literally up in smoke. Following the destruction of their beloved city, persecution and new restrictions on the Judahites forced thousands to leave the now desolate region, many migrating to Egypt, West Africa, and Arabia. Others were carried by General Titus into exile to other lands.

The picture could not look any different for the rest of the inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world at that time and the periods that immediately followed. The Roman Empire successfully maintained an unrivaled political unity in the Mediterranean basin. As long as its citizens adhered to established Roman law and lived happily within the Hellenistic culture that prevailed, all would be fine. It was within this framework that the new Christian movement was allowed to grow and even thrive. Christians were afforded freedom of travel along well-paved roads that were policed by Roman soldiers. But water was the basis for the main mode of transportation, making trade possible. So, by road and sea, therefore, the message of Christianity was able to spread to various parts of the known world through the efforts of, not only Christian missionaries, but also by Christian merchants and traders, and even slaves, who were, at times, the cargo.

When the number of Gentiles joining the Christian movement increased, it became necessary on the part of the leadership to provide a method of training and initiation to ease them into the belief system and ready them for official baptism. This gave birth to what is called, the catechumenate, which involves a person receiving instruction in preparation for baptism or confirmation. It stems from a Greek word that means, "being instructed," hence the modern Catholic term, "catechism."

Catechumenates were conducted in two parts. The first part is called, "the service of the word," where large portions of scripture were read and explained to the new Gentile convert. If the convert was not a baptized member of the church, he or she would be dismissed following this portion of the catechumenate. If he or she was a baptized member, the service would move to part two: "service of the table," or, communion, a corrupted representation of the Passover meal observed by Yeshua and his disciples. This practice of catechumenates was an early staple of the Christian movement and was maintained for the first three centuries of the early church system.

The Romans were initially tolerant of the Christian movement, but persecution and martyrdom of Christians came with the arrival of Nero, and did not abate until the conversion of Constantine. It was Roman custom to have all citizens of Rome worship the sitting Roman Emperor. This custom involved burning a pinch of incense at a Roman altar, offering incense or wine to a statue of the emperor, or simply swearing by the emperor himself. Christians were seen as obstinate by refusing to perform such acts of loyalty by virtue of their religious convictions. Rome first viewed Christianity as a sect within Judahite culture, which it was, initially. But Christians eventually made pains to disassociate themselves entirely from their Hebraic roots and were eventually considered as followers of a distinct religion in the eyes of Rome.

The problem with this distinction is that the Romans had come to accept the Judahites and their bizarre adherence to Torah—coupled with their belief in the one true Creator—as

something that did not arise out of a spirit of national rebellion. Forcing them to go against their strong spiritual convictions would result in true rebellion, therefore Judahites were exempt from having to perform rites that demonstrated their allegiance to the emperor. When Christians were seen as a sect within the Judahite culture, the same tolerance was extended to them. But by choosing to disassociate from the Judahites, Rome saw Christians, who were a growing collection of disparate Gentiles from across the realm, as a new religion within the milieu of mystery religions that already existed in the empire. This meant that Christians, like other regular subjects, had to demonstrate their loyalty to the emperor through open worship of him. Note that, despite this early reluctance on the part of Christians to venerate the emperor by these acts, elements of this kind of worship would later worm their way into Christendom through the veneration of supposed saints.

The Christian refusal to openly worship the emperor was part and parcel of the persecution that was unleashed on them during the first two centuries of their new movement. Other factors contributed to the cause of the prolonged persecution as well. Choosing to worship a man who had been condemned by a Roman governor on the charge of being a messianic king was one major demerit; their failure to express political loyalty to Rome on the grounds of their faith, was another.

At this time, governors throughout Rome's territories were the only ones allowed to pronounce the sentence of death on offenders, so the occasional martyrdom was largely restricted to great provincial cities. Christians responded to the early persecution in two ways: by writing what are called apologetics and accounts of martyrdom. The apologies are derived from a Greek word meaning, "defense," while the word *martyr* derives from another Greek word meaning, a "witness." So the body of writings produced and dispatched were either in defense of their beliefs, or else they recounted the murder of their fellow Christians who died in testimony of their faith. Both pieces of writing were meant to state the Christian case in their plea for tolerance on the part of Roman officials.

From the apologetics we can see the shape that Christian thought and doctrine took in the second century. An early apology titled the *Epistle to Diognetus*, written by an anonymous author, attempts to argue for the divine origin of Christianity, which it states is superior to the Judahite culture and its ritual worship. Christianity had, at this point, nearly shaken off adherence to the Torah in full. A clearer picture of Christian thought in this era is painted by one of the most well known and influential of all the second century Christian apologists, Justin Martyr. He taught Christian doctrine at a private school in Rome, and was executed in 167 CE when charges were brought against him.

Justin Martyr is one apologist who recognized the importance of the Hebrew Scriptures, but at the same time, he presumptuously expressed the fulfillment of their prophecies in Christianity. He redirected the promises made to a literal people descended from the patriarch Jacob to Christians of his day. His view, which shaped the view of other Christians, was that the Torah comprised a set of laws that was forced on the people of Israel as a punishment, and those laws were only in place until the advent of the Messiah, who, he believed, removed their obligation for all Christians through his perfect life, death, and resurrection. He maintained that Sabbath-keeping and physical circumcision should cease. And Christians, he also argued, were now the true people of Yah. With this we see that, as early as the second century, the foundation for replacement theology was being laid.

Now, Christian persecution, which gave rise to the prolific writing of apologetics and martyrdom, began under the emperor Nero, who came to power in October of 54 CE—with the help of his mother. Early on, he was seen as a reasonable ruler, one who regarded the poor and landless citizens of Rome via favorable laws. But Nero soon succumbed to an insatiable lust for both pleasure and grandeur, which compelled him to fill his courts with people who catered to his wishes. Within a decade, Nero was largely despised by his population, who eventually considered him to be insane.

On the night of June 18, 64 CE, a massive fire blazed through Rome, with Nero mere miles away, holed up in his palace at Antium. We are told that when he heard of the fire, he immediately rushed to Rome to lead the fight against it. His palace gardens and certain public buildings were opened to the homeless and displaced as a means of shelter.

Despite these noble efforts on the part of Nero, there were those who immediately suspected him of ordering the city to be burned. To this day, it is believed that he did this so he could rebuild vast sections of Rome in his honor. The fire, which lasted six days and seven nights, destroyed ten of Rome's fourteen sections, and affected citizens cried out for justice amid the chaos that ensued. Nero attempted to deflect all suspicions against him and rise above the rumors, but his efforts failed. And when all fingers pointed at him, he sought someone else to blame.

There were two known areas that had not burned in the fire, where many non-Messianic and Messianic Judahites and Gentiles resided. The emperor lay blame squarely on the Messianic Judahites and Gentiles, who, by that time, were already known by the Greek term, Christians.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, wrote in his *Annals* that:

> "In spite of every human effort, of the emperor's largesse, and of the sacrifices made to the [deities], nothing sufficed to allay suspicion nor to destroy the opinion that the fire had been ordered. Therefore, in order to destroy this rumor, Nero blamed the Christians, who are hated for their abominations, and punished them with refined cruelty.... Thus, first those who confessed [that they were indeed Christians] were arrested, and on the basis of their testimony a great number were condemned, although not so much for the fire itself as for their hatred for humankind."

Tacitus's charge that Christians were "hated for their abominations" speaks to the spiritual stance Messianic believers took in those days, before the doctrinal leaven truly set in. To everyday pagan Romans, social activities were the norm, and these included: the theater, classic literature, sporting events, and even involvement in the Roman army, since Roman soldiers were required to offer sacrifices both to the emperor and to the false deities.

Pagan worship went hand-in-hand with these interests, but first-century Messianic believers insisted on abstaining from such secular and heathen fair for the sake of their strong spiritual convictions. To a pagan like Tacitus, who treasured his Hellenistic culture and Roman society, this was an abomination. As to Tacitus's charge of the Christian hatred of humankind, in his book, *Medieval Christianity*, Kevin Madigan writes:

> "Christians were mistrusted for supposedly meeting secretly, and for being anti-social and taciturn. This caused the Romans to charge them with misanthropy, or hatred of the human race."

Again, quoting from his *Annals*, Tacitus goes on to say:

> "Before killing the Christians, Nero used them to amuse the people. Some were dressed in furs, to be killed by dogs. Others were crucified. Still others were set on fire early in the night, so that they might illumine it. Nero opened his own gardens for these shows, and in the circus he himself became a spectacle, for he mingled with the people dressed as a charioteer, or he rode around in his chariot. All of this aroused the mercy of the people, even against these culprits who deserved an exemplary punishment, for it was clear that they were not being destroyed for the common good, but rather to satisfy the cruelty of one person."

Even a Christian-hating pagan like Tacitus points out that Nero's persecution was unjust. At that time, persecution of Christians seems to have been restricted to Rome, and it stemmed from the accusation of arson. But eventually, Christians were persecuted in Rome simply for their belief, and the abomination of being anti-pagan. Ironically, they were even called atheists by pagans because they worshipped an unseen Creator, rather than the pantheon of stone deities the Romans sacrificed to. Nero's reign ended about four years later, in 68 CE, when he was deposed by a successful rebellion against him that was supported by the Roman senate. After his murder, the persecution of Christians ceased for a time, as the next official emperors, Vespasian and his successor Titus, would have their hands full with a war against Judahites and the destruction of their beloved city and temple.

The idea of the martyr, while a Judahite concept throughout the Messianic Writings, took on quite a new meaning when Christians employed the word during the persecution of the second century. The word, as we pointed out, originates from Greek and means "witness." The emissaries demonstrated various uses of the word in their writings, mostly in the form *martureó*—word G3140, to bear witness, and *marturia*—word G3141, to testify. For instance, when Luke uses the term, he refers to one who has borne "witness" to Yeshua's resurrection. John uses the word to denote someone who bears "witness" to Yeshua being the Son of Elohim. By the time we get to the book of Revelation, John uses the word to refer to the blood-witness of those who gave their lives for their testimony.

Second-century Christians adapted the sense of the word martyr and made it specific to those who gave their lives in persecution. Those who bore witness of their faith through confession alone (which qualified one as a martyr according to the word's use by the emissaries) and did not give their lives, were merely "confessors." In this way, martyrdom, being narrowed in scope, became, in the eyes of Christians, a privileged state conferred on one by the Creator alone, so one could not force themselves into martyrdom. Those who were selected for this cherished experience were viewed as heroes of the faith, because their deaths represented a defeat of the devil himself, much in the way the Messiah's death did. The Christian martyr, it was thought, shared in the very sufferings of the Messiah. Martyrs were also thought to be perfect Christians in their suffering and death, and many believed—despite what Scripture says—that they entered heaven and stood in the presence of Yeshua the moment the breath left their bodies.

To some, this might sound like the act of a radical Muslim engaged in a modern-day jihad, where one sacrifices himself (or takes his own life) for his religious cause, thinking that the privilege of a special place in paradise will be enjoyed immediately upon death. That is the Muslim *shaheed*, the equivalent of the Christian martyrdom. Essentially, the same spirit is

behind both lines of ideology. I say this not to disparage the death of true martyrs, but the genuine article has since been abused and cheapened. Interestingly, the Christian martyr was also thought to share in the role of judge, alongside the Messiah, and was thus equally able to forgive the sins of his fellow mortal Christians from heaven. This was the foundation for the false, pagan custom of praying to so-called saints for intercession.

Accounts of Christian persecution and martyrdom in the first century, beginning with Nero, are scarce, but many records are left to us regarding that of the second century. We get a clear picture of the Christian attitude toward martyrdom, as well as the attitude of the Roman authorities toward the new Christian movement. There is an important exchange between a Roman governor and the sitting emperor, Trajan, that gives shape to the policy that set the terms for Christian martyrdom. In the year 111 CE, a man named Pliny the Younger was made governor of Bithynia, a region in northwest Asia Minor, in what is modern-day Turkey.

Pliny appears to have been a just ruler who honored Roman law and upheld Roman traditions. But something began to disturb him. Bithynia was littered with converts to a new religion called Christianity. There were so many people flocking to this new religion in fact that the pagan temples were largely deserted, and the market for animal sacrifices to the deities had dried up. A list of those suspected of being Christians in the region soon reached Pliny, and he began to inquire into the matter, because the new religion was illegal.

Pliny had those accused of being Christians brought before him, and through this he learned both what they believed and practiced. Out of fear, some denied being Christians, while others confessed that they once were but had since abandoned the faith. These souls were simply required to offer a prayer to the deities, burn a pinch of incense before the emperor's image, and curse the Messiah. True Christians, Pliny knew, would never submit to any of these requirements, so those who performed the customs were released with all charges dropped.

For the ones who stubbornly refused to deny their faith, Pliny offered them three chances to recant upon threat of death. When they still refused, they were executed. Pliny, who strove to be a just Roman ruler, as stated, wanted to know if Christians were worthy of death based on their obstinacy alone, or if they were truly guilty of greater crimes. He tortured two female Christian ministers to arrive at an answer, but they merely confirmed all that he already knew about Christians. Still torn, Pliny wanted to know exactly how to proceed in punishing Christians according to defined Roman law, thus, he wrote the emperor.

Trajan wrote back saying that there was currently no general rule regarding the punishment of Christians. They committed no crimes against the state, so the state should not waste time or resources seeking them out. But if they are accused locally and refuse to abandon their beliefs and practices, they should be punished. Those who did recant and openly worshipped the deities would immediately be pardoned. However, proceedings could not develop from the accusations of anonymous persons. Trajan's policy was in place throughout the realm long after his reign. While the authorities agreed that Christians did in fact commit no crimes against the state, the Christian refusal to worship the emperor indicated their rejection of his right to rule, and if the courts did nothing, they would be viewed as powerless in the eyes of the public.

This policy was in place when Polycarp, the beloved bishop of the assembly in Smyrna, was martyred. Polycarp was highly respected in the eyes of his Christian followers, and was seen as one of many successors to the emissaries. Of course, neither he nor his advisor, Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, were officially appointed by the emissaries themselves, despite the legends that

surrounded the two leaders. Also, Peter, James, John, and the rest of the twelve were never known as bishops. This title was conferred upon them by subsequent Gentile leaders of the Christian movement. The original emissaries, had they lived, would not have recognized what became of the assemblies they established, which were now churches, nor of the Messianic movement they headed, which was now something called Christianity.

By the time of Polycarp's death, even martyrdom had taken on new meaning. But that is the case with Christianity, as well as many religions: they tend to change to suit the times. The martyrdoms witnessed by various crowds helped to elicit sympathy and compassion for persecuted Christians, and in effect, their various murders became somewhat a draw, bringing publicity to the Christian cause, and inspiring many others to join. Often, crowds of thousands sat in the amphitheaters, gazing in awe at the Christians who faced torture and finally death with an incredible degree of courage that was fueled by pure conviction of faith.

Now, while persecutions were ongoing throughout the first two centuries of Christianity's existence, Christians were never killed on a broad scale in this period, as is often portrayed in various media. Persecutions and martyrdoms did widen in scope and scale in the third century and beyond, but not to the exaggerated levels often related in print and film.

Dr. Ryan M. Reeves, an assistant professor of historical theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, has this to say about the Roman persecution of Christians in the first two centuries:

> "Persecution of Christians is often misunderstood. There are popular misconceptions about how Christians were persecuted, and about the ways in which the Roman world, and the Roman government, treated Christians as a whole. Often, particularly in textbooks, or in popular books on the subject, the first centuries of the church are treated as if the Christians were subject to ethnic cleansing; or to something as heinous as the Nazi treatment of the Jews in World War II.
>
> "In fact, with some diffidence, we want to stress that that is not the case. But we have to understand that, in general, overall, given the breadth and the depth of the Roman government, and the amount of land that it covers, and looking at the church as a whole for several centuries, by and large, as we'll see, persecutions were sporadic, and they were local. In fact, at times, only a handful would be persecuted, not thousands, and thousands of Christians. We don't see Rome attempting to wipe Christians from the face of the earth, at least not in these centuries. When we get to the third-century crisis, and up into Diocletian in the early fourth century, we do see something close to that. It gets significantly worse by that period of time. But from the earliest days, up until the early 200s, Christianity is sporadically persecuted, and it is, by and large ignored, though it is, on the books, oppressed and illegal."

CHAPTER 3

HERESY AND ORTHODOXY

BETWEEN THE YEARS 70 and 312 CE, Christianity spread throughout much of the Roman Empire and a bit beyond. This rapid expansion of the movement was already called by another name: *catholic*, from the Greek word that meant universal, in the sense that the religion was to reach all. It grew despite Roman persecution and pagan opposition, and the movement was steered by bishops who, holding to the same beliefs and orthodoxy, presided over churches far and wide. It was to them that the Christian masses turned for counsel and guidance; and it was they who formed the episcopal church government that is the ancient basis for the modern worldwide church system.

Ignatius, the respected second-century bishop of Antioch, coined the term "catholic church," referring to the perceived universality of all the local churches in the realm, and beyond, whose unity the leadership fought to maintain. Many of Ignatius's letters addressed a problem that plagued Christianity from its inception: that of variant interpretations of the faith from outsiders. He sought to sure up the core structure of the church as an institution; to give it a unified spiritual identity. And that has been the effort of its leaders ever since; an effort that has failed, given the many denominational strands that have stemmed from the main Papal branch and its various offshoots.

By the end of the second century, Ignatius's designation for the church, *catholic*, was in wide use, as many embraced his view of spiritual and doctrinal unity. What began as scattered Israelite assemblies in the time of the emissaries, morphed into a Hellenized alternative that appealed to Gentiles far and wide. And, by the third century, Christianity was the favored, and later, the official religion of the Roman Empire. When Constantine became the first Christian emperor, churches could be found in every major town in his realm, and they even stretched as far as Britain, Persia, and Carthage—the great Phoenician commercial empire of the North African coast.

The spread of Christianity was occasioned partly because it appealed to interested Gentiles who responded favorably to the preaching of the Christian message, which seemed to be the antithesis of what was coming out of the stringent, Torah-centered synagogues. The regions to which Christianity expanded also highlight something interesting. During its first three centuries of existence, the Christian religion reached lands inhabited by simple, humble people, among them: slaves, women, traders, and soldiers. People from these walks of life made up the majority of the population.

The hatred many cultured pagans directed against Christians stemmed from prejudice. Those among the cultured and sophisticated saw lower class Christians as barbarians, who were wrapped up in the teachings of primitive Israelites, whose wisdom and knowledge paled in comparison to that of the Greeks and Romans. One outspoken critic of Christianity, a

philosopher named Celsus, attempted to deliver a major blow to the religion by stating:

> "Far from us, say the Christians, be any man possessed of any culture or wisdom or judgment; their aim is to convince only worthless and contemptible people, idiots, slaves, poor women, and children .... These are the only ones whom they manage to turn into believers."

In its early stages, one could say that Celsus had a point. But toward the close of the second century, Christianity's power and appeal would attract some who were thought to be among the keenest intellects of the era. Critics like Celsus gave rise to the apologists, who we touched on in our last chapter. They were the defenders of the Christian faith, warding off pagan attacks, rumors, and railings like those delivered by Celsus, through intellectual, Scripture-centered retorts that were aimed at the educated masses. The apologetics were written to address the flaws in pagan reasoning while correcting the perceived misconceptions surrounding the Christian movement. And it was hoped that these carefully written arguments would lead many to convert to the religion.

Justin Martyr's most well-known disciple, Tatian, wrote an apology titled, *Address to the Greeks*, in which he goes on the offensive. While the Greeks considered non-Greek speaking souls to be "barbarians," Tatian argued that even the elite Greeks could not agree on what their cultured language should sound like, since there was a different dialect of Greek spoken in each region. And what the Greeks praised, he also argued, they borrowed from other civilizations: stargazing from the Babylonians, geometry from the Egyptians, and writing from the Phoenicians. Even their philosophy he said, and their spiritual culture, was preceded by the writings of the Israelite, Moses, who wrote well before that of Plato or Homer. Thus, the similarities between Greek and Hebrew culture were a result of Greeks learning wisdom from so-called "barbarians"; Hebrew wisdom, he pointed out, that they both misunderstood and twisted.

With so many converts joining the Christian movement, drawn from such a wide variety of backgrounds at that, changes were bound to come. On the one hand, the variety spoke to the "catholic," or universal appeal of the religion, which attracted many, but on the other hand, this vast mix of personalities and classes of people brought with it equally diversified views on the Christian message, as well as widely differing interpretations of Scripture. This resulted in two outcomes that still plague Christianity and even Hebraic movements to this day: schisms and heresies.

A schism is a division among members of a group caused by a disagreement over something, and this can result from differing views on discipline, practice, and even a disdain for the personality, character, or attitude of the leadership or fellow members. In short, schisms can occur due to any number of things within a group, which causes the group to split into two or more factions to satisfy the differing views that led to the schism. This occurred repeatedly in the Christian movement in the second and third centuries, where our current historical narrative resides.

A heresy, on the other hand, is quite another matter, being that it is the problem of what is perceived as false doctrine, or the belief in something that dissents or deviates from a dominant theory, opinion, or practice based on Scripture. Heretics were often those who, on a quest for truth, did not lean on a single system of doctrine, but took parts of various existing systems to form their amalgamated teaching. This caused many heretics to hold opinions of Scripture that

drifted far from the core messages taught by the church; core messages that became orthodoxy, or traditionally held beliefs and customs that were accepted as true or correct by the majority.

In some sense, church orthodoxy was developed in response to the threat of heresy, wherein the church defined itself by formulating its beliefs, which had its roots in the Hebrew culture. It is from that culture that Christianity learned the doctrines of creation, the rule of Yah over that creation, the resurrection of the body—which the Pharisees and Yeshua could agree on—and the coming Kingdom of Yah. In packaging these and other beliefs to form its orthodoxy, the church developed a means of sustaining them, in the form of creeds, a cannon of Scripture, and what is called apostolic succession, which relates to the ordination of various bishops they believe literally inherit the spiritual authority from the twelve emissaries who walked with Yeshua. And this unsubstantiated succession has been perpetuated since the second century.

Interestingly, apostolic succession was first claimed by Gnostics, with whom the church came into conflict. In his book, *Medieval Christianity*, Kevin Madigan writes:

> "Among the greatest challengers to the triumph of orthodoxy were the numerous sects historians today classify, cautiously and often reluctantly, under the general rubric of 'Gnosticism.' The word 'Gnosticism' is an umbrella term. It is meant to describe a wide variety of religious and philosophical movements and groups in the ancient Mediterranean world. One early church father in Rome wrote a refutation of no fewer than thirty-three groups he considered Gnostic.
>
> "... The term 'Gnosticism' derives from the Greek word for knowledge *(gnosis)*. Gnosticism in most of its forms was preoccupied with knowledge regarding the genesis of the world, the origin of evil, the destiny of the elect, and the knowledge or teaching needed to liberate one from the material domain, which it regarded as evil. The knowledge it imparted was to a small group of elect; the recipients of this revealed knowledge were a minority of humanity chosen to receive it and destined to return to their heavenly home once liberated from ignorance of their lofty destiny."

This might all sound far-fetched to the modern listener, but Gnostics truly believed what they touted, and the supposed "revealed knowledge" about the spiritual world held by their leaders, posed a serious threat to the church, since its own bishops, the alleged enlightened apostolic successors, were thought to be the custodians of knowledge from Yah. These lofty delusions often led to heated encounters between orthodox Christians and Gnostics.

Gnostics were also active in Israelite communities. In attempting to understand what Gnostics believed and how they operated, we can examine Marcion of Pontus, who, though labelled a heretical teacher, is among the most accessible of the second-century Gnostics, in that his positions are far less speculative and fanciful than that of the spate of groups and movements within the Gnostic designation. He had much in common with them, but differed from them enough to fall into his own category. But examining his life gives us a window into the mind of the Gnostic. Marcion's teachings challenged the leaders of the orthodox church and forced them to mount a counter offensive in order to protect their new Christian heritage.

We again turn to Kevin Madigan, who writes:

> "Born in Sinope, a port city in the province of Pontus on the Black Sea, Marcion was

> the son of a bishop in that city. A wealthy shipowner and merchant, he traveled to Rome around 140 and joined the Christian community there, to which he donated a large sum of money. Having soon fallen under the influence of a Gnostic teacher named Cerdo, he began to develop his own theological ideas, which he then proceeded to explain to the leaders of the Roman church. Horrified, the leaders returned his money and then, in July 144, excommunicated him. Undaunted and bent on spreading his teachings, Marcion founded his own church. It had a ritual and organization so similar to those of the Roman church that contemporary orthodox Christians felt compelled to warn their flocks not to enter a Marcionite church by accident. One contemporary Christian, Justin Martyr, asserts that Marcion's ideas were so rapidly and widely disseminated that they could be found everywhere in the Roman Empire by the middle of the second century."

Unlike the orthodox, or apostolic church led by bishops, which embraced the Pre-Messianic Writings often referred to as the "Old Testament," Marcion, an anti-Israelite, emphatically rejected them, along with all writings that flowed from the pens of the original emissaries. He only accepted Paul and a butchered version of Luke, wherein he removed all references to Israelite culture. He also believed in an extreme doctrine of grace. He saw Yah as a different being from the deity he served, who was—according to him—the "Father of Christians."

His "creator" was all-loving, so there would be no final judgment of mankind, and no punishment, since this deity would simply forgive everyone. In order to make this all possible, Yeshua, the Son of Yah, could not have been born from Mary, so his book of Luke starts at chapter three, expunging all references to a miraculous birth, genealogies tied to ancient Israelites, and things of that sort. Marcion, in effect, posed a greater threat to the church than any other Gnostic teacher. And by founding his own bishop-led church, which grew in measure to rival the official orthodox church—at least for a few years—Marcion bested the various Gnostic movements of his day.

Debates over the origin of all existence are central to the development of Gnostic movements of the second century. And these movements borrowed elements from Israelites, Christians, and even pagans. A vast number of Gnostic speculations arose from their attempts to discern deeper layers underlying the first few chapters of the book of Genesis. This is not to say that all Gnostic groups believed the same things. No, each Gnostic teacher had a unique way of thinking that shaped their view of reality; rather, Gnostic communities were held together by myths related to origins, and by their shared speculative language, which helped to mold a kind of group identity.

Some of the main components of their various myths are these:

The physical, created world we live in was not made by Yah, but rather by the progeny of an Eve-like entity named Sophia. And being unskilled in creation, this progeny makes a physical, rather than a spiritual world that is evil as soon as it materializes. Because the material world, and all things made of matter, were viewed as evil by Gnostics, they despised the contrary belief held by Israelites and Christians that the physical world Yah created was first seen as "good." Therefore, they refused to attribute the creation of a world of physical matter to a Creator of goodness. They could not conceive of a Creator like Yah being able to allow evil to materialize, despite Yah stating plainly in the Hebraic Scriptures that:

7 I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity.

—Isaiah 45:7

Other Gnostics, pushing the belief that the world was not made by Yah, taught that it was instead made by his heavenly messengers. And going farther, the Messiah, being born human, and made of fleshly material matter, could not, in their view, come from a spiritual being of perfect goodness. Therefore, Yeshua, they claim, was born of Joseph, just like all other men, but somehow, he became pure in his lifetime. Thus, we see that, the belief that Joseph, the husband of Mary, being the biological father of the Messiah, derives from second-century Gnostic thought.

To help pass these ideas onto the public, Gnostics even penned their own spiritual writings, retelling the life of Yeshua and aspects of Scripture by editing details according to their own doctrines. As a movement, the Gnostics were a formidable match for the Christian church. They claimed to have secret knowledge that was handed down directly from Yeshua, which was hidden, according to them, from the Israelites who established the Messianic culture. But Christians successively beat back the tide of Gnostic teachings and established their own set of orthodox convictions. In response to Gnosticism, and other similar efforts that attempted to distort basic Scriptural principles and concepts, the church focused on the three Cs: creed, canon, and clergy.

The creeds (from the Latin, *credo*, meaning "I believe") were a written set of basic beliefs that were confessed by converted Christians, particularly during baptism. Following the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, creeds went from being mere confessions of faith to being tests that determined whether one was worthy of Christian fellowship. One creed directly refuted Gnostic assertions by referring to the Creator mentioned in the Scriptures, the Almighty, who is referred to as the "Maker of heaven and earth." This countered the Gnostic teaching that the earth was created by an inferior being and was inherently evil. The creed also affirmed the belief in the Messiah, born of the Set Apart Spirit and of a virgin mother. It also affirmed his death and burial, signifying his complete humanity, which was contrary to what the Gnostics believed. If any converted Christian could not recite such a creed, they were deemed unworthy of fellowship.

As to the canon, this is derived from a Greek word that indicates a "measuring rod" or "ruler." The Scripture canon, therefore, was a body of spiritual writings that acted as a measuring rod and ruler, or, in other words, a *standard* that believers were to live by. The church's original canon was taken from the people who introduced them to the Messiah: the Israelites. And the canon of the Israelites was the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. In fact, what was understood as Scripture in the first few centuries, and certainly in Yeshua's time, were the books that comprised those categories.

Yeshua said:

35 "... And the Scripture cannot be broken...."

—John 10:35

And he clarified what many of those books were:

44 And he said unto them, "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was

yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me."

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.

—Luke 24:44-45

Even the book of Isaiah highlighted what the Scriptures were.

20 To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

—Isaiah 8:20

The law, of course, is the Torah, or first five books of Scripture, which Yeshua called "the Law of Moses." The testimony refers to the Prophets and Writings, such as the Psalms. The word testimony is the Hebrew *teudah*, word H8584, which means *testimony*, in the sense of an attestation, or affirming to be genuine or true; and to authenticate as a witness. In other words, these are the books that testify of Yeshua, and of them he rightly said:

39 "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me."

—John 5:39

Thus, the Scriptures are, in essence, comprised of the books that testify of Yeshua, ranging from Genesis to Malachi, which are the very ones he often quoted from. The Pre-Messianic books, according to Isaiah 8:20, are the true standard against which all other writings are to be measured, and if those other writings stand the test and speak according to Torah and Teudah, then there is light in them. Thus, these Pre-Messianic books were accepted as canon by the Christian church; a canon of Israelite Scriptures they considered their own. And for a time, only the four traditional Good News books—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—were considered canon from the Messianic era. To the early church, the Pre-Messianic Scriptures of the Israelites were believed to be the authoritative word of Yah, and they, along with the Good News books, a spattering of letters penned by Yeshua's emissaries, and a few other associated writings, were the basis for defining their Christian message.

The third aspect of the church's efforts to establish orthodoxy in the face of challengers was establishing a defined clergy and imbuing that clergy with authority. This was especially true following the rise of Montanism. Late in the second century, the church experienced a major change: enthusiasm was waning among its members and, while many were still entering the church, the laity felt there was a lack of spiritual prophecy. The church was becoming more secular as well, allowing for philosophical and even heathen discussions to be had. This paved the way for the entrance of Montanus in Asia Minor, somewhere between 156 and 172 CE. He called for a higher standard of worship, where the church would again be separate from the world.

What's more, Montanus, along with his two prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla, went forth prophesying in the name of the Set Apart Spirit, proclaiming the impending second coming of the Messiah. What was even stranger, however, was that Montanus and his prophetesses raved in

a state of ecstatic trance, as though they had no control of their being. This was quite unlike anything referenced in Scripture that related to the behavior of ancient prophets. While the method was perhaps meant to appear that they were deep in the Spirit, it looked more like demon possession. Despite this, they soon gathered others to themselves and a new movement called Montanism emerged. The church moved to intervene, but the damage had already been done and disorder resulted.

The problem wasn't so much that Montanus had called for a spiritual renewal in worship, it was his insistence that any rejection of the new prophecies would be seen as blasphemy of the Set Apart Spirit. The debate over the relevance of these prophecies created schisms, eventually causing many churches to split. Heretically, Montanus then claimed that a new age of the Spirit had begun, displacing the previous ages, which meant that the ten commandments and all the Pre-Messianic Scriptures were now obsolete. Revelations from Yah would only come through the Spirit of prophecy, and he was its main avenue.

Of this, Kevin Madigan writes:

> "It is quite clear that the Montanists were not doctrinally deviant in the way, say, that contemporary Gnostic groups were. What made them dangerous, in the eyes of many leaders in the Asian (and by 177 the Roman) churches was the very claim of experiencing new revelation outside the emerging channels of early normative Christianity. A series of synods was held in Asia Minor—the first in Christian history—and the result was that the Montanists (again according to Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5.16.16) were excommunicated. Then, in 177, the Montanists were excommunicated by the bishop of Rome.... The issue was whether there could be prophecy or new revelation after the age of the apostles, and if so, could women be vehicles of it? Ultimately, bishops felt that prophets were too great a threat to their own precariously established authority; ... In addition, the controversy stimulated the development of a new, important structure in the history of normative Christianity: the synod or council. This was to become the preferred way to settle disputes regarding belief and discipline for two millennia in the history of Christianity."

During this particular period of the Christian church, many yearned for spiritual renewal. Belief in the power of the Set Apart Spirit was strong, and Christians were familiar with the passages that told of how one could obtain the Spirit's indwelling, such as the example in Acts 2:38, where Peter admonishes his hearers to repent and be immersed in the name of Yeshua, for the forgiveness of sins, that they might receive the gift of the Set Apart Spirit. Christians were also apprehensive about committing sins against the Set Apart Spirit following their immersion. With the ecstatic ravings of Montanus, who accused the church of those very sins—even citing blasphemy—Christians were deeply troubled.

By leaning heavily on its clergy, and imbuing that clergy with authority, the church was able to position itself as a significant institution through forceful rejection of Montanism. Led by its bishops, the church was able to face heresy on a unified front, in the form of synods or councils, and give clear utterance to its orthodoxy. The final power bestowed on the bishops by the church hierarchy was the ability to forgive sins. Thus, with this act of true blasphemy, the episcopacy, or church government led by bishops, was complete. Catholic Christianity was now fully formed. And like the leavened bread it was, all it had to do was grow.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHURCH FATHERS

ONE OF THE MOST valuable assets to the early church was the collective contributions of a succession of men who came to be known as the church fathers. They were respected and lauded for their efforts in penning a vast body of letters and other writings that were dispatched to various congregations. We made mention of one notable figure among them: Ignatius of Antioch. He could be viewed as a pioneer of the ancient catholic church—the name originated with him after all. In our previous chapter, we examined the rise of the bishops, who led the church into a new era, where the clergy began to exhibit greater authority while defining church orthodoxy amidst the threat of heresy.

Ignatius had a hand in the formation of the order of bishops as well, and was therefore integral to their inevitable rise. During the time of the emissaries, there was no such thing as bishops among those who walked with Yeshua. Taken from the Greek *episkopos*, the word bishop literally means, "overseer," for that is his role. This word origin also explains the term episcopal, which denotes the involvement of bishops. While the emissaries were unchallenged leaders of the assemblies following the resurrection and ascension of Yeshua, they were seen as elders. Chief among the emissaries, by designation of Yeshua's words in Matthew 16:19, was Peter the Rock, and concerning himself he said:

> 1 "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder...."
>
> —1 Peter 5:1

Even though Peter could have taken a lofty title and commanded greater respect, he viewed himself as an elder, equal to his fellow servants who were seen as shepherds of the flock. Some among the emissaries were given the dual role of prophet, yet they were all teachers, since they were taught directly at the feet of Yeshua. All these experiences and attributes afforded the emissaries unquestioned authority, unlike the leaders of what became the ancient catholic church.

While many were granted leadership positions in the churches that succeeded the Israelite assemblies, those leaders shared authority and were also known as elders, or presbyters (which is the Greek word for elders). Another group of leaders was known as deacons. Though the responsibilities of those in leadership varied from church to church, in a general sense, it was the duty of the elders, or presbyters to teach new converts and lead worship services, while deacons were required to assist with everything—though they could not preside over communion ceremonies.

It was Ignatius who—while head of the church in Antioch—wrote a series of letters early in the second century, calling for a single bishop in each church, with a body of presbyters and a company of deacons to lend support. After a period of time, this became the adopted order for all

the churches. When we reach the late second century, bishops stood as unchallenged leaders in all matters of the church, much like the emissaries did concerning the Messianic assemblies.

These were among Ignatius's contributions as a so-called church father. But, through their various writings, Ignatius and the other early church fathers dealt only with specific issues that arose in the churches. In addressing these problems, their letters offered discipline and sought to enforce church guidelines, or else they provided answers to burning questions like those surrounding the forgiveness of sins. Other letters dealt with the ongoing issue of persecution. But in none of these letters is Christianity addressed in a broad sense, where one can see the scope of its overall doctrine.

The entrance of Marcion and the Gnostics changed all of that. Those who were labeled heretics created new doctrinal systems that forced the church to respond with what was perceived as sound doctrine as part of its effort to express to the world its broad and grounded orthodoxy. The speculations of the Gnostics were vast and far-reaching, thus the response from the church had to be equally vast, as well as cogent. This resulted in the many writings that flowed from the pens of the church fathers who took ancient catholic doctrines to the next level, and essentially helped to develop some of the Christian theology we see today. Those writers in question are: Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen.

Of all their various written material, the ones that survive are also important for another reason. Regarding this, Kevin Madigan writes:

> "[I]t remained the case for very long that our main sources for Gnosticism had been the hostile writings of Christian critics in the second and third centuries, writers such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen. Documents actually written by Gnostics were often destroyed by the orthodox or otherwise perished and disappeared from history."

We begin with Irenaeus, who was born in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) around the year 130. He was a disciple of the bishop and martyr Polycarp, who he greatly admired. Unknown circumstances eventually led Irenaeus to migrate to Lyons in Gaul, which is now southern France. There he became a presbyter, or elder, and, in the year 177, he was dispatched to Rome with a letter for its bishop. The letter addressed a controversy that resulted from Montanism. While Irenaeus was away, persecution broke out in Lyons and Vienne, and the aged bishop of Lyons, Photinus, was killed. When he returned to Lyons, Irenaeus was elected bishop of the church, and he served in that office until his death in 202.

Unlike Christians of his day, Irenaeus did not like to speculate on Scriptural passages, nor attempt to unravel deep mysteries of the text. He was most interested in leading the Christian flock that was given into his care by the church hierarchy, and this was also reflected in his writing. His pen was devoted to refuting the theories of heretics and instructing those who looked to him as a leader. Only two of his writings survive—one, a body of instructions to his aforementioned flock; the other, a refutation against Gnosticism. In both, we are presented with an exposition of his Christian faith as he received it from those who taught him.

Irenaeus argued that apostolic succession validated the church's teachings, and he reasoned that the church in Rome was the one to exemplify, and so all other churches should agree with its apostolic view. In time, representatives from churches throughout the realm, bowing to

Irenaeus's arguments, would descend on Rome to convene, all having their apostolic tradition in common. Irenaeus also presented ideas on the eucharist, or communion embodying more, and he stressed the importance of establishing a venerated position for Mary, who was considered the new Eve.

Irenaeus's influence loomed large in the church in the West during the Greek period, and his writings paved the way for others who are regarded as giants of Christian history, such as Augustine. He pushed Irenaeus's ideas on Mary farther by suggesting the possibility that Mary never sinned. Ideas like these seeded the Christian view of Mary long after, reaching full fruition in 1854, when the dogma of Immaculate Conception was promulgated. This decree of the Roman Church holds that Mary was not subjected to sin through grace.

Close to a hundred years later, in 1950, Pope Pius XII declared the dogma of the Assumption of Mary. This Assumption holds that Mary's body did not decompose upon her death, but—through some miracle of the Most High—was instead reunited with her spirit after she departed this world. We can find no support for these dogmas anywhere in the Messianic Writings, nor in all of Scripture, for this idolatry has its origin in the leaders of the ancient catholic church.

Now, while Christians endured persecution under various emperors in the third century, the Christian doctrine came to be expressed in accordance with Hellenistic thought. So appealing did some of the church fathers make the melding of faith and pagan philosophy that one of the Roman emperors eventually accepted the religion, irreversibly altering the course of the Christian movement. Clement of Alexandria is one such church father who merged pagan philosophy with Christian doctrine.

Clement experienced a life far different from that of Irenaeus. It is believed that Clement was born in Athens, a city renowned for its Greek philosophers. While his parents were pagans, Clement was converted at a young age and soon went in search of a teacher who could aid him in acquiring a deeper understanding of the Christian faith. In his quest around the Mediterranean, he was led to the city of Alexandria. Founded by Alexander the Great himself in the fourth century BCE, Alexandria was the second city of the Roman Empire, and home to Hellenism. It is where Greece and what is now called the Middle East converged.

Alexandria was also home to the largest community of Israelites in the Greco-Roman world, many of whom were Hellenistic in heart and mind. And it was there that the Septuagint—the preferred Scripture version of the early church fathers—came into being. There too was Philo, the first-century Israelite philosopher who was among the first to attempt to merge spiritual revelation with pagan philosophy. Christianity was eventually introduced to Alexandria, and a church was founded there that was infused with Gnostic elements early on.

When Clement reached Alexandria, he met with a Christian teacher named Pantaenus, who was considered an able thinker. Pantaenus was a Stoic philosopher who offered a philosophical interpretation of the faith that appealed to Clement, and when Pantaenus died, Clement took his place as the main Christian instructor in Alexandria. Persecution broke out in 202 under Emperor Septimius Severus, but despite this, Clement's school gained considerable importance, and was an effective means of drawing new converts to the Christian faith. Clement, however, had to flee the city. He traveled the Mediterranean yet again, bouncing from Syria to Asia Minor. He spent his later years in Cappadocia, where he died around the year 215.

Clement sought to present pagan philosophy as a practice that could be of use to Christians.

Since most of his teaching career was spent in Alexandria, an intellectual hub for philosophers and worldly scholars, the city left its mark on his mental faculty. Unlike Irenaeus, Clement did not seek to shepherd a flock of believers; he was a thinker, beholden to philosophy, and this he dispensed to anyone seeking a deeper truth. He appealed to pagan intellectuals by employing Plato in theological exhortations, and he even argued that Plato's philosophy could support Christian doctrine. The Greeks, he reasoned, were handed philosophy by Yah, just as he had given the covenant Law to the Israelites. Clement would attempt to merge Christian faith and pagan philosophy for his entire life, and others would follow in his footsteps for many centuries.

Tertullian, a church father who was very different from Clement, was born in Carthage around the year 150. Following his conversion to Christianity, at about age 40, he promoted the Christian faith by writing a series of books, thirty-one of which survive in Latin. These books gained him the distinction of being the "father of Latin theology." The books he wrote in Greek are lost. Of note, he is also credited as being the first to use the word "trinity" in its Latin form, though his concept was influenced by elements of Stoic philosophy, particularly his view of the Creator's "substance." He developed the trinitarian concept after becoming a Montanist, a group we discussed in our last chapter.

Tertullian, it is said, was a trained lawyer, as is evident in his writing, which bears the mark of a legal mind. In one treatise, titled, *Prescription against the Heretics*, he presents a kind of legal case between orthodox Christians and heretics. His attempt is to prove that heretics were not only wrong in their pursuits, but that they had no license to dispute with the church, which he claims, had full possession of the Scriptures. The heretics, according to him, had no right to the Scriptures at all, as they legally belonged to the church, notwithstanding the fact that the church coopted the Scriptures from the Israelites.

To drive his point, Tertullian argued on the basis of apostolic succession, claiming that the churches in Rome, Antioch, and elsewhere, could trace their origins and unbroken lines of succession back to the emissaries. Thus, he parrots the same unsubstantiated claims of his contemporaries and predecessors. Finally, using his supposed legal precedence of Scripture ownership, Tertullian argues that the church alone should be allowed to interpret the Scriptures. This legal argument, as it happens, has often been used against perceived enemies of the church throughout the course of Christian history. It was a main argument used by Catholics against Protestants during the Reformation era.

Tertullian was by no means gentle of speech and beneficent of mind when it came to confronting those believed to be heretics. Ryan M. Reeves, an assistant professor of historical theology, says this of the church father:

> "Tertullian is sort of this curmudgeon of the ancient world in the second century. And he has so much to contribute theologically and intellectually to this world, but his tone with just about everybody is simply nasty and bitter. Tertullian takes a more ancient tactic, which was not uncommon in the day, of simply mocking his opponents. This is the same tactic that Celsus uses. And it's actually telling that historians have pointed out that there are not many other patriciate scholars—any of his contemporaries—who actually cite Tertullian as a person of repute that they actually want to model themselves after. He's kind of the bad boy. It actually takes Augustine at a later generation, in a later century, to sort of rehab and to really cite

> Tertullian as a real sort of powerful person that he considers to be an authoritative voice. But Tertullian takes a more acerbic tone when he's taking on his pagan opponents."

Still, while pagans and perceived heretics were his main rivals, something in Montanism, a known heretical movement at the time, attracted him enough to join, and he adopted their particular theological slant. But this didn't stop Tertullian from being recognized as the founder of Western theology.

That leaves us with Origen, the most prolific of the church fathers prior to Augustine. Origen was born to Christian parents in Alexandria around the year 185. He rose to become Clement's greatest disciple, and his own Christian father, Leonides, was martyred during the same persecution under Septimius Severus that forced Clement to flee Alexandria. The persecution came when Origen was still a young lad, and, prior to his father's martyrdom—while he was still imprisoned—Origen longed to offer himself as a martyr. He was prevented from leaving the house and fulfilling that strong desire when his mother hid his clothes. He instead wrote a letter to his father in prison.

Origen had been well-educated, not only completing literary studies of the Greek world, but also learning the prevalent pagan philosophy of the day, which was beginning to take the shape of Neoplatonism.

Of this philosophy, Professor Timothy B. Shutt, who holds a PhD in medieval literature, says:

> "The person who succeeded, at last, in formulating a vision, which made use—In pretty much equal measure—of Plato and Aristotle, and unified their vision into a coherent wider system, was [...] Plotinus, who was from Egypt and moved to Rome, and lived in the second century CE. His legacy was called Neoplatonism, and it represented the final philosophical synthesis of antiquity.[...] It was taken over [...] by Christian theologians—St. Augustine prominent among them—and went on to become the default philosophy of the middle ages in Christian guise."

And in his book, *A History of the Middle Ages: 300 to 1500*, John M. Riddle writes:

> "A Christian from Alexandria, Origen attended lectures given by [...] a founder of Neoplatonism. Of all the pagan philosophies, Neoplatonism held the most appeal for Christians: its theory of the divine as a threefold emanation from the absolute—Plato's universal. Origen's theory of emanation, derived from Plato, provided imagery that could help explain how the Father, Son, and [Set Apart] Spirit could be one [Elohim] in three persons. Unlike Origen, Plotinus believed in no established religion; his work is often quoted as the best source of information on Neoplatonism outside Christianity. [... A]nd thus Neoplatonism had a great influence on Christian mysticism, as well as on Christian theology in general."

With all his acquired pagan knowledge, Origen supported his family through secular teaching. But when he was still in his teens, the bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius, appointed him to train catechumens—or new Christian converts readying for baptism. Even though he was considerably young, and the task was viewed as a major responsibility, Origen—who was already a genius in his own right—excelled, and his fame soon spread. In accordance with this experience—and

given his new position—Origen sold his secular books to support himself and was thereafter devoted to the study of Scripture.

So devoted was he in fact that one scholarly achievement credited to him is the *Hexapla*, a sixfold version of the Pre-Messianic Scriptures in parallel columns that contained line by line comparisons of the text in Hebrew, a Greek transliteration, and four Greek translations. He also attempted to write an extensive collection of commentaries on the Book of John. He wrote thirty-two books on the subject, nine of which survive, though it was never completed. To demonstrate the immense scale he intended to achieve, ten of his books covered the first two chapters of John alone.

After a few years, Origen left the teaching of catechumens to his most trusted disciples and ran a school that taught Christian philosophy to both Christians and pagans who were drawn by his fame. There, he lectured to the delight of his hearers, calling on what he had learned from the great classical pagan philosophers. As he increased his studies, so increased his fame, and he was even privileged to an audience with the mother of the sitting emperor.

A trip to Palestine resulted in the regional bishops inviting Origen to publicly interpret Scripture in the church at Caesarea, though he was not yet an ordained presbyter. This eventually stirred up some trouble in his life, as laymen preaching in the church was frowned upon. First, the bishops of Palestine were criticized, then the bishop who had assigned Origen to instruct catechumens—Demetrius—suddenly turned on him.

While Origen held the position of instructing catechumens—since many of them were women—he took it upon himself to undergo the passage recorded in Matthew 19:12:

> 12 "... And there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

... Yes ... Yes, Origen took that to mean castration, which he inflicted on himself. While this was kept secret for a time, Demetrius now brought the matter before church officials, as it was enough to disqualify members of the church from holding office. Demetrius was such a thorn in Origen's life that he was forced to move to Caesarea in 232, where he took up teaching once more. Despite some of Origen's writings eventually being condemned as heretical, one of his well-known students, Gregory—nicknamed the Wonderworker for his missionary efforts in Asia Minor—would rise to be the bishop of Neocaesarea and later be regarded as a saint.

In the year 251, Emperor Decius persecuted Christians yet again, and this led to Origen being imprisoned and tortured, which likely hastened his death a few years later. Pagan philosophy drove his career and infused his theology, and that philosophy was also imparted to his students. Ryan Reeves tells us that:

> "Origen is the most enamored, really, with pagan philosophy. Origen has a real deep reservoir of platonic thinking within him, and we're going to get to that again later when we get into the third and fourth century crises over the trinity and christology. There is an Origen tradition of thinking about, not only these topics of theology, but of the Scriptures and all kinds of different things. But Origen's tactic, you might say, is really to kind of beat the pagans at their own game. He's not simply trying to refute error or cast down misconceptions, though he does do that. Rather, Origen is of the

opinion that if we're going to be philosophers let's do it better than the pagans.

> "And so, much of his writing—and he wrote a lot besides apologetics works—really is an attempt to show how deeply thoughtful Christians can be in the philosophical arena. Now it's that deep thought that at times gets Origen into trouble; some of his ideas are later condemned, though he himself is not officially condemned by name. And so, Origen has always been sort of this in-between person. He sort of dined with the devil a bit too much, according to some, and he went a little bit too far."

Among some of those condemned ideas are these:

Origen believed that humans were once pure spirit, but, some having fallen, are now either trapped in human bodies, or else have become evil spirits. So, to Origen, humans were once heavenly messengers, and some are now the same demons we battle against. Origen claims to have derived this theory from Scripture, but it is clearly born of the Greek philosophy of his day, which was taught well before his time. So those holding to that doctrine today are dredging up pagan Platonic philosophy.

Origen also believed that Yah, out of pure love, would even save Satan, and return all demons —as well as all of creation for that matter—to their original perfect state. But all spirits will be free, and because of this limitless freedom afforded them, the possibility of perfect beings falling into sin again will always exist, making for a repeated historical saga of fall, intervention, and redemption, which could loop in an eternal cycle.

These are among the broad lengths to which Origen's imagination stretched during his study and speculation of Scriptural matters, though, to his credit, he does not claim that these speculations are to be accepted as doctrine. Nonetheless, they have been accepted as just that by some students of Scripture over the centuries, and they even led to a portion of his writings being condemned in the sixth century and some of his works destroyed. These and other ideas he put forth are rooted in the classic pagan philosophy he and his teacher, Clement, sought to merge with Christian theology. Long after they lived, Christian theologians would labor to continue their original quest.

Over time, other church fathers would rise to prominence in both the east and the west, but they would all be influenced by those who came before them. Eventually, a shift would occur, resulting in a split based on the distinct teachings that emanated from east and west. The Greek provinces of the east would follow Origen and others like him by assimilating and embracing the secular world with its pagan influences. The Latin provinces of the west would follow the rigorist Christian view of Tertullian and others like him, who sought to distance themselves from secular culture. This division between east and west would develop into two individual official catholic churches that would be in direct competition in the centuries to come.

CHAPTER 5

ENEMY EMPERORS

FROM THE YEARS 96 to 251 CE—between the reigns of Domitian and Decius—Christianity had been viewed as a religion separate from Hebraism, Messianic or otherwise. And because of this, together with the fact that it wasn't based on ethnicity, the church had no right to Roman protection. It was therefore subject to sporadic, mostly localized persecutions that were based on Trajan's policy, which was still in effect by the third century. But persecution increased under certain intolerant emperors, such as Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus. New policies aimed at Christians were also added by Emperors Septimius Severus and Decius, which had grave consequences for the church.

When Septimius Severus reigned as emperor early in the third century, he managed to end the civil wars that weakened the empire, though ruling the vast domain that now made up his dominion was no easy task. Beyond the borders of the realm, stretching past the Rhine and Danube were the "barbarians," always ready to seize any opportunity to attack the Romans. Inside the realm, other problems persisted, which stemmed from dissident groups with other ideas on policy. And there was always the threat that a legion might split off, name its own emperor, and launch a new civil war.

With a decline in the empire's strength, and faced with such internal problems and external threats, Septimius Severus decided to implement a new policy. He sought harmony among the many religions that had crept into the realm, so he promoted syncretism, which would combine the various beliefs and practices of all the religions in the empire. This syncretism, however, would be centered on the worship of *Sol Invictus*, or "the Unconquered Sun." This meant that everyone was free to worship whatever deity they choose, in whatever manner they choose, so long as they acknowledged that the Sun was ruler over all of them.

Not long after this policy was enforced did two groups immediately resist its adoption: the remaining Israelites and the Christians. Both had steadily gained converts to their particular movements over the years, thus the emperor decided to halt their spread by outlawing new conversions to either, under penalty of death. The result of this targeted policy was a round of new persecutions, this time aimed at new converts and their teachers. The very year that the edict was issued, 202 CE, the church father Irenaeus died—some believe by martyrdom—and Origen's father Leonides was killed in Alexandria. It is also the year that Clement fled from Alexandria to escape the same persecution.

After Septimius Severus, other emperors came and went, and his policy was not generally enforced, thus persecutions on a broad scale abated for a time. The mother of one succeeding emperor, Alexander Severus—who was very tolerant of Christians—even went to hear Origen speak. But by the year 249, Emperor Decius, bent on restoring the ancient glory of Rome, donned the royal purple. His was a very different rule from that of his predecessors. The empire

he inherited had abandoned its most ancient traditions, as he saw it, and economic problems plagued the realm. The "barbarians" beyond the borders, meanwhile, were steadily growing bolder as they became a greater threat. Philip Daileader, Associate Professor of History at the College of William and Mary, gives us a unique perspective on Rome's vulnerability to invasion:

> "The Roman Empire faced pressure on most of its widely extended borders during the course of the third century. The most serious dangers came from two regions, however. At the far eastern end of the Roman Empire, around Syria and Palestine and Mesopotamia, the Persian Empire was attacking the Roman Empire and trying to recover lands that had once been possessions of the Persian Empire. In Central Europe, along the Rhine-Danube frontier, the Roman Empire also faced pressure—albeit pressure of a somewhat different sort. In Central Europe, Germanic tribes were trying to enter the Roman Empire by crossing the Rhine river and, especially, the Danube river, and trying to settle within the Roman Empire. Unlike the Persians who were looking to make permanent annexations and gain Roman territory, the Germans were not trying to take over anything; they were simply trying to become residents of the Roman empire, but the Romans did not want them there, at least not in the numbers in which the barbarians presented themselves during the third century. And the Roman Empire had a very difficult time trying to deal with the simultaneous threat of Persian and Germanic invasion."

Decius saw all these problems as an outgrowth of national rebellion against the Roman deities, which the citizens of the realm had abandoned. A resurgence of the ancient Roman religion, and unified worship of the deities, would perhaps appease them, and cause the glory of Rome to be restored. Such was the reasoning that led to Decius's particular religious policy, which differed altogether from any that came before it. Decius wasn't interested in punishing a particular religious group for what they believed or practiced; his was an empire-wide campaign to see that everyone in the realm would serve the deities according to the ancient pagan religion. The future of the Roman empire itself, in Decius's view, hinged on the enforcement of his policy. The persecutions would take on an entirely new form, with the empire effectively declaring war on the ancient catholic church.

Gone were the sporadic, local persecutions of the old days. Decius intended to persecute subjects in every corner of the realm who refused his order to sacrifice to the deities by burning incense, pouring a libation, or tasting of the sacrificial meat. Those who abided by the policy and performed these rites would receive certificates, or *libellum*, attesting that they had sacrificed to the deities. With this, Decius's persecutions were unlike those that flowed from the emperors before him. He wasn't out to make martyrs of Christians, he would instead create Christian apostates, by forcing them to accept his religion and abandon their own.

Since there had been a period of abatement of prolonged persecutions prior to Decius's reign, the generation of those who had been martyred gave way to a new generation of Christians unaccustomed to witnessing fellow believers being killed for their faith. This meant that many Christians fell under the pressure of Decius's campaign, obeying the command to sacrifice to pagan deities. Other fearful Christians purchased fake certificates declaring that they had performed the sacrifices, when they had done no such thing.

Beyond that, as part of Decius's policy, which sought to enforce the worship of the pagan

deities, rather than exact death as a first order of business, the number of Christians who died as martyrs were few. The task of the Roman authorities was to arrest Christians (who were the most obstinate among the empire's citizens), threaten and torture them, and force them to abandon the Christian movement. Late in life, Origen was imprisoned and suffered this kind of torture, which was the fate of many Christians at the time. As proof of how widespread and systematic was the enforcement of Decius's policy, certificates verifying the performance of sacrifices to the deities have been discovered in some of the most remote parts of the Roman Empire.

Because few martyrdoms resulted from Decius's persecution, rather than consider all who endured it "martyrs," the term "confessor" went into official use and bore new significance as part of the Christian vocabulary to denote those who resisted but lived. Decius's persecution, while brief, lasting only to 251, was still devastating. Gallus, the emperor who succeeded him, set aside his policy and persecutions ceased for another six years, until Valerian took the throne. He was once a companion of Decius and brought on a new round of persecutions before being captured by the Persians and taken prisoner. For the next forty years, Christians would enjoy relative peace. But prior to that time, the restless barbarians were continually amassing strength.

In his book, *The Conversion of Europe*, Richard Fletcher elaborates on these developments:

> "Crippled by instability, civil war, fiscal chaos—and, just to make matters worse, by intermittent outbreaks of bubonic plague—the empire was in no position to defend its frontiers. From 224 onwards the new Persian dynasty of the Sassanids constituted a well-organized and hostile presence to the east, bent upon regaining the Syrian territories which Persian kings of old had ruled. For the Roman empire, the most humiliating moment of this time of troubles occurred in 260 when the Emperor Valerian was captured by the Persians. The Germanic tribes of the Goths, settled at this period on the northern shores of the Black Sea in today's Ukraine, took to the sea to strike deep into Asia Minor. By land, they pressed hard on the Danube frontier, launching raids into the Balkans and Greece. The Emperor Decius was defeated and killed by them in Thrace in the year 251. Along the Rhine frontier new Germanic confederations, those of the Alamans and of the Franks, took shape. In 257 they broke into Gaul to plunder it at will. Some of them even penetrated as far as northeastern Spain, where they sacked the city of Tarraco (Tarragona). Berbers along the Saharan fringes attacked the long, thin, vulnerable littoral of Roman north Africa. In far-flung Britain the construction of coastal defenses witnessed to new enemies from overseas—Saxons from Germany and Scots from Ireland. One of the most telling signs of the times was the building of town walls throughout the western provinces of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, furnishing defenses for settlements which had never needed them before."

Following Decius's reign, the church was faced with a new problem: what to do about those who had "lapsed" in their Christian faith by bowing to the pressures of the persecution. What complicated the decision was that not all Christians had lapsed in the same way. Some immediately offered sacrifices to the Roman deities the minute they were told to, not considering their faith at all. It was agreed that they could not be viewed in the same light as the Christians who purchased fake certificates to prove that they had sacrificed but really had not, or others who were weakened momentarily but repented and sought to rejoin the church while the

persecution still raged.

Those who were newly minted as “confessors” enjoyed the same privileges as presbyters in the church and were given the authority to forgive sins. This is because they were believed to have received a special portion of the Set Apart Spirit after they refused to give in to their persecutors. So, the confessors were thought to be the ones with the authority to decide on the fate of the lapsed, such as who should be restored to communion status within the church.

You see, communion, or what they refer to as the eucharist (Greek for “thankfulness” or “thanksgiving”) was among the most important celebrations to Christians of this era. It meant that you were still a member of the Kingdom of Heaven in the eyes of the church leaders. To be denied the weekly elements of bread and wine meant certain spiritual death and damnation. And that bread and wine, through the supposed miracle of transubstantiation, was believed to literally transform into the body and blood of the Messiah after being blessed.

In North Africa, some confessors stepped forward and claimed the authority to decide on the fate of the lapsed. Thereafter, they began restoring some to communion status by dispensing letters of pardon. Many bishops opposed this action and claimed that only the church hierarchy was vested with the authority to decide on such matters, and they alone could restore the lapsed in a just manner. Others thought that both the confessors and bishops were lax in allowing those who had become apostates such easy reinstatement. This crisis led to schisms of the churches in Carthage and Rome. Decisions on the fate of those who had been immersed but had fallen away, would continue to plague and divide the church. The system of penance grew from crises of the lapsed, and the Protestant Reformation itself was a massive protest against that very system.

To give you an idea of what the system of penance would grow to become in the time of the ancient church, we turn to Richard Fletcher once more, who writes:

> “The penitential discipline of the early church as administered by, let us say, Gregory of Pontus was of an exceptional harshness. Its characteristics were as follows. It could be administered only by a bishop, and it could be undergone by the penitent only once in a lifetime. It was public and it was shaming. The penitent sinner formally entered an ‘order of penitents’ in a ceremony which took place before the entire congregation of his or her Christian community. Penitents were thereafter segregated into a special part of the church building for future services, where they had to listen to the communal intercessions for them of their neighbors. The penitent had to observe lifelong chastity thereafter and was debarred from ever holding any public office: a seventh-century king of Spain who underwent penance had to abdicate. Penance thereby aimed mortal blows at family and civil life. The penitent became in effect a nonperson.”

In the year 284, a new emperor would enter the imperial palace and, before the end of his reign, order the most vicious persecution of Christians during the time of the Roman Empire. Roughly thirty emperors sat the throne in the third century, and the Roman senate took the business of electing Caesars more lightly than in times past. Kinship meant hardly anything as well, since being a close relation to a recent Caesar probably meant that you would be assassinated if a rival ascended the throne, which was not unheard of. In one account of life in the time of Diocletian, the book, *20 Centuries of Christianity*, by authors Paul Hutchinson and Winfred Garrison, tells us that,

> "Chaos and anarchy spread throughout the empire. The slaying of one Caesar was a signal to Roman troops somewhere to acclaim a new ruler. Sometimes the Praetorian Guards stationed in Rome itself made the choice; sometimes it came from the armies on the frontiers. As the third century drew toward its close, most thoughtful Romans were in despair. They saw the empire on a swift slide into ruin and the once proud civilization about to plunge into a barbarian sea."

And into that sea the empire did plunge, and it did see ruin, but not until the fifth century. In fact, Diocletian, despite his ill repute, managed to turn the empire around, and in effect revive it. Turning once more to Professor Philip Daileader, he says that:

> "During this period, the Roman Empire was reeling from a series of political and military and economic crises, and indeed became very close to collapse. It probably should have fallen at this point in time. [...] Diocletian, was going to stave off collapse by a few centuries, and despite his intense conservatism, and his love of Roman tradition, Diocletian was going to reshape the Roman Empire and to make it a far more openly autocratic state than it had been previously."

With that, Diocletian altered the basis for imperial rule and reorganized the entire empire in order to strengthen it.

Diocletian was born to slaves in Dalmatia, a Roman province in Illyricum, or what is now the western portion of the Balkan peninsula north of Greece. After setting his mind on the Roman army, he enjoyed a successful military career and rose to become commander of the army before reaching the age of forty. An election held by certain generals and officers proclaimed Diocletian emperor following the murder of the previous emperor. Diocletian quickly, and brutally, dispatched a rival for the throne in the presence of the tribunal of the Senate, and then he made his first order of business securing the Roman borders, setting off a series of battles that drove back the barbarians. He even recaptured territory from distant Britain and Persia, and civil wars were also repressed within the realm.

To militate against any future threats of invasion, Diocletian, switching modes from able general to shrewd statesman, implemented a plan to divide the realm.

> "Known for his administrative skill, Diocletian divided the empire bureaucratically into West and East, with an emperor (or Augustus) and vice-emperor (Caesar) for each vast region."
>
> —Kevin Madigan, *Medieval Christianity*

Prior to this division, a single emperor governed, and succession ordinarily passed from father to son, though that rule had been violated on numerous occasions. Frequent civil wars were produced by power-hungry generals who, with the backing of their armies, fought to secure the throne. Diocletian's plan was to establish a more orderly means of succession to the throne, which would begin with top military commanders, who would be succeeded by the Caesars they choose. By dividing the empire into two bureaucratic halves, with two administrative divisions in each, the idea was that ambitious generals could enjoy supreme rule without launching civil wars to attain it. Also, the realm would be protected by invested leaders enthroned in various quarters.

A man named Galerius was named one of the two Caesars, and he ruled the prefecture of Illyricum. Of the four emperors, Galerius saw the greatest military action along the borders, fending off barbarians and Persians alike. Because several Roman soldiers within the legions were confessed Christians, this created a degree of friction. Many of them refused to obey orders and some tried to leave the army. Other Christians refused to join. Galerius developed a disdain for them and took the matter to Diocletian in an attempt to convince him to expel them all. Diocletian's edict did just that, but some officers refused to lose soldiers within the ranks. They tried to force some Christian soldiers to deny their faith rather than face expulsion, and this resulted in the execution of various Christians in the army stationed at the Danube, which was under Galerius's command.

Following this event, Galerius grew all the more determined to push for a new edict, according to the Christian historian Eusebius. Not only was a new edict issued, but it was followed by three others. Diocletian would declare another veritable, but more decisive war on Christians.

> "It was he who launched the fiercest, longest, and most systematic purge of the Christians, traditionally called 'the Great Persecution,' "

... Says Kevin Madigan.

> "Persuaded that the Christians were the cause of bad omens and also to blame for a deteriorating economy, the emperor issued a series of edicts...."

The first of these edicts ordered that all palace and military officials perform sacrifices to the deities to prove their faithfulness to the empire. Christians were therefore weeded out and removed from high office.

> "... [H]e then decided to 'terminate' the Christian community for its refusal to participate. In November 303, Roman soldiers destroyed and looted a church in Nicomedia...."

And they proceeded to burn all the Scriptures they could find.

> "Soon an edict was published requiring the destruction of all churches and sacred scriptures. In response, Christians in the East revolted and burned some imperial buildings. Diocletian retaliated by burning almost three hundred Christians in Nicomedia. Another edict was issued: all higher clergy were to be imprisoned, but a third edict allowed them reprieve on the condition that they would sacrifice. A fourth edict raised the stakes by requiring all to sacrifice. The penalty was hard labor or death. This time, thousands, not hundreds, were tortured, mutilated, enslaved, incarcerated, or put to death."

The persecution, which was not that brutal in the beginning, became systematic and cruel in nature. Diocletian, who primarily governed the prefecture of Oriens from its capital, Nicomedia, took his government reforms seriously and decided to step down as Augustus. He convinced Maximian, the Augustus who ruled the prefecture of Italy from its capital, Milan, to step down as well. That allowed the two Caesars, Galerius and Constantius Chlorus, who governed the

prefectures of Illyricum and Gaul, respectively, to assume the top two positions in the realm, becoming the new Augusti. Two new Caesars were chosen: a man named Severus was given control of Italy and another named Maximinus Daia controlled Oriens.

Persecutions resumed in the east, with Maximinus Daia resorting to capital punishment to enforce the original edicts. Civil war erupted in the west instead. Maximian, the Augustus who abdicated the throne in Milan, supported his son Maxentius in an overthrow of the new Caesar, Severus, who ruled the prefecture of Italy. Severus soon committed suicide, and Galerius, who had rushed to aid his Caesar, was forced to retreat to the east as Maxentius secured his rule in Italy. Constantius Chlorus, the ruler of Illyricum, died in the interim. His loyal troops refused to yield to the supremacy of Galerius, so they proclaimed Constantius Chlorus's son, Constantine, their new Augustus. A man named Licinius, who became an ally of Constantine, gained control of the east.

And ...

> "In the end, the persecution failed."

... Says Kevin Madigan.

> "By the fourth century, many Christians had non-Christian friends or relatives who were disgusted by their torture or death. Western officials were notably reluctant to carry out the harsh decrees mandating death, willing only to comply with the edicts demanding the burning of scriptures. In the East, suffering was more severe. We have the names of about one hundred martyrs who died in Palestine alone; there must have been more. Still, the Roman state could not carry out a mass extermination of Christians, as there was far too much social resistance. In addition, the numbers of Christians had grown to the point where attempted liquidation would have been futile."

When Constantine and Maxentius assumed power, neither kept up the persecutions, which were credited to Galerius, their mutual rival. At last, Galerius himself grew ill and, as the story goes, he issued a final edict on April 30, 311, but one of toleration this time around. Perhaps believing that his illness was in fact some punishment being meted out for his vicious treatment of the Christians, he finally pardons them, and, to the astonishment of not a few, asks them to pray to their deity for him, and "for the public good." Thus ended the most brutal persecution in the time of the ancient church.

The Christians who survived the persecutions were released from their prisons, signs of torture marking them. But all were thankful to be alive. Galerius met his demise five days later. The Roman Empire was now divided between four principals: Licinius, Maximinus Daia, Constantine, and Maxentius. The first three named among these rulers recognized one another as legitimate leaders, but the fourth, Maxentius, was viewed as a usurper. Of the four, Maximinus Daia was the sole ruler to resume the persecution of Christians that Galerius had overturned with his final edict. Nonetheless, the winds of change were already stirring, and Constantine was about to embark on a campaign of war that would end persecutions outright, and alter the political landscape of Europe and the Near East. In the end, he would sit as the sole and supreme ruler of a Christian empire.

CHAPTER 6

CONSTANTINE

CONSTANTINE WAS DECLARED EMPEROR in Britain in 306, and he became the master of Gaul and Spain, but that was not enough. In 312, he assembled his forces in Gaul and started the march south, to wage war with his rival Maxentius for control of Italy and Africa as well. As the legend goes, during this momentous journey, Constantine saw a vision of some sort, of a cross superimposed on the sun with the words, “Conquer in this sign” written in Latin. Encouraged by this, he and his army made their way through the Alps, and then marched for Rome, Maxentius’s capital. Constantine ordered his troops to mark their shields with a new sign that was inspired by his supposed vision, though he continued to worship the “Unconquered Sun” long after these events.

Had he stayed within its walls, Maxentius might have held Rome, which was well-defended. Instead, he consulted his augurs—diviners of ancient Rome—who advised him to present battle, and that poor counsel changed the fate of the empire, and indeed the course of Christianity itself. Constantine’s attack caught Maxentius by surprise, and he failed to defend his stronghold, which was quickly overrun by Constantine’s troops. In her book, *The History of the Medieval World*, Susan Wise Bauer writes:

> “On the morning of October 29, 312, the Roman soldier Constantine walked through the gates of Rome at the front of his army.
>
> “He was forty years old, and for six years he had been struggling to claim the crown of the *imperator*. Less than twenty-four hours before, he had finally beaten the sitting emperor of Rome, twenty-nine-year-old Maxentius, at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. Constantine’s men had fought their way forward across the bridge, toward the city of Rome, until the defenders broke and ran. Maxentius drowned, pulled down into the mud of the riverbed by the weight of his armor.” [...]
>
> “Constantine settled into the imperial palace to take stock of his new empire. Dealing at once with Maxentius’s supporters, he ordered immediate but judicious executions: only Maxentius’s ‘nearest friends’ fell victim to the new regime. He dissolved the Praetorian Guard, the standing imperial bodyguard that had supported Maxentius’s claim to the throne. [...] Then he turned to deal with his co-emperors.”

Following the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine then traveled to Milan to meet with Licinius, to forge a new alliance. Persecution of Christians, they agreed, would cease, and their religious buildings, cemeteries, and other Christian property would be returned to them. This became known as the Edict of Milan, an edict that seconded the one Galerius issued concerning toleration. Licinius married Constantine’s half-sister, Constantia, as part of their agreement, and

for his part, the sixty-year-old emperor set out to battle Maximinus Daia in 313 for control of the eastern territories. Marching under a Christian banner, Licinius had forty thousand less troops than his enemy, Maximinus, who fought for the Roman deity, Jupiter. Still, Licinius's army conquered Maximinus Daia's forces, and, seeing no way of escape, the defeated emperor swallowed poison.

With Licinius's victory, Constantine decided to legalize Christianity as part of their new compact. Of this, Susan Wise Bauer writes:

> "The two men met in Mediolanum (modern Milan) to celebrate Licinius's marriage to Constantia and to issue an empire-wide proclamation that made Christianity legal....
>
> "In fact Christianity had been tolerated in all parts of the empire except the east for some years. But this proclamation, the Edict of Milan, now spread this protection into Maximinus Daia's previous territories. 'No one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion,' the Edict announced. 'Any one of these who wishes to observe Christian religion may do so freely and openly, without molestation."

And here, Constantine's edict tolerates all religions in the realm:

> "... [We] have also conceded to other religions the right of open and free observance of their worship for the sake of the peace of our times, that each one may have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases.' "

This freedom of religion for all would change late in the fourth century, when the leading bishops would convince the emperors that Christianity was the one "true religion," and all others were to be made illegal. Thereafter, Roman Catholicism would dominate the West and Greek Orthodoxy the East, ending freedom of religion and free expression of culture for all.

Constantine had now eliminated two of his three rivals. Licinius was all that remained between him and sole rule of the empire. But Licinius was getting up in age; he would only hold onto power for a little over a decade. In the year 324, Licinius presented Constantine with the perfect opportunity to wage a final war for control of the eastern portion of the realm. Licinius accused the Christians in his territory of spying for Constantine and he expelled them. While the accusations were probably true, Constantine charged Licinius with persecution, which was illegal per the Edict of Milan, and he led his army east to do battle. They squared off twice, with the second encounter leading to Licinius's sound defeat. After surrendering, Constantine spared his life, momentarily, and exiled the former emperor to the city of Thessalonica. Constantine now controlled the entire Roman Empire, and he would do so for the next thirteen years, until his death in 337.

Constantine's path to absolute power did not come haphazardly. On the contrary, he was a meticulous planner, who took on challengers one at a time after prolonged periods of strategizing. Long before he battled Maxentius's forces on the Milvian bridge for control of Italy, Constantine had designs on expanding the empire. With this in mind, he focused on building strong bases of operation in Gaul and Great Britain, and strengthening the borders, particularly positions along the Rhine, which was still vulnerable to barbarian invasion. Though, like many

emperors before him, Constantine was given to pomp and excess, and thus lavished himself by building an imposing, richly appointed palace in his capital city, Trier—this while neglecting important public projects. For instance, vineyards in nearby fields flooded due to lack of maintenance of the drainage systems, which disrupted the local economy.

Constantine, like emperors Decius and Diocletian before him, sought to recapture the former glories of the Roman Empire; but unlike them, he did not choose to do so in honor of the pagan deities. Constantine believed that Rome would prosper once more through Christianity. While he could not know it, Scripture prophecy had placed Christianity at the center of world power, which it would achieve in the form of the Papal Empire, and like Nebuchadnezzar and other kings of old, Yah would use Constantine to establish this leavened religion as the dominant force in the earth to bring about other important prophecies that were yet unfulfilled.

Opposition to Constantine's grand vision for a resurgence of Rome's glory came from many Romans, particularly members of the Senate, some of whom belonged to aristocratic families with long ties to the ancient practices. They decried policies that would diminish the importance of the Roman deities and the privileges that came with paganism. Prior to his victory over Licinius, Constantine conflicted with the Roman Senate, which was still an active check on his power. But as absolute master of the empire, he could direct his own course and see it through as he pleased. And what he saw as part of his grand vision for Rome's revival, was a new capital, that was well away from the pagan center of Rome, which was steeped in ancient traditions and those beholden to them.

During Constantine's second battle with Licinius in 324, known as the Battle of Chrysopolis, something promising struck Constantine's eye. Professor Paul Freedman, who teaches medieval history at Yale University, says:

> "This event, this Battle of Chrysopolis, showed Constantine the importance of the small fortress city of Byzantium, not far away."

Of course, Byzantium would be renamed in honor of Constantine. And, like the old Rome, this new Rome would feature all the classic pagan elements of the ancient city it was meant to replace, including many statues of pagan deities. These would be removed from their ancient temples and placed in the new city's public baths and squares, and even its famed hippodrome. Professor Freedman goes on to say:

> "Constantinople, as this town was called, was planned to be a new Rome. Like Rome it would have a forum, it would have civic spaces, it would have races and sporting events, it would have imperial palaces and gardens, it would have victory columns, triumphal arches, aqueducts; the whole panoply of classical civilization.
>
> "And this relocation of the capital to Constantinople, the relocation of the capital to the east, is significant because it shows us the permanent result of the tetrarchy. Diocletian's experiment was a failure in the sense that the emperors and caesars would not cooperate. And such a scheme was never tried again. But the division of the empire between east and west would be something that would eventually become permanent. Its first traces are with Diocletian; it is also something that continues under Constantine without the addition of the caesars. Constantine ruled over the

> whole empire. He did not divide it himself, but he facilitated its conceptual and, eventually, real political division by creating a new Rome, a new capital in the former fortress of Byzantium."

In his book, *Mysteries of the Middle Ages*, Thomas Cahill tells us why this was a lasting economic and political strategy:

> "In addition to his lightly worn Christianity, Constantine would be remembered chiefly for his dramatic change of imperial residence. He didn't care much for Rome, too huddled and pluriform for his tastes, so he established a New Rome in the small Greek city of Byzantium on the southwestern shore of the Bosphorus. It was an excellent choice, for the site commanded Europe and Asia on opposite shores, was virtually impregnable, yet stood wide open to trade. Though Western Europe began to fracture into a puzzle of barbarian kingdoms little more than a century after Constantine's death, the Byzantine Empire would remain in the hands of Constantine's successors for ten centuries more—till in 1453 Byzantium, now a golden capital called Constantinople, fell to the Turks, who called it Istanbul."

Upon its founding, Constantinople was not a well-populated city. To draw citizens to the new capital, Constantine resorted to doling out all manner of privileges to those who chose to live there. These came in the form of exemptions from taxes and military service. Some citizens received free agricultural products: oil, wheat, or wine. On the strength of these and other acts, so many people flocked to the new capital that a century later, during the reign of Theodosius II, new city walls had to be erected to accommodate the swollen population.

Before Constantine came to power and bestowed broad freedoms on the church, Christianity was persecuted and outlawed. His intervention, vaulting it to the lofty status it enjoyed from his reign onward, in effect caused the church to re-envision its purpose and alter its overall image. A new age had dawned on the Christian movement, which was now free to develop and spread without imperial impediment. Constantine had made the religion completely legal, and he used legislation to create a new day of rest for Christians, Sunday, that did double duty honoring the Unconquered Sun (see our documentary: *Understanding the Sabbath*, for an in-depth study of this topic). Nothing seemed to be able to slow the progress of Christianity, as many streamed into the church, which was now favored by a powerful emperor. Of course, this meant that many pagans were drawn to the movement as well, bringing with them pluralistic, and even secular beliefs and practices that would further poison the Christian well.

To Constantine, this was a non-issue. While he could be viewed as a semi-practicing Christian up until his baptism toward the end of his life, his brand of Christianity, and his conversion experience, was not like that of the average convert. In his day, a new person entering the church would endure a lengthy process of education that focused on Christian discipline and doctrinal instruction. This would ensure that the convert both understood and was able to live the new faith he or she adopted. Following this was official baptism. Thereafter, the bishop of the convert's particular church would act as their guide and shepherd in the course of their spiritual journey.

Constantine experienced none of this. After his professed acceptance of Christianity, he never subjected himself to the authority of Christian teachers or bishops. He did have Christians among

his entourage—historians, bishops, and ecclesiastical leaders—but they were regarded as employees, in the capacity of tutors of his children, documenters, or otherwise liaisons. They did not dictate Constantine's religious life. He determined that alone and in fact considered himself the "bishop of bishops." Beyond that, Constantine continued to take part in pagan ceremonies, and he held onto the title *Pontifex Maximus* as head of the Roman religious cult, to which the leading bishops raised no objections.

Of course, Constantine had lavished the church with many gifts, church buildings among them; his policies greatly favored Christians; and he also spoke well of the being they served. More than this, he sat a powerful ruler who had conquered all challengers. But the bishops remained silent not for these reasons, but mainly because Constantine was not yet a baptized member of the church, and so was not viewed as a Christian in the fullest sense. In light of this, the bishops were in no position to direct the life of such a person. In the end, Constantine's actions show that he had a superstitious fear of the Almighty, rather than a healthy reverence for him. And while that superstitious fear prompted him to shower gifts on Christians and treat them favorably, it did not preclude him from serving the other deities, which he did openly, even consulting the oracle of Apollo. He was Supreme Pontiff, or high priest of the Roman religion, after all—which was the prerogative of all Roman emperors.

Since he enjoyed both paganism and Christianity, Constantine was not about to suppress either. The old pagan deities were still favored by the aristocracy and rural citizens, as well as soldiers in the Roman army. The cities of Athens and Alexandria were still important centers for the study of ancient pagan philosophy and wisdom. Roman citizens among these various classes were not ready to abandon their pagan religion for Christianity, nor was Constantine going to force anyone to do so. That would come later, under a new system and other Roman rulers. As much as he did for the church, and though his empire was largely Christian, Constantine did not make Christianity the empire's official religion. This too would come later, during the reign of Emperor Theodosius.

Now, while we use the term "paganism" in reference to the Roman religion and the general worship of other deities, like many ancient terms, the word "pagan" meant something else during late antiquity. In truth, the ancient Roman religion had no name; only the deities were named. By the early fourth century, the Roman religion was pushed mainly to the rural areas of the empire and was predominantly practiced by rural citizens. The word "pagan" has its root in the Latin *paganus*, which means "country dweller." Thus, "pagan" was thereafter used in a derogatory sense by Christians to describe those who held to the old polytheistic Roman religion, and religions or beliefs akin to this. And so it is used today.

After Constantine, there were few pagans among his successors who tried to restore paganism to the realm, but failed. Christianity would take root, mainly through the many edicts that supported it. Aspects of some of these edicts are still with us to this day, such as church properties being tax exempt, as well as members being able to legally bequeath property to the church. After many centuries, these freedoms would make the church rich in land and other forms of wealth. In his book, *Pagans: The End of Traditional Religion and the Rise of Christianity*, James J. O'Donnell writes:

> "With governmental approval, money and influence began to flow toward Christian communities, especially in the larger cities. The emperor gave gifts, so other

> dignitaries followed suit. Wealthy men offered support for building fine new buildings and left gifts in their wills. Gifts to the church of productive agricultural property were a kind of endowment, guaranteeing continuing income. Just as an old master painting, once it gets to a museum, is unlikely to move again, so as wealth flowed to the ancient or medieval church, it stayed there, undivided by descendants."

So generous was Constantine toward the Christian movement that he even allowed the bishops use of the imperial posts, which meant that bishops traveling to synods or council meetings would have a supply of fresh horses along their journey, and the entire affair came at the expense of the Roman state. With his conversion, a few changes took place in the church as well. Syncretism set in, and pagan superstition could be seen among the laity. When people faced illnesses, they would rely on ancient magical practices. Others would be buried with both Christian and pagan religious symbols and artifacts. When the decree was passed, ordering the first day of the week to be observed, Christians given over to the old pagan ways simply honored the Unconquered Sun, since the day equally honored this deity. And while incense was mainly used as a sign of respect for the sitting emperor, it became a part of the Christian worship service as well. Ministers who officiated at those services, and who once dressed modestly, now wore extravagant and luxurious garments in keeping with the royal court. They also began to adopt the title "priest," like their pagan counterparts—though the ancient Israelites were among the first to use the title to refer to the Levites who officiated in the temple.

Around the time of Constantine's reign, another major issue arose, that of new Christian movements which proposed theories and doctrines that would divide the church. Perhaps the most divisive of these was Arianism. In his book, *A History of the Middle Ages: 300 – 1500*, John M. Riddle writes:

> "Of all the Christian sects found in the empire and beyond its boundaries, none did more damage to the unity of the church than Arianism. Around 318, Arius, a Christian priest in Alexandria, challenged his bishop by preaching that [Yeshua], having been created by [Yah] the Father at a point in time, could not, as a created being, be co-eternal with [Yah]. Only [Yah] the Father was eternal and immutable, whereas the Son of [Yah] was subject to change, as the [Good News books] described him. Being lesser than [Yah] the Father, the Son of [Yah] could have only indirect knowledge of the Father. Athanasius, a conservative-minded deacon, defended his bishop by arguing that the Son of [Yah], incarnate in [Yeshua], had existed from eternity as a coequal member of the [Elohim]: Father, Son, and [Set Apart] Spirit....
>
> "These were not arcane theological points to Christians of the time. We are told that great numbers within the Christian communities, first in Alexandria, and then in cities in Palestine, Syria, and even Constantinople itself, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, engaged in vituperative debates that resulted in physical clashes when attempts at persuasion turned to violence. Constantine, who had hoped to strengthen the unity of his empire by recognizing and encouraging Christianity, could not ignore the problem and sent an envoy to Alexandria in a vain attempt to resolve this doctrinal dispute. The envoy reported that more than one person's skull had been fractured in the street fighting over the nature of [Yeshua's] relationship to the

Father.

> "In 325, Constantine called a Council at Nicaea (near Constantinople), and approximately 300 bishops, out of more than 1,800 in the empire, attended, some at the emperor's expense. The council wrote a creed (from *Credo*, "I believe," the word with which official creeds in Latin began), known as the Nicene Creed (still widely used in Christian churches), which endorsed the Athanasian position. It proclaimed '[the Messiah] ... begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father,' rejecting the Arian belief that the Son was of a different substance than the Father. Although this section of the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed became, and remains, the orthodox position for both eastern and western churches, the threat to the peace and unity of the empire represented by Arianism was not ended. In 381, the creed was revised and incorporated the original version of 325, whose text is lost."

The Arian dispute persisted into the reign of Emperor Theodosius, who ruled four decades after the death of Constantine. He too was forced to deal with its divisiveness. "Arguments about the Arian take on the nature of [Yeshua], as opposed to the Nicene understanding," Susan Wise Bauer writes,

> "... had spread to the lowest levels of society. 'Everywhere throughout the city is full of such things,' complained the bishop Gregory of Nyssa, in a sermon preached at Constantinople, the alleys, the squares, the thoroughfares, the residential quarters; among cloak salesmen, those in charge of the money-changing tables, those who sell us our food. For if you ask about change, they philosophize to you about the Begotten and the Unbegotten. And if you ask about the price of bread, the reply is, 'The Father is greater, and the Son is subject to him.' If you say, 'Is the bath ready?' they declare the Son has his being from the non-existent. I am not sure what this evil should be called—inflammation of the brain or madness or some sort of epidemic disease which contrives the derangement of reasoning."

Despite the controversies that erupted during his reign; regardless of the immense bloodshed of which he was most guilty, which secured his throne; and despite the faithful attachment to his pagan roots, by the year 330, Constantine had managed to fully establish a single empire that would be controlled by one royal family, and be comprised of one church. He had also successfully unified that church temporarily at the Council of Nicaea through imperial sanction. All of this meant that his new Rome would indeed have a lasting impact and enjoy a long legacy. This did not bode well for old Rome, which had lost its status, being isolated as it was, in a region that was far less wealthy that its eastern counterpart centered at the new capital, Constantinople.

But in the centuries to come, Rome would find renewed strength and importance following the collapse of the western Roman Empire. The Roman church would eventually assume primacy over all churches in the western realm, under the direction of powerful popes, beginning with Pope Leo, who would be viewed as the Supreme Head of the western half of Christendom.

CHAPTER 7

CHRISTIAN INDEPENDENCE

DOCTRINAL DISPUTES CREATED deep divisions in the ancient catholic church, which often led to violence, like the Arianism problem seen at the end of our last chapter. Beginning with Constantine's reign, these disputes forced the intervention of the sitting emperor, and all groups and parties in dispute sought the aid of the Roman government, which they hoped would crush the opposition. Constantine attempted to settle the Arian dispute by summoning an ecclesiastical council over which he presided. This idea would fruition into the sixth-century situation of the Byzantine emperor being seen as both king and priest, caesar and pope.

On the path to this kind of supreme power, the men who succeeded Constantine had to destroy two important elements that threatened the dominance of the church: Arianism and the paganism of the Roman aristocracy. The Arian adherents were too unified and too strong to be crushed by orthodox Christians without the aid of the emperor, so the leading orthodox bishops pleaded with the Roman state to step in on their behalf. Arianism had spread far and wide, and it had gathered such strength and force that Constantine was baptized by an Arian bishop on his deathbed. Even his sons who sat the throne after him sympathized with the Arian movement. By the middle of the fourth century, the opposition against Arianism was halted by powerful rulers who also sympathized with the cause. But two decades later, the emperors who assumed power would begin to favor the side of the orthodox church and reject Arianism.

When Theodosius ruled, he made sweeping changes that would stamp out the Arian problem in much of the realm, but not before great damage was done. Theodosius was an orthodox emperor who condemned the Arian movement and sought to destroy any trace of it from the eastern half of the empire, which was his domain. This was also the half where Arianism thrived. Before he could fully suppress the movement by passing laws forbidding Arians to meet, Arianism spread to the empire's fiercest enemies. In his book, *Medieval Christianty*, Kevin Madigan writes:

> "... Europe, no longer an empire but an aggregation of smaller kingdoms, now was home to practitioners of Germanic religions, to Catholic Christians, and to baptized Germans who practiced a form of Christianity that was regarded as dangerously heretical by Catholic Christians....
>
> "Born of a Cappadocian Christian family that had been captured by the Goths, Ulfilas was fluent not only in Greek and Latin but in Gothic as well. Consecrated bishop around 340 by Eusebius of Nicomedia, an Arian who was then bishop of Constantinople, Ulfilas laid the foundation by which the Goths later became Arian Christians and Gothic became a written language based on Greek. Aside from preaching an Arian creed, he translated the New Testament into Gothic. In this way,

> his Arian style of Christianity passed from the Goths to other Germanic tribes and moved back into the western empire when the German tribes crossed the old frontiers, established kingdoms, and began to settle.
>
> "The western Goths, or Visigoths, terrified of the Huns (who were migrating westward from Central Asia), already occupied the banks of the Danube late in the third century, when Dacia was given to them by the Romans.... In a conflict over land and food, they defeated the Romans at Adrianople. Emperor Theodosius I thereafter recognized them as Roman allies and confirmed them in their possessions along the Danube."

Christianity's second great enemy, Roman paganism, saw a slight resurgence when Julian the Apostate, a nephew of Constantine, ascended the throne in 361. After rising to power, Emperor Julian—who was raised a Christian, but secretly embraced paganism—openly expressed his favor of the polytheistic religion and set about reversing the Christian policies put in place by Constantine and his successors. Julian was educated in Neoplatonism and was a great admirer of Greco-Roman culture. He sought to elevate classical paganism to a higher level of sophistication and made it a priority to restore the pagan Roman temples that had been abandoned by the masses who flocked to more alluring mystery religions.

Paganism was dealt a near lethal blow when Julian's efforts were halted during a battle against the Persians.

> "... Julian launched a Persian campaign."

Writes Susan Wise Bauer, in *The History of the Medieval World*.

> "In 363, he marched east with eighty-five thousand men.... One June day, during yet another Persian ambush, Julian was struck by a Persian spear that lodged in his lower abdomen. He was carried back to camp, where he slowly bled to death: one of only three Roman emperors to fall in battle against a foreign enemy."

The other two were Valerian and Decius. Following Julian's death, all emperors who rose to power after him, in both the east and the west, were thereafter Christian. But while the emperors who immediately succeeded Julian embraced Christianity, they did little to oppose paganism. It wasn't until the last two decades of the fourth century that the church experienced vindication by gaining the support of emperors who would suppress and eventually crush paganism entirely. Gratian, an emperor of the west who ruled from 375 – 383, separated paganism from the Roman state and excluded the age-old title, Pontifex Maximus from the list of those usually associated with the emperor. No longer was a Roman emperor high priest of the Roman cult.

Gratian also ordered the pagan Altar of Victory removed from the curia, the principal meeting place of the Roman Senate in the Forum Romanum, ending centuries of dearly held tradition within the highest ranks of the state. The removal of the pagan altar led to a debate between a man named Symmachus, leader of the pagan elites, and Bishop Ambrose of Milan. Symmachus argued that all roads led to the Creator, therefore the pagan Roman religion should be left alone. Ambrose argued that Christianity was the one true religion and all others were to be destroyed. Co-Emperor Theodosius, who would later gain control of both the eastern and western halves of

the empire, sided with the orthodox bishop and thereafter made the practice of the ancient rites of paganism—both in public and in private—illegal throughout the entire realm.

This new legislation, which devasted the pagan aristocracy, caused a remnant of them to rally around a Roman general who promised to restore paganism if his usurpation succeeded. The general and his army managed to take control of Rome, but Theodosius annihilated them in a final battle in 394. A year later, Theodosius would be dead, but his sons, who succeeded him as emperors in the east and the west, passed additional anti-pagan laws, and many pagan temples and sanctuaries were destroyed. Thus ended the freedom of religion in ancient Rome.

Following the events of 394, Christianity enjoyed greater privileges and saw its catholic clergy placed in equal standing with the realm's most celebrated pagan priests. Toward the end of the fourth century, the privileges extended to the church by the orthodox emperors included the fiscal as well as the judicial variety, since the church was elevated above the common law of the empire, and was thus a state within a state. The church was in effect able to establish its own law which it steered by internal tribunals. This became canon law. Sentences passed on individuals through the realm's imperial tribunals could be bypassed by bishops who chose to exercise the church's right of sanctuary.

The ordinary law courts of the Roman state relinquished judicial control over the church, so its clergy was exempted from its strictures. Through the acts of the late-fourth century Roman emperors—Theodosius in particular—the ancient catholic church, for the first time in history, was fully independent of the Roman state's imperial jurisdiction. This was all necessary in order for the church to fulfill the prophecies that pointed to its unrivaled strength, which it would later amass on its course to achieving full power.

With its newly held status as a state within a state, the church—especially in the western half of the empire—was now in a good position to withstand the prophesied invasion of the barbarians in the fifth century, which devastated the imperial Roman state and reduced the words "Roman emperor" to that of a hollow title, devoid of any power. By the time of Theodosius's reign, the barbarians already had a foothold in the realm, but Theodosius managed to appease and pacify them, keeping them at bay. Theodosius's successors, on the other hand, who lacked his competence, only managed to enrage their Germanic enemies. The result was that:

> "[I]n 406 the Rhenish frontiers gave way, and many tribes burst across."

Writes Norman F. Cantor, in his book, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*.

> "There was officially a western Roman empire until 476, but the last emperors had no influence on the course of events. They had even abandoned Rome for Ravenna in the early fifth century. This left the Eternal City open to the invaders, and the bishop of Rome emerged as the leader, taking the place of the absent emperor.
>
> "As the Roman state disintegrated in the fifth century, the attention of men in the West came more and more to be directed to the only institution that could provide some unity and leadership to religion and education—the bishopric of Rome, the acknowledged leader of the Christian church in the West."

The course of history was undergoing irreversible changes in this period. While Diocletian had divided the realm into east and west, Constantine, upholding this division, enacted policies

that freed the church from the grip of the state, ending its persecution and imbuing it with certain freedoms and privileges. Theodosius I, the last of what is considered the great emperors, did more by destroying Christianity's main rivals, and establishing the Christian movement as the state religion. After him, there would be no other single ruler over the entire realm, nor would the administrative aspect of the empire be reunited under one emperor.

In August of 410, Alaric, an Arian leader of the Visigoths, sacked Rome, the former capital of the empire, which sent shockwaves throughout the realm. The barbarians would become a permanent fixture in western civilization. Seeing the precarious nature of this situation, Pope Leo I, the first of the popes to assert any real influence, negotiated with barbarian kings who had invaded Italy. In 452 he requested that the city of Rome be spared by the invading Huns.

In *Mysteries of the Middle Ages*, Thomas Cahill writes:

> "The pope and his brother bishops, all public men in their classical mode, moved quickly and deftly to secure the peace of their increasingly fractured realms (and, in the process, to aggrandize themselves). By the early fifth century, the barbarian hordes were pouring into Italy from the north and east, attracted mightily by settled farmlands and sweet vineyards. By mid-century, one massive influx—the Huns under Attila—looked to march on Rome, now a defenseless former capital. Pope Leo the Great, a bishop of massive dignity, intelligence, and purpose, traveled north to Mantua and met with Attila. The pope used every trick he had—from eloquent words to elegant panoply to a tangible aura of spiritual authority—and so impressed the Hun that he agreed to desist. It was an encounter of mythological proportions and would bolster the reputation of Rome's bishop for centuries to come. The pope could not be withstood, not even by an unbaptized savage."

In 455, Pope Leo again negotiated with the invading Vandals. Here we see the pope replacing the emperor as defender of the realm. It was Pope Leo I, bishop of Rome from 440 – 461, who established the foundation for the supremacy of the papal office, which would begin to reach its height under the eleventh-century popes. The Petrine doctrine, which was formulated by Pope Leo, is based on the words Yeshua spoke to Peter in Matthew 16:15 – 19. Leo's interpretation of this exchange asserts that Yeshua intended for Peter's supposed successors to share in his power, each being given the keys of the Kingdom, as it were. The bishop of Rome, who ruled over a city where Peter is believed to have been a missionary, and was supposedly martyred, was to be the head of the entire church, being invested with absolute authority over matters of faith and morality. The Roman pope was to be seen as Yeshua's vicar, or substitute on earth. Again, this would not begin to be fully realized until late in the eleventh century, as the early popes failed to assert any kind of influence associated with the prestige of the papal office, aside from Leo himself.

To be clear, the Christian independence that was realized in the late fourth and early fifth century was not extended to individuals within the institution. That independence was reserved for the leadership—bishops sitting atop the very apex. Individual conscience was under the direct control of the church hierarchy, which was just as authoritarian as the Roman state itself. The church and the state, at this time, operated in different arenas, and one did not yet absorb the other. Morals and affairs of religion were the business of bishops, not the emperor. But this was mainly true in the west, as the eastern half of the realm, centered in Constantinople, made no

such distinction.

It was Ambrose, bishop of Milan, and his colleagues, who gave the church most of its structure after imperial policies were passed in its favor. It was they who developed the church into a political and legal institution complete with bureaucracy, like any sovereign government. The bishops believed that as the emperor had the charge of maintaining order within his vast realm, so too did the church leadership have the charge of maintaining the morality of the Christian body while shaping overall Christian theology. And this could be achieved through force where reasoning alone failed.

Because the church and the state were still separate and distinct in the west, tensions would mount and inevitable clashes of authority were certain. Those clashes were often centered on control of the minds of the people—and it was people who overlapped the jurisdiction of both institutions. This clash of authority could be seen early in the age of church independence, while Theodosius I was still emperor. He had ordered Bishop Ambrose to see that a synagogue was rebuilt, after a horde of angry Christians burned it to the ground. While Theodosius was an orthodox Christian and no sympathizer of those who held to religions outside of his own, he felt this incident fell within his jurisdiction of maintaining order. Bishop Ambrose disagreed, claiming that it was instead a civil matter that was to be handled by the church.

Ambrose easily won that contest, and Christian money, as he had argued, was not used to rebuild a Judahite synagogue. Another incident brought the powers of state and church into further conflict following the murder of imperial officials at the hands of Roman citizens and Theodosius's brutal response. A governor, who had been drinking at a tavern in Pannonia suffered a drunken experience that left a popular charioteer in prison. The charioteer was set to compete the next day, but the governor refused to release him, so his fans rioted and stormed the governor's headquarters. The governor and other officials were killed.

When Theodosius heard of the matter, he immediately retaliated by having all involved in the riot, executed. The result was a massacre of some six to seven thousand citizens of Thessalonica. Theodosius put the matter behind him, but when he attempted to enter a church in Milan, Ambrose, the bishop of that important city, refused him. Theodosius was a baptized Christian, so, despite being emperor, he was subject to church discipline in matters of morality.

Since it was understood that the emperor had overstepped his bounds, Ambrose excommunicated him, barring Theodosius from receiving the cherished sacraments as punishment for his crime. In a bizarre twist, the emperor actually yielded, humbling himself before the church by begging Ambrose to pardon him. The bishop did, and Theodosius was reinstated.

Of this, Susan Wise Bauer writes:

> "The Christian historians who recorded this merely say that Theodosius then confessed his sin, did penance, and was restored. But what passes almost as a footnote is the fact that it took Theodosius eight months to do so. Standing on the steps and looking at Ambrose's unyielding face, Theodosius must have realized that his decrees were having an unintended consequence. The single, catholic church held his empire together because it was greater than the state, greater than any national loyalty, greater than any single man. It was greater than the emperor."

Turning once more to Norman F. Cantor, he writes that:

> "Ambrose became the dominant force within the Christian church in the crucial decades of the 370s and 380s. Naturally, he brought the attitudes of a Roman official to the church and to society. With his bureaucratic cast of mind, he played a large role in moving the church toward a legalistic style of ecclesiastical life and toward the establishment of canon law as a system based on punishment, duty, office, and obligation. He was deeply concerned with obedience, believing that the role of the bishop was like that of a Roman governor. Bishops had already begun to depart from their early role as pious wise men—the spontaneous leaders of the Christian flock—and Ambrose crystallized the new concept that bishops were authoritarian figures quite separate from ordinary laypeople. A bishop dictates, decrees, and pronounces edicts, and the ordinary Christian is more apt to fear than to love him."

With Ambrose wielding such power and influence at this early stage, we see the beginnings of a state church slowly taking shape. Ambrose only achieved the success he did because a large Christian population supported him; and counted among those Christians were emperors. In this way, Ambrose, having their ear, was able to influence state policy. This is why pagan opposition could be removed by Theodosius, and why Gratian, the young emperor susceptible to Ambrose's control, could be moved to have the pagan altar of Victory withdrawn from the Senate.

Ambrose's influence reached beyond emperors, however. While he presented the theory of the church existing as both a civil and ecclesiastical power, he proved, through his actions, that the church was in fact above the state in many matters, and this would pave the way for the state church that would emerge much later.

That said, the eastern half of the empire was structured quite differently from its western counterpart.

> "Following Constantine's example ..."

Writes John M. Riddle:

> "... the emperors maintained that they were responsible for the church's unity, and, in most cases, that also meant giving approval for appointments to ecclesiastical offices. The emperor appointed the patriarch in Constantinople, generally considered the head of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Patriarch means "rule of the father," similar to the late Latin vernacular word *papa,* for "father" (in English, "pope"), for the head of the Roman Church. In theory, only one "catholic" or "universal" church existed, but by the late fourth century, the eastern and western churches were separating into the Roman and Eastern Orthodox churches over different theological interpretations and the inability of the emperor in Constantinople to determine the religious status of the pope residing in Rome."

East and west, therefore, became more and more distinct over time, though there was still one Roman empire. In both halves of that empire two separate churches had begun to amass power, being led by a pope—in the case of the western church centered in Rome—or a patriarch—in the case of the eastern church centered in Constantinople. This division speaks to the prophecy

found in the book of Daniel, chapter 2 in particular, where Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a statue whose various parts represent succeeding empires that would dominate the known world and control the fate of Yah's chosen people, Israel. Rome, unlike all the other empires before it, would usurp the message of Yah's people, and assume their role in dispensing that message to the world—albeit in a corrupted form. In that chapter, the prophet Daniel told the king:

> 31 " 'You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. 32 The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron....' "
>
> —Daniel 2:31 – 33

In verse 38 of Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar was told that he was the head of gold, meaning Babylon was the first kingdom in succession within the prophetic dream. We all have one head on our bodies, signifying that Babylon would be one kingdom with one ruler. But the next kingdom is associated with a chest and arms. Arms signify that the kingdom would have two regions of control, and we learn that the next empire is formed by a combination of Media and Persia.

> 28 "... your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians."
>
> —Daniel 5:28

We have already shown that the Greek empire was the third succeeding Kingdom in the very first chapter of this book. And while Greece, which is represented at first by the middle or lower torso of the statue—signifying one united empire with one emperor—that kingdom is also pictured as including the thigh region, which indicates a connection to the next kingdom in line. This speaks to the Greco-Roman culture and language adopted by Rome, the statue's "legs of iron." Rome is seen as long legs, signifying not only its impressive span of uninterrupted rule, but also the important eventual, and permanent, division of the empire into east and west, as we see with Rome and Constantinople. This was true of the imperial administration, as well as the later ecclesiastical one, when the Roman and Eastern Orthodox churches emerged as controlling forces within the empire.

Those two churches, however, which comprised one Roman empire, would go from being legs of iron, to feet of iron and clay, meaning that their iron rule would be dampened by outside forces, like the Arab invasion, the rise of independent European states, and the emergence of yet other powerful nations far west, in the new world. Those nations would share the power once wielded solely by the church, signified by the feet of iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's statue. The king's dream, and the representation of that great statue, of course reaches down to our time, and many who live now will witness the culmination of Daniel's prophetic interpretation.

CHAPTER 8

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

OF ALL THE WESTERN church fathers, none is seen as a more towering figure than Augustine of Hippo, whose influence dominated the Middle Ages, particularly in the Latin-speaking world. Even now, he is still regarded as a major theological influence for both Catholics—given his views on the ancient church and the relevance of its sacraments—and Protestants—given his views on grace and salvation.

Some hold him in an even greater light than I have proposed here. Dr. Dorsey Armstrong, associate professor of English at Purdue University, says of Augustine:

> "His was a mind the likes of which the world has only rarely seen."

That great mind, she goes on to say:

> "... helped shape the very landscape of the middle ages in almost all its facets: the political, the religious, the intellectual, the social, and more. Even several centuries after his death, thinkers would return to this man and his writings for guidance and answers to myriad questions.
>
> "He was so well-read, it seems impossible that he would have found the time to do so much writing. And he wrote so many texts, it seems impossible that he could have been an active and involved bishop for his congregation. Yet he was all of these things, and more.... His writings were the single most influential body of work for all the great medieval minds that followed.
>
> "He was destined to become the most important figure in the Catholic church; not only in the Middle Ages, but arguably right up to the present day."

We have reached a point in our historical narrative where we begin to move from the period of late Antiquity into what historians consider the early Middle Ages. And in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, a major shift begins to take place, where the church is being shaped from within by highly influential leaders. Ambrose was one such figure, who we touched on in the last chapter. Jerome was another. He was commissioned to translate the Scriptures into what became the Latin Vulgate. Other prominent figures were their contemporaries, and put together, these men are considered "doctors of the church."

Associate professor, Ryan M. Reeves, who we've quoted in past chapters, describes the role of a church doctor as follows:

> "In Catholic history, and in Catholic practice, a doctor of the church is someone who's given this honorific, or this title as a way of saying that their theology, their

> writing, is synonymous, you might say, with Catholic teaching in general. Now, it doesn't mean that it rises to the rank of papal proclamation, but it does mean that all Catholics are, in a way, engaging with their thinking. From the Protestant perspective, it's more of honoring the significant changes in writing and deep reflection on Scripture that these men provide to the Church in the West. In both the West, and the East, but increasingly—since many of these men are Latin speakers—it's the West that sees these great figures as part of their heritage. Well, by far, the most significant figure from this generation—from this period of frenzied activity—is Augustine. Really, you can't be hyperbolic about the influence and the importance of Augustine. Augustine is a man astride two periods of time. In fact, in many ways Augustine almost embodies the change from the late antiquity period to the early Medieval period. His writings sort of usher in all that would come after it. He's a bit like Luther in that way. Luther stood astride the medieval and the modern world. Well, Augustine stood astride the late Antiquity, or the Ancient world, and the early Medieval world. Augustine's works are some of the most important works of all of Church history, in fact. Again, it wouldn't be hyperbolic to say that outside of the New Testament, no single figure more shaped the Christian world view or the theology of the entirety of everyone that came after him, than Augustine."

Born a Roman provincial in a minor commercial North African town called Tagaste in 354, Augustine, an Algerian of Berber stock, soon exhibited a gift for learning that was not missed by his parents. His father, Patricius, was a Roman official and a pagan at heart—though he would be baptized prior to his death. His mother, Monica, was a devoted Catholic who would later be granted sainthood by the church. Smitten as they were with their only child, the two exhausted their savings by sending Augustine to a nearby town to study. But young Augustine would get up to worldly exploits and would wander aimlessly with his companions after his parents' money ran out.

Eventually, he was able to continue his studies in Carthage, the North African hub for political, economic, and cultural engagement in that Latin-speaking region of the continent. While he focused on his studies of rhetoric, which was among the highest pursuits in the Roman world at the time, Augustine also indulged in the many worldly pleasures Carthage had to offer. This soon led him to take on a concubine who bore him a son named Adeodatus, interpreted as, "given by the deity," meaning the Creator, Yah. The child died while still in his teens.

As a student of rhetoric, Augustine, like many others of his day, was readying for a career as either a lawyer, politician, or other public functionary who was required to speak and write with a certain elegance that was convincing, even if what was being conveyed was not true. Of this period in Augustine's life, Philip Daileader, an associate professor of history, says:

> "Late in adolescence, he explored Christianity to a certain extent. He was curious about the Christian religion, but, upon reading the Christian bible, he found its Greek to be very plain and poor, and he's an aspiring rhetorician to whom style is everything. And so, he decides that Christianity is not for him, and instead, he becomes a Manichaean.
>
> "The religion of Manichaeism had emerged from the Persian empire during the third

> century. Its founder is a somewhat obscure figure by the name of Mani. Mani is familiar with Christian writings, but Manichaeism should not be regarded as an offshoot of Christianity because it incorporates elements of Persian religion, and even of Indian religion as well."

By the time of Augustine, Manichaeism had spread throughout the Mediterranean basin, and it was a lot like Gnostic movements before it, drawing on certain astronomical observations to form some of its teachings. Those who practiced Manichaeism viewed Christianity and its crude writings as something worthy of ridicule and derision, and this ridicule was used as a lure to attract new members. With this, the young Augustine could agree, as he too viewed the Scriptures as an inelegant body of writings riddled with violence, deceit, war, and other barbaric acts. But what truly drew him to the movement was the question of evil, and the particular view Manichaeism held toward it.

Philip Daileader elaborates on that view:

> "Manichaeism maintained that good and evil were equally powerful and equally eternal, and neither one nor the other would be able to vanquish their opponent. Matter and the material world—everything that you see around you—has been created by Satan, therefore the material world is wholly evil, and wholly corrupt; the spiritual world is wholly good. In Manichaean cosmology, particles of the good spiritual world had become trapped here in the material world. And it is the duty of Manichaean believers to liberate these particles of good so that they can return to the spiritual realm where they belong. And the way for Manichaeans to liberate the good that is trapped in the evil, material world is through personal asceticism, and through vegetarianism.
>
> "Augustine was attracted to Manichaeism because it answered an important question that was bothering him; and that was the question of why evil exists in the world."

The answer Manichaeism offered was that evil existed because Yah, who is purely good, is powerless—in their view—to do anything about it. That answer satisfied a young Augustine for a time, as he followed the religion for almost a decade. However,

> "Manichaeans were regarded with horror by contemporary Catholics, and indeed they looked upon Manichees the way that inhabitants of Middle America looked upon Communists in the 1950s: the mere mention of the name 'Manichee' would make the little hairs on the back of your neck stand straight up. When Monica found out that Augustine had become a Manichee she refused to let him in the family house."

Ryan M. Reeves picks up our historical narrative:

> "In 375, after his education was done, Augustine sort of sets up a shop—you might say he hangs a shingle—and he teaches rhetoric in the city of Carthage. And he's there for eight or nine years, and then he decides to try his hand at a big city, a more prestigious city. Now, given that we know that Augustine self-identifies as an African, for him to move to the city of Rome as he does, is telling. He's chasing the bright lights. And he moves to Rome and again he opens up a school of rhetoric, sort

> of, a life of tutoring students in the subject of rhetoric. Now, he doesn't like it while he's there. There's just parts of the city and parts of the culture there that don't really fit with what he wanted or what he expected."

Expanding on the state of Rome during the time Augustine taught there, Professor Dorsey Armstrong says:

> "Rome, at this time, was a seething hotbed of recalcitrant pagans, heretical Christians —like the Arians—and, hypocritical mainstream Christians, who sought after, and used their high religious offices, for personal and political gain. This state of affairs prompted Augustine to quip that, 'The church extends its reach throughout the whole world, Rome excepted.' Disillusioned with Rome, Augustine began more and more to go to Milan, to hear the bishop there, a man named Ambrose, preach on the bible."

A chance meeting with the prefect of Rome, Symmachus—the very Symmachus who debated Ambrose—changes the fate of Augustine, and he ends up landing a coveted position in the city he prefers. James J. O'Donnell, the author of *Pagans*, writes:

> "At least a provincial governorship is what he was aiming for when Symmachus sent him along to Milan and the imperial court in the summer of 384 with a recommendation for the senior professorship there. Within a few months, he was delivering high ceremonial oratory in honor and in the presence of the emperor. That it was a child emperor probably only made the drama more pompous and the effort for glorification more strenuous."

Ryan M. Reeves gives us a clear perspective on what this professorship meant in terms of status in this period of Roman history.

> "This job, this professorship of rhetoric, is set up, frankly, to be one of the most important and the most prestigious platforms from which anyone who is a student or a teacher of rhetoric can hold. And it's telling that Augustine wins this post. He becomes professor of rhetoric in Milan, the imperial city. Now, again, notice, Milan is an important city. It is where the imperial court is, and since so much of the rhetorical discipline is giving speeches on behalf of politicians, and being involved in politics, to hold the professorship of Milan essentially holds the highest chair of rhetoric in the most important city in the West in terms of politics. He has, you might say, reached the top, and he's done so in 384, at only the age of 30."

Augustine put a few hard questions to the Manichees and expressed some of his doubts to them during their gatherings. Some told him that his questions were profound, but only the great Fautus, a supposed enlightened teacher of Manichaeism, could provide suitable answers. Well, when Fautus arrived to answer Augustine's puzzling questions, he proved to be no better than the local teachers of Manichaeism. At this point, Augustine had steadily become disillusioned by the religion of the Manichees, and he sought a new avenue for answers to his burning theological questions.

While in Milan, a man named Simplicianus—who had tutored Ambrose in theology—introduced Augustine to Neoplatonism. Unlike the dualism of the co-eternal good and evil

concept found in Manichaeism, Neoplatonism, which involved mystical contemplation, taught that there was only one source for all things, and that both good and evil emanated from this ineffable source, seen as the One. Evil, it was held by Neoplatonists, resulted from those who drifted away from this source, and the farther removed one was, the more inferior they were, and thus evil was able to manifest within their lives. Moral evil is the result, then, of moving away from the One, according to Neoplatonists. This answer satisfied Augustine following his disappointment with Manichaeism, and he became a Neoplatonist.

But one final doubt remained, and that was the supposed crude writings that formed the Scriptures, a book that figured prominently in the lives of Christian Neoplatonists. How could something like that emanate from the Creator? It was Ambrose who dispelled his doubts on that matter. Augustine's mother, Monica, who stayed with him in Milan for a time, urged him to visit Ambrose's church to hear his sermons—Ambrose was then the most famous speaker in the city of Milan. Following these visits, Augustine, finding Ambrose to be both substantive and acute in a philosophical and theological sense,

> "[O]ften sought Ambrose out for a private audience."

Says Dr. Dorsey Armstrong.

> "His goal, as had been the case with Faustus, was to have many of his questions about faith, addressed more directly. Eventually, this led Augustine to an important conclusion about biblical exegesis, which was that the bible could be used as a tool to instruct people on a variety of levels, from the simplest and most literal, up to the most complex and symbolic. This recognition or realization was crucial, because up until this time, Augustine had considered the bible to be, in many sections, an unsophisticated text that was not well-written. Whereas, now he came to recognize, and appreciate, its complexities."

His intellectual difficulties with Christianity and its particular set of writings solved, Augustine now faced a new problem that arose from his present state of mind. If he was going to be a Christian, he would be one all the way, nothing lacking. That to him meant living a life along the lines of the monastic ideal, coupled with Neoplatonism. This would force him to end his career in rhetoric and even forego all pursuits of pleasure. It was his love of that pleasure that caused him to stall his conversion to Christianity.

The time for his conversion did come, however, and it came at a point when a battle of wills was raging within him while he sat alone in a garden. Following his conversion, he was baptized by Ambrose and immediately began a new life, abandoning Neoplatonism, quitting his teaching post, and setting out for North Africa to live as a monk, his son and mother Monica in tow. But on the way to Africa, Monica died, forcing him to remain in Rome for several months, grief-stricken. When he finally arrived in North Africa, coming upon Tagaste, he sold much of his property, donated money to the poor and settled in a place called Cassiciacum, where his son Adeodatus died.

His only son an heir dead, Augustine again focused his attention on living a secluded life in a monastery, where he could devote himself to prayer and biblical study, as he originally planned.

> "What he found instead was a second chance at fame and glory."

Writes James J. O'Donnell.

> "He took it. Visiting the coastal city of Hippo (modern Annaba, Algeria), mingling with the local Christians, he fell in with, as Ambrose had, enthusiastic Christians who pressed him to accept ordination as a priest. He wept at the idea when he thought of what he was giving up, underwent ordination, then fled home to Tagaste, not sure what he would do. He could have made good an escape, but he went back to Hippo and took up responsibilities he would very much rather have avoided. Perhaps he remembered Ambrose's own career and decided to attempt something like it.
>
> "What emerged was the Augustine of history. As priest for five years, then as bishop for thirty-five, he made this ordinary provincial city, known only as a port for shipping grain from Africa to Rome, into the base for his expanding fame. His preaching built his local reputation while his writing extended his reach into the rest of the Latin world."

Augustine's position as bishop of Hippo involved pastoring a community that looked to him for guidance. He also presided over the ecclesiastical court, spending many hours daily judging matters brought to him by the people, to whom he provided counsel. He also wrote extensively. Throughout his career, he also adopted a monastic community life, which extended to his clergy, and this would be imitated widely within Catholicism.

One major problem with the city of Hippo was that it was largely Donatist, and Augustine spent a considerable amount of time addressing the issue, which threatened the North African church. The Donatism problem arose during the Great Persecution under Emperor Diocletian, which we covered in the fifth chapter of this book. Author Kevin Madigan gives us a historical overview:

> "A group of African bishops was convinced that a bishop of Carthage, Caecilian, had been consecrated by three bishops, one of whom, Felix of Apthungi, was considered a traitor for surrendering sacred books over to the Romans. In the eyes of these bishops, called the Donatists (after Donatus, one of their number), this offense was so egregious that it made Caecilian's ordination invalid. He was a traitor (*traditor*; literally one who had handed over the scriptures), one whose ordination was ruined by collaboration with the diabolical state. By the time Augustine arrived in Hippo, the Donatist church there was larger than the Catholic, and a century-long schism between the two looked as if it might remain permanent."

To put it in simpler terms, this was the main gripe of the Donatists: if a priest capitulated, or surrendered to the Romans during the persecution under Diocletian, and, for fear of his life, ended up handing over—or even worse—burning the scriptures to satisfy their demands, that priest was a bad priest, and nothing he put his hand to should stand. His baptisms were null and void, his consecration of other priests was rendered invalid, according to the Donatists, along with every other thing he did while in office.

As for such priests:

> "They branded them as traitors."

Says Professor Paul Freedman of Yale University.

> "And they said that they could not form legitimate sacraments. Therefore, you, in North Africa, where the Donatists were strong, you as an ordinary Christian had better do a background check on your priest. Because your marriage is illegitimate, your baby is going to hell, your whole participation in the church is, as it were, short circuited by this defect."

The Donatist view had no end either. If a priest was considered good in the eyes of the public, and the priest who consecrated him was also seen as good, but the priest who ordained the priest who ordained the priest, going back a hundred or more years, had been thought to be a traitor, then all the priests who flowed out of his original ordination were considered illegitimate priests. The leaders of the church knew that they could not organize a large, supposedly universal body along those lines, particularly one that was spread throughout the world. The organization the Donatists had in mind would lead to sectarianism, being limited in scope. As they saw it, the church should represent the bride of the Messiah, being without spot or blemish, and of which only the blameless could be members.

Moreover, as Kevin Madigan writes:

> "Like Noah's ark, it contained only a small minority of the pure. Sacraments dispensed by those disgraced and even contaminated by collaboration with empire, or associated with those who were, were ineffective and even polluting.
>
> "Augustine's view of church was that it was a 'mixed body' of saints and sinners.... Wheat and tares (the parable [Matthew 13:24–30] to which Augustine habitually alluded in the controversy) would not be separated until the end of time. Noah's ark? It stank of animals, the stench a symbol of sin that all would have to tolerate. The baptized were made up of the morally mediocre for the most part, fallible sinners whose need for forgiveness was virtually constant and for whom the forgiving church was established."

Thus, the church, backing Augustine's reasoning, would tolerate its large flock of "morally mediocre" members, its "fallible sinners," who, in repeated acts of blasphemy, would continue to be forgiven by Catholic priests. These morally mediocre members funded the church's extravagances, after all. What is more, Yeshua's field in that parable, according to verse 38 of Matthew 13, was "the world." Augustine saw that world as the church, which changes the parameters of Yeshua's parable. But that is the way a master of rhetoric operates.

Augustine, who never fully shook off his Manichaean or Neoplatonist views, would spearhead many popular doctrines, some as a result of his debates with a British monk named Pelagius, who taught—among other things—that it was possible for a believer to attain perfection on his or her own by merely living righteously, and that this perfection was in fact mandatory on the part of all Christians. To stem the controversy that Pelagius created with that and other claims, Augustine formulated the doctrines surrounding the Christian view of sin, grace, predestination, free will, and justification.

The Donatist controversy also led Augustine to elevate the importance of church sacraments. And he formulated the argument used for what he considered a "just war," an argument still used

unjustly by national powers to this day. But as professor Philip Daileader aptly put it:

> "Augustinian thought was going to be an incredibly powerful influence in Europe for well over a millennium. And Augustine's ideas about human nature, about history, about Rome and classical culture and paganism; on the relations between religious and secular authority, are going to be read and debated and argued over for a long time to come."

If Constantine was Christianity's King David, Augustine was its Moses.

CHAPTER 9

THE BARBARIAN ELEMENT

FOR EIGHT CHAPTERS, our history has focused on the origin and development of Christianity within the borders of the Roman Empire, for it was in fact born within that empire, as a direct result of the Messianic Israelites who were under Roman rule, and from whom early Christians borrowed heavily. Catholics, Protestants, and even Eastern Orthodox Christians all have the Roman Empire in common when it comes to tracing their early Christian heritage, which sits a tainted mess. But facets of Christianity, some considered heretical, developed beyond the borders of the Roman empire as well. Prior to the invasion of the so-called "barbarians," Christianity was already being accepted by Germanic peoples to the north. And to the east, where Syriac was predominantly spoken, the expansion of Christianity continued, well outside the empire.

Syriac was the language of trade and international commerce, a language akin to Aramaic. The Israelites of the diaspora, as we pointed out in our very first chapter of this book, had lost their ancient Hebrew language, and the Hebrew Scriptures that were read in Synagogues could only be understood by a scant few. Before Christianity emerged, Israelites had already ceased speaking Hebrew by and large, and thus the need for Aramaic translations of both the Scriptures and written forms of oral traditions, such as those embodied in the *Targums*, became a priority. Just as the Septuagint benefited Greek-speaking Christians in the east, Aramaic translations of portions of Scripture found their way into the hands of Christians in that region who spoke Aramaic. Later, the Scriptures would be translated directly into Syriac to accommodate the many Christians in the east who existed beyond the reach of Rome.

Notably, the Mesopotamian city-state of Edessa, located in what is now southeastern Turkey, embraced Christianity early on, albeit a Manichaean-influenced version. Tall tales and invented legends concerning the spread of Christianity to that city persist to this day, with the core of the tale being that Yeshua himself corresponded with the city's king, Abgar V, before the emissary Thomas was allegedly dispatched to convert the nobility.

In his book, *Pagans and Christians,* Robin Lane Fox writes concerning this:

> "A king's Christianity deserved a noble ancestry, so the Edessans invented one. Perhaps we can also pin down their emphasis on 'Judas Thomas,' the city's supposed evangelist. We have learned recently that the heretical prophet Mani corresponded with the people of Edessa in the mid-third century and sent them his 'apostle' Addai, also called 'Thomas,' as the preacher of his new missionary gospel."

Also, east of the Roman Empire, Armenia embraced Christianity prior to Constantine's conversion, and the Armenians produced a version of Scripture in their language. They were instrumental in spreading Christianity to the kingdom of Georgia as well. The spread of

Christianity even penetrated Persia at an early date, and history shows that it was present in India as early as the second century. The Christian teacher Pantaenus, who taught the church father Clement in Alexandria, is said to have traveled to India around the year 180, and one of the attendants at the Nicene council of 325 was "John the Persian," said to be of India. By the fifth century, Christianity was firmly established in India.

And far west, still focusing beyond the borders of the Roman Empire, there existed Irish Christianity, brought there by the renowned St. Patrick, the former slave of Great Britain who later witnessed to his Irish captors. Since Ireland was bypassed by the barbarians in their conquest of Europe, many monasteries that were established in the country were later accessed for their stores of classical knowledge and literature; knowledge and literature that had been destroyed or lost when the Germanic tribes swept through the Roman Empire and its many territories.

Among those Germanic tribes, north of Constantinople, were people who practiced the "heretical" Arian form of Christianity (we covered Arianism in chapters 6 and 7 of this book). After being introduced to the religion by their captive Ulfilas, the Goths then spread Arianism to other Germanic tribes who later settled the old frontiers of the Roman Empire. Thus, many of the barbarian invaders were Christians, though not of the perceived orthodox persuasion.

In his book *Medieval Europe*, Chris Wickham writes:

> "The northern boundary of the Roman Empire ran right across what is now Europe, along the rivers Rhine and Danube, plus in Britain, Hadrian's Wall, marking a sharp north-south contrast, not just in political allegiance, but in culture and the economy, which outlasted the end of the western empire by centuries....
>
> "The contrast with what the Romans called the 'barbarian world' to the north was considerable. There, the economy was far simpler, and so was local material culture. Political groupings were much smaller and simpler too, and often indeed very fluid, with identities changing as different ruling families rose and fell. Immediately north of the Rhine and Danube, most of these groupings spoke Germanic languages....
>
> "Not surprisingly, barbarian peoples, especially their leaders, were very interested in the wealth of Rome, and tried to get some of it either by raiding, even invasion, or by taking paid service in the Roman army. There was a gray area along the frontier, more militarized on the Roman side, more influenced by Roman styles on the barbarian side as a result. But broadly, the boundary marked by the two great European rivers was a sharp one. What happened in the fifth century in the Western Roman Empire, put succinctly, is that barbarian incursions from the north, although they had been a feature of most of imperial history, this time led to political breakdown. Armies which did not call themselves Roman took over the different western provinces and carved out kingdoms for themselves."

Alaric the Visigoth sacked Rome in 410, and around the time Augustine parted this world, in the year 430, the Vandals were at the gates of his city, Hippo. And following that time, in the year 452, Pope Leo, as we mentioned, was negotiating with invading Huns. In 455, the Vandals then sacked Rome worse than the Visigoths had done forty-five years earlier. By 476, largely

due to invasion, the Western Roman Empire effectively collapsed. The time of the barbarians was at hand, in other words. While they had long been a presence in the empire, both as enemies and allies, they were now showing their strength and essentially overrunning the realm in great numbers, seizing pockets of control. This displaced much of the old Roman order, and the increased population of barbarian outsiders also impacted Christianity in the western regions.

While the Byzantine empire to the east was built on ancient Greek culture, Roman institutions, and church life that was cherished by its mostly Hellenized citizens, the civilization of the Medieval world in the west was built on the culture and Latin literature of the ancient Roman Empire, where Roman law and governmental institutions were central, alongside the existence and importance of the western church, which was largely adopting the theology of Augustine of Hippo. The papacy was slowly rising in preeminence as well, but now the barbarian invasions helped to shape the future of the Roman world.

The western empire, which began with the inauguration of Augustus, who ruled from 27 BCE to 14 CE, ended with Romulus Augustulus (or Little Augustus) who was deposed by a Germanic commander, Odovacar. The Germans now ruled the former Western Roman Empire. It would seem that the Germanic tribes, the so-called "barbarians," came out of nowhere, but these diverse groups of people did in fact have a history separate and distinct from that of the Christianized Roman one we have been covering, and their history figures prominently in the overall Medieval narrative. Thomas F. X. Noble, professor of history and chair of the Department of History at the University of Notre Dame, raises a few key points concerning the barbarians.

> "Well there are several fundamental issues at stake when we discuss the barbarians. We can ask for example in the first place, 'Who are we talking about? Exactly what people do we have in mind?' Another question we can ask is, 'How do we study these people?' The point is that, their remote past takes place outside the Roman world, and wasn't noticed by people in the Roman world, so how do we study these people?
>
> "That leads on, rather naturally, to another question: 'What do we actually know about these barbarians?' We know a good deal about them once they enter the Roman world and begin to interact with the Romans; what do we know about them before? And then, finally, and this is really the fundamental issue, how—at least in the Roman west—do we get from an empire with that vast institutional structure, to a world where there is a series of barbarian kingdoms? We're going to trade provinces, if you will, for kingdoms. And then, we can reflect just a little perhaps, on what connections, if any, might exist between the barbarian kingdoms that were created in the late Roman world, the world of Late Antiquity, and the states of later Europe? Are there connections at all, and if so, do they matter in any meaningful sense?
>
> "So, in discussing the barbarians, there's a whole series of things that are at stake."

Indeed there are, and we will be looking at those series of things, as well as their important connections, particularly prophetic ones, during the course of this book. So, in answer to the question, how do we study the barbarians, a preliterate people who did not have any writings to speak of prior to, say, Ulfilas, and his gothic translation of Scripture? Well, we must turn to the Romans, who wrote extensively about them, but we must do so cautiously, seeing that the

writing was done, at times, with a layer of prejudice and discrimination applied, as well as certain embellishments.

And just who were the barbarians? Well, to the Greeks, since the people outside the Greek Empire spoke no Greek and were foreign to their culture and language, they were considered *barbaros*, Greek for "foreign," the word mainly referring to incomprehensible speech. To the Greeks, and later the Romans, who adopted the term "barbarian" for the same reason, the people beyond the borders spoke a foreign language that was considered gibberish. This made the barbarians inferior in the eyes of the Greeks and Romans.

These various groups of people were also lumped together by the Romans and were called *Germani*, Germans, collectively, which derives from a Latin word meaning, "related," that is, of the same parents, signifying the generality that was applied to these foreigners. Of this, Professor Noble says:

> "The Romans weren't interested in doing any kind of careful, scientific analysis of the people who lived beyond their frontiers, and so they didn't develop an elaborate, sophisticated, detailed, descriptive vocabulary for talking about them. So, broadly speaking, who are the barbarians? They are, in a way, 'them,' they are not 'us.' They are foreigners."

Today, we know that from archaeological evidence and written historical sources that these northern barbarian, Germanic tribes, which is the way we will continue to refer to them for the sake of consistency, mostly occupied lands in or near Scandinavia. They have even been given distinction by historians, being named by tribal order. Will Durant, writing in his book, *The Age of Faith: The Story of Civilization Volume 4*, says:

> "In the heart of Europe—bounded by the Vistula, the Danube, and the Rhine—moved the restless tribes that were to remake the map and rename the nations of Europe: Thuringians, Burgundians, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Frisians, Gepidae, Quadi, Vandals, Alemanni, Suevi, Lombards, Franks. Against these ethnic tides, the empire had no protective wall except in Britain, but merely an occasional fort and garrison along the roads or rivers that marked the frontier limit (*limes*) of the Roman realm. The higher birthrate outside the empire, and the higher standard of living within it, made immigration or invasion, a manifest destiny for the Roman empire then as for North America today."

What little we know of the Germanic peoples who occupied Scandinavia prior to crossing into the Roman world is derived from a rather conventional historical source.

> "What do we know about these people before they enter the empire? We know something from archeology."

Says Professor Paul Freedman, who teaches history at Yale University.

> "But as they moved around, they're not nomadic, they have settlements, but they're not very urban settlements. They have grave sites. People who have grave sites with a lot of graves are not moving around a lot. So that's one indication. And, among other things, they show that they had trade with the Roman Empire, because they've got

> Roman artifacts in them. But we actually don't find out that much about them. The main written source for pre-invasion—let's call them—Germanic tribes—delicately—is Tacitus, the Roman historian best known for his very pessimistic annals of the history of the Roman Empire, but also the author of a brief work called, *Germania*, about the German tribes.
>
> "Before they entered the empire they lived in little villages. They cultivated grain but they were more cattle raisers. They're skilled at iron working. They also supplemented their income by a spot of raiding and warfare; opportunistic warfare."

Giving us further insight into the inner tribal structure of the Germanic people, Professor Noble says of them:

> "They were communities that appear to have been regulated by councils of elders, over whom, some kind of a headman exercised authority. There were leaders, we find in the sources—we call them *thiudans*, *rhix*, *reiks*, not unlike the Latin word, *rex*; *kuning*, not unlike the word, king—who were perhaps, once hereditary, sacral rulers, but who then were supplanted by an aristocratic warrior class with sworn companions around them. Many of these people had subgroups. The Franks, for example, were a confederation of Chamavi, Chattuari, Bructeri, Amsivarii, and so on. So, a lot of people made up Franks. Raiding and plundering was always a way of life for these people. But my key point, is that beyond the Roman world there was a kaleidoscopic and volatile region, with which the Romans, in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth centuries, began to enter into relations."

In the end, it was necessity that forced many of the Germanic peoples from their Scandinavian lands and into Roman territories. This is partly because a food shortage was created when their population grew beyond sustainability. Wars also erupted between various tribes, and those who were defeated were driven out, forced to seek new lands in the south. That is when the Germanic people happened upon the Roman frontier and spied the empire's refined culture, obvious wealth, advanced technology, and even tasted of the realm's agreeable Mediterranean climate. With this in view, they did not seek the empire's destruction, as has been pointed out, but rather, they wanted to partake of the lofty Roman lifestyle.

From the Roman perspective, the barbarians were bent on destroying the empire after looting it. Resistance, therefore, was the first order of business, and the barbarians were repelled by Rome's forces for decades. Many of the tribes wandered the frontiers until they settled on lands that either suited them, or, in the case of a few, they were forced to accept due to the superior strength of other invaders who restricted them to a certain area. As a case in point, Kevin Madigan writes:

> "[T]he Germans had been pushed from their homelands near the Baltic Sea to the border of the Roman Empire by the truly menacing Huns, a nomadic tribe that had been routed by the Chinese and, in the wake of defeat, pressed westward. By ca. 375, the Huns had defeated the Ostrogoths, whom they would then dominate for nearly a century. The Germans, by contrast, were, by and large, not belligerent. Rather, they were attracted by qualities of Roman life, including the relative ease of agricultural

production and trade. Very recent archaeological evidence suggests that the ‘border’ between the Germans and Romans was somewhat porous, and some intermarriage occurred. In effect, the Germans were looking for a suitable homeland, free from the terror of domination by the Huns. In fact, one of the Germanic groups, the Visigoths, hoping to escape Hunnish control, applied to the Romans for permission to cross the Danube and enter imperial territory, a request that was granted.

“Nonetheless, conflicts sometimes broke out. One, the battle of Adrianople has been vested with special significance. It was there that the emperor Valens lost his life and his army to the very Visigoths his predecessors had allowed into western imperial territory. With the benefit of hindsight, we may say that this was the battle that began the ‘wandering of the German peoples’—or, if you like, the Germanic or barbarian invasions—into the western empire.”

Following their victory over the Romans in the battle at Adrianople in 378, the Visigoths—Arian Christians, until they converted to orthodox Christianity—then moved through the Balkans for years before being the first to sack Rome in 410, as stated. Emboldened by their successive victories, they set their sights on Spain after the Vandals vacated it, and that territory was theirs until the early eighth century, when they suffered defeat at the hands of the Muslims.

Over time, other Germanic peoples settled other Roman territories. Of this, Chris Wickham writes:

“By 500, the Balkans, in the eastern empire, were under Roman control again; the west, however, was very different. There, a sector of the Goths ... called by us the Ostrogoths, controlled Italy and the Alps. Burgundians controlled the Rhone Valley; ... a set of small-scale Frankish kings controlled most of northern Gaul; and south-east Britain, a province actually abandoned by the Romans already in the early fifth century, was in the hands of tiny-scale tribal communities called generically by us—and perhaps by themselves—Angles and Saxons.

“There were others too, in smaller areas. Territories of the former western empire which were not under the control of military elites originally from outside its borders were very few and scattered: Mauretania (roughly modern Morocco), parts of the central Alps around Chur and western Britain, particularly Wales, plus Brittany; none of these had any link with the others, still less with the Roman empire in the east, and they lost a Roman identity fairly quickly too, except around Chur....

“Although, as can already be heard, there was now a confusingly large number of ‘barbarian’ groups, many more than in previous centuries. This was not by any means a dangerous strategy in itself, as long as the Roman leadership kept control of the whole process. At the beginning of the century, for the most part, they did. The problem was the Vandals, whose confederacy had entered the empire from the north across the Rhine in 407, and moved across Gaul and into Spain in the next decade. Although partially crushed in 417, they were not subdued, and invaded North Africa in 429, under their new king, Geiseric. Their settlement in 435 was by no means accompanied by military defeat, and their new territory, not in itself a very fertile

one, was right on the edge of the western empire's chief source of grain and olive oil, the rich lands around the great Roman city of Carthage, in what is now Tunisia."

Carthage fell to the Vandals in 429, and North Africa was thereafter their portion, a Vandal kingdom that stretched from the Straits to the very borders of Egypt, with Carthage being their headquarters. A little more time passed before the Vandals took to the sea, taking possession of Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia. We've already discussed their sacking of Rome, the stronghold of the western church, in 455. And being Arian Christians for the most part, in that they rejected the eternal nature of Yeshua, and his position within the Elohim, they saw Catholics as the enemy. Both Catholics and Donatist Christians alike were persecuted in North Africa by the Vandals, in the midst of their ongoing debate about the episcopal authority of bishops who had buckled during persecution. The Vandals ruled for almost a century before being conquered.

We have already learned that the barbarians would effectively redraw the map of Europe, and this would be a recurring practice as, over time, new conquering powers would sweep in to displace the old ones. With the arrival of the barbarians, the imperial western powers diminished, being substituted by the church, headed by bishops, which took over many established public services, such as education. Monasteries sprang up all across the new territories, and monasticism joined the papacy in exercising authority over the masses, both benefiting from the agriculture of the locals, to which they were tied.

The barbarian invasion was seen as a judgment against the imperial Roman government, and indeed this was evident given the manner in which the barbarians stormed in, with textbook precision in accordance with past national judgments pronounced by Yah's prophets against a wayward Israel, who suffered a similar fate. The nation sent by Yah to judge Israel was always a foreign one, whose language they did not understand. This is how Yah always operated, even with non-Israelite nations. The Medo-Persians invaded the Babylonians, the Greeks the Medo-Persians, and so on. Now the Romans were being invaded by a foreign people whose gibberish language they could not comprehend, and which led to them calling the Germanic peoples, "barbarians."

With the arrival of the Germanic tribes, the old western empire crumbled, and many of its institutions vanished, save that of the church itself, which not only survived, but began to take on new importance. Many Germanic peoples would eventually abandon their Arian Christianity for the orthodox, Nicene Catholic variety, further strengthening the church. The barbarians, therefore, were used primarily to remove the imperial powers in the west and carve out a unique space for the church, which it filled according to prophecy. These warlike Germanic peoples were a means to an end, and thus did not effectively establish sophisticated Medieval European states with defined politics along the complex lines of the old order. Those kinds of states would not begin to take shape until the eight and ninth centuries, and they would not rise to the level of perceived greatness until midway into the eleventh century. And that greatness would be achieved through ecclesiastical intervention, as the Roman church would demonstrate authority superior to that of the primitive German concept.

Daniel chapter 7 establishes the very prophetic history we are looking at, when it describes a fourth beast with ten horns, or kings that shall arise within the same kingdom. This is none other than western Rome, where all the Germanic tribes stormed into the realm, overthrew the established order, and set up a patchwork of barbarian kingdoms.

CHAPTER 10

THE MONASTIC MOVEMENT

MAJOR SHIFTS CONTINUED to take place within the Christian church as each new era dawned. When persecution erupted during the reigns of certain emperors, Christians braved torture and torment for the sake of their religion, and many, through gross misinterpretations of Scripture, even saw death by martyrdom as a way to attain perfection and instant access to heaven. When persecutions ceased, this created a problem for those who truly believed that martyrdom was a means to achieving sainthood.

What is more, Christian theology was being bent and manipulated by the church leaders to accommodate new developments. Prior to Constantine, early Christians saw the Good News books—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—as good news directed to the poor, almost exclusively. The rich, according to those very books, would find difficulty in both receiving the same news as well as altering their lives and readying their hearts to meet the requirements for salvation. Yet, when Constantine took the throne and showered favor upon the church, great riches, extravagance, and pomp became a mark of Yah's blessings. The rich were now seen as those worthy of salvation. That theological slant continues to be pushed to this day, through the various prosperity mega churches that have sprung up across the American landscape, showing that the Constantinian era has not ended.

Those who saw Yeshua's message as one directed at the poor and oppressed, the lowly and meek, rejected the direction in which the church leaders were steering their salvation theology, and yet another radical new shift developed: monasticism, a movement that arose partly in protest against the established order. The establishment greeted Constantine's sweeping changes and favor as a fulfillment of Yah's promises to Israel, in whose place they believed they now stood. The narrow gate to salvation now became a broad way so expansive and accommodating that vast multitudes now rushed into the church to partake of Christian privileges and rise to esteemed positions without undergoing any spiritual changes.

Bishops competed for prestigious positions, where one would pull rank over others, and the wealthy rose to power, heavily influencing or outright dominating church life for the masses. In other words, one could hardly see the wheat for all the tares that flourished. When persecution was still an inevitability for Christians, they were on guard against the Roman authorities, who could snatch them away at any moment to undergo a series of trials that would determine their fate, whether they would face death as martyrs or live as disgraced apostates. This epic choice was taken away periodically during the peaceful times that came in the second and third centuries. And that peace caused many Christians to grow weak when persecutions flared once more. This led to the problem of the lapsed, as well as the Donatist controversy, which we covered in the fifth and eighth chapters of this book, respectively.

Many among the laity saw that the security of peaceful times, and the comfort derived from

Christian favor bestowed by the state were dangerous elements for sincere believers. When persecutions were determined to be a thing of the past, and the peace and safety of the church was assured during the reigns of Christian emperors; when church leaders were luxuriating in lavish homes and the rich and powerful were being drawn to the Christian movement, which had become a broad avenue for the masses, many sought a different path: the extreme ascetic life of monasticism. Of course, with spiritual leaven, things will always get pushed to the extreme, and in this case, we have two that sit at opposite ends: the riches, excesses, and pomp of the church leadership, and the radical monastic movement among the laity. And I say the laity because:

> "The whole monastic movement, and later on that of the friars, was a lay one...."

Writes Chris Wickham, in his book, *Medieval Europe*.

> "… (ordained clergy were usually a minority in monasteries, and, since they had to be male, did not exist at all in nunneries). Men and women in those cases autonomously chose an often extreme version of Christian practice, although this was usually legitimated by equally extreme forms of obedience to abbots/abbesses, and, through them, to the wider order of the church."

Monasticism was a way for devoted Christians to flee the trappings of society and leave behind social traditions that tended to dominate the mind and body alike. To exercise control over their many passions and resist temptations of every sort, a certain degree of isolation seemed necessary. So, while thousands of new converts flocked to the church to be baptized, thousands more were leaving to worship in solitude.

In his book, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, author Norman F. Cantor gives us a good description of what Medieval Christian monasticism truly embodied:

> "Monasticism is a form of religious asceticism, which, in turn, involves the disciplining, limitation, or abnegation of the material and physical aspects of human life to assure a saving relationship with a deity conceived of as a purely spiritual being. Asceticism is therefore intended to secure salvation, and this end can be achieved either by the withdrawal of the ascetic from society and its corrupting temptations and distractions or by the severe control of social life to make the environment suitable for the ascetic to continue to live in the world. The former manifestation of asceticism is called monasticism, and the latter may be termed puritanism. It is obvious that in the circumstances of the early Middle Ages, with a violent, disorganized, and fundamentally un-Christianized society, the puritan control of society to make the world safe for asceticism was out of the question. The ascetic had to withdraw from the world to ensure the triumph of his spiritual will and the salvation of his soul. But the nature of early medieval western monasticism in its ultimate form was such that this flight from the world did not succeed very well; instead, the monastery became a social institution of the utmost importance. The more outstanding monks came to render the greatest services both to the church and monarchy and to give new vitality and leadership to both institutions."

And in the western part of the realm, where invading barbarians dominated, there was a great

deal of societal disorganization, which, in the sixth century, would only be addressed, initially, by the church. The church in the west was the hub for almost all the literate men in Europe, thus it was one of the most powerful and influential institutions in existence. But the church was also deeply affected by the barbarian invasions covered in our last chapter. Calling on Norman F. Cantor once more, he writes that:

> "[T]he secular clergy in general was ignorant, corrupt, and unable to deal with the problem of Christianizing a society that remained intensely heathen in spite of the formal conversion of masses of Germanic warriors to Christianity. Heathen superstitions and magic were grafted onto Latin Christianity: The religiosity of the sixth and seventh centuries was infected with devils, magic, relic worship, the importation of local nature deities into Christianity in the guise of saints, and the general debasement of the Latin faith by religious primitivism."

The Latin church in the west did not suffer the fate of other western institutions post-invasion, most of which vanished. And because of the church's survival, the monastic movement in particular not only withstood the influence of barbaric customs that flooded into the region, but the monks would also provide leadership, education, and organization to societies in Europe. In this way, monasticism helped shape medieval civilization.

The word monk derives from the Greek, *monakhos*, meaning "solitary." And to the ancient monk, the greatest form of solitude could only be derived from the desert. This is where the movement thrived, given its isolation from the busy, active life of society with all its noise, distractions, and temptations. Even the term "anchorite," which refers to a solitary monk, originally held the meaning, to withdraw, in the sense of a fugitive. So, the desert held great appeal for this very reason, as it was largely inaccessible by the vast majority. One could disappear amidst the hot sands while worshipping in their personal oasis.

Kevin Madigan, writing in his book, *Medieval Christianity*, says:

> "As the Constantinian era wore on, some Christians began to feel their religion was losing the rigor required of the baptized during the times of persecution. They swarmed to the desert and established one of the institutions that would come to define medieval Christianity: monasticism. As medieval Christianity depended heavily—socially, intellectually, economically[…]—on the institution of monasticism and on monks, it is important to understand the emergence of this form of life in the deserts of Egypt, Syria, and Judea. As more serious Christians began to believe, not wrongly, that the skyrocketing numbers of converts were merely nominal or tepid believers, they began to move into the remote deserts, where they could dedicate themselves to a life of profound Christian commitment, asceticism and prayer, bodily self-mortification, and rumination on the scriptures. Some adopted an 'eremitical,' or hermit style, of life, of which St. Antony was the illustrious exemplar. Others followed a coenobitical, or communal form, of life, the form that would come to dominate in the West. Women as well as men (who far outnumbered the women) felt this call to the desert, and monastic establishments were built for them in the wild places. By the end of the fourth century, thousands of monks were living in the desert, making (in the words of Antony's biographer, Athanasius), 'the desert a city.'

”

The exact origins of Monasticism are a bit sketchy for many historians. Further compounding the origin accounts is the associated flight by many village citizens to the desert who were fleeing heavy tax burdens imposed by the Roman government during times of economic crisis. While Christian monasticism was taking root, Egyptian villagers were abandoning their rural settings and escaping to the desert as fugitives from government obligations. They were anchorites in other words, and it wasn't always easy to distinguish them from those who fled to the desert for the sake of their spiritual convictions.

Beyond this, two famous early Christian writers proposed two distinct founders of the movement. Jerome, who is credited with the translation of the Latin Vulgate, writes a brief account of a man named Paul who, near the middle of the third century, went to the desert to flee persecution. But his was a life almost entirely of legend, and so cannot be accepted as historical. Paul, it is claimed, spent most of his time in prayer and subsisted mainly on a diet of dates. And, according to Jerome's account, Paul lived in the desert under these particular circumstances for close to a century and was visited only by wild beasts and another elderly monk named Anthony, who is also believed to be the founder of the Egyptian monastic movement per the account of our second early Christian writer, Athanasius.

Athanasius tells us that Anthony was born on the shore of the Nile in a small village. He was the son of wealthy parents who raised him in the Coptic Church, which brought oppression from both Greeks and Romans. Anthony inherited his parents' wealth upon their deaths while he was still fairly young, and he intended to live out the rest of his life by means of that inheritance, which would also allow him to care for his younger sister. But a reading of one of the Good News books during church service changed his life. It was taken from Matthew 19:21, where Yeshua tells a rich young man to go and sell his possessions, give to the poor, and he would have treasure in heaven.

Anthony took this to heart and did what was intended for the rich young man in Yeshua's day. He then entrusted his sister to the care of virgins of the church and headed off to the desert to live life as a monk. But we are told that, during his first few years in the desert, he learned the ways of monastic life at the feet of an old man who lived nearby, which proves he was not the founder of monasticism, nor the first to become a Christian anchorite.

Christians in the early centuries of the church's existence tended to look to fairly recent writings embodied in the works of the emissaries, and even ancient Israelite writings that formed the Scriptures, to shape their Christian thinking. Mainly, they would simply try to emulate what they read in those works. This was true of non-canonical writings as well, such as those found in what is now known as the apocrypha. While historians have trouble pinpointing where monasticism got its start, or who spearheaded the movement, there is an important clue as to what passage of writing influenced the creation of the movement itself. And, as with many of the major early developments in Christendom—corrupted though they be—monasticism also seems to have an Israelite origin.

Well preceding all of the monastic events left to us in history, there is a specific account that sheds light on the inspiration for monks fleeing to the desert to find spiritual solitude. This account is found in the apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees, which highlights important events that took place in Judah during Greek occupation in the second century BCE. It all started with the

reign of an evil Greek king named Antiochus Epiphanes, who marched on Jerusalem with a strong force and stripped the temple of all its precious items. Years later, a division of his Greek army which was sent to the Judean cities to collect tribute massacred many Israelites and took woman and children prisoners. They plundered the city, set many homes ablaze, and laid siege to the city of David.

They polluted the sanctuary and established immoral people in the temple. Finally, Antiochus Epiphanes ordered everyone in his realm to worship according to pagan Gentile customs. For Judahites, this meant sacrificing unclean animals to the deities, ceasing the practice of circumcision, and doing away with the Law of Yah and changing the regulations, among many other abominations. Any who refused to do these things would be killed. Many Judahites yielded and defiled themselves to save their lives, but not all did so.

> 27 Then Mattathias shouted loudly in the town, "Everyone who is zealous for the
> Law and supports the covenant should come with me!" 28 So he and his sons fled to
> the hills and left behind all that they had in the town.
>
> 29 At that time, many who sought righteousness and justice went to live in the desert.
> 30 They were there with their sons, their wives, and their livestock because troubles
> pressed heavily on them. 31 The king's officers and the troops in Jerusalem, David's
> City, learned that those who had rejected the king's command had gone down to
> hiding places in the wilderness. 32 Many pursued and overtook them. The king's
> military forces camped opposite them and prepared for battle against them on the
> Sabbath. 33 They said to them: "Enough of this! Come out and do what the king
> commands, and you will live."
>
> 34 But the Israelites replied: "We won't come out, and we won't do what the king
> commands and so violate the Sabbath."
>
> —1 Maccabees 2:27 – 34

Those Israelites, having left all their possessions in the town and fleeing to the desert for the sake of righteousness, would be considered monastic in the eyes of the sixth-century church. And the drastic actions of those Israelites were followed almost exactly by ancient monks who, as early as the third century CE, fled to the desert for similar reasons: to escape Roman persecution and oppression, or else to seek a greater level of spirituality.

The Judahites of the account in 1 Maccabees would be considered cenobites as opposed to anchorites, however, in that they formed a community in the desert. The term *cenobite* derives from two Greek words that together mean "community life," and while not its founder, the person responsible for organizing and helping to develop that form of monasticism in the Christian era, during the time of the anchorite, Anthony, is known to history. Professor Philip Daileader has more to say on this subject.

> "Some of those who followed Anthony, however, and admired him, did develop a more monastic lifestyle in which those who lived an ascetic life lived in a community

> and encouraged one another. And, the individual who is responsible for gathering followers of Anthony into a community is an Egyptian by the name of Pachomius, who dies in 346. Pachomius and those who lived with Pachomius engaged in collective activities together. They would gather several times a day to pray and then retreat to individual caves for their own devotions. And Pachomius becomes the leader of these individuals; he maintains discipline among them, and they, the followers, accept his judgments.
>
> "Pachomius himself regarded the collective lifestyle in which ascetics would gather for prayer several times a day and then retreat to their own caves as merely a preparatory stage; it was a training ground or bootcamp for the ultimate challenge, which was to follow Anthony into the desert and which was to live by yourself. But some of Pachomius's followers regarded the collective life in the desert as sufficiently challenging as an end in and of itself rather than as a means to an end. And so communal living became relatively commonplace among the ascetics of Egypt during the fourth century.
>
> "During the course of that century, the individual elements of what we would later regard as monasticism fall into place. You see, for example, the building of individual houses for all of the monks to live in together rather than simply gathering from various parts at certain times of the day. You see the term *abbot* (*abba*, 'father') applied to the head of the monastery as the abbot assumes responsibility for supervising the various monks. And you see perhaps most importantly the emergence of written rules, guidelines, by which the monks are expected to abide."

These written rules began to emerge just after the time of Pachomius himself, as Jerome, after penning *The Life of Paul the Hermit*, also translated Pachomius's *Rule* into Latin, which had wide appeal in the Western church, given Jerome's popularity at the time. Jerome became a monk as well, though a rare scholarly one for that era, and his influence and intellectual stature attracted many in the church to the idea of monasticism. But Jerome's translation based on Pachomius's *Rule* was superseded by the work of another Christian writer. Of him, Professor Daileader says:

> "A bishop in the eastern half of the Roman Empire named Basil of Caesarea, who dies in 379, composes probably the first written rule for monks. And living according to a written rule or a *regula* becomes one of the defining characteristics of the medieval monk. In fact, monks are sometimes referred to as the 'regular' clergy, because they live according to a *regula*, or a rule, and this differentiates them from the 'secular' clergy, the priests and the bishops, those who live in the world and do not have to live according to a specific written rule."

Overshadowing even Basil of Caesarea was yet another writer of monastic rules, Benedict of Nursia. Author Stephen J. Davis tells us in his book, *Monasticism: A Very Short Introduction*, that:

> "In the West, the most well-known and influential of these early Christian monastic rules was the *Rule of St Benedict*, written in 6th-century Italy. By trying to avoid or

> moderate certain harsher ascetic practices, Benedict was seeking to distinguish his system from earlier competing models. That is to say, he was founding his own 'school,' where the primary ritualized curriculum was … (*opus Dei*)—a protocol of worship that served to punctuate both the day and the night with designated hours of prayer and 'sacred reading' (*lectio divina*).
>
> "Benedict's 'school' proved to be extraordinarily successful. Originally instituted at Monte Cassino south of Rome, his rule quickly became the prevailing model and guide for cenobitic monasticism throughout early medieval Europe. In the 7th and 8th centuries, use of Benedict's *Rule* spread to France, England, and Germany. In the early 9th century, his namesake, Benedict of Aniane, was appointed arch-abbot of all the monasteries in the territories ruled by the Emperor Charlemagne. This latter-day Benedict compiled the *Codex Regularum*, a compendium of rules incorporating and highlighting the original *Rules of St Benedict* but mandating somewhat stricter standards of behavior (yet another subtle gesture of ritualized differentiation). But it was in the 11th century that the Benedictine movement reached its pinnacle at Cluny and its 'daughter houses' in eastern France. The reforms instituted at Cluny de-emphasized the importance of manual labor for monks. Instead, such labor was assigned to an expanded cadre of servants, and the monks dedicated themselves primarily to the precise details of liturgical performance. In this context, the Divine Office (*officium divinum*) at Cluny became grander and more elaborate, with the use of golden vessels and utensils, the addition of extra hymns and songs to the Virgin and the angels, and increased attention to the veneration of the saints and their relics."

Stephen J. Davis also tells us of the influence monasticism had on the development of architectural planning concerning schools and hospitals, which were based on monastic cloisters or monasteries, and infirmaries.

> "Monastic scriptoria and libraries played a foundational role for the development of medieval and modern universities (the architectural plans of the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge are modelled after cloisters), and monastic infirmaries played an equally instrumental role for the development of hospitals."

Essentially, the monastic movement evolved over time, and it helped shape the societies of both the eastern and western halves of the empire in different ways. What began as a movement that highlighted the solitude of early anchorites grew to accommodate large communities of monks, some with hundreds of members. Monasticism went from frowning on books and learning to being steered by scholars like Jerome, Augustine, and Basil. It began as a lay movement that stood in contrast to the organized church, yet was later embraced by bishops, and eventually set the standard for all bishops. Author Kevin Madigan adds to this equation by stating:

> "Particularly significant was the way in which ascetic norms and attitudes entered the cultural bloodstream of the West, how monastic ideals came to be embraced by those outside the walls of the proliferating monasteries. The values of the desert came to be established in the city, as the distinction between those two geographical and cultural

realms began to blur. Present in the city, monks influenced and inspired laymen and women. Bishops, many of them once monks, encouraged monastic reading practices in their dioceses, such as reading and meditating on the Bible. A way of life based on withdrawal moved to the city; the periphery and center collapsed into one. Ascetical ideals came increasingly to be appropriated not only by lay Christians, but also by priests and bishops. The walls that separated the lives of monks, the secular clergy, and the laity slowly crumbled. By the late sixth century, a new age had dawned."

CHAPTER 11

CONQUEST AND CONVERSION

WITH MONASTICISM FIRMLY established, monks would act as the agents of Christianity, spreading the message of the church to distant lands and effectively converting many to the religion. Ireland was instrumental in converting neighboring Britain, for instance. An Irish monk named Columba established a chain of monasteries that crossed the sea. Three of his most famous ones existed in Derry, Darrow, and Iona, an island off the southwest coast of Scotland that became the center of Columba's missionary efforts. Iona was also the central base from which Celtic Christianity spread to Scotland and northern England. Another Irish monk named Columbanus established monasteries in eastern France and northern Italy, and he evangelized the barbarous Suevi who were settled around Lake Constance. In his book, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, historian Thomas Cahill says of the Irish monk:

> "Any question of Columbanus's balance is swept away when you take a serious look at his achievements: at his death in 615 he left behind a considerable body of work—letters and sermons … instructions for the brethren; poems and lyrics, including a jolly boat song; and the even larger legacy of his continental monasteries, busily engaged in reintroducing classical learning to the European mainland. At this great distance in time, we can no longer be sure exactly how many monasteries were founded in Columbanus's name during his lifetime and after his death. But the number, stretching across vast territories that would become in time the countries of France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, cannot be less than sixty and may be more than a hundred…. He had been on the continent for just twenty-five years."

Public penance, which was quite shaming (and which we covered in chapter 5) would give way to a private penitential system of discipline throughout the European continent after Columbanus brought Irish books that demonstrated this new private form of penance. This is also around the time confessions began to be made in private to a priest, who would determine what action needed to be taken on the part of the penitent—this could range from a simple reading of the Psalms, to taking a pilgrimage, paying a monetary sum, or even self-flogging. This new system was developed in Irish and Welsh monasteries during the fifth and sixth centuries.

In chapter 9 of this book, we mentioned that many monasteries in Ireland were later accessed for their stores of knowledge and literature following the destruction of such literature due to the barbarian invasion of the Western Roman Empire. Irish books like the ones Columbanus brought along were highly valued, therefore, but toting such books had become something of Irish tradition.

> "Wherever they went, the Irish brought with them their books…"

Writes Thomas Cahill.

> "… many unseen in Europe for centuries and tied to their waists as signs of triumph, just as Irish heroes had once tied to their waists their enemies' heads. Wherever they went they brought their love of learning and their skills in bookmaking. In the bays and valleys of their exile, they reestablished literacy and breathed new life into the exhausted literary culture of Europe. And that is how the Irish saved civilization."

That civilization truly did need saving following the barbarian invasions. With the coming of the Germanic tribes, centuries of history and development had been thrown into chaos, and cherished knowledge was lost. This is the point at which prophecy truly begins to unfold in clear and dramatic fashion as well. In chapter 9, we discussed the rise of the Germanic Vandals, from which the term vandalism derives, based on their senseless destruction as seen in the 455 sacking of Rome. Their king, Geiseric, as we have shown, led them to a successful invasion of North Africa in 429, with Carthage eventually acting as their headquarters. Thus, Geiseric was among the first of the new barbarian kings, but neither he nor the Vandals were one of the three horns to be rooted up in Daniel's prophecy, as some contemporary Christians believe.

Now, while the Western Roman Empire effectively collapsed in 476,

> "The empire did not disappear in the fifth century."

Writes Richard Fletcher, in his book, *The Conversion of Europe*.

> "It is true that there was no emperor in the west after 476, but no one at the time could have guessed that this was more than a temporary hiatus. Authority reverted, at least in theory, to the emperor in Constantinople, where the Roman empire would survive for another millennium. But the western provinces did effectively come under new masters. They arrived by a variety of means. Whenever and wherever possible, the imperial government tried to control, or at least to influence and shape, the process of arrival."

This is important to note because the prophecy contained in Daniel chapter 7 focuses on horns that arose within an established kingdom, and those horns did not form a new kingdom by supplanting the old, as had been seen with the succession of nations from Babylon to Rome. Rome itself, that fourth terrible beast, never really fell; its western half was merely taken over by barbarian rulers who formed subsidiary kingdoms and thereby redrew the map of Europe.

The number 10 is also representative of Yah's complete order, it doesn't mean that the ten horns represent just ten actual barbarian kingdoms. That number reflects the completeness of the barbarian takeover of the Western Rome Empire that came as a judgment. But the three horns that were plucked up by the roots in Daniel 7:8 did represent three individual barbarian kingdoms that were established by three barbarian rulers or tribes, but they were established over a specific territory, which many fail to see. And, as we will show, all three uprooted horns, or kings and their kingdoms, are in fact barbarian non-Romans.

In chapter 9, we also made mention of the last Roman emperor in the west under the old order, Romulus Augustulus (or Little Augustus) being deposed by a Germanic commander named Odovacar. This occurred in the year 476, which marked the end of the western empire in

its ancient imperial form. With this, the central base of power in the empire shifted back to Constantinople in the east, also known as Byzantium. Odovacar was a barbarian mercenary hired by the father of Romulus Augustus to aid him in seizing the western throne from the current weak emperor. But Odovacar turned on his employers and, at the head of his barbarian mercenaries, marched for Ravenna to seize a western Roman throne for himself. He became king of Italy and thereafter ruled as a client of the emperor Zeno in Constantinople. He is the first barbarian non-Roman king to rule Italy, thus he is also the first of the three horns to be plucked up in Daniel 7.

As the newly minted king of Italy, Odovacar soon ignored the authority of the eastern emperor and did as he pleased. The very next year of his reign, 477, Odovacar confronted the rival Vandals and conquered Sicily, which had been in their possession under Geiseric. Emperor Zeno saw these ambitions as a dangerous threat to his supremacy, and when another barbarian power, the Ostrogoths, moved toward Constantinople threatening invasion, Zeno saw an opportunity. Thus, he turned to that tribe, led by a barbarian named Theodoric, to deal with Odovacar.

Professor Thomas F. X. Noble picks up our historical thread.

> "At the same time in 476, and for a few years after this, the eastern court simply hadn't the means, it hadn't the possibility of doing anything about what had happened in Italy. Now the Ostrogoths present them with a fine opportunity. Here you've got these Goths, who have been in various relations with the Romans for a long time, Theodoric, moreover, amongst those contending factions of Goths, Theodoric's faction had actually won out.
>
> "Theodoric had spent about ten years in Constantinople as a hostage, he knew the players, they knew him, he spoke Greek, he was fairly well-educated. So, an opportunity was presented to the emperor Zeno, and then to his successor Anastasius, to use the Goths to displace Odovacer in Italy to be able to restore some kind of imperial authority in Italy, and at the same time, to get this potentially threatening group of people out of the Balkans and into the west. So, from various points of view, at Constantinople, this looked like a good deal. Theodoric entered Italy in 489. It took him about four years of fairly hard struggle to gain the upper hand."

In his book, *Heart of Europe*, Peter H. Wilson adds:

> "Byzantium was obliged to secure Rome by relying on the Ostrogoths, another tribe displaced by the Huns' eruption into central Europe in the fifth century. Following established practice, Byzantium offered status and legitimacy in return for political subordination and military service. The Ostrogoth leader, Theodoric, had been raised in Constantinople and combined Romanized culture with the Gothic warrior ethos. Having defeated Odovacar, he was recognized as ruler of Italy by Byzantium in 497."

With Odovacar defeated and his followers crushed, he becomes the first of the three horns to be rooted up to make room for the coming papal power, per the prophecy in the book of Daniel.

8 "Just as I was thinking about these horns, a smaller horn appeared, and three of the

other horns were pulled up by the roots to make room for it…."

—Daniel 7:8

And Theodoric, by displacing Odovacar, became yet another barbarian to gain a throne in the empire of the fourth beast, but only the second to rule Italy, thus, he and the Ostrogoths are the second of three horns that will be rooted up to make room for the growing papal power that would rule from the same territory. However, concerning the Ostrogothic Italian kingdom and the ruling power in the east,

> "Cooperation broke down during the reign of Emperor Justinian, who capitalized on his temporary reconquest of north Africa to try to assert more direct control over Italy."

Writes Peter H. Wilson.

> "The resulting Gothic War (535 – 562) saw the eventual defeat of the Ostrogoths and the establishment of a permanent Byzantine presence in Italy."

Here, the Ostrogoths are officially plucked up, leaving one more horn to be established in Italy and plucked up as well, but Byzantium, or Constantinople, which took control of the territory, does not count, since it is essentially a major component of the fourth beast itself. Of Justinian's new governmental structure, Peter H. Wilson goes on to say,

> "Known as the Exarchate, this had its political and military base at Ravenna in the north, with the rest of the peninsula divided into provinces, each under a military commander called a *dux*—the origins of both the word 'duke' and the title *duce* taken by Benito Mussolini.
>
> "Success proved temporary as the Lombards, another Gothic tribe that had served as Byzantine auxiliaries in the recent war, launched their own invasion of Italy in 568. Unlike Odovacar's Goths, they failed to take Rome, or the new Byzantine outpost at Ravenna, but nonetheless established their own kingdom based initially in Milan, and then Pavia from 616. Italy was now split in three. The invaders' new kingdom of Langobardia extended along the Po valley, giving that region its modern name of Lombardy. Lombard kings exercised only loose control over southern Italy, which was largely organized as the separate Lombard duchy of Benevento. The remainder was known as the Romagna, or 'Roman' territory belonging to Byzantium, and surviving today as the name of the region around Ravenna."

With this, the Lombards became the third horn that would be plucked up, being the third and final non-Catholic barbarian tribe to establish a kingdom in Italy, the territory of the growing papal power that would become "the little horn" of Daniel 7.

In Daniel 7:24, an interpretation is given concerning the three horns being uprooted. First, we are told that ten kings truly would arise in this fourth beast kingdom, which resulted, as we have already shown, in the various barbarian kingdoms that were raised up to judge the Roman Empire. Then the verse goes on to say that after (*achar* in Aramaic, word H311), after these kingdoms are established, then another little horn would arise, being different from the first three

horns, or kings. And those three kings will be *shaphel*, word H8214, *cast down* or *brought low*, in the sense of being *humbled*. Some Scripture translations use words that do not bear this out. *Shaphel*, as used in Daniel 7:24 is an Aramaic word whose origin is found at H8213, *shaphel*, an ancient Hebrew root meaning *humility*; *to become* (or be brought) *low*.

This means that the little horn power does not in fact subdue or destroy the three horns, or barbarian kingdoms, itself, through the use of its own power, as some have stated. According to the same verse, the little horn would not come to power until after those kings. What *shaphel* indicates is a humbling, in other words, not destructive power on the part of the little horn, even though destructive power is used to remove them, as seen in Daniel 7:8, with the violent uprooting carried out by others. The humbling comes in the sense that the three horns lose their seats of power to another horn that would retain that power in their stead.

Yeshua illustrated something along this line in a parable he spoke in the hearing of a group of lawyers and Pharisees one Sabbath.

> 7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose
> the places of honor, saying to them, 8 "When you are invited by someone to a
> wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished
> than you be invited by him, 9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you,
> 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the
> lowest place."
>
> —Luke 14:7 – 9

Odovacar and his followers were forcibly put down by the Ostrogoths, at the urging of the eastern Roman emperor Zeno, and the Ostrogoths took their place as the rulers of Italy. Some years later, the new Roman emperor in the east, Justinian, waged war on the Ostrogoths and forcibly put them down, but the Lombards swept in and established a third barbarian kingdom in Italy.

> "During Justinian's reconquest of Italy …"

Writes Kevin Madigan.

> "… Lombards served as mercenaries in the eastern Roman army. In 568, they invaded Italy. By 572 they had subdued the entire Po Valley. Soon most of the peninsula, excepting Venice, Ravenna, Rome, and other coastal areas, fell under Lombard domination. For a time, it seemed as if all Italy might fall. But in 774, the Lombards faced and were destroyed by the most powerful of the Germanic kingdoms, that of the Franks."

The Franks, having converted to Catholicism, defended Papal possessions by destroying this final kingdom, paving the way for the Papacy to rise. Three non-Roman, non-Catholic horns that occupied the peninsula, from which the Roman popes would rule, had to be removed, and this in fulfillment of prophecy. But for the church, the path to securing the allegiance of the Franks was a long one.

Gregory of Tours, a bishop born to an elite family in Clermont in central Gaul, is the

chronicler who recorded the history left to us of the Frankish kingdom. When they first marched on the frontiers of the Roman Empire as part of the prophesied barbarian invasions, the Franks were not baptized Christians. They were a collection of independent tribes that eventually split into two distinct coalitions, a western and an eastern branch. The western coalition, known as the Salian Franks, occupied the lower Rhine region, spreading across parts of Gaul and Germany. They became allies of Rome during the reign of Julian the Apostate (who we discussed in chapter 7) and were charged with defending and securing the frontier on which they lived. In fact, since the third century that very region was named for them, being called "Francia," or land of the Franks.

Early on, the Salian Franks, having been afforded recognition by the emperor, enjoyed good relations with the Romans, and some of them were granted high positions in the Roman administration. In the year 451, an alliance was formed with the Romans when the Salian Franks were called in to help defend the empire against an invasion of the Huns led by Attila.

> "After the costly defeat of Attila …"

Writes Susan Wise Bauer.

> "… the Salian Franks had straggled back westward to their lands west of the Rhine. The battle with the Huns had weakened them; but now they regathered their strength.
>
> "The semi-legendary Merovech died, probably around 457, and was succeeded as chief of the Salian Franks by his son Childeric. But although Childeric claimed the title 'King of the Franks' and established his court at the northern city of Cambrai, he was merely one chief among many. The other Frankish tribes still kept their independence, even while acknowledging the long-haired Salians as leaders of the coalition. There were minor Frankish kings scattered across the landscape, and Roman kings too; after the Romans had given up full control of Gaul, renegade Roman warleaders had set up their own little domains in the land north of the Loire.
>
> "Childeric was forced to battle against these rival kings, against Odovacer of Italy, against Alemanni invaders to the east, and against Saxon pirates sailing into the Loire. When he died in 481, he was merely chief of the Salians despite his royal title.
>
> "But he was succeeded by his fifteen-year-old son, Clovis."

Clovis would prove to be a key figure in the annals of medieval history. By age twenty, he became a capable leader, and he moved to expand the territory of the Franks by attacking a Roman kingdom nearby whose land he annexed. This was but the first of many victories to come. In ten years, he would add to his territory lands from the rival Thuringii, Burgundians, and Alemanni. Many tribal leaders began to look to Clovis as a central authority. He was wise to align himself with his rivals through a marriage contract as well by taking the daughter of a Burgundian king. His wife, a Germanic princess named Clothilda, was Catholic, having been raised thus after her people were converted through the work of Christian missionaries.

It would be Clothilda who would attempt to convert her husband to the Catholic religion. Initially, her efforts, and the efforts of her fellow Catholics, were resisted by Clovis. But her insistence that he consider worshipping the deity the Christians served, for the sake of military

victory, struck home during one decisive battle against the Alemanni. On the strength of this, Clovis made a kind of pact with the being to whom the Christians devoted themselves and was …

> "… catechized secretly by Remigius, bishop of Reims."

Writes Kevin Madigan.

> "Finally, at a gathering of his warriors, Clovis persuaded them to convert; more than three thousand are said to have done so between 496 and 506.
>
> "This was a momentous development. The man who now controlled most of central and northern Gaul and who ruled the only stable kingdom in the center of western Europe had linked destinies with Catholic Christianity. A single, militarily powerful kingdom now had a Catholic ruler, soon recognized by the eastern emperors as consul. In their eyes, the kingdom of the Franks (*regnum Francorum*) continued the presence of Roman authority and tradition."

This would ultimately lead to a marriage between the Franks and the Catholic church, and that marriage would result in mutual power and status for both parties. The Franks would secure the place of the Papacy and essentially be the main vehicle used to fulfill the prophecy found in the book of Daniel. Emperor Justinian had been instrumental in regaining some control of the Italian peninsula, but his victory was reversed when the last exarch of Ravenna was killed by the Lombards. The Duchy of Rome was thereafter cut off from the Byzantine Empire and the popes were left vulnerable. They turned to the Franks for defense.

On the other hand, when Clovis became king and ruled over a unified Frankish kingdom, he needed something that would bind that union. This is the very problem that a certain Roman emperor had.

> "For Gregory, Clovis is the Frankish Constantine. And Clovis was indeed following Constantine's lead."

Writes Susan Wise Bauer.

> "Like Alaric's Goths, the Franks were a confederacy, not a nation: they were held together by custom, by geography, and by necessity. They had lived within Roman boundaries for over a century, and their adoption of Roman practices … was the strongest bond holding them together.
>
> "But the Roman empire had crumbled in the west, and the bond of *Romanness* was crumbling with it. Like Constantine, Clovis saw that a stronger bond was needed to hold his people together (and to allow him to claim the right of kingship over them all). Christianity would serve as the new glue of the Frankish nation."

While the three horns or barbarian tribes had stormed into the realm and conquered Italy, seizing Roman territory for themselves, the Franks acted on behalf of the popes on that very peninsula by annihilating the final horn that remained a viable threat to them: the Lombards.

> “The marriage of the Kingdom of the Franks and the Catholic Church was arranged by necessity.”

Writes Kevin Madigan.

> “Both sides needed something from the other. The Franks needed a rightful, indeed sacred, authority as respected and prominent as the bishop of Rome to recognize their legitimacy as kings of the Frankish realm. The Church needed a defender and a force capable of returning lands taken from it, unjustly by its lights, by the Lombards.”

As far as I have seen over the years, no other set of historical events so neatly and harmoniously unfold to fulfill the three-horn prophecy contained in Daniel 7:8 and 7:24.

CHAPTER 12

JUSTINIAN AND THEODORA

IN THE EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE, which would later be called Byzantium, a strange thing began to happen during the reign of Emperor Anastasius. The love of gladiatorial combat, which was long a favored Roman sport, eventually declined, being replaced by chariot-racing. Much like today (and all of this has a modern equivalent) chariot-racing permeated medieval eastern Roman society, particularly in the larger cities. Like the modern abominations of stock car racing, or soccer, or American football, chariot-racing dominated the entertainment scene for eastern Roman sports fans. It was part of daily life and figured largely in the lives of non-fans as well. Put another way, everyone living in Constantinople could name the star chariot-drivers, and almost everyone knew the winning racing teams from a given chariot race.

The teams, however, were not defined by drivers and their horses. In fact, the origin of modern sports sponsorship has its foundation in the Eastern Roman Empire, as chariot-racing teams were backed by various associations and companies who sponsored each race. But the symbols these sponsors used in their branding was a simple color, in this case, red, white, blue, or green. Therefore, spectators were not fans of individual chariot-drivers, but the color under which pairs of drivers and their horses would race, and these fans would be associated with those colors themselves. Therefore, fans who cheered for a particular color would be labeled the Reds, or the Greens, etc. What is more, these color-coded fans despised one another.

> "By the time Anastasius died of old age in 518 …"

Writes Susan Wise Bauer in her book, *The History of the Medieval Word*.

> "… the fans had settled into two opposed factions: the Blues, who had absorbed the Reds, and the Greens, who now encompassed the Whites. They were increasingly violent, always ready to seize any excuse to murder fans in the other faction. In fact, three thousand Blues had been killed at Constantinople in a 501 riot over chariot-race results, and other riots in 507 and 515 had been almost as bloody.
>
> "Anastasius left no son, although he had nephews who were anxious to claim the right to rule. In their place, though, the imperial bodyguard elected its own commander, the seventy-year-old career army officer Justin, as the new emperor.
>
> "Justin was shrewd, experienced, and had the support of the Blues. He also had the firm support of his nephew Justinian, a soldier who was in his thirties. In 521, Justin made his nephew consul, the highest official position in Constantinople below that of emperor, and Justinian began to take a greater and greater part in the government of the empire."

By the year 527, Justinian, an avid member of the Blues himself, would be emperor of the east. A few years earlier, he had fallen in love with a forbidden woman named Theodora.

> "Theodora's life is chronicled by Procopius, the Roman historian who gives such a sober and trustworthy chronology of Byzantium's military history in his *History of the Wars*."

Writes Susan Wise Bauer.

> "Procopius was a man's man; he admired strength and force, he scorned uncertainty and compromise, and he believed that a real emperor should be free of female influence. His joint biography of Justinian and Theodora, *The Secret History*, was written after Justinian married his actress, and after it became clear that Justinian—brilliant and mercurial—depended on his wife. It drips with vitriol.
>
> "Despite the acidic tone, there is little reason to think that Procopius got his basic facts wrong; Theodora's past was well known to her contemporaries. Her father had been a bear-trainer who worked in the half-time shows given by the Greens between chariot races."

As a side note, here we have another ancient reference that has a modern shade: the infamous half-time show. As we have hinted in other materials, modern sports—all of them—are based on ancient pagan practices. And, as Torah-observant believers, we are commanded to not do as the heathen nations concerning these matters. At any rate, citing Procopius, Susan Wise Bauer goes on to say that Theodora's father took ill and died …

> "… leaving his wife with three small girls under the age of seven. The Greens had hired another trainer, and in order to survive, the mother had forced the girls to appear before the Blues as entertainers. Entertainment led to prostitution…."

… And a life of ill repute. Being both fatherless and absent the protection of brothers, Theodora, like other Roman women doomed to such a life, went down this infamous path and eventually found her way to Alexandria, which was still a Christian center at the time, though a controversial one. Alexandria was the haven for Christians who found themselves on the opposing side of the current theological debate that surrounded yet another position viewed as heretical, this time a belief of the Nestorians, who held that the Messiah had two separate and distinct natures: human and divine. Of this, Susan Wise Bauer writes:

> "The priests at the Council of Chalcedon thought of themselves as monophysitic, and they had carefully rejected language that might make it sound as though Christians worshipped more than one divinity."

The Chalcedonian Creed proposed that the Messiah was one with the Father; that they existed as one being with one subsistence, but that he himself had two natures, and those natures were not divided or separate. Christians who were far to the east, and were nearer to the Persian Empire, which was inhabited by a people who believed in a pantheon of deities, wanted nothing to do with a theology that sounded like they served more than one being. Alexandrian Christians believed that the Messiah was human but that his divine nature overwhelmed his human nature

and thus overcame his natural limitations. Those who held the other popular stance that originated in Antioch believed that his humanity and divinity were not really joined in one, and he was human through his mother and divine through his heavenly Father. These debates led to excommunications of several bishops and the exile of one—Nestorius himself. In fact, quoting Susan Wise Bauer …

> "In the theological wars of the previous century, Alexandria had lost prestige. Despite the age and size of the city's Christian community, the bishop of Alexandria had been placed below both the bishop of Rome (the pope) and the bishop of Constantinople (the patriarch) in the Christian hierarchy."

Theodora, while in Alexandria, was converted to the extreme monophysitic form of Christianity and thereby abandoned her undesirable profession. But lacking means to support herself, she was forced to live with an old acquaintance who was also a former actress and a Christian convert as well. Her name was Macedonia and she lived in Antioch. Having abandoned an undesirable profession equal to Theodora's, Macedonia found a new way to earn her living in Antioch: she was a Roman spy, a member of the imperial secret police.

> "Antioch was the third most important city in Byzantium (just behind Constantinople and Alexandria), and Justinian apparently had a network of spies and informers to keep him abreast of any unseen developments. Macedonia was one of these informers; Procopius says that she reported to her boss by writing letters, but at some point Justinian must have visited the city and asked for a personal update, because Macedonia introduced him to her friend."

Justinian was smitten with Theodora, who was two decades younger than him. He made a promise of marriage and set her up in a house in Constantinople in the year 522, while he attempted to persuade his aunt and uncle, the current emperor, to approve the marriage. There was one little hitch—well, really two. Constantine, some two hundred years earlier, had passed a law, on moral grounds, forbidding his officials to marry actresses, given the demands of their profession. Justinian, who was consul at the time—number two in the empire behind his uncle—could not wed Theodora by law. But that was a small matter compared to the objection of his aunt Euphemia.

> "Euphemia announced that she would never approve of the marriage—not because the young woman had been in a brothel, but because she was a monophysite."

Euphemia died around 524, and Emperor Justin immediately passed a new law revoking Constantine's original marriage ban between Roman officials and actresses. Though they had to be former actresses.

> " 'Women who have been on the stage,' he decreed, 'but who have changed their mind and have abandoned a dishonorable profession … shall be entirely cleansed of all stain.' Legally redeemed by imperial fiat, retired actresses could marry anyone they pleased, and as soon as the law passed, Justinian and Theodora were married at the Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople."

The aging Justin later made his nephew co-emperor, crowning him on April 1, 527. He was now the official emperor and heir to his uncle, and his new wife, Theodora, was empress, and she would prove to be a powerful one.

Justinian, before becoming emperor, was given to much study and was a man of divided interests. At once he studied to become a musician and an architect (his interest in buildings resulted in what is considered one of the greatest architectural feats to date: the Hagia Sophia); he also had an interest in becoming a theologian, a poet, and a lawyer, all in addition to his ambition to one day becoming emperor, which he achieved. He possessed an active mind that seemed to constantly be at work, yet one cannot say the same for his physical activity. He was not very brave, and though he commanded many battles he never took the field in any of them.

Indeed, those very battles, part of a deeply held desire for conquest of the western part of the empire, which he intended to reunite with the east, was a costly affair. Of this, Professor Paul Freedman of Yale University says:

> "The conquest of the west: folly or grandeur? And it's both. It is a classic example of overextension—overextension of empires—meaning that empires weaken themselves at some point, fatally, by simply getting either too big, or spending too much money, and the two are linked. You get too big you have to spend more money to defend yourself, not really having the resources to keep what you have—the British Empire, a reasonably clear and neutral example, at some point, is simply too large for the resources of a weakened Great Britain."

It had been Anastasius, the wise emperor who died in the year 518, who had paved the way for the successes Justinian enjoyed during his reign. Anastasius had ended the gladiatorial contests that pit men against wild beasts at the Roman games, and he had erected a forty-mile wall that fortified Constantinople against barbarian invaders, which stretched from the sea of Marmara to the Black Sea. He also built up the fiscal base of the eastern empire through wise administration, which restored its finances and left the treasury bursting with 320,000 pounds of gold, this while reducing taxes. Justinian was able to dip into the treasury to fund his wars against the Vandals, the Ostrogoths, and the Persians on his northern frontier.

In his book, *Medieval Europe*, Chris Wickham writes.

> "[T]he fiscal system was arguably not robust enough to fight several wars at once as well as building on a considerable scale, and Justinian's administrative reforms did not achieve the root-and-branch streamlining which he sought; his successors were far less ambitious, doubtless as a result. But his reign certainly shows the possibilities that a determined emperor could contemplate, and partially achieve."

Justinian was both anointed and crowned by the patriarch of Constantinople in a grand ceremony, and he wore a costly diadem of pearls. Yet he allowed lowly citizens to approach him, perhaps being that he was an emperor of low birth himself. These contradictory natures are highlighted by the author Will Durant, in his book, *The Age of Faith: The Story of Civilization Volume 4*.

> "[Even] men of low estate and altogether obscure had complete freedom not only to come before him but to converse with him. At the same time, he promoted the pomp

> and ceremony of his court even beyond the precedents of Diocletian and Constantine. Like Napoleon, he keenly missed the support of legitimacy, having succeeded to a usurper; he had no prestige of presence or origin; consequently, he resorted to an awe-inspiring ritual and pageantry whenever he appeared in public or before foreign ambassadors. He encouraged the Oriental conception of royalty as divine, applied the term *sacred* to his person and his property, and required those who came into his presence to kneel and kiss the hem of his purple robe, or the toes of his buskined feet."

Justinian's court was one of opulence and splendor, unrivaled by few other imperial courts in all the annals of history. But its opulence was part of government policy, meant to draw reverence from the populace, and it was effective to a degree. While the citizens at large were awed by the solemnity, the court officials were not, and past coups were incited by members of the court. Notwithstanding this, Justinian did experience revolts during his long reign, the most significant of which came just five years in, and nearly led to his death.

> "The Greens and Blues—the factions into which the people of Constantinople divided, according to the dress of their favorite jockeys—had brought their quarrels to the point of open violence."

Writes Will Durant.

> "The streets of the capital had become unsafe, and the well-to-do had to dress like paupers to avoid the nocturnal knife. Finally, the government pounced down upon both factions, arresting several protagonists. The factions thereupon united in an armed uprising against the government. Probably a number of senators joined in the revolt, and proletarian discontent strove to make it a revolution. Prisons were invaded, and their inmates freed; city police and officials were killed; fires were started that burned down the church of St. Sophia, and part of the emperor's palace. The crowd cried out, 'Nika!' (victory)—and so gave a name to the revolt."

Early success emboldened the rioters to demand that Justinian hand over two unpopular city officials, who they intended to execute. The fighting only grew more violent, and buildings were burned, along with the marketplace and dozens of houses belonging to wealthy citizens. Justinian and Theodora, as well as high officials of Constantinople, "shut themselves up in the palace and remained quietly there," writes Procopius. Whether they expected the riot to die down on its own or not, the trouble only worsened. The rebels sought a new ruler, and so selected Hypatius, the nephew of the deceased and wise Anastasius, who Justin had usurped.

Hypatius, who was a senator, lived in Constantinople with his wife and was forced to bar his doors, but the rebels managed to drag him out of his house against his wishes and declare him emperor. A throne had been set up in the Hippodrome, the venue at the center of the city where chariot-racing events were held, and there Hypatius was escorted to take the imperial seat. Justinian contemplated flight by heading for the nearest harbor and sailing off on one of his royal ships. But …

> "The empress, Theodora, dissuaded him, and called for active resistance."

Writes Will Durant.

> "Belisarius, leader of the army, took the assignment, assembled a number of Goths from his troops, led them to the hippodrome, slaughtered 30,000 of the populace, arrested Hypatius, and had him killed in jail. Justinian restored his dismissed officials, pardoned the conspiring senators, and restored to the children of Hypatius their confiscated property. For the next thirty years Justinian was secure."

Those thirty-plus years would be remembered not so much for Justinian's costly and destructive wars or the early revolt, but for his laws. Over the centuries, many Roman laws had been passed that had been rendered obsolete by the changing times, and others were contradictory or downright confusing. A hundred years before Justinian, Emperor Theodosius II had called for a new codification of the Roman laws dating back to the accession of Constantine to address just such a problem. The church, which was a powerful institution in its own right, had modified its own legislation and could readily interpret it. Yet, the civil laws of Rome often ran contrary to those of the nations that comprised the empire. And laws based on ancient Roman times were ill-suited for Hellenic life in the east. The body of Roman law was a muddle of legislation. Justinian, as ever, stoked his desire to unify—he sought to unify the western and eastern churches despite their ongoing debate on theological matters; he sought to unify the empire through conquest; now he sought to unify the law code.

In the year 528, Justinian commissioned a body of ten jurists to collect and reform the Roman laws, as well as bring clarity to the code as they systematized it. The first volume was completed the next year, but other volumes would come later. In all, the revised code comprised four parts, the *Codex*, *Digest*, *Institutiones*, and *Novellae*.

> "All these publications came to be known as the *Corpus iuris civilis*, or Body of Civil Law, and were loosely referred to as the Code of Justinian."

Writes Will Durant.

> "This code, like the Theodosian, enacted Orthodox Christianity into law…. It acknowledged the ecclesiastical leadership of the Roman church, and ordered all Christian groups to submit to her authority. But ensuing chapters proclaim the dominion of the emperor over the Church. All ecclesiastical, like all civil, law, was to emanate from the throne."

The sheer weight and importance of this revelation should not be understated, and should not be missed by those with discerning hearts. Justinian did what no emperor before him had done. Constantine had made Christianity legal, thereby ending the persecution of the church. Theodosius I made Christianity the official religion of the Roman state, and he crushed its opponents while granting it greater freedoms that led to its independence from imperial jurisdiction. Yet, while Justinian was asserting ecclesiastical authority over that of the bishops, he did not reverse the independent status of the church. What he did add to the equation, however, is the legal preeminence of the Roman church. On the books, we can say that the beginning of the Papal powers gaining their prophesied authority to rule for a given period comes in the time of Justinian, with this very law. The fact is that Justinian, who was both

emperor and the ecclesiastical authority, represents the state first and foremost. His law code actually declared that he was the Roman law, just as Yah is his set apart law.

> "Something had happened, almost invisibly, in the eighteen months that Justinian had been on the throne."

Writes Susan Wise Bauer.

> "[H]is word had become law. And not just secular law, but sacred law as well. Despite his claim to wield the ancient Roman *imperium*, Justinian's assertion that his authority was *sacred* was a new assertion."

Therefore, Justinian is not merely a horn on the beast pictured in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13, he is the beast itself, as a representative of the beast empire. Justinian sees himself as equal to Yah in authority by being able to dictate ecclesiastical as well as imperial matters. This is why we see the beast in Revelation 13—not just the horn in Daniel 7—speaking blasphemies. This would be repeated by later rulers who would come to represent the Roman beast state and not just exist as a horn power.

The Justinian code was far-reaching in its sweep, from ordering lawyers, plaintiffs, and defendants to swear on Bibles prior to court proceedings—which we still see today—to property laws; penalties against heretics and offending clerics, starting with bishops, and even monks.

> "Of all the emperor's work, the making of the *Corpus Juris Civilis* is the best known and most important in its impact on civilization."

Writes Norman F. Cantor in his book *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*.

> "The Justinian code is perhaps the outstanding accomplishment in the history of jurisprudence. It consists of nothing less than the codification into a few volumes of the legal life of a great world empire over many centuries.
>
> "… The Justinian code greatly favors absolutism: The emperor is considered the living law, and his will has the unchallenged force of law. 'The emperor alone can make laws [and] it should also be the province of the imperial dignity alone to interpret them.'
>
> "… Although the Justinian code was not studied in the West in the early Middle Ages, after the middle of the eleventh century it slowly became the basis of the legal systems of all the European countries, with the exception of England."

It is also the principle on which the Canadian and American legal systems rest. Now, for all his boasting and blaspheming; with the throwing of his imperial weight around and exhibiting among the greatest earthly authority seen under heaven, Justinian and his imperial city had it coming. Judgment had to be meted out for his sins. Ezekiel 14:21 highlights Yah's four disastrous acts of judgment. Justinian suffered all four, plus earthquakes. Will Durant writes:

> "In the end, death won all arguments. Theodora's passing in 548 was to Justinian the heaviest of many blows that broke down his courage, clarity, and strength. He was

> then sixty-five, weakened by asceticism and recurrent crises; he left the government to subordinates, neglected the defenses he had so labored to build, and abandoned himself to theology. A hundred disasters darkened the remaining seventeen years during which he outlived himself. Earthquakes were especially frequent in this reign; a dozen cities were almost wiped out by them; and their rehabilitation drained the Treasury. In 542, plague came; in 556, famine, in 558, plague again. In 559 the Kotrigur Huns crossed the Danube, plundered Moesia and Thrace, took thousands of captives, violated matrons, virgins, and nuns, threw to the dogs the infants born to women captives on the march; and advanced to the walls of Constantinople."

These four acts are repeated in the book of Revelation, which gives you a clue as to their prophetic time frame. But during Justinian's reign, Yah's judgment wasn't restricted to Constantinople.

CHAPTER 13

JUDGMENT COMES

ONE MOMENTOUS YEAR, a startling thing happened in the medieval world. The year was 535. Justinian had previously commissioned the Roman law to be codified, and in so doing, a number of new things were established, not least the legal ecclesiastical leadership of the Roman Papacy over that of all Christian entities. By 535, he set out on a campaign to conquer Italy by vanquishing its current rulers, the Ostrogoths, in what became known as the Gothic War. That same year, the earth was shaken, the climate began to change, and the sun was darkened.

Far east in the Indian Ocean lay two islands, Sumatra and Java. Susan Wise Bauer writes that:

> "Between the two islands lay the mountain of Krakatoa: a volcano, slowly building up a head of steam and lava beneath its ice-capped surface. In 535, Krakatoa erupted. The explosion hurled pieces of the mountain through the air to land as far as seven miles away. Tons of ash and vaporized salt water exploded upwards into the air, forming a plume perhaps thirty miles high. The land around the volcano collapsed inward, forming a cauldron of rushing seawater thirty miles across."

While other dates have been suggested for this volcanic eruption, author David Keys, who published a book in 1999 titled, *Catastrophe*, presented his extensive review of evidence for a 535-date based on tree-ring data. That said, the effects of the eruption were felt across a wide region. In China, where the sound of the event is recorded in their *History of the Southern Dynasties*, "yellow dust," they say, "rained down like snow." And according to Susan Wise Bauer:

> "Procopius reports that in 536, all the way over in the Byzantine domain, 'the sun gave forth its light without brightness, like the moon, during this whole year, and it seemed exceedingly like the sun in eclipse, for the beams it shed were not clear.' Michael the Syrian writes, 'The sun was dark and its darkness lasted for eighteen months; each day it shone for about four hours, and still this light was only a feeble shadow…. [T]he fruits did not ripen and the wine tasted like sour grapes.' The ash from the explosion was spreading across the sky, blocking the sun's heat. In Antarctica and Greenland, acid snow began to fall, and continued to blanket the ice for four years."

In the fall of 538, around three years after the event, a Roman senator serving in Ravenna in the Ostrogothic Italian kingdom, writes a letter to an official describing the aftermath. Taken from *The Letters of Cassiodorus*, he writes:

> "The Sun, first of stars, seems to have lost his wonted light, and appears of a bluish

> colour. We marvel to see no shadows of our bodies at noon, to feel the mighty vigour of his heat wasted into feebleness, and the phenomena which accompany a transitory eclipse prolonged through a whole year. The Moon too, even when her orb is full, is empty of her natural splendor. Strange has been the course of the year thus far. We have had a winter without storms, a spring without mildness, and a summer without heat. Whence can we look for harvest, since the months which should have been maturing the corn have been chilled?…The seasons seem to be all jumbled up together, and the fruits, which were wont to be formed by gentle showers, cannot be looked for from the parched earth…. [T]he apples harden when they should grow ripe, souring the old age of the grape-cluster."

And the east was not alone in experiencing this extreme level of crop failure. Susan Wise Bauer adds that:

> "Tree-ring data from as far away as modern Chile, California, and Siberia show a 'drastic drop in summer growth' from around 535 until about 540: this testifies to cold, dark summers. The darkening of the sun was producing plague, hunger, and famine across the medieval world."

It has also been discovered that ash from the volcanic eruption was blown across the earth for some five years.

> "On the other side of the world, summers grew cold and gray. Drought struck the forests and fields of the Americas, and for thirty years crop-killing dryness alternated with the vicious flooding brought on by unnaturally frequent El Niño events."

In his book, *Catastrophe*, David Keys writes that: "The eruption was of truly mammoth proportions. Climatologically, the tree-ring evidence shows that it was the worst worldwide event in the tree-ring record. Looking at the ice cores, we see that it may well have been the largest event to show up in both the northern and southern ice caps for the past two thousand years." Further expanding on this evidence is author John M. Riddle, who, in his book, *A History of the Middle Ages*, writes:

> "On the basis of tree rings, pollen spores, data from peat bogs, and glacial changes, we know that the world's climate around Augustus's time (14 CE) was approximately what it is today. About 450, however, warmer and drier trends are evident. Then, in the 530s, evidence indicates a radical change that lasted about a decade. Speculation centers on a volcanic eruption, possibly Krakatoa in southeast Asia, that sent particles into the upper atmosphere, causing droughts, crop failures, and cooling. There were heavy snowfalls in Mesopotamia and floods in Arabia, while Britain and northern Europe became very cold. The change in climate may have caused the Avars, a Turkic or Mongolic people, to be driven from their native central Asia and created catastrophic disruptions for the pyramid-building empire of Teotihuacán in Mexico, as well as for Japan, China, the Mediterranean region, Europe, and both western and southern Asia."

But that is not all that the Krakatoa eruption yielded. The past few summers had been cold

and dark in the eastern part of the Roman empire, leading to those failed harvests, which meant less food. The scarcity required imports of grain. In 542, a ship docked at the Golden Horn, the harbor at Constantinople, brought just such grain directly from the mouth of the Nile. But the ship had not docked long before a sudden sickness broke out on the waterfront. It wasn't a new illness; ancient civilizations had experienced it, but it was new to Constantinople. Victims were struck with fever, diarrhea, headaches, vomiting, and delirium. They also experienced fatigue and sleeplessness, though light could not be tolerated. As death approached, lumps would appear in the groin and armpits, as well as other lymphatic areas of the body. And these lumps, called buboes, from the Greek, *boubon*, meaning "groin," are what prompted Procopius to call them "bubonic swellings," hence the name history has given the pestilence: the bubonic plague.

Recent studies have shown that a pathogen in dental remains from sixth century victims of the plague is closely related to the bacillus cause of the Black Death that raged in the fourteenth century. The bacillus, or spore-producing bacterium, is said to spread through fleas, which infest rats. When the rats die out from the disease, the fleas then move directly to humans.

After the volcanic eruption of 535, the summers grew wet and cold in the eastern empire, and the temperature drop created the needed element for the active agent of the plague, the *Yersinia pestis* bacterium, to spread. Constantinople, suffering from years of bad harvests, relied more and more on imports of grain, and the citizens of Byzantium only grew weaker and hungrier from the severe lack. Their bodies were not fit to fight off even minor illnesses, but a ship was bound to bring death sooner or later. When the day of death finally arrived, the population died off in unprecedented numbers as the plague raged at full force over the course of three long months.

"The tale of dead reached five thousand each day," Procopius writes, "and then came to ten thousand, and still more than that."

In his book, *Justinian's Flea*, William Rosen writes:

> "[T]he existing burial grounds were filled, then every square foot of new ground; gigantic new cemeteries were built across the Golden Horn at Sycae. At the same time, the population that was filling up the graves rapidly overtook the population that could dig them—those who were still healthy, and not spending every waking hour caring for victims. Though burial had always been a family responsibility, Justinian could not ignore the problem, and detailed a minister named Theodorus to find a solution. A Christian city could not contemplate cremation. Instead, Theodorus looked to the walls….
>
> "Every 180 feet, a square tower sixty feet high was built from which Constantinople's bowmen could defend the city from any barbarian attack. The cemeteries at Sycae were likewise surrounded by such towers, and at Theodorus's direction, Justinian's troops removed the tops of dozens of the towers, and filled them with the bodies of the dead. 'As a result,' Procopius writes, 'an evil stench pervaded the city and distressed the inhabitants still more, especially when the wind blew fresh from that quarter.' "

Physicians of the day examined the dead by dissecting them. They came across strange abscesses swollen with pus and dead tissue which rested at the center of the mysterious swellings. Some among those infected exhibited black lentil-sized pustules before they died

vomiting up blood. Procopius adds:

> "There ensued with some a deep coma, with others a violent delirium … who suffered from insomnia and were victims of a distorted imagination, and in those cases where neither coma nor delirium came on, the bubonic swelling became mortified and the sufferer, no longer able to endure the pain, died."

Other victims were said to have walked out of their homes reasonably healthy only to be struck down with fever mid-travel. They only lay in the road where they fell, helpless, until death came. With grim scenes of this nature, John of Ephesus, a Syrian-speaking bishop of the monastic order who lived through the plague, writes that, "Nobody would go out of doors without a tag upon which his name was written, and which hung on his neck or arm," the reason being that their bodies, disfigured by disease, could then be identified and claimed by their loved ones.

According to Procopius, Emperor Justinian also suffered from buboes but somehow recovered. During his illness, Empress Theodora practically ran the government, though Byzantium's infrastructure was devasted. Those of the Persian empire and the Germanic kingdoms in the east were weakened as well. Death seemed to spread its tentacles to every corner, eventually reaching western Asia, northern Africa, and Europe. Estimates say that anywhere from one-third to one-half of the people who inhabited those regions died from the disease at that time. The plague disrupted farming, commercial trade, military, secular, and even religious life. Eight monasteries that were recorded to exist in Constantinople ceased to be. Families were ripped apart, leaving the weak and helpless to fend for themselves. Ships were reported to wash ashore unmanned. And what's more, another disease broke out congruent with the first, this time killing cattle. It was believed to have started in Syria and is now thought to have been anthrax.

As for the bubonic plague, slowing it seemed impossible. A historian by the name of Evagrius Scholasticus lost his wife, children, and grandchildren to the plague, and he himself developed buboes but survived. According to his own account as a primary source, "Some were desirous of death, on account of the utter loss of their children and friends, and placed themselves as much as possible in contact with the diseased, and yet did not die, as if the pestilence struggled against their purpose."

That this was a judgment from the Most High was not lost on those who lived through the pestilence. A Syrian historian known as Zachariah of Mytilene said of the plague, "It was a scourge from Satan, who was ordered by [Yah] to destroy men."

The high level of deaths, and the voracity with which the plague came, though unprecedented, could not be maintained. Yes, the pestilence was very deadly …

> "But the deadliness of the plague was also its weakness."

Writes Susan Wise Bauer.

> "By 543, it had killed so many people (as many as two hundred thousand in Constantinople alone) that it could no longer remain at full strength; it had run out of uninfected hosts, and began to decrease."

Having recovered from his own illness, Justinian resumed control of the empire and was able to stave off its financial insolvency while maintaining public order. Deceased taxpaying landowners saw the transfer of their lands to their living neighbors. Those among the wealthy who had died without heirs, allowed for the redistribution of their income to capable souls who were reassigned their property, which they kept in production. Fallen government officials were replaced, and government services, like water supply, continued. The collection of taxes also resumed.

Of course, this meant that Justinian could once more focus his attention on the war he initiated on the Italian peninsula; a war that would in effect act as a judgment of the Romans who inhabited that unfortunate region of the empire. The Ostrogoths had not yet been vanquished, and in 541, they elected a young, capable Goth from their midst to be king. His name was Totila, and he soon seized Rome, southern Italy, and Sicily from Byzantium rule. Then he formed a navy that he stationed in the Adriatic to prevent the Byzantines from sending reinforcements. Unlike Justinian's poorly paid mercenaries, who pillaged fiercely to make ends meet, Totila waged war without allowing his Ostrogoth troops to do so, and this caused the Roman populations on the Italian peninsula to welcome him. But Totila would not hold his lands for long.

Justinian's greatest general, Belisarius had retired, so, as Will Durant writes in his book, *The Age of Faith* …

> "… Justinian gave to his eunuch general Narses 'an exceedingly large sum of money,' and ordered him to raise a new army and drive the Goths from Italy."

Narses rebuilt the army from the ground up, by hiring mainly barbarians: which included Huns, Armenians, Persians, Heruli, and Lombards, among others. He raised around thirty-five thousand men in all. With his new army, in the year 552 …

> "Narses accomplished his mission with skill and dispatch; Totila was defeated and was killed in flight; the surviving Goths were permitted to leave Italy safely, and after eighteen years, the 'Gothic War' came to an end (553). Those years completed the ruin of Italy. Rome had been five times captured, thrice besieged, starved, looted; its population, once a million, was now reduced to 40,000, of whom nearly half were paupers maintained by papal alms. Milan had been destroyed, and all its inhabitants killed. Hundreds of towns and villages sank into insolvency, under the exactions of rulers and the depredations of troops. Regions once tilled were abandoned, and the food supply fell; in Picenum alone, we are told, 50,000 died of starvation during these eighteen years. The aristocracy was shattered; so many of its members had been slain in battle, pillage, or flight that too few survived to continue the Senate of Rome; after 579 we hear of it no more."

The Gothic War, which lasted three decades, destroyed the Italian economy and deurbanized the peninsula. Not only did large cities like Rome, Naples, and Milan see their populations shrink to nothing, but great cities along the Mediterranean became nothing more than sleepy provincial towns. The decline in Italy, caused by the catastrophic war initiated by the eastern emperor, stripped the region of its status as a cultural and economic leader in the realm. The famed places that brought it ancient glory were left in ruins.

> “The great aqueducts that Theodoric had repaired were broken and neglected …”

Writes Will Durant.

> “… and again turned the Campagna into a vast malarial marsh, which remained till our time. The majestic baths, dependent upon the aqueducts, fell into disuse and decay. Hundreds of statues, surviving Alaric and Gaiseric, had been broken or melted down to provide projectiles and machines during siege. Only ruins bore witness to Rome’s ancient grandeur as capital of half the world. The Eastern emperor would now for a brief period rule Italy; but it was a costly and empty victory. Rome would not fully recover from that victory till the Renaissance.”

One of the barbarian tribes hired as mercenaries by the eunuch general Narses to fight against the Ostrogoths in Italy was the Lombards. Thought to have come from frigid northern lands in Scandinavia, the Lombards, according to their oral history, were forced, by lot, to leave their overcrowded homeland. By the time Narses arrived in Italy on orders, the Lombards were there, and he promised them land in Pannonia for their service. When the Ostrogoths were finally vanquished, Byzantium ruled Italy and appointed a general known as an exarch to govern, which meant that he also saw to civil matters. Rome was again in the hands of a Roman emperor, now headquartered in Constantinople. But trouble lay ahead. Following the death of Justinian, his nephew Justin II sat the throne, and a year after he rose to power, plague struck Italy this time.

A historian of the Lombards named Paul the Deacon speaks of the same signature swellings of the groin witnessed in the earlier eastern plague. Fevers again led to the deaths of many, leaving piles of unburied corpses in the streets, further decimating the Italian peninsula. Paul the Deacon described the scene, saying …

> “The dwellings were left deserted by their inhabitants, and the dogs only kept house. You might see the world brought back to its ancient silence: no voice [left] in the field; no whistling of shepherds; no lying in wait of wild beasts among the cattle; no harm to domestic fowls. The crops, outliving the time of the harvest, awaited the reaper untouched; the vineyard with its fallen leaves and its shining grapes remained undisturbed while winter came on; a trumpet as of warriors resounded through the hours of the night and day; something like the murmur of an army was heard by many; there were no footsteps of passersby, no murderer was seen, yet the corpses of the dead were more than the eyes could discern; pastoral places had been turned into a sepulchre for men, and human habitations had become places of refuge for wild beasts. And these evils happened to the Romans only and within Italy alone.”

The land of the popes was receiving its own personal judgment. Once this second plague was gone, many empty lands left by the deceased proved tempting to the surviving Lombards, who thrived despite the pestilence. Their numbers actually swelled, making the land of Pannonia they had received as payment too limited to sustain their people. To this end, the Lombards conquered the neighboring Heruls and Gepids. Numbering a quarter of a million, the Lombards needed yet more land. In 568, they stormed Italy and conquered Milan the next year, then headed southward. The Byzantines lost central Italy to them. In fact, all that remained in Byzantine hands following the Lombard conquest was land stretching from Ravenna down the coast, and

which cut across to Rome, the city of the pope, who was then Benedict I. The Lombards were besieging Benedict's city the year that he died, 579, but his successor, Pope Pelagius II, spared Rome by buying them off. Most of Italy was now in the hands of the final horn power to rule over her per Daniel 7, as we have shown in chapter 11.

But the Lombards, who despised both Roman culture and catholic tradition, would not long enjoy their dominance of the future papal territory. In his book, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, Norman F. Cantor writes:

> "The Lombards organized themselves into two or three large duchies and a few smaller principalities. Like the early Franks, they condemned Roman culture and government, with the result that the Roman administrative and legal systems disintegrated. The Byzantines had not had enough time to make the Justinian code well known in Italy. Roman law survived in its homeland only as the customary law of the native Italian population and was mixed with the miserable hodgepodge of Lombard folk law. In addition to their political and legal decrepitude, the Lombards remained Arians (for the most part) for a century after their conquest of northern Italy and thus were completely out of touch with the church and the papacy. In fact, even in the eighth century the pope looked upon the Lombard dukes as his bitter enemies. Perhaps no Germanic people had so little to offer to European civilization as did the backward Lombards. They contributed to Italian life only their name and their blood; the former affected the political geography of northern Italy, and the latter made the physical makeup of north Italians different from the Mediterranean physiognomy of the southerners. These were meager boons in exchange for Theodoric's policy of civilitas. Of course, Justinian had not intended to replace the Ostrogothic with Lombard rule in Italy. But as in his policy in regard to the eastern part of his empire, the risks that he took were so great that failure was bound to result in a worse condition than had existed at the beginning of his reign."

In the end, Justinian, and indeed Byzantium itself, had failed the western empire in offering adequate leadership and protection from its many enemies. Of this, Norman F. Cantor writes:

> "Justinian's failure demonstrated to the men of the West that, as a result of the barbarian invasions, the Roman Empire could not be effectively reunited. Justinian, the greatest Roman emperor since Constantine, was the nemesis of Byzantine power. In the late sixth and seventh centuries Europe turned away from Constantinople, and the European peoples no longer looked to the hard-pressed Byzantine emperors and the essentially alien Byzantine culture for leadership and guidance. Hence, the most important consequence of Justinian's work for sixth- and seventh-century Europe was to bring to center stage the West's own men and institutions. The West was thrown back upon its own resources and had to find leadership in its own ranks: the church, led by the papacy and the monastic orders, and the Frankish monarchy. The short-lived alliance between the papacy and the Byzantine emperor had in the end created only a new disaster for Italy. It remained to be seen whether an alliance between the papacy and the Frankish monarchy could be effected with more fortunate consequences."

CHAPTER 14

GREGORY THE GREAT

DURING THE TIME OF THE Gothic War in Italy, a future pope would be born. The land was being ravaged by opposing forces, but this future pope was a child of wealth, born in Rome, the ancient city now stripped of its glory. His name was Gregory, and …

> "He was born around 540 into an aristocratic family."

Says Thomas F. Madden, professor of medieval history at Saint Louis University.

> "And he had an excellent classical education, and then eventually took a civil position in the government. But at the age of 35 he gave it all up and retreated into a monastery, which was essentially, this monastery was his family house in Rome. He and a bunch of like-minded companions went into the monastery, or to the house, to pray."

Gregory had become a monk, and he established seven monasteries based on the pattern of Monte Cassino which was founded by Benedict of Nursia, who we covered in chapter 10. Gregory even turned his father's palace (which he inherited) into a monastery that was named for a supposed saint, Andrew. Shortly after turning to monastic life, the pope, Benedict I (a different Benedict) made Gregory a deacon, or member of his administrative council. By 579, Pope Benedict would be dead, and the next pope, Pelagius II, would elevate Gregory yet more, appointing him as ambassador to the court in Constantinople.

He served as ambassador from 579 to 586, during which he witnessed many theological conflicts and political schemes that often filled the imperial city. Pelagius appointed another ambassador to Constantinople in 586, so Gregory was able to return to Rome, and to his quiet life as a monk, wherein he was made abbot of his monastery. But soon, the city was suffering new crises. Another plague was sweeping through Rome, leaving many dead in its wake, and the Tiber river burst over the walls of the city and flooded the streets.

Pope Pelagius, aided by Gregory and other monks, saw to the burial of the dead and the feeding of the hungry. Pelagius even managed the organization of city sanitation during this time, but the plague eventually clung to him as well, taking his life. None seemed to want the office of pope during this bitter time, but the clergy, as well as the people of Rome, longed for a new pope. Gregory was content with monastic life, but he was elected, and so the matter went all the way to Constantinople, as was the proper channel at the time. Of this, Professor Philip Daileader says:

> "Around 550, or, in other words, during the period when the Byzantines are wresting control of Rome from the Ostrogoths, it appears that Byzantine emperors assumed a

> power that had been held by local secular authorities in Italy before them: the right to veto consecrations. The way it worked was that after election, the pope would have to notify either the Byzantine emperor, or a Byzantine official in Italy known as the exarch of Ravenna that you had been elected as pope. And then you had to await approval, from either a Byzantine official or from the emperor himself before you undergo consecration. If the exarch doesn't want you to be pope, or if the emperor doesn't want you to be pope, then you're not supposed to be consecrated, and whoever elected you has to go back to the drawing board and pick someone else."

Gregory tried to have his election annulled by writing directly to the emperor in Constantinople requesting that he not be confirmed as bishop of Rome. But the letter was intercepted and so the confirmation went through, to the slight dismay of a reluctant Gregory. Regardless, he took on the office with great enthusiasm thereafter and set about continuing the distribution of food to the poor in Rome. He also oversaw the smooth delivery of wheat shipments from Sicily, and supervised the rebuilding of public works, like the ruined aqueducts on which the city depended. Rome's defenses were also shored up on his watch, and the garrison was trained anew. With little to no help coming from Constantinople at this time, Gregory negotiated peace with the Lombards, who overran Italy's north. This firmly established Pope Gregory as the ruler of Rome and its surrounding region, which was later called the patrimony of Peter, based on a counterfeit eighth-century document …

> "… known as the Donation of Constantine …"

Writes Thomas Cahill.

> "… in which the first Christian emperor had supposedly made donations of vast tracts of land in central Italy to the papacy and had awarded to the pope 'the privileges of our supreme station as emperor and all the glory of our authority.' "

But of course, again quoting from Cahill's *Mysteries of the Middle Ages* …

> "… the so-called Donation of Constantine was a forgery, used by the papacy to prop up its legitimacy in Europe."

Not all the lands in the so-called patrimony of Peter were based on forgery, however, only those lands that were part of the Donation of Constantine. Other landed properties had been legitimately bequeathed to the Roman church by elite and wealthy Christian citizens. Those estates were scattered beyond Rome itself, and could be found throughout Italy, Sardinia, Corsica, Sicily, and even parts of North Africa. When he needed a means to fund the expensive distribution of food to needy Roman citizens and thousands of hungry refugees from the north who had descended on Rome, Gregory looked to the lands within the patrimony.

> "For these purposes, Gregory possessed a pearl of great price, the so-called 'Patrimony of St. Peter …' "

Writes Kevin Madigan, in his book *Medieval Christianity*.

> "… organized by Gregory into what historians would eventually call 'the Papal

States.' These were parcels of lands that the apostolic see had received as legacies from grateful and generous Christians over the first Christian centuries. They were, fortunately, scattered far and wide in the West; not only could they be found in central and southern Italy, as well as its offshore islands, but also in North Africa, Gaul, and the Balkans. The military consequence of this scattering was that it was unlikely in the extreme that they could be conquered simultaneously. Economically speaking, they generated substantial income and produce, which Gregory used for refugee aid and defense."

All of these lands and holdings of course made Gregory—and anyone who sat in the papal seat for that matter—the wealthiest Roman, partly through the collection of taxes on them. More than that, however, Gregory was also seen as Rome's civil leader in a way. He acted as both ecclesiastical and secular head, in that he administered both Rome's relief and defense in a time of crisis. But this was viewed by many as both his right and duty, since there was a clear vacuum of power at the time. Constantinople was of no help, and the exarch of Ravenna was now less powerful and less respected than Gregory himself. To create some sense of order he even appointed governors to various cities in Italy. Future medieval popes would follow in Gregory's steps and seize this kind of civic authority for centuries to come, and that authority would expand to western Europe, well beyond what would become the Papal States.

After Pope Gregory negotiated peace with the Lombards, which cost him five hundred pounds of gold from the church treasury to cause them to withdraw, the citizens were afforded some comfort. The plague had died away, the flooding had subsided, the poor were fed, and the territory secured. Nearly everyone, Roman prefects and officials included, looked to Gregory for guidance. He was lauded for saving Rome from Lombard pillaging and domination and was considered a capable leader. But in light of his invaluable administrative skills during times of crisis, he felt restricted to Rome. He wrote to a colleague, "I am now detained in the city of Rome, tied by the chains of this dignity."

In the year 596, a new exarch was appointed in Ravenna, and he signed his own peace treaty with the Lombards, allowing for even greater peace between the feared barbarians and those who inhabited Byzantine lands in Italy. Thus, Gregory was finally able to devote his attention to matters of his papal office. While Gregory was respected as a civil leader, he considered himself a religious leader above all, and he seized upon this personal view by his constant preaching in various established churches in Rome. He called on the laity to renew their faith, and he urged the clergy to practice celibacy, according to monastic beliefs. This was a practice that Augustine of Hippo promoted heavily, and being a theologian that Gregory greatly respected, it was not the only point of argument that he borrowed from Augustine.

Of note, Gregory was the first monk to be made pope, and his devotion to monasticism led him to infuse the papacy with monastic practices and beliefs. In fact, as Professor Thomas F. Madden points out, when Gregory was elected pope …

"… He brought his monastery with him into the papal residence."

Essentially, he also brought his monastic brothers along with him, even using his power and influence to elevate some to the priesthood and calling on others to lead missions abroad. One such important mission was the one sent to England.

> "He was also eager to see Christianity expand, or to be replaced into England."

Says Professor Thomas F. Madden.

> "When the Roman Empire was collapsing, and Roman troops had evacuated England, the new Germanic groups, the Anglo-Saxons, had come in—were pagans—and therefore, virtually all vestiges of Christianity had left. And so, in 596, he sent a mission there led by one of his fellow monks to Kent to evangelize. And it was a remarkably successful mission."

Well, it was *eventually* successful. This fellow monk was Augustine—not Augustine of Hippo who was long dead, and who was the subject of chapter 8, but another Augustine. Professor Thomas F. Madden goes on to say:

> "During Gregory's pontificate he was able to set up new metropolitan sees (archbishoprics) at the old Roman provincial capitals of Canterbury and York. And these archbishops received their pallium, which is the symbol of their office, directly from Gregory in Rome. And therefore, as the church grew, these direct connections between Rome and these far away dioceses would continue to be forged and to grow, and this is something we'll see right up into the modern era."

It is apparent that Gregory did not recognize the missionary efforts of Irish monks who had labored in the same region to which he dispatched Augustine (later called Augustine of Canterbury) and the forty or so monks who accompanied him to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. While a few churches had been established in Britain, following the events of 476—which led to the fall of Rome—Britain was abandoned, and the remaining churches there were cut off from the Roman sphere of influence and support. Over a hundred years later, Roman missionaries were sent back to what were now Saxon kingdoms, created by the barbarian mercenaries the Romans appointed to defend the island in their absence. There were Saxons in Sussex, a kingdom in the southern part of England; there were Saxons in Wessex, the western kingdom; in fact, Angles, Saxons, and even Jutes were scattered all across the island.

Expected to bring all these Anglo-Saxon barbarians into the Christian fold was the monk, Augustine, who was acquainted with Gregory through his former monastery. Augustine began his mission with a large company of monks and a good deal of supplies that were meant to last them a while, but we are told by the English monk, Bede, that when they reached the coast of the kingdom of the Franks, Augustine withered, "seized with craven terror." Augustine returned to Rome that same year, 596, without success, and he asked Pope Gregory to allow him to abandon the mission. Of course, Gregory refused and sent him back to England with a letter exhorting him to: "Let neither the toil of the journey nor the tongues of evil-speaking men deter you."

Following Pope Gregory's exhortation, Susan Wise Bauer writes that "Augustine's party took heart …"

> "… crossed the channel, and in early 597 landed on Thanet Island, a tiny isle just off the coast of Kent that fell under the rule of Kent's king, Ethelbert."

Most likely, Augustine targeted Ethelbert from the beginning.

> "[H]is wife, Bertha, granddaughter of the Frankish king Chlothar I, was already a Christian. When Ethelbert heard of the party's arrival, he sent a message telling the missionaries to stay put on the island until he could decide what to do with them. Finally, he decided to go and see them, rather than inviting them into his kingdom: he was suspicious, not knowing whether this was a political or spiritual mission. Talking to them, he was reassured and decided that they were harmless.…"

After hearing all that Augustine had to say, the king replied:

> " 'I cannot forsake the beliefs I have observed, along with the whole English nation, but I will not harm you; and I do not forbid you to preach and convert as many as you can.' Eventually Ethelbert did agree to be baptized.…"

Toward the end of that year, Gregory wrote a letter to the bishop of Alexandria reporting of Augustine's success. "For while the nation of the Angli, placed in a corner of the world, remained up to this time misbelieving in the worship of stocks and stones, a monk of my monastery … proceeded … to the end of the world to the aforesaid nation; and already letters having reached us telling us of his safety and his work…. [M]ore than ten thousand Angli are reported to have been baptized."

Gregory referred to the barbarian inhabitants of England as, Angli, or Angles, lumping them together with Saxons and Jutes. And England itself (*Angle-land*; "land of the Angles") as well as the English language is also named for the Angli. But while the seemingly exaggerated figure of 10,000 Anglo-Saxons being baptized might be a stretch of the truth, what is evident is that the missionary efforts were an overall success for Rome. It also established a few things that would continue to develop according to Pope Gregory's leading: the pope would be the principle party to initiate missionary efforts, which would see the Christianization of northern Europe in the centuries to come; and monks, who were never expected to do missionary or pastoral work would be the main drivers of these missionary efforts, moving according to the pope's authority, and being guided by his counsel via correspondence.

Seeing how successful Augustine's missionary efforts had been, Gregory sent more missionaries, and, in time, Roman practices would dominate Anglo-Saxon society in England. But the leaven at the heart of Christianity did not diminish even during Gregory's missions to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, for while the current tainted form of the Messianic belief spread among the barbarians, the heathen custom of the barbarians was also absorbed into the Christian movement.

> "By the standards of the day …"

Writes Kevin Madigan.

> "… Gregory showed remarkable pastoral sensitivity to the Saxons and their native religious traditions, which he was, in the end, determined to eradicate. He urged his Italian monks not to destroy the Saxon temples but the idols in them."

Didn't the Creator deal similarly with the Israelites in Egypt? was Gregory's argument. The Anglo-Saxon temples, if well built, should instead be consecrated and converted to the worship of the Christian deity.

> "… [T]hey would more likely worship Him if they could 'resort to the places to which they had been accustomed.' There they would substitute solemnities like veneration of … martyrs in place of their diabolic practice of slaughtering oxen in pagan sacrifice. Gregory's advice represents some of the earliest Christian thinking on how the newly converted would assimilate to a novel religious culture.…"

This early Christian practice, which was greatly encouraged by Pope Gregory—as well as those who preceded and succeeded him—would see ancient pagan temples that were dedicated to the worship of Roman deities turned into Christian temples. Professor Thomas F. X. Noble of the University of Notre Dame expounds on this idea.

> "The basic Greek and Roman public building was the rectangular basilica. The word means 'a royal hall,' from the Greek *basileus*, the word for 'king,' or 'ruler.' The basilica had been used for all sorts of things: for temples, for law courts, for assembly halls, for grain storage; a basilica is a very useful building. The basilica sometimes had multiple aisles, occasionally had apses, an apse is a semicircular extension at one or both ends of the aisle of a church.
>
> "Numerous Christian churches adapted the basilican plan. In Rome for example, St. Peter, with its five aisles. Whereas the apse of a secular basilica might have held an imperial statue, and the apse of a temple a cult statue, in the Christian basilica, the apsidal region was given over to the altar and clergy. Whereas in a classical basilica, dignitaries might have made a long, solemn walk down the nave to meet with a ruler, in a Christian basilica, clergy and people processed down those naves to celebrate their liturgies and to bring forward their offerings."

The basilica is just one example of how the Roman Empire, and western Europe for that matter, was physically Christianized. But, as was pointed out, the Anglo-Saxons, being allowed to have their temples stand, and many of their abominable practices continue, in fact infused Christianity and the even wider secular world with their heathen customs. This is why we have Germanic deities as the names for some of the days of the week: Woden, Thor, and Frigga, for Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. We covered this topic in our documentary, *Understanding the Sabbath*. Upon Pope Gregory's encouragement, certain Anglo-Saxon customs crept into the church over time, and the world at large now celebrates many of them, along with a spate of other Germanic and Celtic traditions. It all began with Augustine, the monk who was but a timid librarian, and his mission to England—ordered by Gregory—to convert the barbarians there. As was stated, Augustine initially did not want to go.

> "[H]e had every expectation that the savages would eat him when he arrived."

Writes Thomas Cahill in *Mysteries of the Middle Ages*.

> "Once he landed and was accepted by the English, however, he found himself raised to the office of bishop and soon began to administer his diocese of Canterbury with rigid Romanitas."

Because of his extreme partiality for Roman tradition, Gregory was forced to write letter after

letter cautioning Augustine not to prefer Roman customs to English ones.

> " 'My brother, customs are not to be cherished for the sake of a place, but places are to be cherished for the sake of what is good about them.' There was no need, advised Gregory, the practical Roman, to tear down the pagan temples—just remove the idols and replace them with decent Christian images. Nor was there any need to outlaw the old festivals or the customs that accompanied them. Just baptize them a bit.
>
> "By such encouragement were the customs of the northern barbarians allowed to enter the European mainstream. The masks and ghosts of Hallowe'en, the vernal and venereal tomfooleries of May Day, as well as the lustral bathings and lantern-hung forests of Midsummer Night, taken from the Celts; the toasted cheese, toasts of warm ale, and rich desserts of northern winters and the ritual of sweetening with pine branches the claustral air in houses sealed against the cold, taken from the Germanic tribes; the word *Easter*, originally the goddess of spring accompanied by her fertility symbols of rabbits and decorated eggs, taken from the Saxons; the word *Yule* and the burning Yule log, taken from the Vikings—these and a thousand other customs of the savage heathens (which men like Clement of Alexandria would only have looked down their noses at) rolled into the former empire and were christened and absorbed. For this we have Gregory and many of his now nameless brother bishops to thank."

Gregory—later designated "the Great"—was known for many things, and among these were his prolific writings, which were influential in the Middle Ages. He was not concerned with being original or creative, however, he merely sought to reiterate and substantiate many of the positions of church fathers before him, particularly Augustine of Hippo, who he admired most. Gregory was a disciple of Augustine in a way, and taught what Augustine had already taught, only Gregory made doctrine what Augustine had not intended to be taken beyond the level of mere speculation. A case in point would be the place of purification Augustine had suggested, by way of conjecture, might exist for those who died in sin, where they would stay for a time before being made worthy enough to head off to heaven. Both men misinterpreted Scripture in believing the dead go to heaven at death, but the place of purgatory went from being speculation on the part of Augustine, to certainty on the part of Gregory. Gregory's insistence on such a place being in existence led to the doctrine of purgatory.

Gregory also pushed Augustine's views on the Eucharist farther by teaching that the Catholic mass or communion saw the Messiah sacrificed anew each time it was celebrated. This became a standard doctrine of the Western church thereafter, but it was later rejected by Protestants in the sixteenth century.

To many, Gregory portrayed himself as a man not given to pomp. In monkish fashion he fasted often, so much that it weakened his body and many times left him confined to bed. In 601 he wrote to a friend saying, "For a long time I have been unable to rise from my bed. I am tormented by the pains of gout; a kind of fire seems to pervade my whole body; to live is pain; and I look forward to death as the only remedy." Neither did he appear to be in favor of grandiose titles. In his book, *A History of the Middle Ages: 300 to 1500*, John M. Riddle writes:

> "[Gregory] asserted not only the pope's supremacy over the western church but also, much to the consternation of the Byzantine patriarch, the eastern churches as well.

> Once in correspondence, when Gregory received a letter from the patriarch addressed with a long list of superlative titles including ‘Bishop of Bishops,’ Gregory replied by referring to himself as the ‘Servant of the Servants of [the deity, meaning Yah],’ now a title used by all popes.”

The “Servant of the Servants of [Yah].” It sounds humble on the face of it, till one considers where Gregory was coming from. Yeshua, in Luke 9:48, established the order of greatness in the Kingdom, stating that he who is least will actually be the greatest. By this account, we see that Gregory, and every pope who succeeded him, expected to be the greatest in the Kingdom by using this lowly title.

CHAPTER 15

ARAB INVASION

INTERMITTENT WARS HAD raged between Persia and Byzantium for decades, spanning the reigns of several emperors, with both sides gaining and losing ground. In south Arabia, a different struggle was waged on a daily basis: that of basic survival in the hostile desert. The people of the kingdom of Himyar—tucked in the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula—were indifferent to the wars between the great rivals. They were concerned with fighting one another, as well as the harsh elements of their surroundings.

> "In 590, a disaster far to the south shifted and broke the existing patterns of alliance and hostility."

Writes Susan Wise Bauer, in *The History of the Medieval World*.

> "In the center of Himyar, near the city of Marib, a man-made dam had been built back in the days of the Sabean kingdom. The dam closed off the Wadi Dhana, the valley that collected rainwater and runoff from nearby mountains during wet seasons (usually only April and a thirty-day period in July and August)."

For the residents of Marib, the dam was a vital source of life. They were able to both save and channel its water to cultivated fields through a system of irrigation. The dam was also the reason the population swelled to around fifty thousand, which was rare in Arabia at that time due to the lack of abundant food and water needed to support large populations. Susan Wise Bauer adds that:

> "Unpredictable shifts in weather patterns during the 530s and 540s had twice caused such severe and sudden rainstorms that the dam, unable to hold the runoff, had broken."

We discussed these decades-long "shifts in weather pattern" in chapter 13.

> "Both times, the flood caused enormous damage."

A chronicler named Simeon of Beth Arsham, writing on the history of Himyar during the Persian reign says that:

> "The mass of water gushed out and came down, and there was great terror. Many villages, people and cattle were flooded as well as everything which was standing in the way of the sudden mass of water. It destroyed many communities."

Twice in its history, the dam had been repaired, though its structure was permanently

weakened. And in 590, when it broke a third and final time, the flood swept toward villages downstream, completely wiping them out. Marib, which was already a fraction of its original population due to the prior floods was now a near-deserted town. Elsewhere in the south, tribes who had depended on water from the dam headed northeast, to more accommodating regions of the Arabian Peninsula. The dam had been such a vital part of life for many Arabs that it figured prominently in their collective lore, being recorded in a passage of the Qur'an.

> "There was for Sabea, aforetime, a sign in their homeland—two Gardens to the right and the left.… But they turned away from Allah, and We sent against them the Flood released from the Dams, and We converted their two garden rows into gardens producing bitter fruit.… We made them as a tale that is told, and We dispersed them all in scattered fragments."

While the people did scatter, this was by no means a prophecy. At the time of the dam's final collapse, Muhammad had not received his supposed visions, nor was the Qur'an written, so the passage looks to the past. Now, with no reliable source of water in the south, the Arabs went northwards, peopling cities that were once sparse. Mecca, the birthplace of Islam's founder—and home to the cherished Ka'aba—was no longer the only major populated city. Many who migrated from the south also flocked to one settlement in particular: Medina, a less prosperous town that would eventually rise in prominence. Medina was already bursting with Israelites who had migrated there as a result of the diaspora, and their culture and Scriptural beliefs in fact influenced what became Islam.

With all these migrants flooding into northern cities and towns, disputes were inevitable. Arabs lived in clans that were part of larger tribes. All these clans were linked by blood or marriage, but some clans were more powerful than others. It was into one of the poorer, less influential clans of the Quraysh tribe, the Banu Hashim, that Muhammad was born, six months after his father had died. He was a full orphan by age six. His uncle, Abu Talib, a merchant, raised him, and thus he earned his living among merchants. It was while managing the caravan of a wealthy widow merchant—whose investment he doubled via his expert abilities—that Muhammad's life was dramatically altered. The widow, Khadija, asked him to marry her, and after he did, they eventually had three children. His increased wealth caused him to see clearly the sharp divide between rich and poor.

Susan Wise Bauer adds that:

> "Muhammad, devout by nature, took it upon himself to spend one sacred month of each year providing for the poor: his biographer Ishaq tells us that he would pray, give food to all the poverty-stricken residents of Mecca who came to him, and then walk around the Ka'aba seven times."

This is drawn from the ancient tradition that is still practiced in part to this day by Muslims on pilgrimage. In the year 610, during his month of service, Muhammad claims to have had a vision from a heavenly messenger known to Israelite Scriptures: Gabriel. At first, he only related these things to his close friends and family, but in 613, he began preaching his new message to others in Mecca. Encompassed in that message was the idea that people were to worship the one Creator, care for the poor, and share wealth. Others soon followed him besides his immediate family, but mostly those from the lower classes. Those of the more prosperous clans were

actually insulted by his message and warned Muhammad's uncle to put a stop to it, or allow them to do so. When Abu Talib refused, the clan leaders, fearing a revolt by the lower classes, began a campaign of terror against those who followed Muhammad. Susan Wise Bauer writes:

> "His followers were attacked in the alleyways of Mecca, imprisoned on false charges, refused food and drink, pushed outside the city walls. Some of the new converts, afraid for their lives, fled across the Red Sea into the Christian kingdom of Axum, where they were welcomed by the Axumite king Armah.… Others went farther north to Medina. The members of Muhammad's clan (the Banu Hashim) who remained in Mecca were forced into a ghetto, and a ban was declared on them: no one could trade with them, which cut off their food and water."

Under these dreadful circumstances, Muhammad's uncle Abu Talib and his wife Khadija died. It was during this dark time that Muhammad claims to have received a new mandate from the Creator: those who were mistreated and driven from their homes were now permitted to fight their oppressors. But there were fewer and fewer in Mecca who followed Muhammad's teachings. Most had fled. Muhammad, on the other hand, felt an obligation to remain in his city of birth, and he became somewhat vulnerable because of this, seeing he had little support in Mecca. Seizing on this opportunity, the prominent clan leaders plotted to have him assassinated. Ishaq writes that it was then that [the Creator] gave him permission to migrate.

Just as he faced increased opposition in Mecca, Muhammad was presented with a rare opportunity to carry his message beyond his immediate surroundings. In 621, the nearest caravan city, Medina, which suffered from internal warfare, sent a delegation to convince him to come and spread his message there. But it would take another visit to cement the idea. In her book, *The First Muslim: The Story of Muhammad*, author Lesley Hazelton writes:

> "By the time of the next *hajj*, in early June 622, the Medinan deputation to Muhammad had swelled to seventy-two clan leaders; the number alone testified to how serious they were. But, both sides needed assurances. If the Medinans were to pledge full alliance and protection, they would have to be willing to back up their pledge with force if necessary. And as the leader of the Meccan believers, Muhammad would have to do the same…. And so it was done. Muhammad was no longer bound to the Quraysh or to Mecca. He had formally bound himself to Medina, and Medina to him. They had sworn themselves to full protection and help, *nasr* in Arabic. The Medinan believers would thus be known as the *ansar*, the 'helpers,' while the Meccans who came with Muhammad would become the *muhajirun*, the 'emigrants.' "

In his book, *A History of the Middle Ages: 300 to 1500*, John M. Riddle writes:

> "[Muhammad] began his 'emigration' to Medina from Mecca on July 16, 622, the day that begins the new Muslim year and the year 1 AH, for 'after *Hijra*,' literally meaning after the 'severed relationship,' or, more loosely, after the 'emigration.' "

To this, Lesley Hazelton adds:

> "That summer of 622, the *Hijra*—sometimes written in English as 'hegira'—began.

> The word is usually translated as ‘emigration,’ but its Arabic root *hajar* carries great psychological weight. It means, ‘to cut oneself off from something,’ with all the wrenching pain that the term implies. Indeed, the Qur’an would eventually see the emigrants as having been expelled from Mecca. The Quraysh disbelievers ‘have driven out the messenger and yourselves from your homes,’ it would say. This would feel more like exile than emigration.”

Upon arrival in Medina, Muhammad suddenly became not only a religious leader in the eyes of his followers, but a civil authority to unbelieving Medinans as well. Those who followed him, however, were known as the *umma*, and they were the most powerful community in Medina, though all were promised equal rights by Muhammad, whether they were male or female, believer or unbeliever. That said, unlike Hebraic Messianism or Christianity, which had no kingdom or cities to call their own upon their inception, Islam had Medina. It was practically Muhammad’s city. But with so many having followed him by emigrating from Mecca, that being some two hundred families, there was not enough food to go around. To acquire needed food and supplies some Muslims resorted to raiding caravans that wound their way through Medina.

Of this, John M. Riddle writes:

> “The raid was a longstanding rite of passage among Arabic youths, whereby neighboring herdsmen and traders were attacked clandestinely, usually resulting in an animal or two stolen with some risk to life and limb. In January 624, Muhammad led a raid and achieved a great victory, much booty, and many prisoners…. In 626, Muhammad successfully defended against a larger army attack, but by now able generals, among them Abû Bakr, his father-in-law, assisted him. Thus, the tradition was established of using arms to extend his message, and the youthful raid was transformed into a *jihâd*, or a struggle to extend Islam.”

Before long, the numerous tribes throughout Arabia would be unified under Muhammad and his successors. Islam would be the glue that would bind them, and *jihâd* would be the means of Muslim domination throughout the ancient Near East, replacing Byzantium as the master of that vast region. Just as the west had suffered the Germanic invasions as a form of judgment, the east would suffer an invasion of the Arab variety.

Peace came to Arabia under Muhammad, as tribe after tribe joined his *umma*, setting aside their personal disputes in favor of their surrender to what they believed was a higher calling: Islam. Even his former home, and the city of his birth, Mecca, opened its gates to him in 630, allowing his army to enter without violence. He came to be seen as a prophet and religious leader there also. The Muslims of Arabia now had a common identity, and it was the Israelites of the settlement of Yathrib, which came to be called Medina, meaning city, who informed Muhammad that he and his people were thought to be the descendants of Abraham through his son Ishmael.

Muhammad thought highly of the Israelites at first, and held that theirs was an older revelation, on which his new revelation had built. Even Jerusalem, which ranked third among the three most sacred sites to Muslims was held in high regard. In the beginning, Muhammad taught his followers to prostrate themselves in prayer and turn toward Jerusalem, for the Ka’aba in Mecca was contaminated by idols, so they were to focus their attention on the spiritual center of the Israelites instead, that being Jerusalem.

Mecca had been considered the most sacred place even before Muhammad or Islam came into being. Worship in the city centered on the Ka'aba, a cube-shaped granite shrine that, in Muhammad's time, was dedicated to the Nabatean deity Hubal, which was surrounded by a pantheon of lesser deities. Allah was but one of the many deities Arabs served at the time. Within the wall of the Ka'aba was the famed Black Stone, thought to be a meteorite that had dropped from the sky, and therefore linked heaven with earth in the mind of the Arabs. Worshippers trotted in a circle in the direction of the sun, seven times, long before Muhammad, and when Islam was formulated, it simply absorbed these pagan religious symbols and practices. It was for these very reasons that Muhammad taught his followers to pray toward Jerusalem. In January of 624, all of that changed. The Israelites of Medina were resolute in their position: they would never accept Muhammad as a prophet, nor his new religion. Muhammad and his *umma* severed ties with the ancient Israelites, and from then on, Muslims were commanded to face Mecca instead.

Professor Thomas F. X. Noble, who teaches history at the University of Notre Dame, says:

> "It's very interesting the way Muhammad always tried to leave a certain amount of room for the great old city of Mecca. In some ways he had rejected that city, in some ways that city had rejected him; in other ways he always tried to embrace that city, as indeed it would finally come to embrace him. At the very beginning, by the way, it appears that Muhammad had set the direction of prayer as Jerusalem, and then it was Mecca."

In his later quest to build his authority in Medina, Muhammad displayed his disdain for the obstinate Israelites by exiling or slaughtering a great number of them. Regardless of their refusal to accept Islam, the new religion, like Christianity itself, was in fact built on the beliefs and practices of Israelites. With regard to Islam, Professor Noble goes on to say:

> "The powerful sense of a day of judgment—of a day of judgment at the end of time; the notion of fasting; the emphasis on self-renunciation, and on the needs of the community; the notion of prayer in the direction of a 'holy' city; these are all clear borrowings."

Borrowings of the very Israelites Muhammad chose to exile and slaughter, though they were clearly "the people of the book" even to Muslim understanding. By the time of Muhammad's death on June 6, 632, nearly the whole of Arabia was united under his leadership. But with his passing, the spirit of tribal warfare resurfaced within the *umma*, threatening to split it apart. Muhammad had no male heirs and named no successors, and since he declared himself the final prophet, none could rightfully claim his prophetic office. But that didn't stop the rise of a few self-proclaimed "prophets" bent on challenging Muhammad's previous authority. These Arabs splintered from the *umma*.

Abu Bakr, Muhammad's old friend, and the father of his wife, Aishah, was elected by the Meccan elites to be his successor.

> "But the election was not uncontested …"

Writes Susan Wise Bauer.

> "… other Muslims, primarily in Mecca, wanted to appoint Ali ibn Abu Talib, Muhammad's son-in-law, who was busy washing Muhammad's body and mourning his death while the gathering was electing Abu Bakr. It is not entirely clear what Ali himself thought of the situation…. Either way, a number of Arabs resisted Abu Bakr's leadership, with or without Ali's support. Abu Bakr reacted not as a prophet, but as a general. He divided his own followers into eleven armed groups under eleven competent commanders, and assigned each one the task of subduing, by force, the areas where resistance to his leadership was making itself known."

Several tribes in Medina who followed Muhammad saw more in him than his religion, and with Muhammad gone, they were not inclined to yield to or acknowledge the new successor (or *khalifah*) Abu Bakr and his regime; nor were they inclined to start paying a new religious tax (or *zakat*) being imposed. But in the end, force won out, and Abu Bakr was successful in subjugating all those now considered to be apostates, or *ridda*. Of this, Professor Noble says:

> "Now what came to be known, in Islamic tradition, as the Ridda War—from 632 – 634—Abu Bakr suppressed the revolt throughout Arabia. Basically, all of Arabia was returned to allegiance to the Medinan leadership of the *umma*. Henceforth, interestingly enough, Muslims could not raid one another. Now, they had been doing this for centuries, now they were not to raid one another. And here, in some quite interesting ways, were laid—during the Ridda Wars; so just in a year or two of Muhammad's death—the preconditions for the great expansion. A Meccan-Medinan elite would lead the Bedouin—the *umma Muslima*—in wars of conquest."

Collectively, the Muslims focused their energies and attention outward, and the armies began to strike into settled territory bordering the eastern Mediterranean. They captured Damascus and Jerusalem within a few years, and within another decade, Arab domination would be imposed on Egypt and Syria—provinces of the eastern Roman Empire. And the Persian Empire, which then consisted roughly of what is Iraq and Iran today, would come under domination as well and effectively be destroyed. By the 690s, the Muslims were striking into North Africa, which they captured. Indeed, Arab expansion seemed altogether unstoppable, and it is no question that this was ordained by Yah, mostly as a judgment on the known Christian world, particularly in the east. By the year 720, their rule stretched from the Pyrenees along the border between France and Spain to the Punjab of modern northwestern India and Pakistan, and from Morocco on the Atlantic coast to the Hindu Kush mountains in today's northern Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Once a collection of nomadic tribes who opposed one another as they eked out their survival on the harsh steppes of the Arabian Peninsula, the Arabs now sought more fertile and well-watered lands. The Byzantine and Persian powers had long held them in check, however, together with their bitter personal conflicts. But Muhammad, his successors, and Islam had unified the Arabs, and the two great powers, Byzantium and Persia, had exhausted each other in lengthy wars. There was never a more perfect moment to strike than the decade in which they chose to do so.

> "The Byzantine Empire and the Persian Empire were exhausted after their wars with one another in the sixth and early seventh centuries."

Says Professor Philip Daileader.

> "The Byzantine Empire, which was still suffering from bubonic plague, was not really in a shape for another major war, neither was the Persian Empire, yet that is what they both faced as a result of the eruption of the Arabs. Had the Byzantine Empire and the Persian faced the Arabs a hundred years earlier or a hundred years later, things might have turned out rather differently."

While the Muslims were successful in capturing Byzantine provinces within their eastern empire, Philip Daileader adds that:

> "They did not succeed, however in capturing Constantinople. Like so many groups before and then afterward, Constantinople was simply too tough a nut for them to crack. The Arabs certainly tried besieging Constantinople in 674, and launching a massive attack against Constantinople in 717 and 718, but, once again, thanks to its magnificent defensive position, Constantinople was able to hold out against these attacks."

That said, their overall conquest is still quite impressive. In fact, so successful was their collective Arab invasion, that the many nations and territories they managed to seize within the first century of expansion remained in their power indefinitely. Well, all but one. Professor Noble explains:

> "It's very interesting to keep in mind, that with the exception of Spain, and in Spain, the Reconquista—that is to say the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula by Christians from Muslims—the reconquest in Spain took eight hundred years. But every other territory conquered by the Muslims in this explosive first century, remained Islamic, and remains Islamic, today."

Over time, these conquests comprised a vast empire which we call the Islamic Caliphate. But during the Arab expansion, various caliphs came and went, while the caliphate faced internal problems. Several prominent families with ties to Muhammad vied for control over the centuries. Author Chris Wickham, in his book *Medieval Europe*, writes:

> "The actual politics of the caliphate were not as stable as the structure of the state. The immediate successors of Muhammad maintained a central control over army strategy and resources, which was effective, but was resented by the armies flush with success and wealth. When the caliph Uthman was murdered by dissident troops in 656, civil war followed, and an interruption in Arab expansion. In 661, Muawiya, Uthman's cousin, from the Umayyad family, distant relatives of Muhammad, won that war and became caliph (661–80); the Umayyads, based in Damascus in Syria, continued to rule for nearly a century….
>
> "[T]he Umayyads were defeated in 750 and almost wiped out as a family, and a new family took over the caliphal office, the Abbasids, who were descendants of Muhammad's uncle and thought to be much closer to Muslim religious legitimacy. (The Alids, descendants of Muhammad himself via his daughter Fatima, expected to

> be the beneficiaries of the revolt, but were not, and remained after that, for the most part, a permanently disappointed family, although with considerable religious and social prestige.) The Abbasid family would hold the caliphal title for centuries to come, until it was seized from them by the Ottomans in 1517…."

Seeing Arab control of conquered lands has held throughout time, reaching down to the modern day, we can see that they are among the clay toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue in Daniel 2, alongside the iron toes of the vestiges of the Roman Empire, which itself still exists as well. These and other powers that comprise the other clay toes, will be ruling until the very day that the stone kingdom of true Israel, prophesied in Daniel 2:34 and 44 – 45, will destroy them all.

CHAPTER 16

UNDER MUSLIM RULE

WITH THE MUSLIM CONQUEST, the lands under their control were altered, and certain advancements were made, the first of which were in the spheres of education and learning. Unlike the barbarian invasions in the western part of the empire, and much of Europe, where illiteracy thrived as knowledge was destroyed, the conquered Arab lands experienced an explosion of learning and literacy. From the eighth to the tenth centuries, this advancement continued, and Arabic became the default language throughout almost the entire caliphate. From the Atlantic to the Pacific, or at least to the Indian Ocean, Arabic was the primary form of study and communication in the conquered lands, replacing Latin, Greek, and other languages native to those lands.

> "The attitude toward learning resulted in a burst of intellectual energy, as witnessed by a few of the Arabic words that became a part of the vocabulary in Europe, regardless of language."

Writes John M. Riddle in *A History of the Middle Ages*.

> "Some examples are *alcohol*, *elixir*, *algebra*, *zero*, *nadir*, *zenith*, *almanac*, and *chemistry*. From the Arabs, Europe learned of paper, the clock, and numerous medical innovations, including new drugs. Because of Arabic-to-Latin translations, medieval Europe came to know Greek science texts, often accompanied by commentaries from an Arabic writer."

Those Greek texts were introduced to medieval Europe through Muslims because Muslim learning was based largely on Greek concepts, and they developed a love of Greek learning superior to their love of other cultures. Under Muslim conquest, strides were made in the fields of science, agriculture, engineering and technology, medicine, and mathematics as well. Indeed, with the coming of the Muslims, which followed the invasions of the various barbarian tribes, the post-Roman world was effectively split into three distinct power blocks: barbarian-controlled Europe, the Islamic Caliphate, and the remaining Roman holdover, Byzantium.

> "One of the major themes in medieval history from the seventh to the twelfth centuries was the relationship and interaction among these three cultural, economic, linguistic, and religious groupings."

Writes Norman F. Cantor in *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*.

> "In various degrees each of these civilizations was an heir of the late Roman Empire. Byzantium exemplifies the most direct continuation of Roman law, administration,

> and thought. Western Europe also inherited many Roman traditions, and Islam absorbed some aspects of Roman imperial organization and the better part of the philosophy and science of Greece and Rome."

In other words, these power blocks became the toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue in Daniel 2, as would the papacy upon its emergence as a dominant player in western Europe.

A vast number of Christians in the east learned to live under Islamic rule. Islam still influences the eastern churches that survive today, and in a small way that influence extends to Spain, which the Arabs conquered and later lost. The success they enjoyed in the eastern and southern Mediterranean broke the grip the eastern Roman Empire held over that region, and whatever unity was enjoyed was interrupted and reshaped. The west was also forced to grapple with the Arab incursion, though they were able to halt its progress for the most part. In the west, the story was a bit different: the Franks were forced to tighten their military and political structure, which allowed them to dominate, and the papacy looked to them as a means of support when it too developed into an independent state. At its height, the church established five patriarchates. During Justinian's reign, the term came into official use and meant that there were five main religious heads or patriarchs established in five of the most important or influential regions in the realm, both east and west. These patriarchs were the heads of five churches located in Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. With the coming of the Arabs …

> "Three of the five ancient patriarchates—Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria—seemed to have vanished, though the patriarchs in those cities continued, with restrictions, to function"

Writes Kevin Madigan in *Medieval Christianity*.

> "Only Rome (which would experience Muslim raids in the ninth century) and Constantinople (which would experience them much more often) remained. Conquered so rapidly, many of these lands would be fought over for much of the Middle Ages."

Penetration of the Arabs into the west—well, north of the Pyrenees mountains located between France and Spain—was halted by the Franks in 733, almost exactly a century after the death of Muhammad in 632. It would prove to be the century of their greatest expansion.

Many Christians who were previously under Byzantine domination gladly welcomed the Arabs as liberators. In fact, in the lands of early Christendom, that being Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, Christianity had been brought to a low level that left it a shallow husk rife with doctrinal controversies and sectarianism. In these very lands, pagan practices and beliefs were packaged with Christian ones, along with blasphemous prayers to various saints, unwarranted reverence for Yeshua's mother, Mary, and even the use of amulets and other relics and features of supposed magic. No wonder then, that when adherents to the new Muslim religion stormed into these regions proclaiming Muhammad as the last true prophet, many eagerly welcomed this shift and embraced Islam. The Muslims expressed a strict monotheistic belief that did not abide superstitious practices. For many, this seemed like a higher religious ideal when contrasted to the shallow Christianity that pervaded the land. But with the new Arab rulers came a new system of taxation. Chris Wickham, in his book *Medieval Europe* writes:

> “From as early as the 640s, the caliphs seem to have decided that the Arab armies would not settle on the land, as Germanic groups had done earlier, but instead were to be settled in cities and paid directly from taxation.… The practice of supporting the army, the ruling class and the state by a sophisticated system of taxation never failed in the Arab world. This had the significant initial benefit of separating the Arabs from the local societies of non-Arabs and non-Muslims, who hugely outnumbered them, and in fact the Arabs were never absorbed by them.”

In this way, the Arab caliphate spread its policy and grew immensely rich through its fiscal and administrative systems. Altogether, the Arab caliphates were the richest and most powerful of all the rulers of the Mediterranean world for half a millennium. Not only did the Muslims control the lands which they conquered, but their religion was able to spread in many of those lands and be embraced by its Christian citizens, which was a blow to the church. One of the reasons for Islam’s appeal among Christians is similar to the appeal of monasticism to monks: a rigorous ethic and austere theology.

What is true too is that many Christians converted simply to avoid the consequences that would surely befall all those who refused to bow to the new conquerors. These and other factors caused the oldest Christian centers in the ancient world to switch faiths, and that included Christians tied to the churches of Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa itself. Christianity, however, did not disappear altogether in these conquered lands. It would continue to exist in pockets within these Islamic territories, being practiced by a smattering of Christian groups, as it is to this day.

Islam means “submission,” with the idea that one is to submit oneself to the Most High. But this is not a concept original to the Arab religion. Muhammad, while employed as a merchant, traveled far and wide and came into contact with people of other faiths: Christians, Zoroastrians of the Persian belief, and especially Israelites. Israelite customs were a great influence to Islam, and the Israelite Scriptures, and even the Messianic Writings, first spoke of submission to Yah.

> 7 Submit yourselves therefore to Elohim.
>
> —James 4:7

> 11 “But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me.”
>
> —Psalm 81:11

The Qur’an, however, delineates from the Scriptures in several ways. The picture of the rewards in the hereafter are certainly divergent. Like the Scriptures …

> “The Koran sets down a long series of regulations on the daily life of the Moslem.”

Writes Norman F. Cantor.

> “The Moslem is to refrain from drinking and gambling, he is not to practice usury in business, and generally he is to deal with his fellow humans according to the highest precepts of justice and mercy….”

But …

> "[W]hereas the Hebraic concept of heaven is extremely vague and the Christian concept of heaven is purely ethereal and spiritual, the Koranic picture of heaven is both specific in detail and highly attractive to human desires. In fact, the Moslem is promised a heaven in which he can partake of pleasures denied him in this world; he may drink; gamble; and enjoy the company of beautiful black-eyed maidens, who are mentioned several times in the Koran as rewards promised to the most worthy members of the faith."

With promises of this nature, it is no wonder that many Arab males, much less men outside the culture, flocked to the religion in the high hopes of reversing their fortunes on the other side of this existence. *Jihad* meant certain eternal pleasures to Arab warriors, and even the rigid, austere nature of the religion held high appeal for Christians who now viewed their own superficial religion with disfavor.

Just two hundred years after Muhammad's death the many churches along the eastern and southern Mediterranean—the Orthodox and heretical Greek persuasions—lost both their influence and large memberships and in fact became negligible. By 900 CE, the Latin churches of North Africa followed suit and very nearly disappeared. The many churches in southern Spain —renamed Andalusia by the Arabs—lost a vast number of Christians as well.

A tenth-century Spanish Christian writer recounts that the reason many young Spaniards embraced Islam was not due to their political aims but to the literature and culture of the Arabs, which was quite attractive at the time. What is truly interesting is that, what can be considered the very heartland of Islamic civilization today, those very lands on the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, were once dominated by deep-rooted Christian philosophy and theology, thanks to giants like Philo, Eusebius, and Augustine of Hippo. Augustine's own region in North Africa became supremely Islamic, being awash with Muslim culture and language. This utter rejection and stripping away of such Christian influences undid centuries of labor in a relatively short period of time. But this was not mere happenstance. From the moment the Muslims rose to power, they would continue to be a dominant religious, political, and economic force alongside other existing and future powers, per the dictates of Scripture prophecy. As Chris Wickham aptly puts it:

> "[W]hat the Arab conquests created was a third major player in western Eurasia, one which was more powerful than the previously dominant one, the (eastern) Roman empire, and one with which everyone would have to deal in the future."

The concept of *jihad*, which propelled the Arab conquests more than anything, must be understood from an eighth-century perspective. The kind of activity we see today among radical Muslims, which is credited to *jihad*, differs somewhat from its medieval counterpart. Professor Philip Daileader elaborates on the origin and development of the seventh- and eighth-century concept:

> "The word *jihad* appears in the Qur'an about four times, and that's it, and it doesn't even always refer to military effort then. It does not, in other words, play a prominent role in the Qur'an. The idea of the *jihad* is worked out after Muhammad's death, and it is worked out in a specific historical context. It is worked out at a time when it looks as though the Arabs are going to conquer the whole of the known world.

> According to the theory of *jihad*, developed by these scholars in the seventh and eighth centuries, there should be only one state in the world: an Islamic state in which Islamic rule is observed. And the reason for this is that the world should mirror, as closely as possible, the perfect unity of the one Allah."

Having converted the polytheistic Arab worship to the monotheistic Muslim religion, the idea in the minds of these framers was that, since there was only one Creator being—who, as it turns out, favored their people over all others—there should be only one Islamic state in the world. The problem was that, during the time these Arab scholars were developing their theory, there was actually not a single, unified Islamic state.

> "Instead it is divided into two parts."

Says Professor Daileader.

> "One, those territories where Islamic rulers are in control and where Islamic law is observed—and scholars refer to this as the House of Islam or the *Dar al-Islam*. The other area refers to the parts of the world where non-Muslims are ruling, following various types of law, and this part of the world is known as the *Dar al-harb*, or the House of War. According to the theory of *jihad*, developed in the seventh and eighth centuries, the House of Islam had to absorb the House of War and take it over so that there would be a single Islamic state and Islamic law would be observed throughout the world, and the purpose of *jihad* is to accomplish this. *Jihad* is the religious duty falling upon every Muslim. Muslim rulers under this doctrine of *jihad* are forbidden to have peaceful relations with their neighbors extending for more than ten years—at most you could sign a truce of ten years—but ultimately your goal must be to conquer these territories. And those who die fighting on behalf of this ideal are to be considered martyrs."

This is where the reward of those beautiful black-eyed maidens comes into play, which many Christians of the era saw as nothing more than a carnal expression of an idolatrous religion. A clear case of the pot calling the kettle black and all that. At any rate, the concept of *jihad* in the eighth century, rather than being a means to a religious end, was instead a means to a political one. Victory over unbelievers was the main goal of a single Islamic state. While pagans were supposed to be eradicated or converted to the Muslim faith upon threat of death, Israelites and Christians (because their prior revelations were acknowledged by Muhammad) were eventually allowed to exist under Muslim rule with their own beliefs and practices intact, but they were expressly forbidden to attempt to convert Muslims to their religions.

In this way, the Islamic world could and would remain multi-religious indefinitely. Even the most forward-thinking Muslims of that day did not conceive of a worldwide Muslim faith where everyone would be converted to Islam. Today, some fear that Muslim domination will be ignited once more, and that Islam will spread throughout the whole world via the advance of Arab forces bent on terrorism in the guise of *jihad*, but prophecy assures that this will never happen. The Muslims have since been checked, as have all powerful nations and movements. There will be no one-world government but Yah's. We go into greater detail concerning this subject in our mini-doc *Bring on the New World Order!* Be sure to view that video in addition to reading this

chapter.

Why the eighth-century concept of *jihad* became more political than religious is based on the special tax that was imposed on Israelites and Christians residing in conquered lands. That tax was called the *jizyah*, and it ran counter to any hopes of Israelite or Christian conversions to Islam, because the Islamic rulers forbade such conversions in order to allow for the steady flow of tax revenue from the two lucrative sources.

Now, given all this …

> "Although the *jihad* was very important in the first century of Islam's existence, it burned itself out by the early eighth century."

Says Philip Daileader.

> "As the boundaries of the House of Islam extended so far in so many different directions it was impossible to maintain the sort of dynamism that had existed shortly after Muhammad's death. And by the early eighth century, Muslim rulers were establishing regular diplomatic contacts with their non-Muslim neighbors, and they would remain at peace with those neighbors for periods of more than ten years, and they would abandon any pretense that they were ever going to try to incorporate the House of War into the House of Islam. The theory of *jihad* became a dead letter after the early eighth century, but it's still on the books, and it can be called upon in the future—revived—whenever the Islamic world feels itself to be threatened. One such period would be the Crusades, when the theory of *jihad* is revived by Islamic leaders who try and rally Muslims against westerners who have arrived in Syria and Palestine."

The religious aims of the Islamic rulers took a back seat to their political and economic aims, and that continues to be the case today. It is all about power and wealth. Instead of working toward the establishment of one Islamic state where Islam would hold sway over all, the rulers were content to collect their various taxes and enjoy diplomatic relations with their neighbors. The irony of this is that, right up to the middle of the eighth century, there continued to be one central authority over the vast territories and peoples the Arabs had conquered. That authority stemmed from the caliph, whose capital was in Damascus. But a shift began to take place. Some of the non-Arabic peoples in those conquered lands, having converted to Islam, no longer wanted to be subject to the lower-class status of non-Muslims. They wanted to share control of the vast government of the Islamic empire, and they desired equality with the respected Arab warriors who made the conquests possible.

> "Finally, in the middle of the eighth century the subject peoples revolted against the caliph of the Omayyad dynasty, who ruled from Damascus …"

Writes Norman F. Cantor.

> "… and a new dynasty, the Abbasids, who were mainly Persian in background seized the title of caliph and set up a new capital in Baghdad."

We touched on this in our last chapter. Norman F. Cantor goes on to say:

> "The supplanting of the Omayyad by the Abbasid dynasty was a signal for revolt and political decentralization throughout the Islamic world, and by the end of the ninth century, instead of one great Arabic empire, the Islamic world was divided into several states. The rulers of these states continued to respect the caliph as the successor of the Prophet, but the political power in the Islamic world had now fallen into the hands of various despotic princes. Among these princes was the ruler in Spain, where the Omayyad dynasty alone had managed to prevail. The Mediterranean world was now united by the Arabic religion and language, and it formed a great international economic system, but the Arabic civilization was no longer a political entity. From the eighth century the term *Arabic* identifies a great civilization on the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean to which many peoples—Greek, Persian, Syrian, Egyptian, and Berber, as well as Arab—contributed."

So the idea of a single Islamic state gave way to several states that were governed by various princes and populated by peoples of varying ethnicities and beliefs. What is more, Islam was further fragmented, not merely politically and geographically, but religiously as well. Of this, Norman F. Cantor writes:

> "The caliph's position as the religious leader of Islam became a purely nominal one. By the end of the ninth century three distinct traditions and groups had emerged within the Moslem religious community, which by and large still prevail."

The first of those three traditions is the orthodox position, which attempted a strict adherence to the Qur'an and its perceived revelation. In addition to this, the orthodox position also adopted the sayings, or Hadith, of Muhammad, which contain the accounts of his daily practice, known as the Sunna (meaning "tradition"), hence the orthodox branch and dominant majority of Islam: the Sunnis. The Qur'an and Hadith are the basis for Islamic Law, or *shariah*. It was the task of the caliph to uphold this orthodoxy among the people, but that duty fell to a group of teachers of Islam who could be compared to the rabbis who upheld the tradition of the Talmud. Their emulation of these rabbis is a clear sign of the leaven of the Pharisees continuing its prophetic spread. As to the second of the three groups that emerged within the Muslim community, Professor F. X. Noble of the University of Notre Dame says:

> "In Islamic tradition, the first four caliphs—Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali (from 634 – 661)—are called the *Rashidun*, 'the rightly guided Caliphs.' But it's interesting that the last three were murdered. Moreover, when Ali was murdered, the seeds were sown for the eventual 'party of Ali,' the Shi'a. Now, it's quite a while before the Shiite-Sunni division in the Islamic world becomes a factor of real consequence. It's the murder of Ali in 661, which plants the seed out of which that contention would eventually grow."

The tradition of the Shia, followed especially in Iran, reject the first three caliphs and consider the fourth, Ali, to be the first true successor of Muhammed. The third religious group that emerged in Islam, Sufism, is akin to ancient Kabbalah among the Israelites, or the Occult in Christianity. Sufism is the esoteric dimension of Islam through which its followers seek a mystical union with the Creator. These, therefore, are the three major branches of Islam that have

come down to our day. Together, they are a far cry from the united, single-state vision representing the loftiest Islamic ideal. When religions, groups, movements, and governments cannot find unity within themselves, there is no hope that they will be able to unite the world beyond them.

Yah alone will bring true unity at the end of this age.

CHAPTER 17

THE CAROLINGIANS

IN FRANCIA, THE LAND OF THE FRANKS—the mightiest of all the barbarian kingdoms—a king named Clovis had risen to power and united them, thus expanding the Merovingian dynasty, named after a fifth-century Frankish ruler, Meroveus (also known as Merovech) the grandfather of Clovis. We touched on Clovis's reign in chapter 11. As a final act, Clovis divided his kingdom between his four sons, who successfully completed their father's work of conquering all of Gaul, which extended to Burgundy and Provence, but infighting among the four brothers followed. With the death of his three brothers, Clothar gained control of Clovis's kingdom, but he too divided it as an inheritance among his four sons, who were established in four capital cities. One of the sons, who was King of Paris (a city among the four capitals) died, leaving Neustria in the western Frankish territory, Germanic Austrasia in the eastern portion, and Burgundy, with its capital in Orleans.

During the seventh century, the Frankish kingdom was in serious decline, but Clothar's grandson, Clothar II, managed to unite the kingdom once more, and he was succeeded by a powerful ruler, his son Dagobert; but thereafter, the Merovingian dynasty would finally lose steam. What followed was a series of juvenile "Do-Nothing-Kings," as they were famously labeled. Because of their age and inexperience, these young kings forced the creation of a new office, the mayor of the palace, taken up by the chief officials of each royal household. The mayors of Neustria, Austrasia, and Burgundy soon superseded the authority of the kings and made the three regions more independent. In time, the mayors of Austrasia became a hereditary office, much like a royal dynasty, but their authority was still checked by a collection of nobles.

The founder of this new mayoral dynasty was an ancestor of the Carolingians named Pepin, who was mayor when Dagobert was a young king over Austrasia. When Pepin's son Grimoald became mayor in his stead, he made a vain attempt to seize the throne of the Merovingian king, but the Austrasian nobility thwarted his efforts and had him executed. Though the kings were weak, they were not to be deposed. Of this, Professor Thomas F. Madden says:

> "The kings of the Franks were a family which historians refer to as the Merovingians. And these kings were completely powerless, and had been powerless for a long time, but Frankish law, or Germanic law, did not allow someone to depose these kings because—from a Germanic perspective—the kingship of these kings was in their blood; they were born with this special royal blood, and getting rid of them would be bad."

In 687, Pepin's grandson, Pepin II, became mayor of the palace and amassed near absolute power in his position. Pepin II further consolidated his power by warring with the rival mayor of Neustria, whom he defeated in a battle that marked the end of Merovingian opposition. Pepin II

successfully united the Frankish kingdom yet again, this time establishing his grandsons as mayors of Neustria and Austrasia. His grandsons, however, proved to be less capable than he had hoped, and after his death, it fell to Pepin's illegitimate son, Charles Martel, to restore order.

> "And Martel is not his last name, it's a nickname: 'the Hammer.' "

Says Christopher M. Bellitto, professor of history at Kean University in Union, NJ.

> "And he had this name 'the Hammer,' because—kind of like Stonewall Jackson—he could stop anybody that other people couldn't stop. And Charles Martel's greatest exercise of his 'Hammer' capability came in the year 732 at the battle of—well—Poitiers or Tours. It takes place on a field in between the two, and each of them tries to claim the city for tourism dollars. But the Muslims are taking over what is today Saudi Arabia in the modern boundaries; taking over what had been the eastern: the area of the Holy Land; southern: North Africa; and western: Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal)—portions of the Roman Empire. Now they're going into Europe and nobody can stop them. And Charles Martel brings a group of people together; he's allowed to stop them like a hammer. They fall back over the Pyrenees, and then the story of Medieval Spain and Portugal—from 732 – 1492—is the story of what is called the Reconquista—the Spanish Catholics pushing the Muslims out."

Some contemporary historians have set the date for the Battle of Tours as October of 733, which is the year we decided on in our last chapter. Charles Martel was a Christian, and he looked favorably upon the church, which he endowed and supported. He even encouraged Anglo-Saxon missionary efforts to the north, in the hopes of converting yet more barbarians to the Catholic faith, in this case, Germans in Thuringia. On the other hand, he viewed himself as the head of the Frankish church, which was a direct challenge to the authority of the bishop of Rome: the pope. But he controlled lands that supported warriors and soldiers who were the church's main line of defense, so who was going to argue with Charles Martel? Though he was not a king in name (he still held the office of mayor of the palace) Charles Martel ruled like his father Pepin II: autocratically, but he too divided his lands between his sons Carloman and Pepin III.

Charles Martel used his power to depose bishops and funnel ecclesiastical revenue to himself, which he used to finance his own enterprises. So large a figure was he that the Carolingian dynasty is named for him, not the more famous Charles, or Charlemagne, who would later succeed him. Unlike other mayors of the palace, Charles Martel also used his authority to leave the throne of the Merovingian king vacant, which paved the way for the Carolingians to assume totalitarian supremacy over Frankish territories. Writing in *Medieval Christianity*, Kevin Madigan adds:

> "When the titular Merovingian king died in 737, Charles chose not to replace him. This, perhaps more than the Battle of Tours, was to have great significance for the future of Europe and for the church. For this non-act was to allow his son to claim a vacant throne, announce that he was king, and begin to establish the Carolingian dynasty … which would change the face of Europe and shape the history of early-medieval Christianity."

This is no exaggeration. We see the beginnings of this historic change with Charles Martel's direct successor, his son, Pepin III. His other son, Carloman, retired to a monastery in 747, leaving Pepin—also called "the Short," or "the Younger"—sole house mayor during the reign of the last "do-nothing" Merovingian king, Childeric III, who had filled the vacant throne. Pepin was not content with the idea of being mayor only. He wanted to sit a king, since the actual king was less powerful than he was. Intent on affixing the royal title to himself to go along with his rulership, the very year his brother abdicated, Pepin sent a Frankish council to inquire into canon law by obtaining an audience with Pope Zachary. By making this overture to the papacy, a new page was being written with regard to Frankish-Papal relations, which had suffered under previous mayors of the palace.

So Pepin's council put a few questions to the pope.

> "And one of the questions he's really interested in is: is it really right for someone who has no power to call himself the king, and someone who has all the power to not be the king?"

Says Professor Thomas F. Madden.

> "And the pope, Zachary, understood what this meant, and he affirmed that in his judgment, Pepin, because he had all of the authority, could depose the Merovingian king and be crowned himself. Now, Pepin took that and ran with it."

Notwithstanding the centuries of tradition that had held within Frankish society, where the blood of kings was revered, all of the players involved in overthrowing the old order had something to gain from establishing the Carolingians as the new dynasty. Whatever might be said of Pepin's drive to seek the throne—though he sought the blessing of the pope to achieve his end, and was given it—the move was not according to Germanic protocol.

> "However little power the Merovingians had by now … the tradition of their rule was 250 years old; … this was a coup."

Writes Chris Wickham in his book, *Medieval Europe*.

> "Pippin and his heirs spent time covering this up, and so did their historians; maybe the pope himself had agreed to it in advance; maybe the aristocracy had agreed to Pippin being anointed by Archbishop Boniface of Mainz.… This set the tone for Carolingian political action ever after, for, without the support of the church, they were just another aristocratic family, even if by far the most prominent one in Francia. The commitment to an ecclesiastical vision of politics followed."

After all was said and done, the last Merovingian king, Childeric, was deposed and sent to a monastery. Pepin, not wanting to seem presumptuous among his own people, called an assembly of the Franks, consisting of the church laity, who unanimously chose him as the new king. To make things official, Archbishop Boniface anointed and crowned Pepin, declaring the act the grace of the Almighty. For Pepin, however, this was still not enough. To fully legitimize his crowning, Pepin, in 754, was honored with a visit from the next pope, Stephen II, who traveled north to personally anoint him and his two sons in a papal ceremony at an abbey near Paris. The

anointing was seen as something divine, replacing the pagan traditions that had preceded it in Frankish history.

While Pepin wore ecclesiastical vestments, Pope Stephen blessed his sword, scepter, ring, and crown, and he was anointed with the same oil used in the consecration of bishops. Pepin, however, felt himself above both bishops and priests. During the anointing, Pope Stephen declared Pepin and his sons to be the "patricians of Rome," their responsibility as royals chiefly being to protect Rome from its main enemy: the Lombards. In return, Pepin openly declared that lands stretching from Rome to Ravenna was the rightful property of the papacy. These lands actually belonged to the eastern Roman emperor in Constantinople, but it was argued that he had failed to properly defend them and so his ownership had been forfeited.

Pope Stephen, greatly advanced in age, had traveled north for another purpose. He sought to enlist the aid of Pepin in making good on his new Roman patrician status by facing off against the Lombards for control of the contested papal lands that would form "the Patrimony of Peter," which would go from being papal private lands to lands under papal civil jurisdiction, thanks to the Franks. Pepin led his army toward Italy in the spring of 755, and he successfully outmaneuvered the Lombards and lay siege to the town of its king, on whom he subsequently forced a harsh set of terms. When the king refused to keep his pledge, Pepin marched toward Italy again and handily defeated the Lombards.

Before long, envoys from Byzantium, sent by the eastern emperor Constantine V, visited Pepin and demanded, on behalf of the emperor, that Ravenna be restored to him. Ravenna, they claimed, had once been in the emperor's possession prior to the Lombard conquest of northern Italy. But Pepin, who had already given the land to the pope—an act known as "the Donation of Pepin"—refused. He had won back the land for Peter in an attempt to have his sins pardoned, he explained, and nothing would induce him to take back what he had given to Peter. The Byzantine envoys withdrew and Constantine V had to live with the decision. East and west were further divided as a result, but the alliance between the Franks and the Roman papacy was forged, and the papal states had officially come into existence as a legal entity.

In his book, *Germany: A History*, author Francis Russell gives us the next development in our Carolingian narrative.

> "Charles was twenty-six and Carloman barely sixteen when their father died. Pepin left no will. But ancient Frankish tradition, confirmed by tribal assembly, determined the division of Frankland. Austrasia with part of Neustria and the north German lands went to Charles, while Carloman received western Neustria, Provence, and the Swabian country of the Alemans. Carloman died within three years. Because there were rumors that he had been plotting against his brother, his widow fled to Italy with her two infant sons when Carloman died. Charles simply ignored them. Another national assembly of the Franks unanimously confirmed him as sovereign of the country, which was united once again."

Charles—later called Charlemagne, meaning "Charles the Great"—became ruler of a united Francia in his prime, at age thirty. He spoke German, which was his native tongue, in addition to traditional Latin and a Neustrian Latin-Celtic dialect that had lately emerged. He also understood Greek, so he could readily decipher the speech of envoys from Byzantium. Charlemagne envisioned a Frankish-Roman empire along the lines of an idealistic description given in a book

written by Augustine of Hippo. In short order, he began a series of military campaigns to expand his empire.

In the year 774, Charlemagne faced off against Rome's fiercest and main enemy, the Lombards, and he ended them, absorbing their kingdom. The Lombards ceased to be, and all that remained of them were their name, which the northern region of Italy still bears, and their blood, which the people of that region carried for generations. Around this time, the current pope, Hadrian, minted coins in his own name and dated official documents based on the date of his papal ascension. This marked a clear separation from the eastern empire; Rome was now independent of Byzantium thanks to the Franks.

Among Charlemagne's most bitter foes were the Saxons, whom he battled in eighteen separate military campaigns over thirty-three years. In 782, four thousand Saxons were slaughtered by his forces and compelled to convert to Christianity. Charlemagne then set his sights on Bavaria, annexing the territory in 787. He battled the Avars and sought to Christianize them. His empire extended south to the Pyrenees and he even subdued the people of northern Spain. By 790, Frisia too was conquered.

The spirit of conquest that had possessed the Arabs seemed to possess Charlemagne as well, and his many campaigns spilled much blood. But more than that:

> "Charlemagne's endless warring consumed a fortune."

Writes Johannes Fried in his book, *Charlemagne*.

> "There was no cheaper way to secure peace. Charlemagne understood full well though, that a successful king had to run a successful economy too. Yet how could he afford both war and peace? How might they be financed? There was plenty of money for sure, in the form of pure silver coinage, but it was never enough to pay all his fighting men, or even his administrators, estate managers, or noblemen. As a result, other instruments of remuneration had to be deployed. So, how then were revenues generated and the costs of a standing army met? A king had many mouths to feed, including, not just his own royal household, but also the clergy, guests at court, foreign legations, and countless others, all in a manner befitting both their station and his own royal rank. He was expected to put on a display of grandeur, power, and wealth, and to exude an air of splendor through bounteous generosity and conspicuous expenditure. None of this came cheaply."

The financing came from the very lands he had either conquered or inherited. Since there was no system of direct taxation in place and citizens were required to render service to the state in place of this system, revenue was generated from the land itself. And where coin could not be used to satisfy payment to those in the king's service, land was donated. Johannes Fried goes on to say:

> "The huge extent of this property portfolio, which steadily increased over the decades, together with the land seized through conflict against the Saxons, Lombards, and Avars, may well have made the king magnanimous and open-handed. War turned out to be a profitable enterprise for those who took part. Charlemagne rewarded his followers, secular magnates, dioceses, and monasteries with generous donations of

land. He also never neglected to bestow new territory on the Roman papacy. These institutions all received a share of the booty."

When Charlemagne ascended the throne, the empire he inherited comprised what is today France (which is named for the Franks), Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and a large portion of Germany across the Rhine. But so successful was he at seizing new land that in forty-three years of rule the empire doubled in size. He added Saxon territory, Bohemia, the vast Danubian plain inhabited by the Avars—which the Romans called Pannonia—the Lombard region of northern Italy, and Spanish territory across the Pyrenees.

Important changes came during Charlemagne's rule and during the subsequent time of Carolingian supremacy as well. While the term "archbishop" was used as a title for patriarchs and bishops who acted as special representatives of the Roman pontiff, it adopted a new specific use. It was now reserved for metropolitan bishops—that is, bishops who were granted important sees, like provincial capitals. Once appointed to the office of archbishop, they were given the pallium, which was a band of white wool worn on the shoulders and had four crosses worked on it. They could then be considered something like the pope's deputies. As a sign of his commitment to the Christian cause, eight new dioceses were established during Charlemagne's reign. But unlike the early church, ecclesiastical dioceses were now decided jointly by the secular power and the papacy. Bishops, however, were named by Charlemagne, which continued Frankish customs initiated by the legendary Merovingian king, Clovis I.

Bishops were expected to travel often, visiting the local parishes that formed an intricate network throughout the realm. The cathedral (from the Greek *kathedra*, meaning "seat") was now the church of the bishop, which was where he had his seat. The place in which a cathedral stands is also called a bishop's see, a word derived from a Latin root that also means "seat." If you are familiar with the language of Revelation, you'll take special note of these little tidbits.

Canonical clergies were also formed during the Carolingian period. Ordinarily, there was the secular clergy (*saeculus*)—referring to clergy who lived in the world, like in large cities—and the regular clergy—referring to those who lived in monasteries as monks and abided by a monastic rule (*regula*). But the Carolingian period saw the rise of the canonical clergy, which combined these two features and introduced a clergy that fulfilled parish responsibilities in the world but lived by a monastic rule.

That said, the Carolingian period saw its share of intrigue. In Rome, where ecclesiastical power was concentrated in the papacy, treachery abounded as many vied for the top seat. Professor Thomas F. Madden adds:

> "The next pope, Leo III, was elected in 795. He had a great political skill and he was also known to be a very wise and pious man. It's in this period, as we get to the end of the eighth century, that the papacy—because it's such an important secular position in Rome—it means the Roman families (the powerful Roman aristocratic families and the various political factions in the city of Rome) are naturally now, going to be focusing on the papacy. 'Cause, that's how you get to be boss; you get hold of the papacy, you get hold of the pope. You become the pope, one way or the other. And so, there's a lot of intrigue, backstabbing—literally, backstabbing—and the like."

Years earlier, Pope Adrian died, but his surviving relatives, the nobility of Rome, failed to get their desired candidate elected to the papal throne. They bitterly resented Leo III, and so hired a gang who attacked him as he was on his way to service. He was hauled off to prison and charged with all manner of evils, but agents of Charlemagne's court, who happened to be in the city, rescued the pope, who fled north to Aachen, to secure the king's help.

The king sent the pope back to Rome and kept him under guard, and by the end of the year 800, the king crossed the Alps and, on December 23, presided over a trial that allowed Leo to clear himself of his accusations.

> "This course of events had signified a dreadful humiliation for the pope and his abnegation before the Carolingian ruler …"

Writes Norman F. Cantor, in his book, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*.

> "… and he determined to try to regain the prestige and authority of his office by carrying out the imperial coronation of Charlemagne.
>
> "On Christmas day, 800, as Charlemagne rose from prayer … Pope Leo suddenly placed the crown on the king's head, and the well-rehearsed Roman clergy and people shouted, 'Charles Augustus, crowned great and peace-giving emperor of the Romans, life and victory!' "

Charlemagne ruled as emperor for fourteen years, and then, like his Carolingian predecessors, and the Merovingian kings before them, he divided his empire between his three sons. Two of them died before he did, however, and so the empire went to his surviving son, Louis the Pious. At its height, the Carolingian empire was impressive. In fact:

> "No empire in Europe from the early Middle Ages to the time of Napoleon was to be so grand in sheer territorial scope as the Carolingian."

Writes Kevin Madigan in *Medieval Christianity*. But with the death of Charlemagne the empire was weakened, and it started on a steady decline until it ultimately disintegrated. Kevin Madigan goes on to say:

> "By the death in 840 of Charlemagne's son, Louis, who had inherited the crown at his father's death, civil war among three of his heirs weakened the monarchy still further. At the same time, Europe was being attacked from three sides."

By the Muslims, Vikings, and Magyars. But eventually, the Carolingians would run out of descendants to sit the throne, and a French dynasty would give way to a German one, leading to what would be considered The First Reich.

> "In the wake of these internal and external threats the old Carolingian Empire collapsed and split into three large territories: the East Frankish kingdom, the West Frankish kingdom, and the kingdom of Italy."

Writes Kevin Madigan.

> “The last Carolingian in the eastern line died without heirs in 911. There, the political future lay with three kings, each named Otto, and to the dynasty (Ottonian) to which they gave their name.
>
> “With the loss of an effective protector, the papacy became the object of jealous competition among the noble families of central Italy and the kings of Germany.”

And thus, the papacy would experience its own decline, prior to reform and resurgence on its quest to fulfilling yet other prophecies.

CHAPTER 18

DECLINE OF THE PAPACY

IN WESTERN EUROPE, FROM the late ninth to the early eleventh century, a low ebb was experienced in Christian and secular societies. Compounding the moral depravity and greed of men and women alike was the external threat of further invasions by the Magyars, who swept in from the east, and whom the Latin West called Hungarians, because they were a brutal reminder of the ancient Huns. But worse than the Hungarians were the Germanic Northmen, or Norsemen, a combination of Vikings and Danes from Scandinavia. The Northmen would later be known as the Normans, who would give their name to a region of France: Normandy.

"Viking" to many ears meant seafearing pirate raiders. Generally speaking, they were northern invaders made up of barbarian pagans who threatened to extinguish the light of civilized advancement ignited during the Carolingian period. Ireland was invaded by them in the eighth century, followed by the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria in England. In both instances, they raided monasteries, simply for the abundant gold and silver that was found in religious relics, such as chalices, crosses, and certain ecclesiastical art pieces. These monasteries were also undefended, and were therefore easy targets, which were often burned to the ground, while its monks were, at times, tortured or slaughtered.

In the two centuries that followed the death of Charlemagne, the Vikings made their way not only throughout western Europe, but also northern Europe, along the Caspian Sea north to the Volga, within Russian territory. They traveled along the Black and Mediterranean seas as well, and even far west to the northern Atlantic lands of Newfoundland and greater North America.

What made all this possible was Viking technology, summed up in their impressive longships. Of this, author John M. Riddle, in his book, *A History of the Middle Ages*, writes:

> "Several developments permitted the Vikings to descend on Europe and the North Atlantic. First, they learned that the ore found in peat bogs could be smelted in pottery chimneys with shaft furnaces, which provided them with the basis for metalwork. Abundant trees provided charcoal for the furnaces where molten iron was manufactured. And skill in metalwork led to the development of tools for felling the forest, clearing land for pasturage, and providing timber for heating homes and building ships. Second, as experienced fishermen, the Vikings were already familiar with building boats, but with good iron tools the Norse shipbuilders designed the longships, nearly a hundred feet long, that were primarily for battle and carrying cargo, including horses and around a hundred men. Primarily, Viking ships were sailing vessels, but their well-crafted beams could handle rough ocean seas, and their flat bottoms had little draft, thus enabling them to sail up shallow rivers for interior raids."

In England, King Alfred the Great of Wessex seemed to be the ruler of the only force that could stall the Norsemen, but by the eleventh century, King Canute of the Danes was master of England in its entirety—in addition to Denmark (hence the Danish language), Sweden, and Norway. The Norsemen conquered the Muslims in Sicily and took possession of that territory as well. Attacks by the Norsemen decreased dramatically after they settled lands and established distant kingdoms in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Northern France. What is more, they converted to Christianity after conquering several Christian lands. They simply adopted the religion of the settled peoples, and many Norsemen still remaining in Scandinavia and Iceland were either forced to convert or inspired to by the leadership. Midway through the eleventh century, almost all Scandinavians were baptized Christians, so they were no longer a barbarian horn in opposition to the papal or wider Christian powers.

The terrifying Magyars too, later known as Hungarians, eventually adopted the customs and culture of the surrounding Germans and even the Slavs they had conquered. The efforts of missionaries sent to Hungary from Byzantium and Germany led to the conversion of a tenth-century Hungarian king. And the next king in line, Stephen—later dubbed Saint Stephen of Hungary—spearheaded the forced conversion of his people.

Even though Christianity would eventually sweep through all of those European lands, the brutal incursions by Scandinavians and Hungarians in the tenth century has caused that century to be considered one of the darkest in medieval history. And the version of Christianity that was being adopted was more tainted than the one from early antiquity. Corruption was rampant.

> "In this state of affairs, nonetheless, the pace of Christianization quickened."

Writes Kevin Madigan, in his book *Medieval Christianity*.

> "The Northmen of England and France were baptized. From 950 to ca. 1000, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were all converted. On the eastern border, Christianity was accepted in Hungary and Poland in the late tenth century.
>
> "Still, everywhere canon law was either unknown or ignored. Church offices were bought and sold. Clergy were sexually immoral. Lay rulers appointed bishops and abbots. They also built private chapels without the supervision of bishops and appointed priests. It would have been impossible to see, in these conditions, that Christendom lay trembling just then on the brink of an epochal revival."

But that revival would not come right away. In fact, this period was one in which the papacy itself fell to its lowest depths as a perfect reflection of the dark times. Accompanying the problem of papal corruption was the Roman citizenry, which was largely unmanageable from of old, when Rome was an imperial stronghold. The papal powers that ruled what was now a small Italian principality were equipped with a militia—small and weak though it be—a powerful creed to which all Christians were bound, and the overbearing influence of their ecclesiastical office. The power of the papal office was such that it was able to control the title of emperor, a right that was granted with the crowning of Charlemagne in the year 800. This kind of power aroused jealousy in the Roman aristocracy, which was drawn from the Roman citizenry.

At this time, Roman citizens were not awed by the papal office. Many of them saw weakness in the popes, as well as greed. These citizens, however, along with the Catholic clergy and

Roman nobility, had to consent to the election of popes, so the populace held their own power in a way. But the real power lay with those who could control the pope himself, who was often a puppet in this dark period.

> "The rulers of Spoleto, Benevento, Naples, and Tuscany—and the aristocracy of Rome—divided into factions as of old."

Writes Will Durant in his book *The Age of Faith*.

> "And whichever faction prevailed in the city intrigued to choose and sway the pope. Between them, they dragged the papacy in the tenth century to the lowest level in its history."

One account of barbarity is left to us from the end of the ninth century, and it involves one of papal political treachery. Of this, Will Durant writes:

> "In 897, Pope Stephen VI had the corpse of Pope Formosus exhumed, dressed in purple robes and tried before an ecclesiastical council on the charge of violating certain church laws."

Pope Formosus, who was the previous pope until his death in 896, had crowned Lambert, duke of Spoleto, emperor. But a change of heart caused him to reject that crowning for that of another candidate, a ruler named Arnulf. These and other acts committed by Formosus were scrutinized during Pope Stephen's judgment of the corpse of Formosus. And in the end …

> "The corpse was condemned, stripped, mutilated, and plunged into the Tiber."

This after it was dragged through the streets.

> "In the same year, a political revolution in Rome overthrew Stephen, who was strangled in jail."

Will Durant goes on to say.

> "For several years thereafter, the papal chair was filled by bribery, murder, or the favor of women of high rank and low morality."

While the popes had the ostensible power to crown and uncrown emperors, they could not properly govern their own city, let alone rid their office of corruption. Prior to the bizarre trial involving the corpse of Formosus, which is known as the "Cadaveric Council," a former pope, John VIII, had sought the aid of a Frankish emperor, Charles the Fat, to defend his holdings against Muslim invasion. Pope John also reached out to Byzantium, but when neither showed any interest in aiding the vulnerable pope, someone close to him was ordered to see to his murder, which took place in his palace. Following John VIII, many popes came and went in quick succession, as powerful rivals in Rome and beyond the Alps carried out various intrigues to see their desired man seated as pope. Many popes therefore died a gruesome death, some being strangled, others being thrown into dungeons where they were left to starve in darkness.

As an illustration of how the prevailing aristocracy intrigued and maneuvered to control the

papacy, Will Durant writes that:

> "For half a century the family of Theophylact, a chief official of the papal palace, made and unmade popes at will. His daughter Marozia secured the election of her lover as Pope Sergius III (904 – 11)."

And in the very year Sergius was made pope, 904, he had his two main rivals, Leo V and Christopher I, imprisoned and killed. Will Durant goes on to say that Theophylact's wife Theodora …

> "… procured the election of Pope John X (914 – 28). John has been accused of being Theodora's paramour, but on inadequate evidence. Certainly he was an excellent secular leader, for it was he who organized the coalition that in 916 repulsed the Saracens from Rome. Marozia, after having enjoyed a succession of lovers, married Guido, Duke of Tuscany. They conspired to unseat John. They had his brother Peter killed before his face. The pope was thrown into prison and died there a few months later from causes unknown.
>
> "In 931 Marozia raised to the papacy John XI (931 – 5) commonly reputed to be her bastard son by Sergius III. In 932 her son Alberic imprisoned John in the castle of Sant'Angelo, but allowed him to exercise from jail the spiritual functions of the papacy. For 22 years, Alberic ruled Rome as the dictatorial head of a Roman Republic. At his death, he bequeathed his power to his son Octavian, and made the clergy and people promise to choose Octavian pope when Agapetus II should die. It was done as he ordered. In 955, Marozia's grandson became John XII and distinguished his pontificate by orgies of debauchery in the Lateran palace."

In the reign of the German king Otto III, who inherited the empire and ruled from 983 – 1002, a spiritual revival was attempted. Otto III, though German, rarely resided in Germany. Instead, he set his sights on Rome, which he planned to reestablish as the center of a new Roman Empire. This was not a thought original to Otto, however. His main influence was that of a religious French scholar named Gerbert of Aurillac who had studied in Muslim Spain and was considered to be the greatest western intellect of his day. Gerbert, along with other Christian authorities who had filled Otto's court, often discussed a revival of the ancient Roman Empire. This vision impressed upon Otto III the idea of the western world being ruled from Rome, as was seen in the days of the great Caesars and Augusti.

Set on implementing his new plan, Otto III established a residence in Rome and placed Gerbert on the papal throne as Pope Sylvester II. These moves were seen as the elements needed to unify the world and the church, and Otto, in an important document, declared the same, stating emphatically:

> "We proclaim Rome capital of the world. We recognize that the Latin church is the mother of all churches."

Otto III died of smallpox in 1002, in the midst of his efforts to suppress a revolt, and his grand imperial vision died with him. With Otto's passing, a new aristocratic family, that of the Roman consul Crescentius, gained power over the papal throne. They were related to the

previous dominant family of Theophylact, Theodora, and Marozia. Following them, the counts of Tusculum seized control of the papacy and named three popes in succession, the last of which, Benedict IX, was a mere young teen. In 1045, thirteen years after he assumed the papal throne, Benedict IX abdicated briefly after accepting a financial settlement of one or two thousand pounds of gold. Following more attempts at reform by the succeeding pope, Gregory VI—who bought his seat from Benedict IX—and intrigues by the Crescentius family—who had regained their hold and appointed Sylvester III—the Italian clergy appealed to Henry III, the German emperor, who intervened at last.

> "[H]e came to Sutri, near Rome, and convened an ecclesiastical council."

Writes Will Durant.

> "[I]t imprisoned Sylvester, accepted Benedict's resignation, and deposed Gregory for admittedly buying the papacy. Henry persuaded the council that only a foreign pope, protected by the emperor, could terminate the debasement of the church. The Bishop of Bamberg was elected as Clement II (1046 – 7); he died a year later; and Damasus II (1047 – 8) also succumbed to the malaria that now regularly came out of the undrained Campagna. At last in Leo IX (1049 – 54) the papacy found a man who could face its problems with courage, learning, integrity, and a piety long rare in Rome."

The same council moved against broader acts of ecclesiastical corruption in the church, namely simony, wherein bishops and popes routinely bought and sold their position, as was the case with Benedict IX and Gregory VI. The act of simony was named for Simon Magus, who, in Acts 8:18 – 19, attempted to buy the gift of the Set Apart Spirit from the emissaries—not that the papacy, bishoprics, or any priestly Christian office or benefice could ever equate to the gift of the Set Apart Spirit. Another problem the emperor addressed was the issue of marriage within the secular clergy. Marriage led to sons, who, through the corrupt efforts of the Roman nobility, often became heirs to the papal throne. Celibacy was thus favored to allow for the fair election of future popes. But more than that, allowing a hereditary priesthood, which would result from the progeny of such marriages, would sink the church further into feudalism.

The church, by virtue of its vast landholdings, was heavily involved in the social, economic, and political structure of feudalism, a medieval practice that sprang out of France in the tenth and eleventh centuries, but which has its roots in late Roman and early Germanic times. Charlemagne's habit of land payments, which we touched on in our last chapter, seeded this medieval system, remnants of which exist to this day. While there are various interpretations of what feudalism is, there were mainly three basic elements to its structure. There was the chief social element of lordship and vassalage, which will be explained shortly; there was the secondary economic element, which involved a fief (or land held on condition of feudal service); and there was the final political element of a decentralized government and legal structure that supported the entire feudal system.

The decentralized nature meant that relationships formed between persons of noble rank did not need the oversight of a governmental body. And feudalism, a government operated locally by private individuals, began with the upper class, in that a king allowed a count to hold a fief, and a count a baron to hold one, then the baron a knight, and so the vassalage flowed from the highest

rank of nobility. A vassal was a feudal tenant of a stronger nobleman, to whom he swore allegiance. A vassal also provided his lord with financial aid, lodging, and counsel. But most of all, he provided military support. Chris Wickham, in *Medieval Europe*, writes:

> "Here we are in the middle of the world of what is often called military feudalism: a wide élite of great aristocrats and knights did military service, and showed political loyalty, in return for gifts of office or land from kings or lesser lords, which they would lose if they were disloyal. Such men would often be called the lord's sworn *vassi*, vassals, and the conditional landholdings would be called *feoda*, fiefs, hence the words 'feudal' and 'feudo-vassalic' in modern historical terminology."

The bond between a lord and a vassal was forged in a ceremony called an act of *homage*. The vassal traditionally knelt before his lord, pledged that he was his "man," and professed fealty to him by swearing on a bible or other object thought to be sacred. In turn, the lord swore protection and justice to his vassal. What must be noted is that, by the eleventh century, while the vassal knelt before his lord, he would join his raised hands together, which the lord would clasp with his own hands in ceremony. The joined, raised hands of the vassal before his lord has since become the symbol of prayer to the Creator among Christians, which is a feudal practice. Israelites did not pray in this manner.

Among other examples, the idea of a tenant and landlord who are contracted to each other through a lease agreement can still be seen in cities and suburbs where individuals rent apartments. And many still do not realize that translators of English bibles have long substituted the name of the Creator, Yah, for the feudal title "Lord," which is the English translation of the Hebrew word "Ba'al," a Phoenician and Canaanite deity. We covered this topic in part 3 of *The Covenant Law of Yah* scripture study series.

While a knight had to be born of the nobility, in this medieval period, a common family, on rare occasions, could rise to the level of nobility by sending its sons to war. If a commoner went to war for a king and demonstrated extraordinary military service, that soldier could be knighted, and knights formed the army of a feudal lord. The knight would then be awarded with land for his loyalty.

> "[A]rmies had to be constructed on the basis of the public service of landowners, or else by handing out land on which military men could live."

Writes Chris Wickham.

> "In this world, a substantial proportion of military service, and thus army formation, depended on personal relationships, linked to the possession of land."

The aristocratic families of Rome and beyond the Alps ranked high among the noble families of the empire, a feat they achieved by receiving royal favor, acquiring substantial wealth, restricting themselves to marriages with close family lines, proving their military prowess through knighthood, and other means. But by gaining control of the papal selection, these families among the lay nobility became enemies of the clergy, and they had to be dealt with. With the invasion of Magyars and Vikings, the church turned to French barons and German kings for support, but that meant that many among the upper ranks of the Catholic clergy, and

even the abbots within the monastic movement, had to swear allegiance to these elites by becoming their vassals, for which they received fiefs, or lands, that forced them to provide feudal services to their new lords. These bishops and abbots looked to the Roman pontiff as the shepherd of the church, and their true head on earth, so having to become vassals to lesser powers proved to be a problem. But the papacy was in turmoil due to various factions of the diabolical nobility.

These opposing loyalties led to what came to be known as the investiture controversy, wherein a bishop or abbot who assumed office received two investitures. Supposed spiritual authority was bestowed by the church, but feudal or civil authority was bestowed by a king or noble, to whom the bishop or abbot was vassal. In this period, however, feudal lords and kings gained control of selecting and installing bishops, abbots, and other clergy. In Germany, where the king's power extended to the control of the church, this was most pronounced. The church was in no position to challenge the power of the king, or even lesser feudal lords. Widespread corruption and greed inhibited many from even attempting a change of circumstance.

> "Many bishoprics became in the eleventh century the hereditary patrimony of noble families, and were used as provision for bastards or younger sons."

Writes Will Durant.

> "In Germany, one baron possessed and transmitted eight bishoprics. A German cardinal alleged (ca. 1048) that the simoniacal buyers of sees and benefices had sold the marble facings of churches, even the tiles from their roofs, to reimburse themselves for the cost of their appointments. Such appointees were men of the world; many lived in luxury, engaged in war, allowed bribery in episcopal courts, named relatives to ecclesiastical posts, and worshipped Mammon with undivided loyalty. Pope Innocent III would say of an archbishop of Narbonne, that he had a purse where his heart should have been."

What came next was a broad measure of reform that began with the Benedictine order of monks at Cluny. These monks sought to reform not only the monastic movement, which had also been in decline, but the feudal church itself, extending to the secular clergy. They called for celibacy and the abolition of simony, with their chief aim being that of freeing the church of secular control and bringing it under papal authority. The papacy itself, with the coming of Pope Leo IX and his entourage of reformers, slowly changed course. Before long, in parts of the land, new laws were passed by other powers, and …

> "The clergy could not legally marry."

Writes Norman F. Cantor, in *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*.

> "[T]hough many had children, these children were bastards who could not inherit fiefs under feudal law. Hence no bishop or abbot could pursue a dynastic interest with regard to his fiefs. The fiefs, in any case, were attached to the ecclesiastical office and were not the personal possession of the bishop or abbot."

The investiture issue was also addressed by the college of cardinals, which, under Leo IX,

became somewhat a senate of the Roman church after being institutionalized. In 1059, an important edict transferred papal elections from Roman nobles and German emperors to the college of cardinals. Thenceforth, it became the task of the college of cardinals to elect the pope, as it is to this day.

From this period onward, western Europe would undergo a momentous series of changes, with sophisticated feudal European states emerging from former barbarian-controlled provinces, all of them having Christianity in common. The papacy would survive its darkest era in history and emerge as an integral part of what would come to be known as the “Holy Roman Empire,” a multi-ethnic complex of European territories that was none of the three things its name suggested. This so-called empire, which began with Charlemagne’s crowning as emperor, would pass through many hands and last through various historic upheavals until the Napoleonic Wars would see to its destruction at the turn of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 19

THE FIRST CRUSADE

IN THE LATE ELEVENTH and early twelfth centuries, the papacy led both a sweeping church reform and a relentless push to have the secular rulers launch an armed reconquest of Jerusalem from the Muslims, and these two agendas took center stage in medieval history at this time. The reform movement resulted in the popes clashing with emperors over the issue of investiture, which we touched on in our last chapter. Secular rulers, in the eyes of the papacy, should not be allowed to give the symbols of ecclesiastical office to members of the clergy, much less appoint those men. The church was to be a sovereign religious institution, independent of state control.

The papal reforms aimed to return the imperial court to its role as the secular arm of the church; and the papacy relied heavily on that secular arm, which was eventually persuaded to focus its military might on the Muslims in the First Crusade. The papacy's persuasion was quite powerful. German kings styled themselves as "Roman," and acted like successors of Augustus, but they did not rule an empire along the lines of Charlemagne, or actual past Roman emperors like Theodosius I. Instead, they descended on Rome to be crowned by the pope and ruled over small kingdoms and European municipalities that were a far cry from an empire. But, regardless, what they ruled would be called just that.

After Leo IX, the papacy continued the reform movement via other popes, most notably Gregory VII, which elevated the office of the papacy to the loftiest position in Europe. The church was becoming centralized, with bishops at large swearing fealty to the Roman pontiff; and the pope, who was viewed as a supreme monarch and judge, in turn heard wide appeals throughout Christendom, which he decided on. Gregory VII was a powerful pope, and his power was tested by the German king, Henry IV late in the eleventh century.

Church and state clashed once more with these two towering figures, as Henry's view was that, as the sitting king, through the grace of the Almighty, he was invested with the authority to mediate matters between the people of his realm and the clergy. Henry saw the church as a free entity subject only to the state. Gregory, like other apostolic-minded popes before him, argued that the papacy held the keys to heaven, and all Christians, the king included, were subject to its control. The pope, he held, could depose, in his universal authority, unfit emperors.

> "When Henry fell out with Pope Gregory VII in 1075–76, the pope threatened Henry with deposition."

Writes Chris Wickham, in his book, *Medieval Europe*.

> "Henry moved quickly to Italy, and in one of the famous images of the middle ages stood three days and nights in the snow outside the castle of Canossa in January 1077 until the pope, who was inside, accepted his penance."

The pope was urged to do so by those with him in the fortress, for they were greatly moved by Henry, who had arrived barefoot in the snow wearing sackcloth, and weeping. The pope held the power of excommunication, which was an unequalled weapon in the medieval period. He could threaten peasants and kings alike, bringing them to their knees in forced penance, as was the case with Henry IV. The pronouncement of excommunication was usually followed by the formal reading of such by a bishop, then a bell would ring—the same as intoned for a funeral—a book would be heard closing with force, and a candle would have its flame put out. This was all indicative of the guilty excommunicated soul being, as it were, cut off from salvation by the power of the pope's order. While excommunicated, that person could not partake in legal affairs, either as a judge—if that was his office—juror, witness, or lawyer. They could also not be named in contracts, or act as guardians or executors. Upon death, no Christian burial was to be granted, and should they be buried on what was considered to be consecrated grounds, the church would have their bodies dug up and destroyed.

Despite this unprecedented authority, the papacy, through the dictate of prophecy, would always be a "little horn" power, wielding her influence where she could. Thus, the papacy always looked to certain secular powers—the regular sized horns—for defense, or sheer military might. It had relied on the Carolingians to defend it against its fiercest foe, the Lombards, whom Charlemagne destroyed. And it then looked to the kings of Germany for defense against Muslims. When the Normans stormed into the region, taking up position in southern Italy, they did not do so in the manner of the prior horns that had to be plucked up.

In discussing a set of European kingdoms which were beginning to develop into powerful states, Chris Wickham writes:

> "Italy also showed the sharpening of political power. It did so on the largest scale in the south, where Roger II of Sicily (1105–54) unified all the Norman principalities in wars between 1127 and 1144, and was recognized as king by Pope Anacletus II in 1130. The Norman kingdom was tightly governed from then on for the most part, with a rich capital at Palermo and an elaborate Greek–Arab–Latin administration, linked to the provinces by royal-appointed justiciars."

Note that the Norman king had to be recognized as such by the Roman pontiff, Anacletus. This was not the case with the Lombards, or the other two non-Catholic barbarian tribes that were forcefully uprooted. What is more, the Normans, wherever they settled and eventually assimilated, helped develop a new political and social order in Europe, which would have lasting effect. Papal influence would draw Norman feudal lords from southern Italy, together with nobles from France and Germany, to fight in the First Crusade.

It was Gregory VII's extreme reform measures that seeded the fertile soil that gave rise to the crusades. During the investiture controversy, Gregory had argued that Christians who engaged in military efforts for that cause were in fact doing penance by fighting as soldiers of the Almighty. While Pope Gregory VII was instrumental in removing the stranglehold the kings had on the western church, his strong convictions, and his efforts to seize supreme temporal power, were considered too broad.

> "Although Gregory went too far, too fast …"

Writes Thomas Asbridge, in his book, *The Crusades*.

> "… and ended his pontificate in ignominious exile in southern Italy, his bold strides did much to advance the twin causes of reform and papal empowerment, establishing a platform from which one of his successors and former advisor, Pope Urban II (1088 – 99) could instigate the First Crusade. Urban's call for a Holy War found a willing audience across Europe, in large part because of the prevailing religious atmosphere in the Latin world. Across the west, Christianity was an almost universally accepted faith, and, in contrast to modern secularized European society, the eleventh century was a profoundly spiritual era. This was a setting in which Christian doctrine impinged upon virtually every facet of human life: from birth and death, to sleeping and eating, marriage and health."

Much like Mecca was in the eyes of Muslims, for centuries Jerusalem was held in high esteem among Christians who regularly made pilgrimages there to visit places they viewed as sacred. Acts of devotion to the ancient city along these lines could be seen as early as the fourth century. A Spanish woman had written extensively about her visit to Palestine, detailing the Christian rituals she witnessed, the places she visited, and the customs she encountered. So greatly did Christians in the west regard the places they thought to be sacred, her long letter, titled *Peregrinatio*, was still being read and appreciated by them in the eleventh century.

Through the centuries, Christian pilgrimages had been very peaceful, even after Muslims swept in with Islam in the seventh century and conquered the Near East. By and large, Muslims were very tolerant of Christians in Palestine, so much so that, a few centuries later, mass Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem were being organized by bishops, the largest of which left from Germany in 1065 with some seven thousand pilgrims. Things changed quickly, however, when a new enemy entered the medieval arena.

The Seljuk Turks amassed power and began to challenge their enemies. Successful raids against the Byzantine Empire resulted in a peace agreement that left the Seljuks with lands on the empire's eastern frontier, along with much booty, food, and supplies. Emboldened, they also sought to seize Muslim lands, and a march into Baghdad unseated the ruling power there, forcing the remaining spiritual head, the Abbasid caliph, to view the leader of the Seljuk Turks as supreme sultan of the Muslim world. Just as the Germanic invaders of the Roman Empire had converted to Christianity, the Seljuk Turks eventually converted to the religion of the Muslims they conquered.

The new sultan of the Seljuk Turks, Malik Shah, looked to expand their region even farther.

> "Turkish armies, under the command of the general Atsiz ibn Abaq, pushed south all the way to Jerusalem, which up until now had been in the hands of the Fatimids of Egypt."

Writes Susan Wise Bauer, in her book, *The History of the Medieval World*.

> "Atsiz and his soldiers laid siege to Jerusalem and forced the Fatimid defenders to surrender in 1073. Fatimid resistance in the city continued until 1077, but in that year Atsiz grew exasperated and massacred three thousand of its inhabitants."

Mostly Fatimid Arabs and Israelites.

> "This brought a final end to the Fatimid attempts to hold onto the city. It was now firmly under Malik Shah's overlordship."

These fanatical new converts to Islam, who systematically plundered the Near East, brought a tense situation to Jerusalem after they seized the city. The Seljuk Turks were not finished yet, however, as they swept north into Asia Minor to complete further conquests. This region was a major source of revenue for the Byzantine Empire, from which it also drew many troops. In 1071, during the Battle of Manzikert, the Turks captured the emperor of Byzantium, Romanos IV, and slaughtered half his troops while they scattered his remaining forces of some 30,000 men. Within a few years, Byzantium lost Asia Minor to the Seljuk Turks. In 1095, the sitting Byzantine emperor, Alexius I, dispatched envoys to Pope Urban II requesting that Italian soldiers be sent east to help suppress the Seljuk Turks.

> "This was a relatively simple request—Alexius needed mercenaries—but Urban II transformed it into something new."

Writes Susan Wise Bauer.

> "He was on a tour through Italy and Western Francia, designed to demonstrate that the pope's authority—unlike the fractured authority of his predecessors—once again covered all of the Christian world. Now he would demonstrate that the authority of Peter's heir stretched across the world.
>
> "In November of 1095, at Clermont in Western Francia, Urban II announced that it was not only time to help Byzantium in its battles against the Turks (as Alexius had asked), but also time to recapture Jerusalem from the hands of Muslims (something Alexius had not mentioned)."

In 1095, in an open field at the Council of Clermont in France, Pope Urban II delivered a speech that urged a crowd of thousands to take up the Christian cross and thrust themselves into an important spiritual cause that would not only merit spiritual rewards, but considerable material ones as well. He drew their attention to the land they inhabited, pointing out its narrowness in contrast to their large population. He stressed that the same did not abound with wealth, and could scarcely furnish food enough for its cultivators. This, he illustrated, was the reason the people rose one against the other with violence and murder. There were others, however, who were more deserving of such treatment: the Turks and Arabs, who had seized and occupied more and more Christian lands.

> "They have killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the empire."

He said, in his impassioned appeal on that cold November day. If the people allowed these horrors to continue, the faithful would be attacked all the more by these enemies. On that account, he beseeched the crowd, as the heralds of the Savior …

> "… [T]o publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-

> soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy that vile race from the lands of our friends."

Rather than destroy one another, he insisted that they direct their energy to enemies abroad.

> "Let those who have been accustomed unjustly to wage private warfare against the faithful now go against the infidels. Let those who for a long time have been robbers, now become knights. Let those who have been fighting against their brothers and relatives now fight in a proper way against the barbarians…. Let those who go not put off the journey."

Then came the promise of the spiritual reward, which many in attendance saw as the only means of reversing their dire fate.

> "All who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins."

Thus, with blasphemy, were the people urged to engage in a bloody crusade in what was perceived to be "the Holy Land." Following Pope Urban's impassioned speech, the crowd erupted in a cry of "*Dieu li volt*," ("the Deity wills it"). Then and there, Urban declared it the official battle cry in the war against the Muslims. He also instructed the crowd to wear the symbol of the cross upon their foreheads or chests. This is why strips were later cut from red cloaks and sewn on the front of tunics in the form of a cross. In fact, the word crusade has its root in the Latin *crux*, or cross, and means "a state of being marked with the cross."

A contemporary, William of Malmesbury, reported that some of the nobility fell at the knees of the pope and immediately consecrated themselves, as well as their property, to the cause, which they saw as divine. Thousands of commoners in the crowd also made similar pledges. Even monks and hermits abandoned their monastic principles to enlist as soldiers in the crusade. With boundless energy, the pope took his message of the crusade to other French cities over the next nine months, passing through Tours, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Montpellier, and Nîmes.

> "When he reached Rome after two years' absence, he was enthusiastically acclaimed by the least pious city in all of Christendom."

Writes Will Durant, in his book, *The Age of Faith*.

> "He assumed, with no serious opposition, the authority to release Crusaders from commitments hindering the crusade; he freed the serf and the vassal, for the duration of the war, from fealty to their lord; he conferred upon all Crusaders the privilege of being tried by ecclesiastical instead of manorial courts, and guaranteed them, during their absence, the episcopal protection of their property; he commanded—though he could not quite enforce—a truce to all wars of Christians against Christians; he established a new principle of obedience above the code of feudal loyalty. Now, more than ever, Europe was made one. Urban found himself the accepted master, at least in theory, of Europe's kings. All Christendom was moved as never before as it feverishly prepared for the holy war."

Papal legates helped spread Pope Urban's message as far as southern Italy. Others did the rest. His promise, that the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to enact war could be considered a substitute "for all penance," if one were sincere in their efforts, drew a great response from central and northern Europe. Around 60,000 in all responded to the call. But other inducements helped to swell the numbers to such a vast multitude. Citizens were promised tax exemptions; debtors enjoyed a temporary cessation in paying interest; prisoners were released; and death sentences, by papal authority, were converted to a life of service in Palestine. Indeed, the sheer numbers of people who headed east dramatically altered life in Europe. But the pilgrimage also instilled great hope in the Crusaders. Some knights were forced to go simply because their serfs had enlisted and abandoned the land. Other enterprising individuals sought to obtain fiefs in the east, a feat that would be impossible to them in their homeland. Merchants were optimistic about new trading opportunities that would increase their traffic of goods.

Women and children, who couldn't bear to be away from their husbands or parents, joined the throng. The journey for the Crusaders, as Pope Urban had said to the crowd during his crusade speech, was to begin after winter had passed. Preparations, therefore, began in earnest in late 1095 and early 1096. Among the first to depart was a horde of 12,000 peasants, together with only eight knights, led by Peter the Hermit and Walter the Penniless, a Frankish noble who was so named because he had no money to raise a proper army. Wealthy nobles did join the cause as well. The first elite to sell his land and set out for Jerusalem is said to have been a man named Godfrey, a very rich individual of noble birth. Quoting Susan Wise Bauer, he was …

> "… the duke of lower Lorraine. He was accompanied on crusade by his brothers Baldwin and Eustace, and the three siblings were followed in rapid succession by Robert Guiscard's son Bohemund, who left his father's Norman lands in Italy to answer the call with a smaller army; the Frankish duke Raymond of Toulouse, who brought ten thousand men with him; and Robert, the duke of Normandy. Robert, oldest son of William the Conqueror, had inherited Normandy at his father's death in 1087, while his younger brother William had become the second Norman king of England."

Count Bohemund had his heart set on carving out a kingdom for himself and his faithful Norman warriors from the former Byzantine holdings in the Near East. The peasant company, on the other hand, did not hold such grand ambitions. They were a motley, disorganized band of mostly degenerates given over to bloodlusts, who attacked locals and massacred several Israelite communities as they went. These peasant hordes were ill-prepared for the road, being led by incapable leaders who had provided little in the way of food or funds to support such a vast multitude. Neither did they account for the extreme length and arduous nature of the journey. As they made their way toward Palestine by way of the Rhine and Danube, the impatient children among their number asked at every turn in their march, "Is this not Jerusalem?" which is ancient-speak for, "Are we there yet?"

The funds soon ran out, and starvation set in. This sent the hordes on a pillaging spree of the fields and homes along their route, and led to worse acts of atrocity. Beyond the violent resistance of the citizens who were bold enough to fight back, the hordes endured famine, plague, leprosy, and even fever, but at last they reached Constantinople, penniless and reduced in number. Emperor Alexius welcomed them but could not satisfy the hunger of so great a host,

thus the hordes took to pillaging once more, this time within Constantinople itself, targeting churches, palaces, and suburban homes. Alexius intervened by providing the Crusaders with seagoing vessels to carry them across the Bosporus where they were to await reinforcements while they subsisted on the supplies sent by Alexius.

> "Whether through hunger or restlessness, the Crusaders ignored these instructions, and advanced upon Nicaea."

Writes Will Durant.

> "A disciplined force of Turks, all skilled bowmen, marched out from the city and almost annihilated this first division of the First Crusade. Walter the Penniless was among the slain; Peter the Hermit, disgusted with his uncontrollable host, had returned before the battle to Constantinople, and lived safely till 1115."

A new wave of Crusaders—a more orderly procession this time around—marched toward Constantinople. They reached the eastern empire's capital via different routes, Bohemund and Godfrey among them. Bohemund immediately proposed to Godfrey that they lay siege to the city. Godfrey refused, reminding Bohemund that the enemy was the Muslims. Emperor Alexius, alarmed at the sight of the combined western forces assembled at his gate—30,000 men in all—thought better of his plea to Pope Urban that they be sent. Alexius recalled the actions of the previous hordes and quickly furnished the new Crusaders with supplies, transport, military aid, and, for the noble leaders, bribes. He then struck a bargain with the nobles, having them agree to swear fealty to him as feudal lord upon the seizure of any lands. In 1097, the troops crossed the Bosporus, intent on waging war. In her book, *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths,* Karen Armstrong writes:

> "It was a good time to attack the Seljuks: their early solidarity had given way to factional strife, and the emirs were fighting one another. The Crusaders made a good start, and they inflicted defeats on the Turks at Nicaea and Dorylaeum. But it was a long journey, food was scarce, and the Turks pursued a scorched-earth policy. It took the Crusaders three years of unimaginable hardship to reach Jerusalem. When they arrived at Antioch, they laid siege to this powerfully fortified city during the terrible winter of 1097–98; over the course of the siege, one man in seven starved to death and half the army deserted. Yet, against the odds, the Crusaders were ultimately victorious, and when they stood at last before the walls of Jerusalem in 1099, they had changed the map of the Near East."

The way this was accomplished was a wonder to behold, according to Raymond of Agiles, a priest who witnessed the scene. He reports of corpses and body parts filling the streets, which one could see as they rode in any direction. Many Saracens—a term used by Christians to describe Arabs who were hostile to Crusaders—were beheaded. Some Saracens received arrows, while others jumped to their deaths from the towers. Many more suffered days of torture before being burned alive.

Other eyewitnesses reported of women being killed violently, along with suckling infants who were forced from their mothers' arms. Of the thousands of Muslims who remained in the

city, very few survived. The last of the Israelites too were gathered into a synagogue that was later set on fire, killing all inside. Following these and other heinous acts, the victorious Crusaders congregated in the church of the Holy Sepulcher, where they embraced, wept with joy, and offered up prayers of thanksgiving for their achievements.

With the Seljuk Turks in Asia Minor vanquished, the Crusaders were able to set up two new principalities that were ruled by westerners: one in Edessa, and the other in Antioch, whose ruler was Bohemund. Godfrey of Lorraine, meanwhile, ruled the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, which was nothing more than a small principality. This dark chapter in Christian history was followed by more crusades, and by 1187, Jerusalem would be back under Muslim control. In another century, the Latin Kingdom would be no more. The chief asset won through much bloodshed, in other words, would be lost to the very infidels they sought to destroy.

CHAPTER 20

CRUSADE AFTERMATH

AS SEEN AT THE END OF our previous chapter, Jerusalem was captured by Christians from the west in the First Crusade on July 15, 1099 after a long and bloody siege. Following their victory, the reconquered lands were organized along the lines of the western European ideal. The Greek Church was ended and the former patriarch forced to flee to Cyprus. He was replaced by an Italian primate, but the papacy had ultimate ecclesiastical rule. New parishes and monasteries were established, with the entire kingdom functioning under Latin rites. The noble Godfrey of Bouillon was named "Protector of the Holy Sepulcher," the most important church in Palestine among Christians, because its grotto was believed to have held the body of the Messiah prior to his resurrection. Godfrey's brother Baldwin became Godfrey's vassal as Count of Edessa, with the other two vassals being the count Bohemund, who became Prince of Antioch, and Raymond of Toulouse, who became Count of Tripoli.

Upon Godfrey's death in 1100, his brother Baldwin I succeeded him, but he wanted to be crowned the first Frankish King of Jerusalem and not exist merely as its protector. A few necessary steps had to be taken in order to secure that title, however.

> "First, he would have to undergo a coronation."

Writes Thomas Asbridge, in his book *The Crusades*.

> "This centuries-old rite usually involved a crown-wearing, but this was not—as might be imagined—the centerpiece of the ceremony."

That particular honor came in the form of ritual anointment, when what was thought to be "consecrated" chrism—usually a mixture of oil and balsam—was poured on a prospective ruler's head by a person believed to be a representative of the Most High on earth …

> "… such as an archbishop, patriarch, or pope. It was this act that set a king apart from other men; that imbued him with the numinous power of divine sanction. To achieve this elevation, Baldwin needed to reach some form of accommodation with the church."

He managed to do so, and his anointing took place on December 25, 1100, in a Catholic ceremony stolen directly from the Hebrew Scriptures, and of course corrupted. Samuel, a true representative of Yah, in that he was a prophet and judge, is seen anointing the Benjamite Saul as the first king of Israel by pouring oil on his head in 1 Samuel 10. That said, when Baldwin became king of Jerusalem, he handed Edessa to a distant cousin, who was also named Baldwin. Under the original Baldwin, Jerusalem was expanded after several successful battles were fought over the course of eighteen years. Upon the king's death, his cousin Baldwin left Edessa to rule

Jerusalem as Baldwin II.

Now, with the capture of Jerusalem in 1099—and Jerusalem becoming a sovereign state—many of the Crusaders—those who had no intention to settle the new territory—saw no need to remain. They made preparations to return to the west. Raymond of Toulouse, who desired to rule Jerusalem but was passed over for Godfrey, left in disgust, but turned back just as a Fatimid Muslim army marched on Jerusalem. Godfrey barely had the necessary contingent of knights to defend his city. When the Muslims camped at Ascalon, Raymond and his crusade forces ambushed and defeated them. Eventually, the surrounding enemies—the emirs of Caesarea, Acre, Ascalon, and Arsuf—surrendered to Godfrey, accepting him as overlord. The sheiks of Transjordan also submitted, but Jerusalem would be threatened by these hostile and bitter enemies for the next twenty-five years. The city, which was weak in certain areas, would struggle to maintain its independence. To shore up this weakness, two military orders were established, both made up of murderous monks, truth be told.

> "As far back as 1048 the merchants of Amalfi had obtained Moslem permission to build a hospital at Jerusalem for poor or ailing pilgrims."

Writes Will Durant, in his book, *The Age of Faith*.

> "About 1120 the staff of this institution was reorganized by Raymond du Puy as a religious order vowed to chastity, poverty, obedience, and the military protection of Christians in Palestine; and these Hospitallers, or Knights of the Hospital of St. John, became one of the noblest charitable bodies in the Christian world. About the same time (1119) Hugh de Payens and eight other crusader knights solemnly dedicated themselves to monastic discipline and the martial service of Christianity."

From Baldwin II, these nine knights acquired a residence near what was believed to be the site of Solomon's Temple, thus they were known as the Knights Templar.

> "St. Bernard drew up a stern rule for them, which was not long obeyed; he praised them for being 'most learned in the art of war,' and bade them 'wash seldom,' and closely crop their hair. 'The Christian who slays the unbeliever in the Holy War,' wrote Bernard to the Templars, in a passage worthy of Mohammed, 'is sure of his reward; more sure if he himself is slain. The Christian glories in the death of the pagan …'

Because the Messiah, he goes on to say …

> " '[I]s thereby glorified'; men must learn to kill with a good conscience if they are to fight successful wars."

The uniform of the Hospitaller was a black robe, the left sleeve of which featured a white cross. The Templar, by contrast, wore a white robe that featured a red cross on the mantle. The orders despised each other. While they defended pilgrims and provided them with medical treatment, both the Hospitallers—who were 600 strong—and Templars—who numbered only 300—leveled attacks on Saracen bases. In the year 1180, both orders were important factions in the crusade and proved to be able warriors, which earned them respect. This is evident from the

financial support they were given by both the church and the state, and rich and poor alike. Over time, the wealth of both orders increased, peaking in the thirteenth century with Europe boasting considerable estates for Hospitallers and Templars. These included abbeys, villages, and even towns. While the battles of the Crusade raged on, these two orders enjoyed unprecedented luxury.

Jerusalem had been sparsely populated until 1115, when Baldwin II decided to address that issue by turning to Transjordan, from which he imported Syrian Christians. They were lured to the city by the promise of certain privileges, and were settled in empty houses in the city's northwest corner. The Syrian Christians went to work building new churches for their worship and restoring damaged ones. In a short time, the city's population swelled to thirty thousand, and Jerusalem functioned as a capital city once more. The Franks looked to it as a primary metropolis because of its historical significance in the Scriptures. But it was operated like a western city, with civil and criminal courts, and even a high court reserved for the nobility; and markets were preserved from the days of the Roman forum. Its chief industry, however, was the tourist trade. Since it could not become a trading center due to its great distance from popular trade routes, thriving merchants could not establish a base there, thus tourism was elevated.

Under Baldwin I, Jerusalem ceased to be run as a theocracy. He filled the highest ecclesiastical office with patriarchs who were subservient to him. While the patriarch had jurisdiction over Jerusalem's old Christian Quarter beginning in 1112, Baldwin controlled the rest of the city. Ironically, this left Jerusalem—which was once the center of spiritual life for Israelites, and later Christians and many Muslims—as a metropolitan center that was far more secular than many European states. With the coming of Baldwin II, the Franks began converting many existing fortresses into castles, to which they added new buildings that created a ring that encircled the kingdom. Fortified monasteries and churches also circled Jerusalem, and stone walls were raised to keep out invaders. Jerusalem, in other words, became a military state poised for war. And war of course did come. In 1144, an important principality of the Crusaders, Edessa, fell into the hands of the Sultan of Aleppo. And because of this …

> "The Second Crusade of 1144 was preached by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the moral leader of the mid-twelfth-century church …"

Writes Norman F. Cantor, in his book *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*. And the Second Crusade was preached …

> "… in response to urgent entreaties from the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem for aid against the resurgent Arabic power. St. Bernard succeeded in inducing two of the crowned heads of Europe, Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany, to take the cross. The inclusion of the two kings provided more prestige than the first crusade had enjoyed but no more military prowess, for Louis and Conrad were not renowned for their skill on the battlefield or the size of their armies. They never reached Palestine, their forces being cut to pieces in Asia Minor."

While the First Crusade succeeded in capturing territory along the eastern Mediterranean coast and beyond—creating several feudal crusader states, including the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, which lasted for centuries—the costly Second Crusade achieved nothing, and simply dissipated after two years. A massive army of Crusaders was annihilated, yet Jerusalem remained

in Christian hands. But that would change toward the end of the twelfth century.

The First Crusade created a frenzy that would be unmatched by the crusades that followed, but the policy of crusading in fact led to widespread corruption within the church. Crusading was an expensive undertaking, not least because the crusader states needed to be maintained. For one thing, the pope was obligated to provide legates for the new Christian territories that were seized, and funds had to be raised to cover the cost. Spiritual benefits were therefore sold to penitent sinners, creating a new market of sorts.

Traditionally, a Catholic would confess their sins to a priest, who, upon hearing the confession would proclaim the confessor's sin forgiven (again, this was blasphemy according to the very Good News books that were read by these Christians). However, the confession had to be accompanied by a penalty that would satisfy the debt for the sin committed—an act of penance in other words. This would show that the confessor was sincere in his or her repentance. But if the penitent sinner should die before carrying out this act of penance, Augustine of Hippo and Gregory the Great's concept of purgatory would be the final opportunity to secure eternal life. Thus, be it in life or in purgatory, penance could be carried out, this being known as "temporal" punishment. So goes the traditional Catholic doctrine at any rate—the one that existed prior to the crusades.

For as long as the system of confession had existed within the church, priests could only remit, or remove, part of a sinner's temporal punishment, and were never granted the power to offer full and total pardon to a sinner. When Pope Urban II ascended the papal throne and preached the First Crusade, however, complete remission was offered to Crusaders bound for Jerusalem with a sincere desire to fight for the cause. For those unable to make the trip, the same benefit could be conferred if they simply contributed financially to the cause. In essence, medieval sinners, like Christians and other believers today who dole out fiat currencies to whatever they deem as worthy causes, bought their way into the Kingdom—or so they believed. This is how the popes financed the establishment of legates, and the building of new hospitals and cathedrals in newly conquered territories. But the happy state of affairs wouldn't last long.

After the capture of Edessa by the Muslims in 1144, an event that launched the Second Crusade, the new emir of Aleppo, Nur al-Din, attempted to consolidate power. In 1146, Joscelin II, the Frankish count of Edessa, sought to recover his lost capital by assembling an army and making an advance. While the Franks were butchered by a wave of violence in the Second Crusade, and their women taken captive, Christians native to the east were spared by the previous Muslim elite, Zangi, along with their homes. Latin churches were targeted in the war, but Armenian and Syrian churches were bypassed. Muslim armies even took pains to limit damage to Edessa's fortifications.

Joscelin II, with the aid of Edessa's Christians, managed to breach Muslin defenses and put the citadel garrison to flight. Nur al-Din got wind of the attack and immediately took action, amassing an army of thousands which he led on a swift march that continued day and night, making for a relentless journey that left horses dead from fatigue. But a large portion of his warriors reached the city in time and forced Joscelin to retreat, though his army suffered heavy casualties.

> "With Edessa back in his possession, the emir chose to make a blunt demonstration of his ruthless will."

Writes Thomas Asbridge.

> "Two years earlier, Zangi had spared the city's eastern Christians; now, as punishment for their 'connivance' with the Franks, his son and heir scourged Edessa of their presence. All males were killed, women and children enslaved. One Muslim chronicler remarked that 'the sword blotted out the existence of all the Christians,' while a shocked Syrian Christian described how, in the aftermath of this massacre, the city 'was deserted of life: an appalling vision, enveloped in a black cloud, drunk with blood, infected by the cadavers of its sons and daughters.' The once vibrant metropolis remained a desolate backwater for centuries to come.… After the failure of the Second Crusade in the late 1140s, Christian Europe's enthusiasm for holy war had waned dramatically. At the time, some began to question the purity of the papacy and the crusaders."

A German who chronicled the event at the time wrote of the Second Crusade: "[The Almighty] allowed the Western Church, on account of its sins, to be cast down. There arose, indeed, certain pseudo-prophets, sons of Belial, and witnesses of the anti-[Messiah], who seduced the Christians with empty words."

Some decades later, in 1187, Saladin, a powerful sultan who had lately emerged, invigorated the Muslims under his charge and effectively united much of the Muslim empire in his quest to launch a new *jihad*. The Christian leadership in Jerusalem had been locked in bitter feuds, while Saladin readied for a massive invasion of their kingdom. Many towns in Palestine surrendered to them on their march, and Jerusalem fell to Saladin's forces by October of that year. Unlike the bloodthirsty Christians of the First Crusade in 1099, Saladin decided to spare his enemies upon conquering their city. Not one Christian was killed. Wealthy barons were able to buy their freedom, but the poor were taken as prisoners of war. News of Jerusalem's capture eventually reached the Christians in the west and Pope Clement III called for a Third Crusade.

> "The mixture of tragedy and farce that characterized the second crusade was repeated in the third crusade of 1190, the most ambitious, at least in its inception, of all the Latin expeditions to the Holy Land."

Writes Norman F. Cantor.

> "The power of Saladin was to be challenged by a crusading army that, at least on paper, commanded the greater part of the military resources of Europe. The three greatest rulers of western Europe at the time, Richard the Lion-hearted of England, Philip Augustus of France, and Frederick Barbarossa of Germany, set off for the Holy Land with formidable armies. Barbarossa drowned en route, and the Germans ended by participating only in a token manner. It soon appeared that the cynical Philip Augustus intended only to go through the motions of fighting the Moslems; he was eager to get back home to continue his plotting against the English king."

But prior to leaving the fight, Philip joined Richard in a two-year siege that won them Acre, and nothing more. After a series of other pointless battles, Richard settled on a truce with Saladin that was to last three years and allow Christian pilgrims to travel freely to Jerusalem. When

Richard ended his campaign and departed for home, he was captured by the German emperor and held prisoner until he could promise a large ransom.

> "The Third Crusade had freed Acre, but had left Jerusalem unredeemed."

Writes Will Durant.

> "[I]t was a discouragingly small result from the participation of Europe's greatest kings. The drowning of Barbarossa, the flight of Philip Augustus, the brilliant failure of Richard, the unscrupulous intrigues of Christian knights in the Holy Land, the conflicts between Templars and Hospitallers, and the renewal of war between England and France broke the pride of Europe and further weakened the theological assurance of Christendom. But the early death of Saladin, and the breakup of his empire, released new hopes. Innocent III (1198–1216), at the very outset of his pontificate, demanded another effort; and Fulk de Neuilly, a simple priest, preached the Fourth Crusade to commoners and kings. The results were disheartening."

At the time, the throne in Constantinople was vied for by two bitter rivals. Pope Innocent was asked by one of them to divert the crusade to the Byzantine empire in order that he might secure the throne, a favor he would kindly repay by supporting the crusade against the Muslims. Pope Innocent refused to do so, but the Venetians, who were to transport the crusaders to Egypt by sea —from which they would launch an attack—instead conspired to divert the crusade to Constantinople for a considerable fee. Venetian trade with Egypt was quite lucrative, and they did not want to disrupt that business, so turning to Constantinople seemed a better alternative.

Through these efforts, Baldwin of Flanders was made emperor of Byzantium, and the new Latin Empire of Constantinople was formed, which lasted over half a century. The Greek patriarch gave way to a Latin one, and east and west seemed to be reunited, but the people of Byzantium soon resisted the rule of the Latin emperor, and splinter states eventually broke off, one of which—the Empire of Nicaea, seized Constantinople, thus ending the Latin Empire. Enmity between east and west further intensified as a result. Byzantium was considerably weakened by the events of the Fourth Crusade and remained a minor player in the Mediterranean world until its fall to the Muslims in 1453.

Though the Fifth Crusade was led by "the King of Jerusalem," the title was a misnomer, since the city remained under Muslim control. Also, this so-called "King of Jerusalem," King John, never saw Palestine, and his attacks on Egypt accomplished little in the crusade. The Sixth Crusade was considered a major success in a few small circles, in that Frederick II, who led it, negotiated with the sultan of Egypt, resulting in both men signing the treaty of Jaffa. This amounted to a ten-year truce and Christians taking back Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem. Muslims, however, would continue their worship in the city unhindered. In other Christian and Muslim circles, the treaty created outrage and drew protests. To add insult to injury, Frederick, who had been excommunicated by the pope, and who no bishop or priest would crown, decided to crown himself King of Jerusalem at the Holy Sepulcher's high altar. When the Templars plotted his assassination, he fled the city. A few years after the truce expired, Jerusalem was back in Muslim hands.

The Seventh Crusade did not result in the recapture of Jerusalem by Christians. Led by Louis

IX of France (who also led the failed Eighth Crusade that would see him die of fever), the Seventh Crusade was a disaster. The entire army of Crusaders was captured and held prisoner in Egypt in 1250. During this captivity, the elite Muslim party in Egypt was overthrown by an upstart party known as the Mamluks, who founded a new kingdom. Of them, Karen Armstrong, in her book *Jerusalem*, writes:

> "As children they had been enslaved by Muslims, converted to Islam, and then drafted into elite regiments in the Muslim armies. Since their lives had dramatically improved after their capture and conversion, they were usually devoted Muslims, who yet retained a distinct ethnic identity and felt strong solidarity with one another. Now the Bahariyya regiment that had seized control of Egypt would create a new Mamluk state and become a major power in the Near East."

The ascension of the Mamluks effected no change in Jerusalem's status in the beginning, but they fended off the invading Mongols in 1260 and captured the city in a decisive battle. Christians would have to live with the loss, but their annual pilgrimages still occurred. The crusading spirit completely died out in Palestine by 1291, the year that the Mamluk sultan Khalil destroyed the Kingdom of Acre, and rid the city of the Franks who had made it their coastal hub. It was not by force that Muslims accomplished this, however. Acre is actually a testament to the vast amount of material wealth that was actually expended to the various crusades. North of Haifa, Acre is home to an enormous castle built by the Crusaders. Its walls are too thick to have been penetrated by medieval weaponry; its storage chambers belowground so vast that food supplies and other materials could outlast the longest siege. Indeed, the French knights who held the castle when the Mamluk Muslims approached in 1291 willingly surrendered, thinking that they had been forgotten by their homeland, from which relief would never come. They left the garrison with their pennants, strewn with decorative crucifixes, waving in the wind high above them.

What the crusades accomplished was blocking the Muslims from controlling the entire Mediterranean coast, which, prior to the First Crusade, they were on the verge of doing. The era of the crusades also saw the merger of religious devotion and military aggression, the combined act of which came with papal promises of spiritual reward—chiefly the complete remission of sins. This ideal normalized the frenzied killing of those considered to be infidels to the Christian mind, and that did not include Muslims alone, but Israelites too. Hebrew Israelites were killed with abandon in this brutal period, not only in Palestine, and not only by Christians, but also in Muslim areas of the Iberian Peninsula at the hands of Berber rulers from the twelfth century onward. Israelites had to leave those regions and settle in Christian-controlled lands which saw them being forced to convert to Christianity in the late fourteenth century. Mass conversions on the part of Israelites followed, but many of them were merely pretending to convert to save their lives while secretly practicing their own ancient culture. With their ultimate victory over the Muslims in the Reconquista, a feat borne out of the crusading spirit, the Spanish and the Portuguese emerged as dominant players on the world stage. The Iberian Peninsula was transformed into a multicultural and ethnically diverse society primed for imperial expansion. Author Norman F. Cantor adds:

> "In the end it was a missionary society devoted to ambitious programs and great

> undertakings, and therefore it was Spain and Portugal that inaugurated the great age of European imperialism in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and created the new civilization of Latin America that could very well be the most dynamic culture of the early twenty-first century. The year 1095 leads directly to 1492, and the Iberian peoples bear the stamp of the crusading culture—its violence, its ambitions, its mobility, and its energy."

The transatlantic slave trade would result from these imperial ambitions, fulfilling among the most striking prophecies in Scripture that relate to the true people of Israel.

CHAPTER 21

MEDIEVAL HIGH POINT

A SERIES OF MONUMENTAL CHANGES began to shape the development of the medieval world of Europe between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Further monastic reforms were implemented; the papal monarchy grew and thus attracted a bevy of clerics and lawyers to Rome; trade and commerce expanded, leading to the rise of urban life; and political stability was realized in many areas, creating peace between peoples and thus stimulating communication, intellectual pursuits, a focus on the arts, philosophy and science, the furtherance of missionary work, and the invention and spread of new architecture.

In this period, cities began to grow, trade increased exponentially, and money was predominantly used in place of the barter system. The increased use of money brought many changes, not least being the focus on specialized production, where goods were produced by skilled labor and sold to specific markets. A greater divide began to develop between rich and poor as a result and, with the growth of cities, populations began to migrate, swelling large towns and urban areas. Then, as now, this urban sprawl created the beggar, or in the medieval sense, the mendicant friar, that is, a monk who begged for a living. This was a new low for the Christian movement, which established a system that countered the wise words of King David and clearly highlighted their lack of righteousness and the leaven that permeated their movement:

> 25 "I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread."
>
> —Psalm 37:25

This mendicant movement could be credited to Francis of Assisi, an Italian of the merchant class who gave up his inheritance to found a monastic order of beggars called the Franciscans via papal approval.

> "About the same time that the Franciscans were established, Dominic began another order of mendicant ('begging') monks."

Writes John M. Riddle in *A History of the Middle Ages*.

> "Born of minor nobility in Castile, he joined the canons regular in Osma (Spain) and accompanied his bishop to southern France, where he encountered the Cathars (a cult)…. He attracted imitators and soon had a following that was organized in 1215 at Toulouse as the Order of Friars Preachers, later known as the Dominicans."

Ironically, the Dominicans, a less turbulent order than the Franciscans, made study their main objective, along with preaching and teaching, whereas poverty was set aside when circumstances

allowed members of the order to own property. In the same period, theological universities were being established, the most prominent of which were Paris and Oxford, and the Dominicans gained a foothold by setting up professors in both. The Franciscans later established their own teachers in major universities across western Europe. Following the death of Francis of Assisi, a moderate party developed within the Franciscan order who appealed to the pope to relax the rule of poverty. Pope Gregory IX did as they requested and many of these beggars who were never to own property later acquired vast holdings.

When the mendicant orders of Franciscan and Dominican monks were founded, the most powerful pope in Christian history occupied the papal throne. He took the name Innocent III. The widow of a dead king, fearing that her son, the heir to the throne of Sicily, would be murdered by German rivals, named Pope Innocent III his protector, and made the kingdom of Sicily an official fiefdom of Innocent's papacy.

Pope Innocent wielded his might far and wide, excommunicating kings, intervening in the political affairs of nations, and forcing kings to turn their lands into additional fiefdoms of the papacy. But prior to his papal ascension, previous popes of the papal monarchy had been granted fiefdoms by kings. Professor Thomas F. Madden says of this:

> "William of Sicily, who was the leader of the Normans in southern Italy, was confirmed as a kingdom by the pope, and as a result of this the entire southern Italy and Sicily was given to the pope. Basically, it was a papal fief. In other words, the pope was the lord of it, and the Normans were considered to be the vassals of the pope."

However …

> "The greatest of these popes of the papal monarchy, and probably the most powerful of the popes in the middle ages, was Pope Innocent III, who reigned from 1198 – 1216. This is really the pinnacle of papal monarchy. Innocent and his curia were active in a dizzying array of activities all across Europe."

That included England, Spain, Bohemia, Portugal, Hungary, Denmark, Iceland, Bulgaria, and even Armenia in southwestern Asia. After a powerful French king put away one wife for another, Pope Innocent III ordered the king to return to the wife he had cast aside. When the king refused, the pope prohibited the entire country from taking the cherished sacraments. The nobles and bishops of the land sided with the pope, which forced the king to yield to his demands. Pope Innocent's reform programs also had far-reaching effect through the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. When Constantinople was taken during the Fourth Crusade, and the Latin Empire created against his wishes, his authority extended to that region as well. It was because of Pope Innocent III that Christendom, in this period, was considered nearly one fold under the supreme rule of the papacy.

Pope Innocent III, for these reasons, was seen as something more than human to Christians of his day. The popes who succeeded him also enjoyed the residue of the prestige that surrounded his papal throne. Papal power did not wane following Innocent's death either. From 1254 to 1273, the German empire fell into disorder and Pope Gregory X moved to restore order by giving papal approval to the election of Rudolf of Hapsburg as German emperor. Rudolf

essentially created the Hapsburg dynasty thereby, which lasted till 1918. As a nod to the pope, the new emperor made Rome and the papal states independent of his empire.

The thirteenth century was in fact the high point of medieval life in Europe. The papacy had reached its greatest height of power, the mendicant orders extended their tentacles in attempt to convert the world to Catholicism, Catholic universities sprang up throughout Europe and became the foundation for the level of scholasticism we see today, Gothic art and architecture pushed boundaries, and the Christian world seemed to be united under one head. Population growth and an economic boom were experienced as well. In fact, there were no important European wars from 1214 to the 1290s, illustrating the relative peace of that century, which allowed for the explosive development and advancement in the period.

Europe would not long enjoy this height, however. By 1261, the Latin Empire that replaced Byzantium collapsed, and papal control in that region was undermined. A sense of nationalism would sweep through several countries as their economies continued to develop and new political attitudes emerge. In the next two centuries, war and invasion would engulf the continent, plague would leave its indelible mark, corruption would run rampant, and the medieval period would begin to give way to the modern age. As economies continued to develop, credit systems emerged, along with a new societal class: the bourgeoisie. These capitalists conflicted with the feudal lords, seeing their aims were at odds.

The structure of feudalism made it difficult for the bourgeoisie class to greatly benefit from trade, due to local disputes between nobles, excessive taxation on goods crossing their borders, and the independent spirit of barons and other lords. The bourgeoisie pushed to centralize government, which would improve trade and end petty disputes, thus they tended to back kings in order to suppress high nobles. The nobility was able to oppose kings who could not secure enough resources to support armies, but the bourgeoisie supplied all that the kings needed. This led to centralized monarchial governments that gave rise to powerful banking families and merchants. By the time we reach the end of the thirteenth century, some banks grew so large that they existed as middlemen on an international scale, such as Florence’s Bardi and Peruzzi banks, which backed a considerable degree of wool exports from England to Flanders. The bourgeoisie were not merely lenders to the merchant class, however, but to kings also, whose wars they financed with large loans that came with high interest.

> “[T]hat ambition did not end well for many.”

Writes Chris Wickham in his book, *Medieval Europe*.

> “[F]or kings, when they defaulted, did so on such a scale that whole banks collapsed: Edward I of England destroyed the Riccardi bank of Lucca in this way when he confiscated their assets in 1294 (they went under in the next decade); the Frescobaldi of Florence fell when Edward II ran into trouble in 1311; and the Bardi and Peruzzi, by now overextended, in part with loans to Edward III, fell in their turn in 1343–46.”

This system of centralized monarchies made possible by powerful banks, led to the formation of several modern European states. England, France, and the countries in Scandinavia were among the first to unite under a single monarch. Spain, which was as yet a collection of Christian kingdoms and a Muslim one in Granada, would unite at the end of the medieval period. Italy and

Germany would unite well after that. However, a sense of nationalism began to emerge in Europe. Where citizens used to identify mainly with a county or city of a given region, the idea of belonging to a French or English nation slowly took root. This sense of nationalism soon led to many others undermining the papacy and its claim to divine authority. The English showed early resistance to the papacy, and the French would install its own docile pope to counter the efforts of a rival pope. The papacy lost not only authority as a result, but a great deal of prestige besides, and Christians longed for greater reform.

The thirteenth century ended with a pope announcing a "jubilee," which promised a "full and copious pardon of all" the sins of those who visited the churches of Peter and Paul during that momentous year. It was February of 1300. The papacy was still riding high on the triumphs of the deceased Pope Innocent III, but major changes were already afoot for the church; changes that went virtually unnoticed. Christianity had been on the rise from the fourth to the fourteenth century, and was seen as a convenient marriage between the Christian empire and the Catholic church. This speaks to John's vision of a woman riding a scarlet beast in the wilderness.

> 3 "And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting
> on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten
> horns. 4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and
> jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the
> impurities of her sexual immorality. 5 And on her forehead was written a name of
> mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations.'"
>
> —Revelation 17:3 – 5

In the thirteen and fourteenth centuries, her daughters were not yet born. They would come during the Protestant Reformation. The beast itself was comprised of the kingdoms and nations that carved up what used to be the Roman Empire, and it was full of blasphemous names because all those kings thought themselves divine. A heavenly messenger gives John the interpretation of his vision in verses 15 – 18, saying that the ten horns (which we know are kings or kingdoms) will hate the prostitute. But the woman, she is considered a great city; the Greek word is *polis*, hence the modern term metropolis, meaning a chief city. The see of Rome is actually referred to as the great metropolis. Notwithstanding her perceived greatness, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the church, that decadent prostitute, would start to see her greatest decline.

The thirteenth century not only marked the high point of the papacy and the orders of mendicant monks, it was also the apex of medieval scholasticism. A century earlier, the Catholic church had established cathedral schools that taught theology and were directly connected to the church and its bishops, but with the growth of cities and urban centers, universities were established. While the popes were seen as the primary authorities in the Christian world, the ascent of royal power challenged that authority with the aid of the universities.

> "The popes, and the church, in order to get well-trained men who could work the bureaucracies and the diplomacy of the church, they had created these universities."

Says Professor Madden.

> "And in the universities, if you were of, say, a middle class—and middle class was a fairly small class in the middle ages—you could send your son to university with the concept that they would get a job with a bishop, or in some other ecclesiastical capacity, that would pay well. Because the universities that were created by the Catholic church and designed to produce well-trained men for the Catholic church, that's why all of the students would essentially take some kind of minor religious orders, and would generally—when they graduated—go on to a clerical role someplace. Some of this is still left over even today; if you go to a commencement exercise at a university and you look at what everyone's wearing, they're wearing clerical vestments. These would be the vestments that the clergy would wear as they took on the symbols of their investment—of their degrees. It wasn't too long, particularly in the thirteenth century, before the kings wanted to start making use of these well-trained men in their own royal bureaucracies, to use those same methods and that same education that was coming out of these universities."

This resulted in many students receiving university educations but refusing to join the clergy. They would take their education and find employment in the secular courts of European rulers. Kings benefited greatly from this pattern and their governments became more efficient, productive, and powerful. Together with the backing of the bourgeoisie, centralized monarchies resulted and kings were able to exert greater control over their subjects. And again, modern European countries began to emerge. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, two of the most powerful of these emerging nations came into serious conflict, and those centuries were thereafter occupied with the Hundred Years' War, which lasted from 1337 – 1475. While it initiated with France and England, the conflict soon involved Europe on a whole, creating the first European war.

The fourteenth century also witnessed the Great Plague, which erupted in 1347. Noted changes in the weather during this time also affected agriculture, causing widespread famine. The population was therefore vulnerable to disease. Because of improved trade between regions like the Mediterranean and northern Europe, the plague that erupted in the Black Sea region and spread to Italy easily swept through northern Europe as well. The outbreak stormed the entire continent from 1348 – 1350, claiming, by some estimates, a third of the existing population. In another three years, the plague would subside, but periodic outbreaks would follow with the passing of a dozen years or so. Europe's economy was devasted by the disease, and lack of work and needed resources led to riots, political instability, and societal turmoil. Europe would not recover from the event for a few centuries.

The church experienced major changes as well. Around the turn of the fourteenth century, Rome was the scene of renewed political intrigue and maneuvering. The papacy saw its political power limited by the French monarchy, which had grown in strength, and in 1309, Pope Clement V transferred the residence of the popes to a principality called Avignon, which was ceded to the papacy during the Council of Lyons. Avignon, situated just across the Rhône river from French territory, was heavily influenced by the French government, and for over 70 years, the popes—subjecting themselves to this same influence after abandoning Rome—caused this period to be termed the "Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy." Yes … an irony if ever there was one. Chris Wickham adds:

> "The popes … were all French-speaking until 1378, and did not base themselves in Rome; in 1309 they settled in Avignon in what is now southern France, a small city which they could control rather better than Rome, and during the century they were based there the sophistication and wealth of the papal administration reached its height, as also its power over the church appointments of Latin Europe. Although the French kings did not actually rule Avignon, this was a very French power; nearly half the funding of the papacy came from church dues in France, and, conversely, the popes by now allowed the French king to tax church land for the English war. But the sense that Rome was the 'proper' place for popes to be never went away, and by the 1370s it had become powerful."

Thus, after a few years, the papal residence was moved back to Rome, the city upon which the concept of the universality of the western church, Roman *imperium*, was built. But it would not prove to be a smooth transition. The Avignon period of the papacy was held in bitter regard by the Germans due to extensive papal corruption. The papal court was bankrupted by a loss of revenue from the papal states. In order to raise new funds, the popes of Avignon devised schemes to keep the money flowing. Fees and taxes were levied on all manner of privileges, and the most egregious ones were collected via threat of excommunication.

In the first quarter of the fourteenth century, the seeds of dissent were already being sown against papal authority thanks to its Avignon phase. Emperor Louis the Bavarian, who ruled from 1314 – 1347, acted against the sitting pope, John XXII, by making an official appeal to a general council. Aiding him in his efforts was a scholar named Marsilius of Padua, who had to flee the University of Paris for his actions against the church. Marsilius and a colleague, John of Jandun, wrote a paper titled *Defender of the Peace*, which argued against the entire papal structure in favor of a democratic government.

The ecclesiastical hierarchy was not truly superior to the church laity, the paper said, nor had popes been given any high authority from the Messiah; they, along with bishops and priests, were merely to serve as agents of the body of believers, which the general council itself represented. Also, the spiritual was to be completely separate from the secular, as temporal matters were not the business of popes or the church. What *Defender of the Peace* did was stir up a storm of controversy that would not abate for over a century. With his paper, Marsilius laid the foundation for the modern concept of sovereign government. This was in fact the beginning of the pre-Reformation period.

With the turmoil of the Avignon phase, Pope Gregory XI returned to Rome in 1377. But the papal reentry into Rome enjoyed a brief celebration. Gregory XI would be dead within a year, and a new pope had to be elected. The Italian populace was jaded by the college of cardinals, whose membership included a large number of Frenchmen. A Roman mob stormed the building where the cardinals met and blocked a way of escape as they insisted on the election of an Italian pope. The college of cardinals, bowing to the demands of the mob, elected a new pope, Urban VI, who was crowned during a pagan celebration of Easter. Professor Thomas F. X. Noble says this of the famed event:

> "In the election of 1378, the sixteen cardinals in Rome—six of them were still up in Avignon—elected Bartolomeo Prignano, who was the archbishop of Bari, largely because of the howling mob outside the door demanding a Roman, or at the very

> least, an Italian be elected pope. Well, Bartolomeo—Urban VI, who was pope from 1378 – 1389—initially enjoyed the good will of the cardinals in Rome. But then he utterly ruined his relationship with them by treating them wretchedly. Now, he was well-intentioned, Urban was, but he was totally inept.
>
> "In July, the cardinals declared that the April election had been illegal because [it was] conducted under restraint and fear. Now, that's perfectly true. Elections were not supposed to be conducted in such conditions, with a howling mob outside the door. So, the cardinals decided that Urban was deposed—he wasn't legitimate pope—and they left Rome momentarily for Neapolitan territory to the south."

Urban, the alleged "illegitimate" pope, retaliated by creating another college of cardinals. The original French cardinals, refusing to be outdone, chose from among them a new pope, Clement VII, who they announced to the secular rulers and church hierarchy. Urban's papal throne remained in Rome, but Clement established his in Avignon, and this dynamic created what came to be known as the Great Schism of the papacy. Two popes enjoyed their own college of cardinals and claimed the right to excommunicate those who questioned their legitimacy. Because the cardinals themselves had created the confusion by electing a pope in April and then rejecting that pope for another that was elected in September, the question of who was the rightful pope was left to others.

In the end, France and Scotland sided with Pope Clement VII, while Italy, England, Scandinavia, Flanders, Poland, and Hungary went with Pope Urban VI. Several other kingdoms repeatedly switched sides. Chaos reigned among the populous for a time as a result of this sharp divide. With the death of Urban in 1389 another pope replaced him, but in 1395 the idea of forming a general council to settle the schism was proposed by professors of the University of Paris. Canon Law, however, dictated that the pope alone held the power to call a council of that nature, and he alone could ratify the decisions of one. Necessity forced the issue and a general council comprised of members of both colleges of cardinals met in Pisa in 1409 to depose both rival popes and elect yet a new pope, Alexander V.

Rather than ending the schism, the election of Alexander now left three men claiming to be the legitimate pope, as Boniface IX (who replaced the deceased Urban) and the pope in Avignon refused to back down. Europe could not abide more than one pope, so in 1414, an impressive gathering of representatives from various European nations was assembled at the behest of the German emperor. Known as the Council of Constance, the gathering was a kind of multinational affair that required the vote of each medieval nation. It would be another few years before the council could get one of the popes to step down, while it deposed two others. Finally, it elected Martin V, a pope who immediately disavowed the acts of the council, with the exception of the vote that made him pope. In the mind of Martin V, no council must be allowed to wield power above that of the pope. All in all, the Great Schism was ended, but immorality and corruption would plague the papacy yet again during the reigns of a succession of Renaissance popes; and that corruption would peak with the arrival of Pope Alexander VI, who ruled from 1492 – 1503. Disdain for the papal office began to build, and the Protestant Reformation was stirring in the hearts of several men.

CHAPTER 22

WYCLIFFE AND HUSS

THE FLAWS OF THE CHURCH, though evident at its very foundation, were most apparent at its apex, as the leadership revealed through a string of venalities and controversies, culminating in the so-called Babylonian Captivity in Avignon, as well as the Great Schism, that Christianity was a corruption of truth from the top down. Attempted internal reforms, such as those brought on by general councils—otherwise known as the conciliar movement—failed. The concept of the papacy being the earthly ecclesiastical office that channeled the will of the Most High became an absurdity to a few.

Among the men who challenged that long-held viewpoint were John Wycliffe and John Huss. Wycliffe was alive during the papacy's Avignon period and died after the beginning of the Great Schism in 1384. Huss was condemned and burned at the stake as a heretic at the Council of Constance. A prior pre-Reformation reform was attempted around 1173 by a man named Waldo, who was a merchant that decided to give all his wealth to the poor. He taught on the streets of Lyons and believed the Christian leadership to be thoroughly corrupt. To his understanding, the Scriptures were to be made accessible to all, thus, he had them translated into French. While he did not directly oppose the church, but sought to reform it, he was forced from Lyons and so took his message throughout the middle portion of France. Those who believed his preaching and followed him were called Waldensians. That movement was quickly suppressed, however, and they were forced underground to worship in poor regions of the Alps, Bohemia, and other areas. Therefore, as Will Durant writes in his book *The Reformation*:

> "The Reformation really began with John Wycliffe in the fourteenth century, progressed with John Huss in the fifteenth, and culminated explosively in the sixteenth with the reckless monk of Wittenberg."

That being Martin Luther. John Wycliffe, who preceded him, was either lauded by men of his day for his zealous nature, or villainized for that very nature, which led him to take a strong stance against the church. His early life is obscured in the shadow of history, but he bears the name of the Yorkshire village where he was born and raised, Wycliffe-on-Tees in northern England. His family owned land in that village, and by the time he was twelve or thereabouts, the village fell under the jurisdiction of the second son of King Edward III, John of Gaunt, who would later figure prominently in Wycliffe's life. In 1345, he landed at Oxford, where he enrolled as a student at around fifteen years of age. Wycliffe, who became famous for his bookish learning and keen logic, left the school briefly to enter politics in service to the crown. England was establishing itself as a nation at the time, so this was a crucial period. English had become the language of the elite and the government, replacing Norman French, and the burgeoning nation passed statutes that aimed to limit papal interference in its ecclesiastical elections. King

Edward III would use his authority to appoint Wycliffe to the parish of Lutterworth, where he preached until his death.

Wycliffe earned a doctoral degree in 1372 and became a prominent professor at Oxford. A heavily debated topic at the time was the idea of the right of dominion over men. Professors at Oxford were already questioning this matter when Wycliffe added an important equation to it. His view was that the English monarchy retained the power, by divine right, to check the authority of the church leadership, particularly when they abused their offices through some sinful act. The property of the clergy should even be seized if they proved corrupt. In 1377, Wycliffe's teaching was condemned by the pope, and it took the intervention of his influential English friends to prevent the pope from taking further action against him.

> "Any cleric living in a state of mortal sin would inescapably have forfeited his claims to ecclesiastical dominions or lands."

Writes Kevin Madigan, in *Medieval Christianity*.

> "These, Wyclif concluded, could then be taken, with justice, from the church by civil and secular rulers. This conclusion won Wyclif the appreciation of the nobility, of many ordinary critics of clerical wealth, and even of the mendicant orders, who of course wished, at least in theory, for those living the apostolic life to be poor.
>
> "Bishops and popes were considerably less exuberant. Indeed, in 1377, Wyclif was summoned to appear before an assembly of bishops in London. They wanted him to defend his views in person. In the event, he was protected by John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, and the proceedings never took place. The same year, Pope Gregory XI, perhaps encouraged by Benedictine antagonists of Wyclif, published a list of eighteen errors in Wyclif's works. They also called for his examination and arrest. Again, Wyclif was protected by powerful figures."

In 1378, when Wycliffe's reforming efforts deepened, the Great Schism of the papacy was getting underway. The schism was the perfect fodder for Wycliffe's push for church reform. Like the early monks, Wycliffe saw the excesses and worldly luxuries of the papacy as the antithesis of the lowly Israelite emissaries to whom they often pointed. In view of those poor and humble men, neither should popes possess political power. With two rival popes seeking to excommunicate the other and claim legitimacy, John Wycliffe vented his disparaging view of the papal office. The Messiah "is truth," wrote Wycliffe. "The pope is the principle of falsehood." While Yeshua lived in poverty, he added that "the pope labors for worldly magnificence." And where Yeshua refused temporal dominion, "the pope," he wrote acidly, "seeks it." He found fault with the church's practice of pardons, absolutions, indulgences, its worship of images, its pilgrimages, and even its worship of supposed saints. He also had strong views on the authoritative position of Scripture. "Neither the testimony of Augustine," he said, "nor Jerome, nor any other saint should be accepted except in so far as it was based upon Scripture."

The greatest hostility he faced, however, was derived from his negative views on the sacrament of the eucharist. Wycliffe released twelve strong arguments against the communion ceremony in the summer of 1380, refuting the idea that the bread and wine that was prayed over and served were actually transformed into the body and blood of the Messiah. Because this

deeply held belief was at the very heart of Catholicism, Wycliffe immediately began to see his support dwindle. His teachings were condemned by a small council and he was forbidden to lecture at the university. Another council, called by the Archbishop of Canterbury, condemned further writings as heretical. Wycliffe is even credited with fomenting the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, though he did not initiate it. Another man named Wat Tyler actually led the revolt. Inspired by the Messiah himself, however, Wycliffe is responsible for dispatching lowly priests into the villages of the poor, and even to rural churches to reach the neglected and downtrodden.

These poor priests traveled far and wide in russet robes and unrefined wool, without sandals or satchels, and carrying only long staffs in hand. Their food was provided by the peasants with whom they lodged or passed, who gladly received their word, which was based on Wycliffe's teachings. The priests were dubbed the Lollards, a pejorative meaning *mumblers*, likely for the manner in which they mumbled their prayers. They became a bane to the nobility, the monarchy, and the church. In 1382, Wycliffe was expelled from the University of Oxford altogether and lost the status of a master. Regardless of this, the Lollards spread Wycliffe's doctrine and preached that the Scriptures should be read by all. But they were forcefully put down since the church saw them as heretics. Chris Wickham, writing in his book, *Medieval Europe*, adds:

> "[O]ne prominent Lollard, Sir John Oldcastle, staged a half-hearted revolt in 1414, which led to a clamp-down on Lollards generally, and an increasing marginalization of them in England across the rest of the century. By now, however, Wycliffite views had gone well beyond the university, and sometimes changed as a result; Lollards were often self-educated preachers, the sort of people who had been 'good men' in the 'Cathar' period in southern Europe. Not unlike earlier lay heretics, they regarded the authority of scripture, which they had by now in English, as superior to that of the church, rejected the latter's temporal power (here they were at their most Wycliffite), and for the most part rejected transubstantiation."

Despite his penchant for church reform due to evils practiced by the clergy, Wycliffe is guilty of benefiting from an ecclesiastical appointment in return for his political service. He even refused to relinquish a few strongly-held Catholic beliefs, such as the concept of purgatory and prayers offered up to supposed saints. And while he decried the practice of Christians relying on the ideas of respected theologians over that of Scripture, he quoted heavily from the works of Augustine of Hippo.

Wycliffe met his end in 1384 after suffering a stroke during communion. Dying in this way moved the church to bury him in what it viewed as consecrated ground, but because of his radical viewpoints and negative teachings against long-held Catholic doctrines, he was condemned at the Council of Constance. Thus, his remains were dug up and burned in the manner of a heretic, and his ashes scattered to the winds over the river Swift.

Despite his death, the Lollards continued to spread Wycliffe's message for a time and, at their height, they even attracted members of the nobility to their numbers. Their favorable situation prompted the Lollards to appeal to Parliament to change the law regarding heresy, but their petition failed to take root and, faced with growing opposition, the nobility abandoned them and returned to the mother church. After John Oldcastle's failed revolt in 1414 the gentry largely withdrew its support of the movement, thus Lollardism spread to the lower classes and took a more radical bent. In 1431, a conspiracy was discovered among the Lollards that sought to bring

sweeping church reform and ultimately overthrow the English government. It was suppressed, and further persecutions followed.

The Lollards were not completely defeated, however, and they continued to dot the landscape for decades. In the early sixteenth century, they experienced a revival which led to the condemnation of many of its members who were killed as a result. When the Protestant Reformation was fully underway, Lollards figured prominently among protestants in England. Well before that time, however, Wycliffe's anti-Catholic teachings had spread to distant Bohemia, where another influential reformer would take up the reins of the pre-Reformation movement.

Wycliffe's teachings and influence spread from his immediate surroundings to the distant land of Bohemia through several paths. First, a literary and theological link extended from Oxford, where Wycliffe taught, to the University of Prague. That link was further strengthened after Anne of Bohemia wed King Richard II of England in 1383. With this, students of both countries frequently traveled back and forth, and Czech students in particular would be drawn to Oxford in droves where they would directly encounter the works of Wycliffe. Kevin Madigan adds that:

> "A second path has less to do with ecclesiastical politics than intellectual commitments, particularly the appreciation in Prague for Wyclif's philosophical views. A crucial factor here, one that would inform ecclesiastical and academic life in Prague in coming decades, was the desire of the Czech professors—or, as they were also called, 'masters' (*magistri*)—to distinguish themselves, philosophically speaking, from their German counterparts. By roughly 1390, Czech students returning from Oxford had begun to acquaint their compatriots with Wyclif's epistemological views, which contrasted to the moderate nominalism embraced by most German masters. Well before Wyclif's theological works had begun to appear in Prague, his reputation as a bold and stimulating philosophical intellect was well established among the Czech masters."

In the early fifteenth century, following his death—and after his writings had been placed under a ban by the church—Wycliffe's teachings still managed to wield their influence far and wide. In Bohemia (a former kingdom of the Czech Republic) that influence reached John Huss. While a professor at the University of Prague, Huss borrowed heavily from both Wycliffe and the Lollards and began to spread their message. Like them, he was big on church reform and seeing a greater emphasis placed on Scripture rather than the authority of the papacy.

John Huss was born to a pair of peasants in a little town for which he was named, that being Husinetz in southern Bohemia. He later attended the University of Prague and earned both a bachelor of arts and a master of arts prior to beginning his teaching career. After being appointed to the pulpit of Bethlehem Chapel near the university, Huss finally had an opportunity to circulate the teachings of Wycliffe, which included his own bitter criticisms against papal abuses of power. He was an ordained priest who had reformed his own life, living along the austere lines of a monk.

> "As head of the Bethlehem Chapel, he became the most famous preacher in Prague."

Writes Will Durant.

> “Many figures high in the court were among his listeners, and Queen Sophia made him her chaplain. He preached in Czech, and taught his congregation to take an active part in the service by singing hymns. His accusers later affirmed that in the very first year of his ministry he had echoed Wyclif’s doubts as to the disappearance of bread and wine from the consecrated elements in the Eucharist. Unquestionably he had read some of Wyclif’s works; he had made copies of them which still exist with his annotations; and at his trial he confessed to having said: ‘Wyclif, I trust, will be saved; but could I think he would be damned, I would my soul were with his.’ ”

By 1403, Wycliffe’s writings had reached a point of influence in the University of Prague that forced a decision to be made concerning their fate. The cathedral’s administrative clergy called for a vote by the university’s masters as to whether or not forty-five articles from Wycliffe’s writings should be banned. Huss and several other professors voted against this idea, but the majority were in favor of a permanent ban on their teaching or adoption by the faculty either in public or private. Also, none would be allowed to defend those articles.

Huss, despite this prohibition, ended up being reproved by the archbishop of Prague for violating it. The archbishop later excommunicated Huss and several other priests. When the small company continued to serve as priests regardless, all of Prague was placed on an interdict, which cut off the city from enjoying perceived religious privileges. The archbishop also called for as many of Wycliffe’s writings as could be found to be brought forth. Some two hundred manuscripts were found in Bohemia and handed over. They were burned in his palace courtyard. This caused Huss to appeal to Pope John XXIII, but when the pope summoned Huss to appear before him in the papal court Huss did not comply.

> “In 1411 the pope, desiring funds for a crusade against Ladislas, King of Naples, announced a new offering of indulgences.”

Writes Will Durant.

> “When this was proclaimed in Prague, and the papal agents seemed to the reformers to be selling forgiveness for coin, Huss and his chief supporter, Jerome of Prague, publicly preached against indulgences, questioned the existence of purgatory, and protested against the church’s collecting money to spill Christian blood. Descending to vituperation, Huss called the pope a money-grubber.”

He even labeled him Antimessiah.

> “A large section of the public shared Huss’s views, and subjected the papal agents to such ridicule and abuse that the king forbade any further preaching or action against the offering of indulgences. Three youths who violated this edict were hailed before the city council; Huss pleaded for them, and admitted that his preaching had aroused them; they were condemned and beheaded. The pope now launched his own excommunication against Huss; and when Huss ignored it John laid an interdict upon any city where he should stay in 1411. On the advice of the king, Huss left Prague, and remained in rural seclusion for two years.”

Kevin Madigan adds that he spent those …

> "… two years in the castles of his noble supporters, first near Prague, then at Kozi Hradek in southern Bohemia, and finally at Krakovec in the west."

During this time, Huss dedicated himself to writing several works, a few of which borrowed from the Waldensians who had been pushed into Bohemia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the bulk of his writings were heavily influenced by Wycliffe, however. Huss was against the worship of images, auricular confession to priests, and the ongoing act of simony. He openly denounced the fees priests charged for performing baptisms, marriages, Mass, and burials. One treatise he wrote, *De ecclesia*, contained writings that were used to prove him heretical, and for which he was condemned to death by burning.

Huss agreed with others before him, such as Wycliffe and Marsilius of Padua, that the church was to have no worldly possessions. The pope, he held, was not his infallible head, or anyone else's for that matter. That position belonged to the Messiah. Huss also held that if a pope were in error, one would be obeying the Messiah by rebelling against that pope. Will Durant adds that:

> "When a general council met at Constance in 1414 to depose three rival popes and enact a program of ecclesiastical reform, a chance seemed open to reconcile the Hussites with the church. Emperor Sigismund, heir apparent to the childless Wenceslaus IV, was anxious to restore religious unity and peace in Bohemia. He suggested that Huss should go to Constance and attempt a reconciliation. For this hazardous journey he offered Huss a safe-conduct to Constance, a public hearing before the council, and a free and safe return to Bohemia in case Huss should reject the judgment of the assembly."

While some cautioned him against making the trip, Huss packed and traveled to Constance in October of 1414 in the company of three members of the Czech nobility and several Bohemian friends. Almost simultaneously, an adversary named Stephen of Palecz and various other opponents of Huss made their way to Constance as well, intent on indicting him before the council.

Upon arrival in Constance, Huss was treated warmly and enjoyed personal freedom. It was when Stephen of Palecz approached the council and presented to it the many heresies Huss had clung to that things changed. Huss was brought before the council and peppered with questions. Refusing to shrink from the intense scrutiny, he offered up answers that caused the council to view him as a true heretic, for which they imprisoned him. Huss became gravely ill to the point of death as a result, and physicians were sent by the pope himself to see to his treatment and recovery.

Emperor Sigismund by this time had expressed to the council his regret that it had countermanded him in refusing to uphold his promise to Huss of a safe-conduct. The council argued that when it came to matters of the church and trying its enemies, the state had no jurisdiction, thus the council could overrule the emperor. In the spring of 1415, the month of April, Huss was transferred to the fortress of Gottlieben, which was situated on the Rhine. There they placed him in fetters and neglected to feed him sufficiently. Huss soon grew ill to the point of death once more.

After seven agonizing months of imprisonment, Huss was dragged in chains before the council on three separate occasions in July. This time they questioned him concerning his views on Wycliffe's forty-five articles that stood condemned. While Huss claimed to disagree with many of them, he agreed with a few. The council later focused its attention on Huss's own treatise, *De ecclesia*. Huss offered to recant whatever points he had made in his writings if those points could be disproven by Scripture. Martin Luther would use the same argument in the next century.

Despite Huss's position on the matter …

> "The council argued that Scripture must be interpreted not by the free judgment of individuals but by the heads of the church."

Writes Will Durant.

> "[A]nd it demanded that Huss should retract all the quoted articles without reservation. Both his friends and his accusers pleaded with him to yield. He refused. He lost the good will of the vacillating emperor by declaring that a secular as well as a spiritual authority ceases to be a lawful ruler the moment he falls into mortal sin. Sigismund now informed Huss that if the council condemned him his safe-conduct would be automatically canceled."

The questioning continued for three days, yet Huss would not allow the influence of the emperor or the cardinals to get him to recant. He was imprisoned once more and four weeks would pass while the council considered the matter. Huss maintained his position on the church despite more attempts by the emperor who sent representatives to get him to change his mind. He was unyielding in his argument, stating, as always, that Scripture alone would prove him wrong and force him to recant.

Finally, the council had had enough, so on July 6, 1415, while gathered in the cathedral that served Constance, it formally condemned Huss along with the deceased Wycliffe and ordered that Huss's writings be burned. Huss was then placed in the custody of the secular powers. They immediately stripped him of his frock and ushered him out of the city to the place prepared for him. There stood a wood heap on which he would be consumed as a victim of the Inquisition. He was offered a final chance to recant but refused, and while reciting psalms, fire engulfed him.

But alas, as Norman F. Cantor writes in his book *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*:

> "The death of Hus did not end the Hussite heresy, however. The conversion of another Bohemian national leader to the Hussite doctrine sparked resistance to a German invasion aimed at subjugating the heretics. Even after Bohemian resistance collapsed, the heresy survived. Today it forms the basis for the teachings of the Moravian Church…. The growing power of national states in the late fifteenth century led to further domination of the church by national governments. Henceforth the pope could not effectively intervene in ecclesiastical affairs within the states of Europe, nor could he play a decisive role in international politics…. The papacy and the college of cardinals remained preoccupied with Italian politics and dynastic struggles, while growing nationalistic feelings added fuel to the fires of religious discontent in northern Europe. All this precluded the recovery of the glories of the

thirteenth-century papacy. It also set the stage for the final blow to the universal authority of the church, the Reformation of the sixteenth century."

CHAPTER 23

THE RENAISSANCE

IN THE MIDST OF THE pre-Reformation movement was the European Renaissance—also called the Italian Renaissance—which covered the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, and ushered in the modern era. In this cultural period, politics incorporated the custom of diplomacy, while science relied more on observation and induction, where conclusions were drawn from a part to a whole, or from particulars to generals. This was also a period of education reform, and in the arts, particularly oil painting, natural realism was the new aim, therefore new techniques were developed to achieve it. Accomplished artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo soon emerged and helped define the Renaissance.

While the period has its origin in fourteenth-century Florence, it soon spread to other Italian city-states, such as Genoa, Milan, Venice, Bologna, and Rome, among many others. Later, the culture flooded into western Europe. Of course, there was no true nation of Italy at the time, nor an Italian language; those would come centuries later, along with the recognized territorial boundaries featured on modern maps of the peninsula. So, in referring to Italy, I do so merely to frame a historic region and period for the contemporary mind. That said, the Renaissance witnessed the revival of antiquity, wherein Latin manuscripts were copied and circulated. And, after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, exiles from Byzantium fled to Italy and filled the country with classical Greek literature. This literary awakening eventually spread to Europe as well. Scholars began to focus on humanism, which is what we call the humanities today—otherwise known as liberal arts. The term humanism has been used to encompass a spate of activities and ideas, but during the Renaissance, it had two important, harmonious meanings:

> “First, there is social (sometimes called civic) humanism, which describes the outlook of the upper middle class in the Italian cities during the Renaissance.”

Writes Norman F. Cantor in *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*.

> “The upper bourgeoisie, glorying in its new political power, expressed its independence by placing great emphasis on human autonomy and on the value and grandeur of the city-state. The new class imitated the French aristocracy of the thirteenth century, taking up the aristocratic education, style, and courtly life that they considered suitable to their own emancipation and to their equality with the northern aristocrats. Social humanism inspired a passionate civic patriotism, a belief that all urban resources should be applied to the defense and beautification of the republican commune.
>
> “The second major aspect of humanism was the intellectual movement, based on Platonic philosophy, which emphasized the primacy of human values and individual

> creativity over feudal and ecclesiastical traditions and institutions. Humanist philosophers believed that the human mind was capable of deciding for itself without relying on traditional authority. In both its social and intellectual aspects, humanism drew strength and inspiration from the Greek and Roman classics, which taught the value of the city-state and its self-governing urban elite and upheld the critical powers of the individual human mind."

Humanists in Italy focused on the study of Scripture using their newfound philosophy, which they mingled with notions from secular classical literature. Many humanists were dedicated Christians, yet, like the Neoplatonists and Gnostics before them, Christian humanists of the Renaissance sought to infuse their religion with pagan philosophy and mysticism. Despite these leanings, Rome—seat of the mother church—was in fact the spiritual and intellectual center for these humanists. More to the point, several popes were humanists as well, hence their full support of the arts during the Renaissance.

Humanism at the time did not merely denote the philosophy and intellectual bent of the Italian nobility, where the sole focus was the humanities as it is today; humanism also emphasized the so-called "genius of man," and in fact praised the ability of the human mind, which was considered to be "extraordinary." This kind of man-worship was at the heart of humanism, while its proponents looked back to the literature, language, and values of ancient Rome and Greece, as these were viewed as the twin epitomes of man's great achievements.

What shaped the Italian Renaissance was fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian culture itself. The wealth of the Italian elite and the structure of society in the city-states, with their unique political systems, saw to the development of the Renaissance as a full-blown cultural movement, rather than a passing expression of ideas and art from a scant few. Europe would look to Italy as the forerunner of cultural rebirth as it emerged from the feudal despotism of the middle ages. Italy was able to do this via its vast wealth, together with the political structure of its powerful city-states. Unlike the antiquated feudal economy that was tied to land …

> "By the latter part of the thirteenth century, Italy had a money economy based on trade and finance."

Writes Norman F. Cantor.

> "The late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries saw the rise of the great banking houses. The pope was the bankers' largest single customer in Europe, since he needed an agency for the deposit and transfer of vast church funds. Money was lent in sometimes staggering sums to kings and merchants and nobles."

In this way, the city-states of northern Italy were a collective superpower, which Europe looked to and emulated during the Renaissance. While kingdoms and principalities still existed in southern Italy, the politics of the northern Italian city-states differed from other states in Europe, in that many of those Italian governments were not under the control of kings, emperors, or longstanding oligarchs belonging to old aristocracies. Government control rotated in northern Italy, and those governments were more autonomous, with wealthy commoners among the new elite holding high office. This had been the case since the city-states gained independence in the eleventh century following the collapse of imperial power on the peninsula.

Professor Jennifer McNabb, who teaches history at Western Illinois University, adds:

> "These political and economic realities helped to create a group of elites not found elsewhere in Europe: a community of citizens, drawn from the successful mercantile interests and the nobility, who, in northern Italy, began making cities rather than country estates their home. These citizens—in many of the northern states bound together by common interests, rather than divided as elsewhere in Europe, between different concerns and visions of authority in countryside and city—forged a new type of self-government: the commune. The elites in these flourishing cities seized political control of their governments. And, by the early twelfth century, the roster of communes included Lucca, Milan, Parma, Rome, Pavia, Pistoia, Verona, Bologna, Siena, Florence, Pisa, Genoa, and Venice."

And it was in some of these powerful city-states—beginning with Florence—that the revival of antiquity emerged, which saw Italian poets like Petrarch, as well as painters, sculptors, and even architects reaching back to the classical era of pagan literature and art for inspiration. And these they interspersed with Renaissance Christianity. The renewed interest in classical knowledge was further fueled by Johann Gutenberg's movable-type printing press, which he invented in 1439. That innovation, which revolutionized communication between peoples, would be used to even greater effect some 80 years later, during the Protestant Reformation. That would mark the beginning of the masses at last having direct access to the Scriptures in various translations.

The wealth of the Italian city-states during the Renaissance also financed the erecting of great buildings, which were adorned with art commissioned by the bourgeoisie; and that art did not magnify or exalt the Creator so much as human grandeur. Employing paint and stone, painters and sculptors sought to capture past Greek and Roman representations of human glorification, which was interrupted by the invasion of the barbarians and the coming of the Dark Ages. The Renaissance, therefore—a word that is of French origin, and which means, a new birth, or revival—was seen as a rebirth of the glories of classical antiquity. So, in a way, it was also a period of worship of the ancients. But while it was seen as a time of prosperity and great artistic achievement, it was also a time of turmoil.

During the late middle ages, political intrigue plagued the papacy, and that intrigue surmounted during the so-called Babylonian Captivity of Avignon prior to reaching its zenith in the Great Schism, wherein three rival popes claimed to be the legitimate pontiff. Italy was deeply affected by the battles for papal dominance, which dragged a great deal of Europe into the conflict and saw European republics and noble houses swinging their support from one corrupt candidate to the next. We covered this topic in chapter 21 of this book.

> "What was to become known as the Great Schism was ended only by a series of general councils of the Church."

Writes Alexander Lee, in his book *The Ugly Renaissance*.

> "But even this caused massive problems. In the wake of the Schism, a group of churchmen known as conciliarists had come to believe that it was simply too dangerous to give the pope too much power. Instead, they wanted a kind of

> ecclesiastical parliament, convened at regular intervals, to have the final say in matters of great importance. The problem was that this was the exact opposite of what the popes wanted. After the Schism had been healed in 1417, Martin V and his successors wanted to take up the reins of power without any interference, least of all from a council filled with rustic clerics from all over Europe. Mutual loathing between the two camps threw the papacy into yet another bout of internecine warfare."

The papacy would emerge triumphant in its war against the conciliar movement and popes would retain the supremacy in ecclesiastical matters. Despite this, a succession of popes would continue to prove corrupt, through acts of simony, nepotism, debauchery, and many other evils. Within this period of intrigue and treachery, upheaval, and the lofty Renaissance ideal the papacy would deteriorate as it moved into the Reformation era.

Among the first popes of the Renaissance to embrace the movement was Eugene IV, also known as Eugenius. During his reign, he sought to beautify and embellish Rome by inviting artists Fra Angelico and Donatello to the languishing city. Pope Eugene was also instrumental in helping to end the conciliar movement, but through forced concessions to European princes, which left the papacy relying more heavily on revenues from the Papal States. Pope Eugene IV was a nephew of a prior pope, Gregory XII, which speaks to the prevalent nepotism of the tainted pontificate. And Eugenius was himself guilty of nepotism in helping to establish quasi dynasties in the papacy. As a case in point, Thomas F. X. Noble, professor of history and chair of the Department of History at the University of Notre Dame, tells us that:

> "Paul II, Pietro Barbo, was a nephew of Eugenius IV. Alexander VI, Rodrigo Borgia —Spanish pope—was a nephew of Calixtus III. Pius III, Francesco Todeschini, was a nephew of Pius II. Julius II, Giuliano della Rovere, was a nephew of Sixtus IV. And finally, the Medici family produced two popes in this period: Leo X and Clement VII."

To clarify, prominent Roman families did not produce more than one or two popes since power had to rotate between various noble houses. It was generally accepted that the reign of one or two popes was all that was necessary for a particular family to benefit greatly from that pope's favoritism and bestowal of patronage to family members. Professor Noble goes on to say.

> "Now another way we can look at the kind of dynastic politics of Renaissance papal Rome, Eugenius IV named six nephews cardinals. He married his nieces and nephews into some of the great families of Rome and of Italy. He made his favorite nephew, Giuliano—who later became Pope Julius II—get this—archbishop of Avignon in Bologna, bishop of Lausanne, Coutances, Viviers, Monde, Ostia, and Velletri, and also Abbot of Nonantola and Grottaferrata. This is probably the biggest case of pluralism in the entire history of the church. This one man had all these positions."

It was the role of the cardinals to elect the pope. By naming six of his nephews to the cardinalate, Eugenius—along with successive popes who would follow suit—was able to secure power and steer the election of a future pope, thus keeping the papal throne in the family until

another noble house seized power. Whoever controlled the cardinals, therefore, controlled the most powerful clerical body in Christendom.

Successive popes would follow in Eugene's footsteps in other ways too, by commissioning established Renaissance artists and architects to not only embellish existing buildings with grand works of art, but also to erect new palaces, monuments, and churches that reflected papal grandeur, such as the Sistine Chapel. The papal library was also expanded with literature from the period. In all, vast sums—mostly culled from church revenues—were expended in this colossal undertaking, which culminated in the erection of the famed Saint Peter's Basilica. But church funds would not be enough. To raise new streams of revenue, one pope, namely Julius II, would wage war.

> "Julius wanted a nation-state of his very own."

Says Professor McNabb.

> "[A]nd to get it, he put into place many of the same initiatives that propelled monarchs elsewhere in Europe to new levels of centralization and authority. But fueling those other state-building programs were revenues. And so, the Renaissance papacy too needed to become an institution growing ever more creative in its strategies for meeting its ever-expanding financial needs. This was part of the reason Julius exercised military might in expanding papal claims to the lands of the central Italian Peninsula. The Papal States, over which the pope could exercise direct authority as secular lord, were simply needed to pay the bills."

But Julius II was one of the later Renaissance popes. Immediately following Pope Eugenius IV was Nicholas V, who ruled from 1447 – 1455. Pope Nicholas sought to be a true Renaissance pope by dedicating most of his pontificate to trying to establish Rome as the dominant political city-state in all of Italy. More than that, he wanted Rome to act as the intellectual center of Europe itself, and to further that aim, he tried to attract the greatest living Renaissance authors and artists to his city. It was said that Nicholas V possessed the greatest personal library in all of Europe, but he was not merely a patron of the arts and literature; Nicholas was an exacting pope who did not tolerate those who opposed him. Many were executed during his reign. Yet, he is also the pope who witnessed the fall of Constantinople, and whose call for a crusade to capitalize on the consequential event was ignored. Nicholas also issued a papal bull that permitted the sitting Portuguese king to round up descendants from the tribe of Judah as slaves, as mentioned in our documentary, *A History of the True Hebrews*.

The successor of Nicholas V was the first of the Borgias—the Spanish noble family—to rule as pope. He took the name Calixtus III and is noted for attempting his own failed crusade against the Turks. Calixtus even sold his possessions to secure and equip a fleet for the endeavor, but the people of Europe did not back him in his cause. Nepotism ran high in the papal court of Calixtus, who appointed his nephew Rodrigo to the college of cardinals, cementing his future election as Pope Alexander VI. Calixtus is also the pope who established the custom of ringing the midday church bell, which was initially meant to remind Christians to pray for crusaders.

Following Calixtus, Pope Pius II occupied the papal throne. He ruled from 1458 – 1464, and was the final Renaissance pope to attempt church reform. Pius is singular also in the fact that he

did not use his papal position to amass power or benefit family members to the extent of other Renaissance popes. Pope Pius's attempts at reform came to nothing due to great opposition from the corrupt cardinals and other clergymen. And their corruption and sinfulness during the Renaissance was hard to disguise.

> "[T]he papal court thronged with rich, powerful churchmen who were utterly devoted to greed, gluttony, and lust."

Writes Alexander Lee.

> "The magnificent halls of their palaces buzzed with every variety of sin, giving the Curia a very bad name, especially among humanists like Bartolomeo della Fonte who came to Rome to pursue their art. Vicious invectives were launched against the lifestyle of Renaissance cardinals by various learned litterateurs. Even among the ordinary people of the city, the court earned a rotten reputation, and despite the magnificence of curial palaces the very word 'cardinal' became a term of abuse…."

And with each succeeding pope, the corruption and sinfulness of the papal court of the Renaissance seemed to worsen. Pope Paul II, who ascended the papal throne in 1464, was an obese glutton and sodomite given to violent bouts of debauchery and drunkenness that often left him vomiting. His aim, for which he expended great wealth and attention, was to restore Rome's pagan glory through grand building projects. A few of his contemporaries wrote that he died of apoplexy, which was doubtless due to a life of excess.

In 1471, Sixtus IV was elevated to the papal throne after being elected by a conclave of eighteen cardinals, whom he bribed with many gifts. Noted for his famed project the Sistine Chapel, which is named after him, Pope Sixtus is also responsible for endorsing an assassination plot against the rival Medici family and dragging Italy into war for the sake of his nephews. In fact, enriching his family was a high priority for Pope Sixtus, and he appointed several family members, particularly his nephews, to the college of cardinals, which came with grants of land and other benefices.

> "Since he was absolutely determined to make the comparatively obscure della Rovere one of Italy's foremost noble families …"

Writes Alexander Lee.

> "… Sixtus IV's propensity for elevating his relatives to the Sacred College surpassed that of even his most nepotistic predecessors. As Machiavelli recorded, he was 'a man of very base and vile condition … the first to show how much a pontiff could do and how many things formerly called errors could be hidden under pontifical authority.' No fewer than six direct kinsmen were elevated in the space of just under seven years and accounted for almost a quarter of the cardinals present at the conclave after his death."

Prior to being elected, the next pope in line, Innocent VIII, who ruled from 1484 – 1492, vowed to refrain from appointing more than one family member to a high ecclesiastical office. Following his election, Innocent broke his promise on the grounds that, as pope, he was now

imbued with power that did not bind him to past oaths, particularly oaths he was forced to make in order to secure votes. Innocent VIII is unique in that he was the first pope to not only acknowledge his illegitimate children (which a pope was forbidden to have) but he also showered them with riches and high honors. Simony too was his order of business, as indulgences were routinely sold for profit, under the careful management of a trusted son. During the first year of his pontificate, Innocent VIII set his sights on suspected witches, and issued a papal bull that touched off a literal witch-hunt that was fueled by moral panic. Hundreds of women, who had nothing to do with witchcraft, were murdered as a result. Those suspected to be witches or who were labeled heretics were usually burned at the stake, on the misguided presumption that the bodies of those who were burned could not be resurrected in the judgment.

> "After Innocent's death, the most decadent of all of the Renaissance popes came to power, shortly after the fall of Granada in 1492."

Says Professor McNabb.

> "Spaniard Rodrigo Borgia, or—to use his regnal name—Pope Alexander VI. Alexander represents the zenith of papal self-involvement and corruption. The enhancement of the papacy wasn't his primary drive. The ultimate object of his concern was his own family. Alexander had no interest in pretending to celibacy…."

The pope's many concubines, who were the legal wives of men serving in his court, bore him several children whom he claimed openly without shame. Cesare Borgia, the most well-known of his illegitimate children, was appointed to the cardinalate and was in fact the first person to resign. Pope Alexander placed Cesare in command of the papal army and, after allying with the French, Cesare engaged in war to recapture papal states in Central Italy, one of which was carved out as his own for a brief period. Alexander VI, whose pontificate was occupied with every manner of sin, died suddenly, and his son, Cesare suffered the same fate not long after. A new pope was elected therefore, Pius III, who was set on reforming the church and bringing peace to Italy. But he would be pope for a mere twenty-six days before death came calling.

> "… Giuliano della Rovere was one of the strongest personalities that ever reached the papal chair…."

Writes Will Durant in his book *The Renaissance*, in speaking of our next pope in line, that being Julius II.

> "[T]his is the man who for a decade kept Italy in war and turmoil, freed it from foreign armies, tore down the old St. Peter's, brought Bramante and a hundred other artists to Rome, discovered, developed, and directed Michelangelo and Raphael, and through them gave to the world a new St. Peter's and the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and the *stanze* of the Vatican.… [H]e reached the cardinalate at twenty-seven, and fumed and fretted in it for thirty-three years before being promoted to what had long seemed to him his manifest due."

That of being pope. Yet the regnal name he chose linked him not to a deceased Christian or Biblical figure as with other popes, but to a Roman pagan: Julius Caesar. And upon assuming the

papal chair, Will Durant writes that …

> "He paid no more regard to his vow of celibacy than most of his colleagues…. Julius was stern, Jovian, passionate, impatient, readily moved to anger, passing from one fight to another, never really happy except at war…. [T]he sexagenarian pope became a soldier, more at ease in military garb than in pontifical robes, loving camps and besieging towns, having guns pointed and assaults delivered under his commanding eyes."

In 1513, however, death would claim Julius and end his many pursuits. The pope who succeeded him was Leo X, a member of the powerful Medici family. During his pontificate, Leo would be consumed with the arts, to the neglect of his papal duties. So consumed was he in fact that he sought to complete the famed St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, which he partially financed by selling indulgences. This particular sin would provoke the protest of Martin Luther. Thus, Leo X would occupy the papal chair as the glories of the Renaissance waned and the Protestant Reformation erupted around him.

CHAPTER 24

THE NEW WORLD

WHILE THE RENAISSANCE WAS FLOURISHING within Italy, and in fact reaching its height on the peninsula, the Portuguese were expanding their empire into the Atlantic. They looked to establish new trading routes, and thus settled Madeira in 1419, the Azores in 1427, and the Cape Verde Islands in 1450. This allowed for the establishment of important trading posts along the African coast. While their primary pursuit was gold, this was not easy to come by, therefore slaves took precedence since they were easier to acquire. The already booming trans-Saharan slave trade allowed the Portuguese to branch off into a distinct market, but, being Catholics, they first needed the approval of the pope.

The justification for that approval came on the basis of war, or to be more precise, a crusade. The people on whom the Portuguese had set their sights were descendants of ancient Israelites, who had established settlements in West Africa and other territories after fleeing Jerusalem and its surroundings during the Roman siege of 70 CE, and the failed Bar Kokhba revolt of 135 CE. In 1452, Pope Nicholas V issued a bull to Alfonso V of Portugal titled *Dum Diversas*. That bull allowed the king to launch a crusade on Saracens and pagans—namely Israelites—and, in conquering them, submit them to perpetual slavery.

> "*Dum Diversas* regarded the enslavement of Africans to be part of the Holy War of Reconquest."

Writes Katharine Gerbner, in her book *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World*.

> "It also granted the Portuguese Crown the authority to act as the head of the Church in Africa and, later, in Brazil, a right known as the *padroado real*. In 1454, Nicholas V reconfirmed his support for Portuguese expansion in the brief *Romanus Pontifex*. Later Popes reiterated the grants in 1456, 1481, and 1514."

Those popes were Calixtus III, Sixtus IV, and Leo X—three popes of the Renaissance—and they reiterated the grants of the papal bulls on the cusp of the Protestant Reformation, which would act as a judgment of the church while existing as a fulfillment of prophecy. The Portuguese eventually formed alliances on the African coast and set up colonies there. In 1483, they arrived at the mouth of the Congo River and discovered that the vast land beyond, and all its territories, was ruled by Nzinga a Nkuwu, who held the title *mani kongo*, meaning "king."

In the hopes of accessing distant Ethiopia by sailing the Congo, the Portuguese maintained good relations with the mani kongo and his subjects. An agreement was soon reached that left four Portuguese in Congo, while four Africans were taken to Lisbon to experience court life. When they returned, reports of the pleasant treatment they received and the splendors of

European civilization they witnessed were enough to convince the king to make Portugal his ally. This eventually led to baptisms, and the king and his heir naming themselves after Portuguese kings. Portuguese missionaries were able to labor in the Congo freely and thus a church was formed, complete with a bishop who was the son of the next Congolese king.

Relations deteriorated after a few decades, however, and the Portuguese looked to new lands south of the Congo. Now known as Angola, these lands were a rich source for slaves. Unlike the Congo, where the mani kongo controlled the slave trade, the Portuguese were free to use force in Angola and establish another important colony, and also lay claim to vast lands stretching well into the interior, which were another source for slaves.

Slavery had been practiced in Africa for centuries prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, and it took on a new life after other European kingdoms crossed the Atlantic. African elites were able to supply the Europeans with slaves from their territories, and many of these slaves were the descendants of the ancient Israelites. The Kingdom of Ghana for instance, once ruled by Israelite kings, eventually collapsed, forcing its Hebrew subjects into other African territories ruled by various tribes. Arab chronicler al-Zuhri wrote of the Barbara and Amīma people, who were frequently captured as slaves. In his book *African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Early and Medieval West Africa*, Michael A. Gomez writes concerning these peoples:

> "It is not clear who the Amīma and Barbara were (possibly 'Bambara,' also ambiguous), though the latter were regarded as strong, 'impetuous,' 'brave,' and 'skilled in war,' the 'most noble and aristocratic of men' to whom 'the *amīr*' of Ghana was related.' Said to inhabit 'the middle of the desert,' they may have been a branch of the Soninke. The Amīma, on the other hand, are identified as impoverished Jews who 'read the Torah' and were involved in the import business."

These readers of the Torah, captive Israelites no less, bore a similar skin complexion to native Africans, which is primarily why they were able to assimilate into various tribes and adopt their culture. And many African tribes were comprised of ancient paganized Israelites from the northern kingdom who had fled the Assyrians in the seventh century BCE. As to the Portuguese, they were not satisfied with Africa's west coast. Their initial aim was to circumnavigate Africa entirely in search of a route to the Far East, since the Muslims controlled all the land routes between Europe and the Orient. In their quest, the east African coast was also subjugated. All the while, Portuguese priests were dispatched to Africa's interior on missions to convert more African kings to Catholicism.

On the heels of the Portuguese voyages to and beyond Africa, other explorers sought to make their fortune on a grand expedition of their own. One such explorer was Christopher Columbus. Born in Liguria, a region in northwestern Italy, the experienced ship captain was well-traveled, having sailed to the Greek Aegean, the waters of west coast Britain, and even the west coast of Africa by his early twenties. But since then, many other voyages were made as part of his occupation, that of a trade agent for Genoese merchants. But he personally participated in trade of a different kind as well. Christina Snyder, assistant professor of American studies and history at Indiana University, says of this:

> "Columbus, even before he came to the Americas, he had participated in the African slave trade. This was a trade that people in Spain and Portugal in particular had

> started engaging in in the fifteenth century. He and his father were both participants, and had bought and sold West Africans in Europe."

So, being a seafaring captain, Columbus was knowledgeable about North Atlantic trade winds, and their clockwise rotation. He would use this to his advantage and plot a southerly course upon departure for the Far East, keeping the trade winds at his back.

He had experience, he was chockful of knowledge on navigating the ocean, and he had a grandiose plan. All he needed was a rich court to finance his expedition, which was expected to yield tremendous riches by opening up direct trade to the Far East, a region known for its prized Chinese silks and spices. To this end …

> "… Columbus had conducted a long dalliance with King John II of Portugal, whom he nearly succeeded in convincing."

Writes Thomas Cahill, in his book *Heretics and Heroes*.

> "He sought out financial power brokers in both Genoa and Venice but came up short. He sent his brother Bartolomeo to Henry VII of England with the astounding proposal. Henry, father to Henry VIII and founder of the Tudor dynasty, whose claim to the throne was quite shaky, said he would think about it. He thought and thought but had nothing more to say (at least not till it was too late). Meanwhile, Columbus found himself at the Spanish court, spending nearly six seemingly sterile years in the attempt to lure the monarchs into financing his scheme."

Ferdinand and Isabella's decision to support the expedition was an auspicious one for Spain, and indeed for Europe. Columbus had raised nearly half of the needed funds through the support of Florentine bankers. It was believed that, because Spain's treasury had recently been drained by prolonged military campaigns of the successful Reconquista, Queen Isabella was forced to publicly donate a portion of her jewelry in the hopes that members of the Spanish nobility would be moved to match her efforts. But this is now thought to be a myth based on a rumor that was spread in the sixteenth century. The Spanish crown in fact used very little imperial funds to sponsor the voyage. Advisers convinced Isabella to conscript two fully equipped caravels (the Pinta and the Niña) from the Spanish city of Palos as a penalty for past sea crimes. Palos is also the city from which Columbus would set sail. Other ideas on ways to raise funds were put forth as well, and the financing goal was soon met.

The crew set sail on August 3, 1492, but by the next month they were stationed in the Canary Islands, at the port of San Sebastián, where they restocked and made necessary repairs prior to sailing into the unknown. On September 6, the day they set sail, the Tenerife volcano erupted behind them like a portent from Heaven. Columbus took his fleet toward what is now called the West Indies, a name that stuck because it was mistaken for the Spice Islands of the East Indies, which is Indonesia today. Land had not been sighted since they left familiar shores thirty-one days before, and tensions began to rise. On October 10, 1492, the sailors threatened mutiny and conspired to toss Columbus overboard for leading them on an endless journey. But finally …

> "On October 12, 1492 … land was sighted from the deck of the Pinta by a sailor named Rodrigo de Triana."

Writes Thomas Cahill.

> "The time was 2 a.m. The sighting came not a moment too soon for Columbus. They had sailed for five weeks and were beginning the second day of their sixth week. The crew, among whom served a sprinkling of convicts with little to lose, were growing nervous about the unlikelihood of their return if their outward voyage should continue to drag on. Columbus, though a charismatic leader, could not have commanded their compliance much longer."

The land they spotted was an unknown island in the Bahamas, but they would not walk it until the morning of the next day. Upon reaching land, everyone fell to their knees in prayer, grateful to have made it ashore. Columbus immediately named the island—which was already inhabited—San Salvador, meaning "Set Apart Savior." He thereafter claimed the land in the name of the Catholic king and queen of Spain by reciting language that was incomprehensible to the natives. Then he presented the naked inhabitants with "little red caps and glass beads which they hung around their necks, and other things of slight worth, which they all valued at the highest price."

The inhabitants were Tainos, a member of the Arawak people whom Columbus would encounter again and again, not only in the Bahamas, but also in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Hispaniola (home to the Dominican Republic and Haiti). Tainos are thought to no longer exist, having been decimated by Spanish invaders, though people of mixed descent still carry traces of their blood. For roughly the next 150 years, in what is considered the age of "discovery," Europeans would spread their colonies throughout the Americas and establish new trade routes to the Far East, where its riches could be directly enjoyed. During this 150-year period, the church would dispatch Jesuit priests as well as friars and monks from the Franciscan and Dominican orders to carry out missionary work while living among the natives who inhabited the colonies. In contrast to the monks and priests, Christian conquerors forced many natives to convert via the point of a sword.

In his book *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, author Norman F. Cantor says of the burgeoning European age of "discovery":

> "When Christopher Columbus, flying the Spanish flag, landed in the islands off the coast of America on October 12, 1492, Spain possessed only the Canary Islands and the remnants of the Mediterranean empire of Aragon. Within a few decades it had the largest overseas empire among the European states. At the moment when the economy of the Mediterranean world was entering its last decades of prosperity, Spain was in the forefront of the expansion of Europe into the unknown lands of America and the Orient.
>
> "Spain's only rival was Portugal, which had survived the unification of the Iberian Peninsula to remain an independent state. Portugal had spent the last half of the fifteenth century exploring the west coast of Africa. The original impetus given to Portuguese exploration by Prince Henry the Navigator had made Portuguese seamen the most advanced in geographic and maritime knowledge in Europe. Soon after Columbus landed in America, Vasco de Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope and completed the voyage to India by the eastern route. His successors established the

Portuguese empire."

By the end of the fifteenth century, all the necessary steps had been taken by the two Iberian empires to allow for the further expansion of European interests throughout the entire world.

> "The location of the Iberian Peninsula and the policies of the strong monarchies that developed in Spain and Portugal placed these states in an ideal position to exploit the new opportunities."

Both the Portuguese and Spanish empires are considered to be the first truly worldwide empires in scope and scale. In fact, following Columbus's so-called discoveries, the two empires were colonizing lands in their maritime quests at such a rapid rate that tensions developed, therefore Pope Alexander VI published a bull that divided the New World between them. The pope decreed that all lands situated west and south of a meridian line 100 leagues west and south of the Azores and Cape Verde islands belonged to Spain by right. But since the decree failed to specify the lands on the other side of the line as possessions of Portugal, the two empires eventually signed several treaties that created an official line of demarcation. This divided rights of trade and colonization for newly discovered lands; those situated to the east belonged to Portugal, while lands to the west belonged to Spain. This is why Brazil speaks Portuguese and Spanish is the language of Latin America. Other European countries were excluded from the treaties and bulls, but in time, nothing would keep the Dutch, English, French, or Germans from entering these divided territories and staking their own claims.

The papacy also commissioned the monarchs of Portugal and Spain to evangelize the people of the lands they conquered. These kings were expected to send missionaries to their new territories and appoint bishops over newly converted Christians among the native inhabitants. It was made a high priority to Catholicize Central and South America, and the Caribbean therefore, and intermarriage between Spaniards and Native Americans occurred in these regions as a result, which gave rise to *Mestizos*, who are people of mixed European and Indigenous American descent. Missionaries had less success in Africa and Asia, however.

Spain was at the very forefront of colonization and enslavement in Central and South America, and they made their push into North America as well. In addition to their conquest of the Aztec, Inca, and Maya civilizations, which were decimated, the Spaniards battled the French —who were protestant Christians by then—for possession of Florida. The Spaniards then moved on to what are now Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia. Other European powers, such as England, showed a keen interest in the New World as well, attracted by Spain's success. They would use Spain as a benchmark and model for their own colonization and enslavement enterprises, and slavery would be used to expand and enrich these colonizing nations. Professor Snyder says of this period:

> "Slavery itself is on the go, it's dynamic, and it's really colonialism that creates the Atlantic Slave Trade which is what we typically think of as the prototypical form of slavery—that is the kind that was practiced in the South and the Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But that took a long time to evolve. On the eve of colonialism, Europeans had relatively limited experience with slavery, and they each brought their own experiences and understandings into the colonial context. And, when we think about major colonizing powers in North America, three of the

> most important are Spain, England, and France. And out of these, especially in the early colonial period, the Spanish are really the most important, because they're the first colonizers, and partially because other colonizers look at their experiences as they form their own colonial policies."

As staunch Catholics, the Spanish invaders felt entitled to the newly conquered lands and far superior to its native peoples by right of "discovery," and this sense of entitlement was supported by papal policy.

> "Christianity and the kind of legal doctrines that are developed around colonization have a really strong role in the invasion of North America and also on ideas about slavery."

Says Professor Snyder.

> "This doctrine of discovery is basically a legal notion that's supported by the Catholic church that decrees that only Catholic powers should colonize North America, and that essentially indigenous people only had use rights; that is, it really didn't recognize indigenous territorial claims as being legitimate in European eyes."

Emboldened by the church leadership, Spanish expeditions of the new world were carried out with barbaric violence, not unlike what was seen during the crusades. Yet, the violence exacted on natives of the new world was fueled by centuries of warfare with Muslims—called Moors by the Spanish—who ruled the Andalusian portion of the Iberian Peninsula. Arab-Berber encroachment into Christian Spain had created a fanatic bloodlust in the Spaniards, and a disdain for non-Christians, which did not abate following the defeat of the Moors. Professor Snyder adds to this by saying:

> "You know, 1492 is when Columbus sets sail, but it's also the year that marks the end of the Reconquista, which is Christian Spain's centuries-long fight to claim all of the Iberian Peninsula for the Christian kingdoms, and those Christian kingdoms eventually become what we now think of as Spain. And ideas that had really propelled the Reconquest were based on an intolerance of non-Christian people, and as part of that, there are these germs of ideas about race that are articulated during the Reconquest, and the Spanish referred to these as notions of blood purity; and that is that, you know, Christians had this pure blood. They also have an anti-black bias against sub-Saharan Africans during this time."

That anti-black bias against slaves, the descendants of ancient Israelites taken from sub-Saharan Africa, would be shared by all the colonizing European nations. Not only would those slaves be forced to work on plantations throughout Central and South America and the Caribbean, they would also be forced to accept and practice Catholicism. This policy was enacted via the issuance of papal bulls by Pope Alexander VI, who, in addition to conferring upon Portugal the *padroado real* in West Africa, also conferred upon Spain the similar *patronato real* in the East Indies for the same reason: to grant the Spanish monarchy the power and right to establish and oversee a new branch of the Catholic church in the new world.

The Spanish were thereafter afforded the unquestioned right to build churches, appoint their

clergy, collect funds, and apply their own ecclesiastical laws as they saw fit. This power of course encompassed slavery in the new world, and the Spanish monarchs sought to enforce the evangelization of slaves.

> "The Iberian monarchs decreed that Africans should be baptized before they arrived in the Americas, but it was unclear exactly when and how they should be introduced to Christianity."

Writes Katharine Gerbner.

> "Charles V commanded that Africans should be baptized before they left the African coast, but even when priests did perform baptisms (which was only occasionally), there was rarely any instruction in Christian doctrine. In 1545, the Spanish Crown issued a new set of ordinances for the governance of Africans in the New World that emphasized both Christianization and Spanish language acquisition. All slave owners were commanded to baptize newly arrived slaves, provide chapels on their estates, and allow their slaves to hear Mass."

The Spanish slave owners, particularly those in possession of larger plantations, initially resisted the command of the monarch. They felt that allowing the slaves to attend Sunday services would slow productivity in the field. The Portuguese forced their slaves to work their Brazilian cane fields on Sundays for the same reason. And rather than provide the slaves with food, the slave owners expected their field hands to keep small plots and produce their own crops to sustain themselves. A few slave owners were brought to court over the matter after receiving heavy criticism by Jesuit missionaries. And as time passed, both enslaved and free Israelites embraced Christianity and interpreted the belief system in their own way, while infusing it with their own worship rituals. They even had their own chapels and performed baptisms themselves. Then there was the establishment of Israelite confraternities, the so-called black brotherhoods, which would see enslaved and free Israelites alike forming their own little religious communities where leaders were elected from within.

> "Both the Church and the Crown supported the establishment and growth of black confraternities."

Writes Katharine Gerbner.

> "In 1576, the Portuguese king ordered that tithes collected from baptized slaves should be used for black churches, lay brotherhoods, and other spiritual affairs. In the late sixteenth century, Pope Gregory XIII declared that black brotherhoods could help to indoctrinate newly converted slaves."

Of course, that was the whole point: to get Israelites to indoctrinate themselves. And so it has been with the Christian movement, well into the Protestant era and up to the present day. Israelites, as dictated by the algorithms set forth in prophecy, would lose their national identity through the actions of enemy nations. The Psalmist Asaph wrote of this passionately, imploring Yah Elohim to not keep silent on the matter; to not hold his peace or be still.

2 “For behold, your enemies make an uproar; those who hate you have raised their heads. 3 They lay crafty plans against your people; they consult together against your treasured ones. 4 They say, ‘Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more!’ ”

—Psalm 83:2 – 4

CHAPTER 25

MARTIN LUTHER

AT A TIME WHEN PRIESTS, cardinals, bishops, and other clerics were living in open sin and rebellion against their own Catholic laws, such as that of celibacy—and countless Scriptural precepts besides—certain clerics who aspired to something more pious were aggrieved enough to act upon their strong convictions. One such cleric was Martin Luther, a local preacher and respected university professor of theology, who dared to challenge the corrupt establishment. He lived in a time when Catholic men bought their ecclesiastical office—a practice called simony; when popes flaunted and openly supported illegitimate children; when convents and monasteries were leisure dens, over which monarchs and Catholic noblemen appointed their unqualified sons and daughters as abbots and abbesses. But author James Reston, Jr. in his book, *Luther's Fortress*, also states that:

> "The period of 1483 to 1546, Luther's lifespan, was an era of giants: Henry VIII in England; Francis I in France; Charles V, the Holy Roman emperor presiding over most of Europe; the Medici popes, Leo X and Clement VIII in Rome; and Suleyman the Magnificent in Constantinople. It was a time of conflict between Charles V and Francis I in Italy, the sack of Rome in 1527 by Protestant forces from Germany, and the siege of Vienna by Suleyman in 1529 and 1532, when the Ottoman sultan threatened to spread the dominion of Islam all the way to the Rhine River. It was the time of Christopher Columbus and the opening of the New World, of Vasco da Gama and the opening to India, and of the Renaissance with its luminaries: Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Albrecht Dürer, and Machiavelli."

It was also the time of Israelite slavery and oppression at the hands of Hamite Africans and Gentile Portuguese and Spanish explorers, who were vested with authority by the Roman papacy. Martin Luther lived through all of these moments, and would himself add a memorable page to the annals of history. Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany in 1483. His father, a Saxon, was himself a man of peasant stock who earned his living as a miner but later owned several foundries, or copper smelters. Luther's parents were austere in the extreme, a fact he complained of in his later years. He was often punished severely as a child, which left him in states of depression and anxiety. Despite a slow academic start, in that he was caned excessively for not preparing his Latin lessons correctly, Luther later aspired to become a lawyer, at the urging of his father.

Those plans changed in 1505, however, when, at nearly twenty-two years of age, he was struck by a bolt of lightning while walking toward a village in a thunderstorm. He had been knocked to the ground, and in terror he cried out to the Catholic patroness of miners and protector from storms, an apocryphal woman known as St. Anne—this was a holdover from

Greek mythology and ancient pagan religions that appointed a deity over agriculture, another over the weather, and different deities over various aspects of nature and life in general. Well, St. Anne was supposed to protect miners, mining being the business Martin Luther was born into. This deeply rooted superstition compelled him to beg the supposed saint—believed to be the mother of Mary—to save him from death, a favor he would return by becoming a monk. Seeing he was still alive after two weeks, Luther, to his parents' regret—and somewhat to his own—kept his word by selling many of his books and walking into an Augustinian monastery at Erfurt to become a monk.

By his own admission, Luther was no common monk either. "I kept the rule so strictly," he said, years after the experience, "that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his sheer monkery, it was I. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work." A life of austerity, shaped through days of fasting and sleeping in the freezing cold without the protection of a blanket, along with many acts of penance, was an outflow of the misery Luther suffered while he lived as a monk. During one of his confessions, he was told to love the Creator, to which he replied in a burst of emotion, he did not love him. In fact, he hated him.

It was not until he came across a Latin Vulgate translation of the bible that Luther began to experience a change of heart. In his day, the Scriptures were not readily available to the masses—not even to monks—as Drs. Paul Maier, Joel Biermann, and Ken Schurb, explain:

> "He had heard readings from the bible before but never realized they all even came from the same book. Because in those days the bible was regarded as a very dark and obscure document which only the clergy could properly interpret.
>
> "Now remember, Luther is born right at the advent of the printing press' discovery, but it was still in its infancy and books were still rare. If you had a book it meant somebody had to hand copy that book. And so bibles, they were very expensive because you had to copy every single line of every single bible by hand, but in Luther's time growing up, there were bibles that were very rarely found.
>
> "Luther was very much aware, as were all Christians at the time, that the church said, 'Now, you need our help in order to be able to understand this. You need guidance, expert guidance to interpret this very mysterious book.' "

Despite becoming an ordained priest in 1507, Luther's many doubts remained, and to counter this, the vicar general of the Augustinian order encouraged him to pursue academic work. In this way, Luther encountered the Scriptures for himself after he was appointed to the chair of biblical studies at Wittenberg University, which had recently been established. Reading the words for himself removed the veneer that overlaid the beliefs he had been instilled with by the church. So alluring was the veneer that, on his one visit to Rome as a young man in 1510, just two years before, all the "vermin and vileness" he witnessed, along with the general dysfunction of the city, was not enough to have him call the sanctity of the church or its leaders into question. Not yet at least.

With the election of Leo X, who became pope in 1513, Luther would begin to see the papacy, as well as the church and its many doctrines, in a whole new light. Leo X had been born into the

powerful Florentine banking family the Medici, and was the first among them to become pope. He inherited the papal chair of Julius II, who had waged devastating wars during his reign. Leo, in typical Medici style, instead focused on the Renaissance art, literature, and science of the day, which infused his pontificate. Leo lived like a secular king rather than a spiritual figure, and his lavish lifestyle was full of excesses that invited controversy.

> "Inevitably, the extravagance of Leo's luxurious lifestyle taxed the Vatican's coffers."

Writes James Reston, Jr.

> "To make matters worse, France invaded Italy in 1515, taking possession of Milan and threatening the independence of the papal dominion in central Italy. Within two years the Vatican's savings were squandered, and Leo became more and more obsessed with money. How was he to wage war and finance Raphael's work and the construction of St. Peter's, stage his lavish banquets and offer indiscriminate donations to artistic flatterers and hangers-on? He turned increasingly to bankers, borrowing enormous sums at 40 percent interest. To address his deficits, Leo X turned to the dubious practice of selling cardinalates and archbishoprics for enormous prices. On July 31, 1517, he created thirty-one new cardinals and received 300,000 ducats (or around $50 million in today's dollars) for the appointments."

After securing this huge sum of money, Pope Leo was heard saying of the Messiah, quite cynically, "How well we know what a profitable superstition this fable of Iesus Christus has been for us." The corruption did not stop there, however. Those who bought the expensive ecclesiastical offices had to borrow heavily in order to pay for them. One German, Albrecht of Brandenburg, purchased from Leo the archbishopric of Mainz, which cost 21,000 gold ducats, or $3.3 million dollars in today's currency. A powerful bank in Germany, the House of Fugger, loaned Albrecht the funds, but he needed a viable way to pay back the debt. The papacy allowed the German archbishop to raise funds via the sale of indulgences, which was the perceived spiritual relief from various sins. A sinner would pay Albrecht a high fee to lessen or cancel time spent in the fictitious purgatory. The purchase of indulgences signified repentance on the part of sinners. Pope Leo himself engaged in the sale of indulgences to finance construction on St. Peter's Cathedral, to the tune of 60,000 ducats, or $10 million dollars per year.

Martin Luther came to abhor the sale of indulgences, and being able to read the Pre-Messianic Scriptures and Messianic Writings for himself, he was shown that man's salvation rested with the Messiah, who had the power to forgive sin; therefore, the intercession of earthly Catholic priests was unnecessary. The practice of selling indulgencies to gullible Christians began during the crusades, but it continued unabated up to Luther's time, and it would be the main vice of the church that would propel his rebellion in Germany.

Armed with this new outlook on the church and its problematic doctrines, Martin Luther began to compose and deliver weekly sermons that were highly critical of the institution to which he still belonged. In 1517, he was further provoked by the actions of a Dominican preacher named John Tetzel, who campaigned through Germany in attempt to raise additional funds to further the construction of St. Peter's basilica. Tetzel was bold in promising prospective donors that any money they contributed would result in an indulgence that would extend beyond

the grave and allow them to skip purgatory. He even recited a catchy mantra to sweeten the proposal, which went:

> "As soon as the gold in the casket rings
> "The rescued soul to heaven springs."

This vile action drove Luther to draw up ninety-five theses (or propositions) for a spirited debate, which he posted on the wooden door of the Imperial Church in Wittenberg, according to the custom of his university. From there, his fame spread, and the Protestant Reformation was underway.

> "So, Luther first emerges in the public eye in late 1517."

Says Professor Brad S. Gregory, who teaches history at Stanford University.

> "As a university professor and a monk, protesting against indulgences on the basis of Scripture, his publicity comes above all at this point through circles of humanists; humanists who see in his theses common points with many of their own concerns—about the importance of Scripture; about the renewal of religious life. The theses are translated into German without Luther's consent, and they're published in multiple editions. Humanists are the ones who see to this above all. Within months, this obscure monk is known throughout Germany and Switzerland, all the way from Amsterdam in the north, to Berne in Switzerland in the south. The humanists are essential then in making the ninety-five theses more than simply a narrow matter for academic debate. They give Luther his first real public exposure."

Luther's theses stressed that indulgences could not remove a sinner's guilt. They only created false hope in those who paid for them. The public was stirred by this argument. Luther's opponents, the German Dominicans, denounced him for preaching doctrines they deemed dangerous. The Vatican responded by issuing counter-theses, warning anyone who dared to speak ill of indulgences that they were in danger of being heretics. Luther was unshaken in his convictions, insisting that he be proven wrong from Scripture alone. In 1519, during a debate against a theologian named John Eck, Luther stated, "Neither the church nor the pope can establish articles of faith. These must come from Scripture." It was evident that Luther, who already learned that salvation comes through the Messiah alone, now added to his belief that Scripture was the measure of faith and the guideline to a spiritual life, not the pope, the church, or its councils.

Refusing to be outdone, John Eck moved against Luther after the debate by trying to convince Rome to formally condemn him of heresy. Luther, for his part, took his case to the people, by publishing various pamphlets that were distributed throughout Germany. He even made an appeal to the German nobility, requesting that princes put an end to the abuses of the church leadership by removing them from their positions and appropriating their wealth. After Luther mounted relentless attacks on the church, decrying its sacraments and false doctrines, Leo at last issued a papal bull condemning him on June 15, 1520, and threatening excommunication unless he recanted his heresy within sixty days.

The first line of the bull was a plea to the Almighty by Pope Leo, which addressed him in

Latin, stating: “Arise o Master” …

> “*[Exsurge Domine],* and judge thy cause, the wild boar from the forest seeks to destroy your vineyard.”

Martin Luther was that wild boar. Author Carlos M. N. Eire, in his book *Reformations*, adds that:

> “[T]his document listed forty-one ‘ancient’ errors that Luther had revived in Germany, like some ‘restless evil, full of deadly poison.’ This wording was standard procedure against all heretics, for the accepted thinking on theological error was that it had but one source, the devil, and was also of one piece, linking all heretics together. Luther and his followers were interpreting the Holy Scriptures ‘just like heretics have done since ancient times,’ charged Leo, ‘inspired only by their own sense of ambition, and for the sake of popular acclaim.’ The bull roared against Luther and anyone who agreed with him.”

The church itself did not possess the authority to apprehend so-called heretics, neither did it have the means to; only the secular powers claimed that right. In light of this, Leo wrote to a German prince, Frederick the Wise—a supporter of Luther—to try and convince *him* to seize the rebellious monk. But Luther had gathered quite a following across the German landscape at this point, and received the support of many nobles who pledged to stand with him in his fight, not just Prince Frederick.

Indeed, Luther was seen as a local hero in the eyes of the German people, one who fought for their liberty. His new theological views excited them, but so too did his stance against Rome, which was now perceived as an enemy of Germany.

> “And it was not just nobles who had been won over by Luther.”

Writes Carlos M. N. Eire.

> “Burghers in the cities and students had also joined his camp. Those carrying the bull *Exsurge Domine* to Saxony were supposed to publish it in every city and town where they stopped and to see to it that Luther’s texts were burned. The two men chosen for this task, Girolamo Aleandro, former rector of the University of Paris, and Johann Eck, Luther’s debating nemesis, encountered stiff resistance nearly everywhere in Germany, especially from students, who rioted and threatened them with physical violence, or burned anti-Lutheran works rather than those of Luther.”

Insulated by this protection, Luther was able to focus on his writing, and he published more works that marked a complete split with the Roman Catholic Church. Three of his treatises, written in haste while the sixty-day deadline to recant loomed, expressly called for church reform. Luther effectively took up the torch passed to him by Wycliffe and Huss and carried their efforts even further, in large part because of the overwhelming support he was afforded at the time.

Luther also wrote a letter to the pope himself, in which he expressed his sincere respect for Leo the man, though his office and the Roman curia itself, Luther felt, stood condemned through

corruption. Luther deemed the See of Rome more corrupt that Babylon and Sodom. The Roman See, in his words, was "characterized by a totally depraved, hopeless, and notorious wickedness. That see I have truly despised. The Roman church has become the most licentious den of thieves, the most shameless of all brothels, the kingdom of sin, death, and hell."

Not all were on Luther's side, however. In cities such as Meissen, Merseburg, and Brandenburg, Luther's opponents—Johann Eck among them—were successful in proclaiming Pope Leo's papal bull of excommunication against him. In Ingolstadt, his books were seized, and in Cologne, Mainz, and Louvain they were burned according to Leo's order.

> "But at Leipzig, Torgau, and Döbeln the posted bull was pelted with dirt and torn down."

Writes Will Durant in his book *The Reformation*.

> "[A]t Erfurt many professors and clergymen joined in a general refusal to recognize the bull, and students threw all available copies into the river; finally Eck fled from the scenes of his triumphs a year before. Luther denounced the ban in a series of bitter pamphlets, in one of which he fully approved the doctrines of Huss. About August 31, 1520, as 'a single flea daring to address the king of kings,' he appealed to the emperor for protection; and on November 17 he published a formal appeal from the pope to a free council of the church. When he learned that the papal envoys were burning his books, he decided to reply in kind. He issued an invitation to the 'pious and studious youths' of Wittenberg to assemble outside the Elster gate of the city on the morning of December 10. There, with his own hands, he cast the papal bull into a fire, along with some canonical decretals and volumes of Scholastic theology; in one act he symbolized his rejection of canon law, of Aquinas's philosophy, and of any coercive authority of the church. The students joyfully collected other books of the kind, and with them kept the fire burning till late afternoon. On December 11 Luther proclaimed that no man could be saved unless he renounced the rule of the papacy. The monk had excommunicated the pope."

In January of 1521, Pope Leo published another bull of excommunication against Luther that held no limits and was not left to debate. Any region that supported Luther in his rebellion would be placed under immediate interdict, wherein its priests would not be allowed to perform Catholic sacraments. Luther was officially declared heretical and expelled from the Catholic church. That absolved the Roman curia of Luther, which meant he was now the problem of the emperor, Charles V, who, as a Christian sovereign, was sworn to defend Catholicism and rid her of heretical enemies. Luther was called to appear before the king at a Diet (or imperial assembly) in Worms where he was promised a fair hearing, for which he would be given twenty-one days of safe conduct. Upon appearing, Luther again refused to recant his positions on the church, stating that only the Scriptures could prove him wrong, and it was to that authority that his conscience was captive.

Charles V was not swayed by Luther's words, and in fact deemed him an outlaw, who he called "a devil in the habit of a monk." Luther, Charles proclaimed, "has brought together ancient errors into one stinking puddle, and has invented new ones. He denies the power of the keys and encourages the laity to wash their hands in the blood of the clergy. His teaching makes

for rebellion, division, war, murder, robbery, arson, and the collapse of Christendom." Though Luther's adversaries had tried to convince Charles V to cancel his safe conduct, as Sigismund had done with John Huss more than a century earlier, Charles remembered the disgrace Sigismund suffered for betraying Huss; therefore, the monk was given another twenty-one days of safe passage to return to Wittenberg, after which sentence could be passed against him. Luther managed to escape the king's justice with the help of his friend and supporter, Frederick the Wise, the prince of Saxony. Luther received sanctuary at Frederick's castle in Wartburg, where he disguised himself as a noble and spent the year translating the Messianic Writings into German.

Years later, Charles V would regret his decision, stating:

> "I did wrong in not killing Luther then and there. I was under no obligation to keep my word. I did not kill him, and, as a result, this mistake of mine assumed gigantic proportions. I could have prevented this."

What he meant to prevent was rebellion and open revolt the likes of which the church had never seen. In Rome, priests and town officials tore down church statues and did away with mass. Radical reformers sprang up seemingly overnight and more nobles—dukes, princes, and electors among them—threw in their support for Luther and his protestant movement. After a year of tireless translating, Luther returned to Wittenberg to implement a nationwide reform of Christianity. Among his first reforms was getting rid of the office of bishop, for which he saw no basis in Scripture. And, after being exhorted by Luther, a large number of ministers in Saxony and surrounding regions stopped being celibate. A spate of marriages between monks and nuns occurred at this time. Luther himself, living up to his own words, took a wife as well. He married a former nun named Katherine Von Bora, and later remarked that there was a lot to get used to during the first year of marriage.

From there, Luther's influence would spread far and wide, largely through the dissemination of his literature.

> "Printing fell in with his purposes as a seemingly providential innovation which he used with inexhaustible skill."

Writes Will Durant.

> "He was the first to make it an engine of propaganda and war. There were no newspapers yet, nor magazines; battles were fought with books, pamphlets, and private letters intended for publication. Under the stimulus of Luther's revolt, the number of books printed in Germany rose from 150 in 1518 to 990 in 1524. Four-fifths of these favored the Reformation. Books defending orthodoxy were hard to sell, while Luther's were the most widely purchased of the age. They were sold not only in bookstores but by peddlers and traveling students. Fourteen hundred copies were bought at one Frankfurt fair. Even in Paris in 1520, they outsold everything else. As early as 1519, they were exported to France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, England. 'Luther's books are everywhere, and in every language,' wrote Erasmus in 1521. 'No one would believe how widely he has moved men.' The literary fertility of the Reformers transferred the preponderance of publications from southern to northern

Europe where it has remained ever since. Printing was the Reformation. Gutenberg made Luther possible.”

CHAPTER 26

RADICAL REFORMERS

MARTIN LUTHER HAD LED the Reformation movement in Germany for years, but by 1530, there were many prominent Reformers who had risen to leadership positions, filling a space that Luther could no longer occupy. A summit conference held that year in Augsburg was convened without Luther's presence, because he was still considered an outlaw. The purpose for the conference—which was even attended by Lutheran princes—was to present a clear statement of faith, or confession, for what had come to be known as Lutheranism, and the man at the helm was a young Wittenberg professor named Philip Melanchthon. Like Catholicism the Augsburg Confession proclaimed that the Lutheran church held the power and authority to excommunicate members who rejected any fundamental Lutheran doctrine.

While Charles V did all he could to prevent the spread of the movement, which was deemed heresy, it thrived. In defense of the new denomination, Lutheran princes joined forces and fought intermittent battles in what was basically a civil war from 1546 to 1555. Peace was later reached through compromise, and the princes were left to decide the religion of their lands, which they all insisted be Lutheran, to the exclusion of all other Protestant movements that had lately emerged. Former Catholic bishops had to divest themselves of all property received from the church as well. After a time, Lutheranism became the state religion throughout much of the empire, and spread from Germany to Scandinavia.

Despite the popularity of this new Protestant belief, however, some felt there was need for a reform within the reform. They were considered radical Protestants. While Luther was spearheading the Reformation in Germany, a Swiss Reformer working apart from him was spearheading a similar movement in Zurich. His name was Ulrich Zwingli.

> "Luther might have sparked the Protestant Reformation, much to everyone's surprise, but he was far from alone, and not even the first in his generation to challenge Rome."

Writes Carlos M. N. Eire, in his book *Reformations*.

> "The Swiss city of Zurich is 468 miles southwest of Wittenberg. There, in Zurich, before Luther took on Johann Tetzel, another young cleric had been challenging the whole of the Catholic tradition for a few years. In some ways, he was far ahead of Luther when it came to envisioning a thorough reform of the Christian religion. His vision was more systematically consistent and less paradoxical, and focused on a different set of theological issues. Most significantly, his reforming vision involved symbols and rituals at its very center, and linked this concern to a conception of church/state relations very different from Luther's. This Reformation tends to get

> second billing, largely because of chronology and of its initial impact. The Reformation led by this Swiss cleric, Ulrich Zwingli, progressed more slowly and cautiously on a smaller stage, almost as if hidden from view by the towering Alps."

Neither did Zwingli's protestations erupt with the kind of fire that ignited Luther's. Zwingli never stood before the emperor at an Imperial Diet, nor was he whisked away by prominent nobles to live in disguise while enjoying sanctuary in a castle. The Swiss Reformation never gained the international acclaim that Luther's did, nor did its writings reach as wide an audience. It also failed to mature as much or survive as long as Luther's movement did.

> "But being the first to bolt from the starting gate, or having the larger, splashier stage setting, or the wide readership, or the longer life does not necessarily mean all that much in terms of the eventual unfolding of history."

Writes Carlos M. N. Eire.

> "The Swiss Reformation proves this to be true, several times over, for when all is said and done, this Reformation would end up affecting a greater array of countries and a larger number of people than Luther's ever did."

A year before Martin Luther burst onto the scene with his ninety-five theses, Zwingli was already laboring in Switzerland to bring reform in the Catholic church. After 1517 he was often compared to Martin Luther, or mistaken for one of his followers, despite the fact that he preceded Luther, and in fact sharply disagreed on many theological points. So much did the two dislike each other that Luther himself was offended whenever someone suggested that Zwingli was his disciple. The two men were born six weeks and about 330 miles apart, but aside from being ordained Catholic priests who had become disillusioned with their religion and took pains to reform it in their own way, the two had little else in common.

Ulrich Zwingli was born to a peasant family in the village of Wildhaus, located in the mountainous county of Toggenburg—part of the Swiss confederacy. Being typical Swiss citizens of the day, the Zwingli family was devoted to their land, and they treasured the independence of their region, for which they were willing to fight. Self-sufficient, military-minded, and defiant against the nobles who lorded over them, the peasants, who had formed Swiss cantons—or administrative communities—won independence from the Holy Roman Empire in the previous century, though that independence had gone unrecognized by the emperor. Thus, their independence was de facto, not de jure—they were independent in fact, but not by law. Regardless, the Swiss were military experts who were seasoned in warfare, so they were a formidable foe best left to their own devices. This also meant that they could be hired out as mercenaries throughout Europe at a good price—hence the pope's Swiss Guard, originally a mercenary force founded by Pope Julius II on January 22, 1506.

The Swiss Reformation, which was by all accounts an urban one, was spearheaded by a man who grew up tied to rural land and surrounded by rustic settings that would figure prominently in his sermons and theological writings as metaphors. During Zwingli's day, the Swiss Confederation was a unique entity, comprised of several mini states or cantons, each governed by secular councils. These secular councils, however, also decided religious matters, which is a key to how Zwingli, an Erasmian at heart, rose to a leadership position within the Swiss reform

movement.

> "A powerful and a persuasive preacher, Zwingli gains a significant following, and he grows popular in the first few years in Zurich."

Says Professor Brad S. Gregory, who teaches history at Stanford University.

> "He moves from Erasmus's strong emphasis on Scripture, to the view that all preaching and worship must be based exclusively on the bible. It's a subtle but an important difference: from an emphasis to saying exclusively on the bible. And this mandate—that all preaching be based on Scripture—is a mandate that is laid down and established by the city council of the city of Zurich in 1520. Now this is a crucial point: Zwingli's reforms in the 1520s—beginning right here and going through the essential completion of them in 1525—Zwingli's reforms are the story of a kind of symbiotic cooperation and negotiation between a preacher, theologian, and reformer on the one hand, and the political authorities in the city on the other."

Of note, Zwingli was personally awarded a seat on the city council in 1521, which gave him daily access to its members. By the next year, he began denouncing various Catholic traditions in his sermons, which he felt did not line up with the Scriptures.

> "The city council decides his—that is Zwingli's preaching—was Scriptural, and that all disputed religious issues were to be decided on the basis of Scripture."

Says Professor Gregory.

> "Now note: this is the city council making this decision. This amounts to political authorities making decisions, not only about religious policy, but indirectly about religious content too. In effect they're claiming that Catholic claims to religious authority in the city are no longer going to be acknowledged. A political decision about religious content."

The city council then, existing as the lay oligarchy with complete rule over cities like Zurich, would use its civil powers to not only approve the Reformation in the Swiss Confederation, but through this and other acts it would in effect abolish the old Catholic religion, with its devotion to idols and relics, and establish a whole new one, together with a new societal structure. Other Swiss cities would follow Zurich in abolishing Mass and idolatrous practices. In the city of Bern, zealous mobs tore through the city's churches and destroyed the religious art and ritual objects they housed. While the mobs sacked the churches, children sang in the streets of being saved from the baked deity, meaning the idol at the heart of the eucharist, which they no longer had to partake in. The very next day, Zwingli praised the rioting and considered the Reformation a triumph, stating, "Victory has declared for the truth."

More mobs eventually stormed other towns in other Swiss cantons, sparked by the actions in Bern. Wagons loaded with rubble from the destruction were carted away to be burned, while precious items like gold and silver were melted and jewels safely stored. The wealth that was not distributed among the poor went into the town treasury. Indeed, over the next few years, much of northern Switzerland would witness the burning of many idols and images, with the approval of

the city councils that governed the various localities. But as each city and town moved to destroy its idols and sack its churches, conflict arose and tensions mounted throughout the confederacy. Those who clung to the old Catholic traditions in some areas exacted violence on those who had abandoned the religion. Given these sharp religious differences, there was soon talk of civil war in Switzerland.

> "The Reformation had split the confederation and seemed destined to destroy it."

Writes Will Durant in his book, *The Reformation*.

> "Bern, Basel, Schaffhausen, Appenzell, and the Grisons, favored Zurich; the other Cantons were hostile. Five cantons—Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, and Zug—formed a Catholic League to suppress all Hussite, Lutheran, and Zwinglian movements in 1524. Archduke Ferdinand of Austria urged all Catholic states to united action, promised his aid, and doubtless hoped to restore the Hapsburg power in Switzerland. On July 16, all the cantons, except Schaffhausen and Appenzell, agreed to exclude Zurich from future federal diets. Zurich and Zwingli responded by sending missionaries into the Thorgau district to proclaim the Reformation."

One of the missionaries was arrested, but friends came to his rescue, and shortly thereafter led another wild mob in the sacking of another monastery and several churches, which saw their images and idols burned and looted as well.

> "Three of the leaders were executed, and a martial spirit rose on both sides."

Writes Will Durant.

> "Erasmus, timid in Basel, was alarmed to see pious worshippers, aroused by their preachers, come of church 'like men possessed with anger and rage painted on their faces … like warriors animated by their general to some mighty attack.' Six cantons threatened to leave the confederation if Zurich were not chastised. Zwingli, enjoying his new role of war leader, advised Zurich to increase its army and arsenal, to seek alliance with France, to build a fire behind Ferdinand by fomenting Revolution in Tirol, and to promise Thorgau and Saint-Gall the properties of their monasteries in return for their support."

Zwingli offered the Catholic League peace as well, but on conditions they could not agree to, thus, Zurich ordered that the abbey in Saint-Gall be seized, which caused the league to yield. Zwingli's influence was strong at this point, but by January of 1525, a new movement would spring from two of his former supporters.

While Ulrich Zwingli had disagreed with Luther on various theological points, in Switzerland, as pretty much everywhere else in Christian Europe at this time, infant baptism had been the norm. A few men in Zurich held strong reservations against this particular custom, however. Two of their leaders, Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz had that day been ordered to cease teaching bible classes. Four days before that, the council had told hesitant parents to see to the baptism of their infants within eight days of their births or suffer banishment from the region.

In response to these measures, around a dozen men made their way to the house of Felix

Manz in the dark of night during that cold winter month. There, they would decide on the next steps they needed to take. That night, the men shared rumors and reports that had recently circulated, and to quiet their fears, they bowed their heads in prayer. When they rose from that moment of supplication, Christianity would have a new Protestant denomination. Though they were baptized Catholics, all those who were gathered decided to be baptized again that night. Thus, they were later called Anabaptists by their Christian enemies, a word meaning rebaptizer (that is, to be baptized again). This label marked them as heretics and brought severe persecution from their rivals. Anabaptists did not, however, consider themselves to be rebaptizers, since they rejected the sprinkling they received from Catholic priests in infancy. They preferred to be called simply Baptists, and that is the name that eventually stuck. Some of their foundational beliefs also remain with us to this day.

Of all the Christian sects of the sixteenth century, the Anabaptist reformers were the most radical. However …

> "There were sects within this sect."

Writes Will Durant.

> "Most Anabaptists adopted a puritan severity of morals, and simplicity of manners and dress. Developing with rash logic Luther's idea of Christian liberty, they condemned all government by force, and all resistance to it by force. They rejected military service on the ground that it is invariably sinful to take human life. Like the early Christians, they refused to swear oaths, not excepting oaths of allegiance to prince or emperor. Their usual salutation was 'The peace of the Lord be with you,' an echo of the Jewish and Moslem greeting, and a forerunner of the Quaker mode."

The Quakers (who never referred to themselves as Quakers, but the Society of Friends) in a way descend from the Anabaptists, as do the modern branches of the evangelical Protestant church that call themselves Baptist, whether Northern or Southern. The Mennonites, as well as their orthodox offshoot, the Amish (named for their founder Jacob Amman), are also Anabaptist sects. Like all Protestants, the Anabaptists arrived at their beliefs and convictions through their personal study of Scripture. Luther and other leading reformers had taught that believers had the right to search the Scriptures for themselves, and so the Anabaptists did, but they failed to find evidence for the existence of a church and state alliance, or the justification for Christendom itself. They saw in the Messianic Writings that the assemblies established by the twelve emissaries were merely close communities of like-minded believers who had chosen to serve and follow the Messiah.

To the sixteenth-century Christian, this was a revolutionary concept. While Luther preached about believers having personal spiritual experiences, the Lutheran denomination was not a far cry from Catholicism. They were an established institution with a clerical hierarchy of ordained men. More than that, the clergy, as well as Lutheran princes, considered the citizenry of entire territories members of the Lutheran church. Salaries and protection were also provided to the Lutherans by the state, thus Protestantism, in an official capacity, differed little from the mother church it sought to reform, and from which it had split.

The Anabaptists were intent of redressing all of that, but it meant a radical approach that

would extricate them from society on a whole, which they viewed as inherently wicked.

> "Agreeing with Luther's view that the secular state was little more than organized banditry, they concluded that Christians should therefore have nothing to do with it."

Writes Alec Ryrie, in his book *Protestants: The Faith That Made the Modern World*.

> "They should obey its orders, but not swear its blasphemous oaths, serve on juries that hang the hungry for stealing bread, or fight in armies that plunder the innocent. Perhaps, they should not even pay taxes that funded such things. All they should do is live their lives in peaceful separation, and prepare for the persecution that these rejections would inevitably bring down on their heads. The most enduring strand of Anabaptism was marked by pacifist withdrawal from a corrupt world."

The Anabaptists were radical in the extreme. During the mid-1530s, they were seen as a real threat to both Catholics and Lutherans, particularly with the Münster rebellion. Münster was an independent episcopal city in Germany's Westphalia region, not far from the Netherlands. By 1532 the Reformation reached Münster, and the Lutherans established a strong center in the city. Soon, others immigrated to the region, Protestants who were disciples of a charismatic figure named Jan Matthijs. These disciples spread fanaticism to the Lutheran leadership, teaching an older doctrine that the kingdom of the world was to submit to the Kingdom of the Messiah, but the aim was to forge an alliance between the two so that the violent nature of the worldly kingdom could be used to force the establishment of the Heavenly Kingdom.

That apocalyptic view had been the brainchild of an Anabaptist preacher and nemesis of Luther's named Thomas Müntzer.

> "Müntzer tried to turn the peasant rebellions of 1524 – 25 in this direction to no avail."

Writes Alec Ryrie.

> "But the idea did not die with him. It was taken up most notoriously in the Western German city of Münster. When the city's pastor and several of its leading citizens were converted to apocalyptic Anabaptist doctrines in 1532, Anabaptists from across the region converged there, and succeeded in throwing out the bishop and taking over the city's government."

Jan Matthijs, a Dutch baker who gathered followers by claiming to have received visions from the Creator, prophesied that the city of Münster was the New Jerusalem mentioned in the Book of Revelation, to which the Messiah would soon return. Surprisingly, many believed this report, and …

> "Over a thousand adults accepted baptism. They began to muster an army. They expelled bishop-raised forces too and laid siege to the city in 1534. Matthijs was killed in a suicidal sortie early in the siege. But one of his comrades, a tailor named Jan Bockelson, was now proclaimed king, and the successor of King David."

Yes … yes. You read that right. Alec Ryrie goes on to say:

> "Within his besieged Jerusalem, he abolished private property. All goods were held in common. Notoriously, he legalized polygamy, taking sixteen wives for himself. We are told that when one of them crossed him, he beheaded her himself in public. The Kingdom of Münster ended as violent apocalyptic cults usually do. After a yearlong siege, the city was overrun. Bockelson and his fellow prophets were tortured and executed. The gibbets on which their bodies were displayed still hang from the cathedral tower."

Münster was seen as an atrocious city rife with infamy. Fears of Anabaptist fanaticism spreading throughout Christendom were rampant, and that growing apprehension created a sharp divide among Protestants in this period.

> "Protestants who wished to claim respectability now scrambled to distance themselves from the radicals. They distinguished radicals sharply from so-called magisterial Protestants, those who sought reformation in alliance with existing princes, magistrates, and other secular powers."

Those who aligned with state representatives still harbored radical sentiments, however, disagreeing with the idea of infant baptism, swearing oaths, and paying church taxes. So Anabaptist beliefs were deeply held by many who did not proclaim to be part of the denomination outright. These particular Protestants, who depended on princes, magistrates, and other civil authorities, were called Magisterial Anabaptists, and figured in what was the Magisterial Reformation. These Protestants even employed intellectuals known as magisters, who were university-trained teachers, or masters, to teach their rituals and doctrines to the masses who lived within their given territories. These Protestants also depended on the civil arm to enforce those teachings. Radical Protestants, however, who did not align with the civil powers, rejected all aspects of the Magisterial Reformation, being true nonconformists.

There were other branches within the Anabaptist movement as well, including the Hutterites, who were founded by Jacob Hutter in 1527, emerging within the Radical Reformation. This particular group took to heart what they read in the book of Acts, chapter 2 verse 44:

> "And all who believed were together and had all things in common."

> "This remained a point …"

Says Professor Brad S. Gregory.

> "… their insistence on communal ownership of goods that not only distinguished them, but also divided the Hutterites from other Anabaptist groups who were quite critical of this practice."

The Anabaptists can be seen as the forerunners of the Congregationalist church, in that there was no ecclesiastical oversight in the form of priests and bishops. Each congregation was self-governing, with decisions being made by the membership as a whole. The more radical Anabaptists were also the first in modern history to preach and hold staunchly to the separation of church and state, which gave rise to notions of religious liberty. For many Anabaptists, however, persecution snuffed out their zeal to evangelize, and taking flight in an effort to survive

as disparate communities became paramount. Their legacy became that of being skilled farmers, and quiet people on their lands. The Mennonites and Amish continue in this mode today. But while the Anabaptist fervor died out, other movements within the leavened Christian religion took root and made their spread throughout Europe and beyond.

CHAPTER 27

THE SPREAD OF CALVINISM

A REFORMER OF WHAT CAN BE considered the second generation, John Calvin, a methodical thinker and systematizer of the sixteenth century, unified various Protestant theologies into a cohesive set of doctrines. While Luther was consumed by the Protestant theology of justification by faith, Calvin centered his focus on the sovereignty of the Most High and sanctification. At a time when Spain was at war with France, the young scholar was forced to end his studies in France and leave the country. He traveled through Geneva where he planned to lodge for a single night. The town's reputation was not the kind that afforded solitude. It was a pleasure-loving city that was in the middle of an identity crisis, having rejected both secular and religious authorities, that being the Duke of Savoy and the Roman pope. Catholic masses were no longer held and citizens were hostile to the city's bishop. A gaping vacuum was ready to be filled by an influential reformer who could infuse the city's religious institutions with the spirit of the Reformation, as had been done elsewhere.

A local reformer named William Farel had preached his brand of reform in the city for four years prior to Calvin's visit, but not to great effect. Farel was familiar with one of Calvin's publications, and when he learned that Calvin was in town, he rushed to his inn and urged the young man to remain in the city and aid in establishing a powerful reform movement there. When Calvin insisted that he must leave to continue his studies, Farel warned that he was only following his own wishes and, if he didn't help the reform effort, the Most High would punish him for seeking his own interests. Calvin, stricken with terror, yielded, and immediately threw in his own efforts for the reform movement in Geneva. He would eventually rise to a leadership position in what he called "the game," and his brand of reformation, which was the third iteration after Lutheranism and the radical reform of the Anabaptists. Calvin spearheaded what came to be known simply as Reformed Christianity, also termed Calvinism. John Calvin, then, is the root of all Presbyterian churches, a good deal of Baptist congregations—which moved away from their Anabaptist origins—as well as many Congregationalists, and the Dutch and German Reformed Churches.

The torch had been passed from Luther to Calvin one could say. But these were very different men with different approaches to the Reformation.

> "Luther dreamed of good princes, disliked law on principle, and had little interest in institutions. As a result, Lutheran churches ended up with a mishmash of governing structures."

Writes Alec Ryrie, in his book *Protestants*.

> "Calvin, by contrast, had trained as a lawyer, knew that structures matter, and favored

> more participatory government. He insisted that pastors should never have control over money…. More momentously, he distinguished pastors, the ordained ministers who preach and celebrate the sacraments, from elders, senior laymen who would take charge of discipline, and who become the sharp edge of a cultural revolution. Calvin saw the church as a covenanted community, a new Israel in which all were bound to be their brothers and sisters' keepers."

Calvin, like many other Christian leaders, shaped his church and its doctrine on personal views, based on what was inferred from a reading of the Messianic Writings. While he took up Luther's torch, Calvin's reform efforts rather followed Zwingli's in structure, and he was able to build on Zwingli's work. Zwingli's influence reached other reform leaders who sympathized with his view of the Reformation over that of Luther's, thus Zwingli's brand of reform was able to spread throughout and beyond Switzerland, reaching Strasbourg in Germany, where another reformer, Martin Bucer—third in importance in that country only to Luther and his successor Melanchthon—took up the cause of Zwingli. After Zwingli was killed in battle, however, his cause lost the impact it enjoyed under his direct leadership, thus the center of the Protestant Reformation moved to Geneva, the French-speaking Swiss city that benefited greatly from Calvin's disciplined leadership.

Calvin—who was bound for Strasbourg, where he was prepared to study and write—was offered the position of Professor of Sacred Scriptures by Geneva's city council, and in this office he dug his heels into the work of reform. A confession of faith was drawn up, which those residing in Geneva would have to accept. He also drew up plans for education reform, and insisted on excommunicating all who refused to adopt a certain spiritual standard.

> "[B]ut the Genevans seemed to resist at every turn."

Writes Carlos M. N. Eire in his book *Reformations*.

> "The worst conflict was a power struggle between the clergy and the city council over the right of excommunication, which the ministers wanted to control, against the wishes of the magistrates. Having just rid themselves of what they viewed as an oppressive church, the elites of Geneva were not eager to see another one take its place. Unwilling to compromise, insisting on the clergy's right to excommunicate, Calvin and Farel were expelled from Geneva in May 1538."

Calvin took that as a sign from the Creator and gladly headed for Strasbourg, his original destination. He later confessed that the years spent in Strasbourg were among the happiest of his life. He had been liberated from the obligation of battling Anabaptists in the rebellious city of Geneva, whose citizens always saw him as an outsider. Strasbourg, on the other hand, was home to French refugees whom Calvin ministered to with ease. Strasbourg had also subdued the Anabaptists, and it was there that Calvin married one of their former members, a widow named Idelette de Bure. In time, Calvin also met up with influential reformer Martin Bucer, from whom he learned a great deal.

Calvin's time in Strasbourg saw him achieve success as a teacher of Protestant theology; the city even honored him with the privilege of being its representative at religious conferences held in Germany, which were of some importance. But the happy, virtually carefree time in

Strasbourg would be relatively short-lived, lasting from 1538 – 1541. Calvin's main supporters in Geneva gained the upper hand in the city through favorable elections to the council, and they invited him back to continue his work of reform. Reluctantly, he returned to the burdensome city in September of 1541 and essentially picked up where he left off.

"His first task was the reorganization of the Reformed church."

Writes Will Durant in his book *The Reformation*.

> "At his request the small council, soon after his return, appointed a commission of five clergymen and six councilors, with Calvin at their head, to formulate a new ecclesiastical code. On January 2, 1542, the great council ratified the resultant *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques*, whose essential features are still accepted by the Reformed and Presbyterian churches of Europe and America. The ministry was divided into pastors, teachers, lay elders, and deacons. The pastors of Geneva constituted 'The Venerable Company,' which governed the church and trained candidates for the ministry. No one henceforth was to preach in Geneva without authorization by the Company. The consent of the city council and the congregation was also required, but episcopal ordinances—and bishops—were taboo. The new clergy, while never claiming the miraculous powers of the Catholic priests, and though decreeing themselves ineligible for civil office, became under Calvin more powerful than any priesthood since ancient Israel."

This fourfold church government, or consistory, had only five pastors, who, not unlike the mother church in Rome, kept up the practice of administering sacraments, chiefly the eucharist. There were twelve lay elders, and since they outnumbered the pastors, they enjoyed the majority of leadership, yet Calvin's authority and influence were such that the church government often yielded to him. For twelve years, the consistory, upon Calvin's orders, sought to regulate the religious lives of Geneva's citizens, who were also members of the Reformed church. Backed by the power of excommunication, the consistory ruled with an iron hand that created conflict with the secular government. But in 1553, Calvin's strongest opponents rose to power once more and seriously challenged his authority in the city.

At that time, a brilliant but heretical Spanish physician named Michael Servetus, having fled Catholic persecutors in France, sought refuge in Geneva. As an escaped prisoner of the French Inquisition, once Servetus was recognized he was immediately arrested. Calvin personally drafted thirty-eight accusations against Servetus for views that were seen as heresies even among Protestants. Those who opposed Calvin came to Servetus's aid and tried to convince the council of his innocence. In being tried as a heretic by Catholics, they reasoned, Servetus was therefore an ally of Protestants. The Genevan authorities sought the advice of leaders of the Swiss cantons and the view of the Protestant opposition was unanimously rejected. Servetus was sentenced to death by burning, since heresy at the time was a more serious offense than murder.

"That did not exactly end the Servetus affair, however."

Writes Glenn S. Sunshine in his book *The Reformation for Armchair Theologians*.

"Some time earlier, a man by the name of Castellio had been a teacher in Geneva. He

> wanted to become a pastor, but due to a disagreement over how to interpret the Song of Solomon, Calvin opposed his ordination. Castellio, disappointed, left Geneva for Basel, carrying with him a very positive attestation from Calvin about Castellio's abilities as a teacher. When he heard about the Servetus affair, Castellio was furious. Servetus wasn't a dangerous heretic like Thomas Munzer or the Anabaptists at Münster, or even the Swiss Brethren, whose rebaptism of adults threatened the social fabric in the community. Rather, he was prosecuted simply for what he thought, for his ideas. Castellio wrote a book entitled *On the Coercion of Heretics*, in which he argued that prosecuting heretics was counterproductive. Servetus's ideas would have sunk like rocks if Calvin hadn't made a capital case out of them. In fact, because of what Calvin did, Servetus's ideas were much better known than they would have been otherwise. If the person commits no physical crime, he should not be subject to prosecution, and thus heretics ought to be tolerated in society."

The book angered Calvin and caused him to appeal to the city council to silence Castellio. It refused to do so. Therefore …

> "Castellio would end up writing other books against religious warfare, and promoting peace, harmony, and other 'outlandish' ideas. But he was largely a voice in the wilderness. Very few other people in Europe were ready for arguments for toleration."

While Calvin preferred that Servetus be beheaded rather than burned at the stake, since he led the Inquisition against him, he was seen as the one who had Servetus burned. Two years after the event, however, Calvin would be secure in his position and enjoy a largely unchallenged role in influencing the religious and moral affairs of Geneva. And, as Glenn S. Sunshine writes:

> "Despite these controversies, Calvin's ideas spread widely, and helped shape religious thinking in a number of areas in Europe."

By placing the sovereignty of the Most High at the center of his theology, those who embraced Calvinism viewed the state in a different light. Luther considered the state to be of the highest authority, which is why German Lutheran princes were afforded such power within his church. Calvin taught that no man on earth was to be imbued with unlimited power, neither king nor pope. In this way, he encouraged resistance to tyrannical monarchies. The church, Calvin taught, was to lead and guide the secular government in matters of morality and spiritual concern. Emboldened by this stance, Calvin's followers went about threatening revolutions throughout Europe, and sought to overthrow suppressive governments or religious powers deemed false.

Geneva was viewed as the unofficial capital of this religious revolution, which the ardent followers of Calvin saw as a promise of the coming Kingdom. From Geneva, many of Calvin's disciples returned to their European countries to spread his brand of theology, and thus Calvinism was able to break out of its original boundaries and become an international denomination. The movement started as a minor affair in France, but when influential members of the nobility were converted, all of that changed. Most notably, the Huguenots, who were French Calvinists that took Calvin's words completely to heart, attempted to seize control of the

French government. Thousands of them were butchered in 1572 on what is called St. Bartholomew's Day. This put an end to their efforts to threaten the Catholic hold on that region, though they retained some influence in the country.

The spread of Calvinism to the Netherlands, which was being ruled by Catholic Spain, was a crucial moment in Christian history. At the time, Philip II sat on the Spanish throne, taking over from Charles V who had abdicated. Philip inherited all the provinces once held by Charles V, except those in Austria. In Philip's possession were Spain, Milan, Sicily, Southern Italy, Mediterranean islands like Sardinia, as well as all the territories under Spanish control in the new world and Asia. He even inherited the nations that formed the Low Countries. In 1580, when the last of the Portuguese royal line died out, Philip annexed Portugal and seized its colonies in Asia, Africa, and the new world. Spain existed as the most powerful nation on earth, whose empire stretched worldwide.

> "Curiously, despite this enormous empire and the influx of gold and silver from the new world, Philip's finances were never particularly stable."

Writes Glenn S. Sunshine.

> "Spain was a rural country whose principal export was the wool of Marino sheep, the highest quality of raw wool available at the time, but hardly a major money-maker in the grand scheme of things. Further, of all the countries of Europe, Spain was probably the least prepared for the challenges of colonization. It had little skilled industry or manufacturing to provide the finished goods the colonists wanted in return for their gold and silver. As a result, the hard currency that flowed into Spain flowed right out again to purchase manufactured goods for the colonies, mostly to northern Italy and the Low Countries. To make matters worse, Spain was constantly involved in wars outside its borders. Philip was a devout, conservative Catholic who saw it as his duty to defend and promote the faith against both Muslim expansion and Protestant heretics, so he spent the majority of his reign fighting wars, mostly—though not entirely—over religion."

It was largely because of Philip's navy that the Ottomans were unable to expand their empire into the eastern Mediterranean region during his reign. He even took the side of Catholics in the religious French wars against the Huguenots and Calvinists in France that lasted till 1598—this was predicated on the spread of Calvinism in that country. Of all of Philip's wars, however, the most prominent among them is the war that resulted from a Dutch revolt against his rule in the Netherlands, which also brought him into conflict with England. The Netherlands, or Low Countries, are known today as the Benelux countries, comprising Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium. The nation was bursting at the seams with Protestants who had earlier ignored many of the edicts of its ruler Charles V, since he had declared Protestantism a religious and civil offense. Yet the Low Countries were the source of half of Charles's revenue stream.

When Philip took the throne, he was viewed as a foreign ruler by those in the Low Countries, whose way of life he would never understand. The Low Countries were made up of republics that were governed by the highest rungs of the local citizenry who sought the protection of national privileges and rights. The region, which was also home to Catholics, Lutherans, Anabaptists, and Reformed Protestants (or Calvinists), saw no major conflict arise between these

groups which were fairly moderate toward one another. That changed toward the end of the 1550s when the Protestants became more militant in their religious stance. This was due largely to Calvinists from France and Genevan missionaries who descended on the Netherlands with new views preached by John Calvin, which made them intolerant of the high taxes and persecution of Protestants being inflicted by the Spanish. In time, converts began to flock to their numbers. Glenn S. Sunshine adds:

> "By 1561, they were numerous enough to hold a synod, adopt a Calvinist statement of faith known as the Belgic Confession, based on the 1559 French-Gallican Confession, and set up a church order paralleling that of the Huguenots."

Indeed, the Calvinists in the Netherlands would rise and fight against their oppressive Catholic Spanish rulers well into the seventeenth century. Calvinist pastors were among the first to migrate to the Low Countries and lead the resistance. This amounted to what would be considered freedom fighting or guerilla warfare today. A national party that was established in the northern province had as its leader William the Silent, who became a Calvinist in 1573, and in another decade, he would help create a Dutch republic, which united the provinces of the Low Countries and lasted until 1795. But the Low Countries was just one region among many to which Calvinists would spread.

Back in Geneva, John Calvin had bested his opponents and seized property from a powerful family among them. On this property he founded the Geneva Academy in 1559, where a preparatory school for youths and a seminary for pastoral training were established.

> "Its first rector, the French émigré Théodore de Bèze (1519–1605), was Calvin's right-hand man and anointed successor."

Writes Carlos M. N. Eire.

> "Under his direction, the academy quickly became a veritable factory of Reformed clerics, and especially of hundreds of French natives, who returned to their kingdom immediately. Full of zeal and well educated in Reformed theology, these missionaries trained at Calvin's academy brought home with them the Genevan model, and set about creating throughout France a tight, growing network of Huguenot churches. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Geneva would thus play a role in French history more significant than any other French city, save Paris.
>
> "Geneva would also figure prominently in the history of many other nations. In the 1550s, especially, Geneva became a truly international center of religious fervor, earning itself that title of the Protestant Rome: Italians, Spaniards, Germans, Scots, Englishmen, Netherlanders, Poles, Hungarians, Moravians, and others took up residence, or passed through. Those who returned home, like the French clergy trained in the academy, brought with them Calvin's theology and his Genevan blueprints for reform."

As Geneva grew in popularity, so too did Calvin's fame rise. Even decades after his death, his theological views lived on in others, such as John Winthrop, the Massachusetts Bay Colony governor—and a disciple of Calvin's—who sailed to the new world to establish a puritanical

city. In fact, most of the Puritans were Calvinists, which speaks to John Calvin's great influence and the heights it eventually reached.

Scotland illustrates this fact. This was a land that in the sixteenth century was home to subjects who were of one religion and a queen who was of an entirely different one. Mary Queen of Scots married into French royalty at a young age, leading the Scots and the English alike to fear that Scotland would soon become a possession of France. Out of this tense situation emerged John Knox, a preacher and activist who had fled persecution in Catholic England to deliver his brand of Calvinism to the Scots. Within his message was the idea that the queen could be challenged by her subjects.

> "Scotland was a latecomer to the Reformation."

Writes Alec Ryrie.

> "In 1559 – 60, an inchoate evangelical movement fused with nationalistic resentment to spark a rebellion against the pro-French Catholic regime. The man who crystalized this movement was John Knox, a disciple of Calvin's, who lacked his master's subtlety and made up for it in zeal. He had seen the future as a refugee in Geneva and wanted to make it work in Scotland. Above all, he was entranced by the idea of spiritual equality. In a series of polemics in 1558, he warned his fellow Scots that they could not shirk their responsibilities to reform the church simply because they were commoners."

Knox assured them that, in the Creator's eyes …

> "… '[A]ll man is equal; equal not in rights, but in responsibilities. If you lived in a land of idolatry, it was your duty to demand reform, and to take action to separate yourself from the sin around you.' … After a decade of confusion, Scotland's Protestants succeeded in deposing their Catholic queen, Mary, and replacing her with her infant son, now King James VI."

But after going through all the trouble of ridding the realm of a Catholic ruler, they were reluctant to submit to a king of their own choosing. Alec Ryrie goes on to say:

> "James was raised Protestant, but spent his adult life in a running battle with Protestant churchmen who would not accept his power over them in any meaningful sense. They wanted a church that elected its own leadership, so-called Presbyterianism, from the Greek word for elders. The king wanted the church to be governed by bishops, partly for tradition's sake, but mostly so that he could appoint them himself. Worse, like the true Calvinists they were, the Presbyterians wanted comprehensive moral discipline, and to be able to haul even the king before church elders."

All of this was ignited by the efforts of John Knox, who had elaborated on Calvin's original view of Protestantism and stressed the right of commoners to resist, by force if necessary, their overbearing monarchs. The Scottish nobility was drawn to this enticing notion, and so was the public at large. Civil war erupted in the country in 1559, and by the summer of the next year, the

country’s capital, Edinburgh, was in Calvinist hands. John Knox personally drafted the articles of religion, which parliament adopted for Scotland. This meant the end of Catholicism in that country. When the queen finally returned to her kingdom in 1561, she was a nineteen-year-old widow forced to witness a Calvinist takeover.

Scotland stood as the embodiment of the Reformation with its decisive Catholic versus Protestant conflict; the lowly preacher and his common followers pitted against the powerful highborn queen, her court, and the mother church. The dynamic would shift in Knox’s favor, however, and even Mary’s descendants would fail to slow the progress of Calvinism in the country. In fact, Scotland came to be the most Calvinistic of all countries in the world. And when John Calvin met his end in 1564, Calvinism had spread throughout Europe and would soon storm America. Thus, many labored tirelessly to ensure that Calvinism would not die with its founder.

CHAPTER 28

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

WHILE LUTHERANISM WAS CONCEIVED in a monastery by a disillusioned Catholic monk, Anabaptist notions at a prayer meeting, and Calvinism at the desk of a traveling scholar, the Church of England was born largely out of political affairs. The crux of the problem was that of royal succession to the throne. Well, that was the first English Reformation at any rate, the constitutional one under Henry VIII, who would simply reject the authority of Rome and leave the nation's doctrines virtually unchanged. Of course, this move became the standard and course of many nations. The second, theological reformation of England would come with the Puritans nearly a century later.

Unlike in other Protestant lands of the day, which had rejected Catholicism on the grounds of theology, England was not presently concerned with such things. The church of Rome and its repressive power over kings was at issue. The sixteenth-century state of affairs saw Scotland and France in close alliance, while England was an ally of Spain. Great Britain itself though existed as two British kingdoms at the time, divided between the Stuart kingdom in Scotland and England's house of Tudor. Strong bloodlines ran between the two houses, but the intent was to unite the crowns at some point, though that would come during the reign of King James. During the sixteenth century, however, the British kingdoms were bitter enemies that were often at war. We discussed the reformation in Scotland at the end of the previous chapter, now we turn to the English reformation, which followed an entirely different course.

> "Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, came to England in 1501, aged sixteen, and married, on November 14, Arthur, aged fifteen, oldest son of Henry VII."

Writes Will Durant in his book *The Reformation.*

> "Arthur died on April 2, 1502. It was generally assumed that the marriage had been consummated; the Spanish ambassador dutifully sent 'proofs' thereof to Ferdinand; and Arthur's title, Prince of Wales, was not officially transferred to his younger brother Henry till two months after Arthur's death. But Catherine denied the consummation. She had brought with her a dowry of 200,000 ducats (around $5,000,000). Loath to let Catherine go back to Spain with these ducats, and anxious to renew a marital alliance with the powerful Ferdinand, Henry VII proposed that Catherine should marry Prince Henry, though she was the lad's elder by six years."

Then came the gross misinterpretation of Scripture by Catholic officials.

> "A Biblical passage (Lev. 20:21) forbade such a marriage: 'If a man shall take his

brother's wife it is an unclean thing… they shall be childless.' "

This of course refers to the case of representatives on all fronts, both brothers and the wife in question, being alive at the same time. A brother was in fact lawfully allowed to marry a deceased brother's widow and raise up seed unto him, prolonging his name. The Catholics mistakenly thought that the first law was contradicted by this one:

" 'If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child... her husband's brother… shall take her to him to wife' (Deut. 25:5)."

Needless to say, this was all Israelite business anyway and had nothing to do with English kings or Catholic authorities. Regardless…

"Archbishop Warham condemned the proposed union; Bishop Fox of Winchester defended it if a papal dispensation could be obtained from the impediment of affinity. Henry VII applied for the dispensation; Pope Julius II granted it in 1503. Some canonists questioned, some affirmed, the papal power to dispense from a Biblical precept, and Julius himself had some doubts. The betrothal—in effect a legal marriage—was made formal in 1503, but as the bridegroom was still only twelve, cohabitation was postponed. In 1505 Prince Henry asked to have the marriage annulled as having been forced upon him by his father, but he was prevailed upon to confirm the union as in the interest of England; and in 1509, six weeks after his accession, the marriage was publicly celebrated."

Seven months after this, Catherine would bear a child, which resulted in stillbirth. In another year, Henry rejoiced at the birth of a son, a promising male heir to the Tudor throne, but in a few short weeks the child died. Two more sons would suffer the same fate in 1513 and 1514, which urged Henry to consider annulling his marriage to Catherine. Not to be outdone, Catherine tried once more, this time giving birth to a girl in 1516. They named her Mary, and she would be a future queen. Henry was consoled by her birth and saw it as the promise of the sons he longed for, which would surely come now that one child had survived. But those heirs never came. The people of England were not thrilled with Mary's birth either, since the previous queen stained her reign with bloody wars over royal succession.

In 1525, Catherine was well past her prime at 40 years of age, and the lack of male heirs caused Henry to believe that a curse had befallen him for marrying his brother's widow—the aforementioned misapplication of Leviticus 20:21. He even questioned whether Pope Julius was in error for approving the wedding. And if the marriage was cursed, the sitting pope was to put it to an end. In 1527, Henry approached Clement VII to do just that. He wanted the dispensation for the marriage—which had lasted some eighteen years now—revoked, and declared invalid from the start via a new dispensation. Popes had granted such requests of kings in the past. The problem with Henry's present situation, however, was Catherine's family ties. She was the aunt of Charles V, the king of Spain and current head of the so-called Holy Roman Empire.

"Clement VII was in no position to defy the emperor Charles V."

Says Professor Brad S. Gregory, who teaches history at Stanford University.

> “In 1527, the emperor’s army had sacked and looted the city of Rome. And the pope became a virtual prisoner for the time being of the emperor, right at the time that Henry decides he needs his dispensation. Moreover, Charles V was the nephew of the English queen—of Catherine of Aragon. And a sudden invalidation of her longstanding marriage would have been a gross dishonor wrought on the family of Europe’s most powerful ruler. You can’t simply say that after almost twenty years this wasn’t a marriage after all, not to the house of Aragon, not to anything that touches the house of Hapsburg. It would have invited in other words retaliation against Henry VIII, and against the pope, from Charles V. So a political knot in addition to trying to overturn a previous papal dispensation stand in the way of the king and thwarts his wishes. Henry, however, like most kings—and in his case, even more than most kings—was not used to not getting his own way; to having his wishes frustrated.”

To complicate matters further, Henry had fallen for a woman named Anne Boleyn, the sister of a former mistress. A court advisor named Thomas Cranmer encouraged Henry to break with Rome by detaching the English church from papal control and folding it into the government as a new branch, which, as monarch, he would head. Henry heeded that advice and began to take matters into his own hands. He secretly married Anne Boleyn in January 1533 and had the English church court dissolve his marriage to Catherine in May. By September, he was the father of his first child from Anne, but it was another girl—to his dismay—who they named Elizabeth.

In retaliation, the pope excommunicated King Henry, which moved Henry to orchestrate a plan to fully overthrow the papacy. He was aware of the anti-Catholic notions that were stirring in England—many were embracing Lutheran principles for instance. With that in mind, Henry decided to strip away papal authority in his country via an obscure fourteenth-century law that banned dealings with foreign powers, which the papacy certainly was. On the strength of this recently-discovered old law Henry insisted that the clergy of the English church cease its dealings with the pope altogether. In another year, that being 1534, the Act of Supremacy was passed, naming King Henry, “The king’s majesty justly and rightly is and ought to be and shall be reputed the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England called Anglicana Ecclesia,” or the Anglican Church. From this denomination sprang the Episcopalian arm, which is in full communion with the See of Canterbury and the Archbishop of Canterbury, the so-called first among equals within the Anglican movement.

With the 1534 Act of Supremacy, the break with Rome was complete. King Henry was supreme head of his own church, his English subjects were to swear an oath of loyalty to him, and his marriage to Anne Boleyn was officially recognized. As head of his own church, however, he was not priest, thus, while he could appoint bishops, he could not consecrate them. Neither could he defend or formulate the faith of the church. Those tasks were directly overseen by the archbishop of Canterbury, a post that fell to Henry’s former court advisor, Thomas Cranmer.

> “Henry was at best a reluctant Protestant.”

Writes Glenn S. Sunshine in his book *The Reformation for Armchair Theologians*.

> “He took advantage of the change to close the monasteries and confiscate their property in the kingdom, yet in general his preference was to stay Catholic in every

> way possible, except with himself as head of the church. He savagely prosecuted and executed for treason anyone who expressed any doubts about his divorce, but at the same time he also executed mainstream Protestants as heretics. When he was in a reforming mood, he tended toward Lutheranism as less extreme than Reformed Protestantism, but he would inevitably lurch toward Catholicism pretty quickly, turning his back on reforms he had only recently instituted. His heart just wasn't in it. But it wasn't his heart that was driving his religious policy. This resulted in a wave of Protestants, known as the Henrician exiles, leaving the kingdom, typically heading toward Reformed territories on the Continent."

Prior to closing the smaller monasteries (those earning less than two hundred pounds per year), Henry gave the unpopular monks a chance to relocate to other cloisters or enter secular life. Nearly half opted for worldly society over another monastery. By 1539, the crown was in possession of all monastic properties and monasticism was formally ended in England. The former holdings of monks, therefore, were absorbed by the realm and accounted for one-tenth of Britain's wealth. With this move, Henry was suddenly supported by powerful barons and citizens of the highest social standing who were either gifted or otherwise purchased the properties.

With the banishment of Catholicism from the realm, a new translation of Scripture was needed for use in English churches. Upon Henry's order, an English bible soon emerged. When Rome held sway over nations, they were not against Scripture translations based on a country's native tongue, as long as those translations were not derived from the original Hebrew or Greek texts. The reason for this is that Rome had long used questionable Latin sources for its bible translations, which rendered certain words according to Catholic doctrine, rather than the original Hebrew concept.

One important example of this is the word *metanoia*, which in Greek means "repentance," and signifies a deep transformation of one's heart or mind, and a spiritual conversion wrought by their conformity to the Creator. This has as its Latin equivalent, *agite paenitentiam*, which translates to "do penance" in Catholic translations of Scripture based on Latin texts. For instance, the Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible, based on the Latin Vulgate, still translates the Greek term metanoia as the Latin "do penance" in Luke 13:3.

> "No, I say to you: but unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish."

An English translation of Scripture that ignored the age-old Latin sources did not bode well for Rome or Catholicism. After Erasmus's Greek New Testament was published in 1516, which featured a preface encouraging other translations in the common tongue of nations, new bible translations began to emerge in other languages, such as French, German, and English. Protestantism was fueled largely by these efforts.

> "While King Henry had broken with the Roman Catholic Church—and had been duly excommunicated—nothing at all had changed yet in the Church of England."

Writes Carlos M. N. Eire in his book Reformations.

> "Its theology, rituals, and ethics remained exactly as before. Among the Protestant sympathizers who hoped to bring about change, the most highly placed were none

> other than the new queen, Anne Boleyn, and the archbishop of Canterbury himself, Thomas Cranmer. In addition, Anne Boleyn surrounded herself with chaplains deeply affected by evangelical ideas, one of whom, Matthew Parker (1504–1575), would become archbishop of Canterbury during her daughter Elizabeth's reign. But none of Anne's efforts mattered much to Henry. In a fit of jealous rage, the king accused her of adultery, and, after being tried and found guilty, Anne Boleyn was beheaded on May 19, 1536, two days after Thomas Cranmer had annulled her marriage to Henry."

But since he still needed a male heir, the search continued, thus Henry married a third wife two weeks later.

> "The bride this time was Jane Seymour, a former lady-in-waiting to the recently executed Anne Boleyn. And this time, Henry VIII finally got the male heir that he needed. In September 1536, four months into their marriage, Jane Seymour gave birth to a frail boy, Edward, but she died as a result of complications during the birth. Henry VIII had an heir to the throne, at last, but he was a widower once again."

Failed marriages and the problem of royal succession continued to plague Henry's reign. His son, Prince Edward, was a frail, sickly heir, and his two sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, were legally prohibited from inheriting the throne for a time—though both would later be crowned queens. Henry married three more times following the death of Jane Seymour, but not a single heir was produced from those unions. With his own death, in January of 1547, Edward, a mere nine years of age, inherited the crown of his father. Of course, this meant that true rulership lay with others, such as Edward's uncle, Edward Seymour, the Duke of Somerset, who was named Protector of the Realm. The Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, whose hands were no longer tied by Henry in a religious sense, pushed a Protestant agenda. Several of Henry's legislations were repealed, and Reformed preaching was promoted. Influential reformers were also granted professorships at prominent universities, like Oxford and Cambridge. By 1549, church ritual too was revised with the formation of the Book of Common Prayer. All churches in England were forced to do away with Latin and adopt English as their formal language.

But the sudden rise of Protestantism in England was put to an end with the death of the frail King Edward in 1553. He was succeeded by his sister Mary, the daughter of Catherine. Mary was extremely Catholic, and she attempted to shift England back toward Rome in every way. Hers was a bloody reign, and close to three hundred Protestants were killed as a result of her intolerance, including the powerful archbishop Thomas Cranmer, who was burned at the stake.

> "Although Mary did not begin her reign by slaughtering her political rivals, she was less reluctant about executing other people."

Writes Glenn S. Sunshine.

> "Given that Henry had split with Rome so he could divorce Mary's mother, Mary didn't exactly have warm feelings toward Protestantism. So she began to arrest, prosecute, and burn alive any Protestants she found, particularly clergy and other leaders. This earned her the nickname "Bloody Mary," making her the only English monarch with a mixed drink named after her. The renewed persecution caused a new

> wave of exiles to leave the country, known as the Marian exiles. Many of these made their way to Geneva and learned Calvin's more radical approach to Reformed theology and practice."

It was this persecution that John Knox fled, as discussed in our previous chapter. He later founded the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian branch of Christianity. Despite her bloodthirsty nature, no other English monarch of the sixteenth century aspired to the level of piety that Mary Tudor did. That bloodthirstiness, however, would be her undoing. By the middle of the sixteenth century, England had been free of Rome for nearly a generation, but the Catholic reign of Mary, and her subsequent marriage to Philip of Spain, another devout Catholic, was considered a betrayal by the people of England. Mary ended her reign in disappointment and died an agonizing death at age 42. Being childless, she was succeeded by her half-sister, who reigned as Queen Elizabeth I.

Daughter of the deceased Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth inherited the monarchy, and with it, control of the Church of England, which, during her reign, took on its distinctive Anglican characteristic. That said, the church still had Catholic leanings, with its apostolic succession of bishops, its adoption of the eucharist, its Catholic infused liturgy, etc. In 1563, Elizabeth's doctrinal statement, the Thirty-Nine Articles, which were agreed upon by the Archbishops, Bishops, and the entire clergy within the Provinces of Canterbury, York, and London, held language that accepted both Roman Catholics and Protestants alike. The articles, which form the summary of the beliefs of the Church of England, were an obvious compromise, which later English churchmen would regard as the best of both worlds, calling it the *via media*, or middle way between Protestantism and Catholicism. This was also the culmination of the so-called Elizabethan Settlement, which was a response to the religious differences that threatened the stability of England during her ascension.

Elizabeth, who was skilled at avoiding open religious conflict, initially saw great success with the enforcement of the articles, which mixed Catholic traditions and Protestant thinking. But while much of England was happy with the outcome, those at the extreme ends of the spectrum were not pleased. Among the disgruntled were the Marian exiles who had been forced out of England during the reign of the previous queen. They returned to England when Elizabeth was on the throne and were not comfortable with the compromise, against which they cried out, seeking another reformation. These particular Reformers came to be known as Puritans, and they were largely Presbyterian.

> "For many Puritans, episcopacy was now revealing itself as part of the problem, not the solution."

Writes Diarmaid MacCulloch in his book *The Reformation*.

> "[T]he obvious goal was to replace it with a Presbyterian system like Geneva."

However:

> "It is important not to fall into the trap of thinking that every Puritan was a Presbyterian (although there is no problem in identifying all Presbyterians as Puritans)."

Rebecca Fraser, in her book *The Mayflower: The Families, the Voyage, and the Founding of America*, adds:

> "Puritans were Protestants who believed the English Reformation had not gone far enough. The Elizabethan religious settlement returned the Church in England from Roman Catholicism to the Anglicanism established by Henry VIII. Anxious not to offend the population—many of whom had been disturbed by the Reformation in the first place—Elizabeth's government did not wish to make the new religious settlement too Protestant. But many of the English Protestant clergy who had been driven out by the Catholic queen Mary Tudor now returned from Geneva imbued with the ideas of important theologians of the sixteenth century, including Jean Calvin. Many of Elizabeth's chief ministers were Calvinists in points of doctrine such as predestination. However, they took the position that the state must dictate the form of the church. Bishops were an essential part of that."

The problem is, Calvin taught his followers the exact opposite, that the church was to be governed by church elders, or presbyters to use the Greek designation.

> "How the church should be governed and how much it should be reformed became a running battle between the Elizabethan government and Puritan clergy."

The Puritans also argued that bishops were not mentioned in the Messianic Writings, nor were traditions like making the sign of the cross, observing saints' days, or (perhaps the greatest bone of contention among them) the wearing of priestly vestments. Carlos M. N. Eire confirms this in his book *Reformations*:

> "It all began with vestments, and more specifically, with one piece of liturgical garb that Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity required all clerics to wear during church services: the surplice (a white wide-sleeved gown). Reformed Protestants made an issue out of this requirement not just because surplices were unbiblical 'popish' remnants, but because they were an indifferent item, that is, totally unnecessary and unrelated to salvation.… Opponents of the surplice objected most strenuously to the way in which consciences were being forced, for requiring any Christian to observe some trivial ordinance was tantamount to raising human laws over divine commands."

In short, Puritans wanted a church that did not include what they considered to be the unrighteous, which was pretty much all non-Puritans. Queen Elizabeth, her court ministers, and the church hierarchy rebuffed their efforts, and those with Puritan sympathies had to meet in secret. Despite their future expulsion, Puritans were patriotic Protestants. They merely wanted more church reform. Following Elizabeth's death in 1603, James, son of Mary Queen of Scots, and great-great-grandson of Henry VII, acceded the thrones of Scotland, Ireland, and England, since Elizabeth died childless. King James, being born in Scotland, was a Presbyterian monarch, thus the Puritans felt he would surely support their Protestant cause, and their aim to rid the church of Elizabethan compromises. James actually became their antagonist. While a Presbyterian, James actually shored up the Church of England, which he inherited control of.

> "A whole new set of ecclesiastical laws forced the more committed Puritans out of

the Church of England and made them separatists."

Writes Rebecca Fraser.

> "James made it clear he would 'make them conform, or I shall harry them out of the land, or do worse.' "

In all of this, note that the Anglican (and therefore the Episcopal) church did not emerge as a result of some noble spiritual ideal, but rather it sprang from the acts of an obstinate king—that being Henry VIII—bent on pursuing his overpowering lust. And successive monarchs did their best to protect the institution that grew out of that lust. Rebecca Fraser goes on to say:

> "Canons of 1604 enforced conformity. All those who rejected the faith and practices of the established church were automatically excommunicated. Puritan clergy must go before the Courts of High Commission to swear to these new canons or they would have to leave their parishes 'as being men unfit, for their obstinacy and contempt to occupy such places.' And in the end, if you were a Puritan passionate about your religion, you left England. Otherwise you faced imprisonment or death."

This led to their withdrawal from England in 1607, wherein the Puritans sailed across the English Channel and settled in the Netherlands, joining other separatists who had left in 1593. But the Netherlands soon grew too overcrowded and was rife with corruption. Hence the 1620 voyage of many Puritans to the new world to establish a new colony.

CHAPTER 29

PROPHESIED ENSLAVEMENT

WHILE THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY saw the rise of the Portuguese and Spanish empires, which had divided new conquered lands and peoples between them, the seventeenth century was occupied with other European colonial powers building up empires of their own in the new world. France staked claim to Quebec and settled it in 1609. The first Dutch settlement was established in the Americas around 1615 along the Hudson, near what is Albany, New York today. New Amsterdam, or the southern tip of Manhattan Island, came next. It served as the seat of the colonial government of what was then called New Netherland and became capital of the Dutch province by 1625. Great Britain, however, eventually eclipsed all European rivals in this new arena of overseas expansion. The thirteen colonies, which would later become the United States, were among its first enterprises.

Spain's early conquests of the new world is often contrasted to that of Great Britain's. The Spanish empire was able to exploit the vast riches of the Aztecs and Incas, and they forced large populations of natives to work the land. The British experienced none of this. The British had no hope of enslaving natives, who could flee into the wild interior to avoid capture. Instead, they looked to trade with the natives as a means of amassing wealth, but that was a bitter disappointment. Another solution was agriculture. Produce could be yielded from the land and exported to Europe to fill the coffers of the owners of the colonies. This initially required British indentured labor, since the land was owned by colonial companies and not free colonists at the time. But relying on white indentured servants was a problem.

> "White servants had not yet been brought over in sufficient quantity."

Writes Howard Zinn in his book *A People's History of the United States*.

> "Besides, they did not come out of slavery, and did not have to do more than contract their labor for a few years to get their passage and a start in the New World. As for the free white settlers, many of them were skilled craftsmen, or even men of leisure back in England, who were so little inclined to work the land that John Smith, in those early years, had to declare a kind of martial law, organize them into work gangs, and force them into the fields for survival."

All around them, Native Americans were living off the same land, able to support themselves and were, in that sense, superior to the white settlers, who had better technology, but no means of creating enough food with it. The so-called savages had the advantage over the "civilized" invaders. It got to a point where white settlers deserted the colonists and joined forces with the natives. This frustrated the Virginians, who resorted to killing and torturing natives, and burning their villages and cornfields in a show of what they considered superiority. Regardless, their

many failures forced them to look to yet another avenue for survival.

"Black slaves were the answer," writes Howard Zinn. And the first of those slaves were twenty and odd Israelites who were captured in the Kingdom of Ndongo in Angola and brought to Jamestown aboard a British ship on August 20, 1619. Zinn goes on to say:

> "And it was natural to consider imported blacks as slaves, even if the institution of slavery would not be regularized and legalized for several decades. Because, by 1619, a million blacks had already been brought from Africa to South America and the Caribbean, to the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, to work as slaves. Fifty years before Columbus, the Portuguese took ten African blacks to Lisbon—this was the start of a regular trade in slaves. African blacks had been stamped as slave labor for a hundred years. So it would have been strange if those twenty blacks, forcibly transported to Jamestown, and sold as objects to settlers anxious for a steadfast source of labor, were considered as anything but slaves."

We discuss the ramifications of that 1619 event in our Scripture study video *400 Years: Sentence Served*.

The enslavement of so-called blacks was prophesied in the Scriptures in several places. Jeremiah chapter 17 gives an interesting overview of the particulars of that national punishment, which, in the case of the tribe of Judah—the negroes and blacks who were a large percentage of the transatlantic slave trade—endured due to their sin and rebellion against Yah. Captivity and the loss of their heritage are two key circumstances they would suffer, as mentioned in the following verses:

> 1 "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with a point of diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars, 2 while their children remember their altars and their Asherim, beside every green tree and on the high hills, 3 on the mountains in the open country. Your wealth and all your treasures I will give for spoil as the price of your high places for sin throughout all your territory. 4 You shall loosen your hand from your heritage that I gave to you, and I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know…"
>
> —Jeremiah 17:1 – 4

Historian Howard Zinn adds:

> "Their helplessness made enslavement easier. The Indians were on their own land. The whites were in their own European culture. The blacks had been torn from their land and culture, forced into a situation where the heritage of language, dress, custom, family relations, was bit by bit obliterated except for the remnants that blacks could hold on to by sheer, extraordinary persistence."

This prophecy was slow in coming to pass, however, because for centuries, the people of Israel, having migrated south to other lands on the African continent, enjoyed prosperity following their assimilation into various national African cultures. While Europe was still

discovering and inventing itself, the Israelites, as well as other African nations, had long found their footing. Timbuktu was one region Israelites were known to dominate, with one of our ancient communities being discovered in Mali as late as 1996. Part of the Songhai empire at the time, the land was only a portion of a vast region the Arab conquerors called *bilād as-sūdān*, or the lands of the blacks.

> "The African civilization was as advanced in its own way as that of Europe. In certain ways, it was more admirable."

Writes Howard Zinn.

> "It was a civilization of 100 million people, using iron implements and skilled in farming. It had large urban centers and remarkable achievements in weaving, ceramics, sculpture. European travelers in the sixteenth century were impressed with the African kingdoms of Timbuktu and Mali, already stable and organized at a time when European states were just beginning to develop into the modern nation."

But the prosperity would not last. Eventually the Gentiles would live out their role in fulfilling recorded prophecy, most strikingly in the Americas. When the British tried their hand at earlier colonial ventures, those efforts failed. Under Queen Elizabeth, Sir Walter Raleigh—for whom the city of Raleigh, North Carolina is named—was given the go ahead via royal charter to establish a colony in North America. The region was named Virginia in honor of the virgin queen, Elizabeth. Twice Sir Walter Raleigh tried at the colony game, first in 1585 and again in 1587. The settlers of the first round simply returned to England after the failed attempt, but the second set disappeared in 1590. That group left behind no more than two clues: the words "Croatoan" carved into the gatepost of a fort and "Cro" etched into a tree. It is thought that they were either annihilated by disease or killed by Native tribes.

At any rate, earnest colonization would not take root until the spring of 1607, with the month of May seeing 105 new settlers landing near the mouth of a river they named James, in honor of the Scottish king who succeeded Elizabeth. Thus, the founding of Jamestown. While the venture was an economic one, the Virginia Company, which financed the voyage, claimed to be motivated by religion, in that it aimed to establish an arm of the Church of England in the new colony to minister both to the Natives and the English settlers. But no bishop was ever appointed in Virginia or any of the other thirteen colonies. The stockholders of the Virginia Company looked to trade with the Indigenous Americans and then to agricultural yields in the hope of a handsome return on their investment, as stated.

When the Virginia colony was founded, Puritan influence was at a high point in the Church of England, therefore the stockholders of the Virginia company, as well as many settlers, thought it prudent to allow the new colony to be ruled according to Puritan principles. Early laws, therefore, were of a strict religious bent, requiring settlers to attend worship twice daily, in addition to observing Sunday as the Sabbath and enduring punishment for dressing immodestly and using profane language. But the Puritan ideal never won out in Virginia. For one thing, King James denounced the Puritan way and refused to allow it in his colony. By 1624, Virginia was placed under his direct rulership and Puritan influence waned considerably. King Charles I, who succeeded his father James, followed the same course and was equally intolerant of Puritan views. In time, as Puritan preaching was restricted and ministers suspended from their posts or

removed entirely, many Puritans considered emigrating and therefore looked to new American lands, namely New England, which, as author Wendy Warren writes in her book *New England Bound*, were:

> "[A] cluster of colonies perched on the edge of England's fledgling North American empire. Colonized in the early seventeenth century by stern people wearing black hats and somber clothes, the popular story goes, New England became an exceptional land of hard work and bountiful crops and thrift and curtness and fervent religiosity. Puritans, we call these fabled people, a sort of shorthand used to describe a motley array of Protestants interested in reforming a Church of England they considered too encumbered by vestiges of Roman Catholicism. Between the years 1620 and 1640 alone, more than twenty thousand English colonists emigrated to the northeastern coast of North America, where they founded in quick succession the colonies that would become jointly known as New England: in 1620, Plymouth (a colony that later joined with Massachusetts); in 1630, the Massachusetts Bay Colony; in 1636, the colonies of Connecticut and of Rhode Island; in 1637, the New Haven Colony (eventually joined to Connecticut)."

And so on. After the colonies were established and settled, they had to be made economically viable. For that, slavery was needed in all of them. The Virginia colony, which started as a marginal concern, soon achieved economic success in the tobacco trade, which took great labor to grow and export. Slaves were routinely acquired from Africa for that reason. Unlike the Spanish Catholics, who were ordered to baptize slaves even before they left the African coast (as seen in chapter 24) the Christians of the Virginia colony were part of the Church of England, and did little to convert slaves to their religion. Part of the reason for this was the belief that Christians were not to hold other Christians in bondage, which stemmed from ancient principles.

To assure that the ancient principles were not violated by the modern custom, a law was passed by the Virginia Assembly on September 23, 1667 to settle the matter. It declared plainly that the spiritual condition of a slave did not change as a result of baptism. All black people (i.e., Israelites) who were baptized into the Church of England were not thereafter exempt from bondage. The great lengths that Christians went to in order to protect the property rights of Christian enslavers was a demonstration of the corruption that had been inherited from the mother church. But even after this law was passed, slaves were not put through the process of conversion and indoctrination, because enslavers believed an ignorant slave would be more submissive and provide better service.

In his book *The Great Stain*, author Noel Rae introduces his readers to the concept of a slave as follows:

> " 'What is a slave?' Asked William Wells Brown in a lecture to the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem, delivered on November 18, 1847. One of the abolitionist movement's most effective black orators, Brown had himself been a slave, and knew what he was talking about."

Brown went on to say:

> " 'A slave is one that is in the power of an owner. He is a chattel; he is a thing; he is a

> piece of property. A master can dispose of him, can dispose of his labor, can dispose of his wife, can dispose of his offspring, can dispose of everything that belongs to the slave, and the slave shall have no right to speak; he shall have nothing to say.' And what was a chattel? According to the then-current edition of Webster's dictionary, 'Chattels personal are things movable, as animals, furniture.' The word chattel is derived from cattle. The word slave derives from *sclavus*, the medieval Latin word for Slav—probably because so many of that nation were enslaved by the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto the Great, in the tenth century."

Colonial slavery was not the kind of slavery that was represented in the Scriptures. Slaves in those ancient times had many rights and limits on their terms of service for instance, whereas slaves in the Americas were rendered such for life, and had no rights whatsoever, as William Wells Brown explained.

Prior to colonial slavery, being a Christian meant that you were superior in society. But with some slaves having access to that leavened religion, a new standard of superiority had to be invented.

> "[S]lave owners adapted."

Writes Katharine Gerbner in her book *Christian Slavery*.

> "They created the concept of 'whiteness' and revised their prerequisites for voting to exclude nonwhite Christians from enfranchisement. By the end of the seventeenth century, the term 'white' had begun to replace 'Christian' as an indicator of freedom and mastery."

But believing that Christianity was central to the culture and faith of colonial slaves is a mistake, as many historians have done in the past. There were core Christian believers among enslaved Israelites, to be sure, and they preached that Yah would deliver them out of slavery as he had done in ancient Egypt. But the majority among them did not convert to Christianity until after the Civil War, and emancipation, which seemed to deliver on that promise. That's when slaves began to convert in large numbers.

Daniel L. Fountain, an associate professor of history and author of *Slavery, Christianity, and Salvation*, found that there were many obstacles present in the life of colonial slaves that made mass conversion difficult, and if fact, unlikely. Evidence shows that they had infrequent access to religious instruction, and when they did hear the Christian message at all, that message was inconsistent, and thus colonial slaves had to carve out their own spiritual culture. What seemed to be a Christian bent among the converted, Daniel L. Fountain discovered, was actually a holdover of the ancient practices maintained during the African diaspora.

> "West African religions contain many beliefs similar to those characterizing the evangelical Christianity that dominated the antebellum southern United States."

Fountain writes.

> "Among them, both African Traditional Religion and evangelical Christianity emphasize a single creator […], symbolic death and rebirth, water as a spiritual

> symbol, blood sacrifice, religious prayer and song, and belief in an afterlife. According to most interpretations of nineteenth-century slave religion, these similarities facilitated the conversion of slaves to Christianity by allowing them to incorporate familiar beliefs into their New World environment. This confluence resulted in a slave-created form of Christianity that reflected African as well as European Christian ideals."

In other words, colonial Christians did not introduce Israelite slaves to a belief system that was completely alien to them. Christians essentially borrowed heavily from the ancestors of the slaves they held captive, then reintroduced to those slaves an Anglicized version of their own spiritual culture. But by the time Christianity was fully embraced by subsequent generations of these slaves, the brutal institution of slavery had wiped away the last vestiges of the ancient culture that was once their own, which cemented the loss of their true identity in fulfillment of prophecy. This was part of the punishment for the national sin of covenant-breaking on the part of true Israel, as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy.

Of course, the culture that was maintained following their expulsion from the Promised Land was already tainted, being a mixture of pagan practices coupled with their own Israelite heritage, as is seen in the ancient Israel of the Scriptures, who followed the customs of the nations around them. This was the idolatry that led to their expulsion; the aforementioned breaking of the covenant. But during the African diaspora, Israelites—some having assimilated into local tribes, others forming communities of their own—resettled new lands and continued along their tribal course.

> "In fact, it was because they came from a settled culture, of tribal customs and family ties, of communal life and traditional ritual, that [African] blacks found themselves especially helpless when removed from this."

Writes Howard Zinn.

> "They were captured in the interior (frequently by blacks caught up in the slave trade themselves), sold on the coast, then shoved into pens with blacks of other tribes, often speaking different languages. The conditions of capture and sale were crushing affirmations to the black African of his helplessness in the face of superior force. The marches to the coast, sometimes for 1,000 miles, with people shackled around the neck, under whip and gun, were death marches, in which two of every five blacks died. On the coast, they were kept in cages until they were picked and sold."

The slave trade became a thriving industry when other commodities joined tobacco, such as coffee, rice, cotton, and chief among them, sugar. The year 1515 recorded the first accounts of sugar being exported to the east from the Spanish West Indies. Yet 1518 marked the first recorded shipment of slaves westward from the African coast, to accommodate the new sugar industry. Sugar production is thought to have originated in northern India, and in time it spread to the Middle East, then to the Mediterranean—namely Cyprus, Crete, and Sicily—and again to islands like Madeira, Cape Verde, and the Canaries off the west African coast. The method of growing and refining sugar would cross the Atlantic after that and take on a new life with increased slave labor. European demand for the sweet crop fueled the increase of production and

exports, and sugarcane byproducts, molasses and rum, were also in high demand.

> "But raising sugar was labor-intensive…"

Writes Noel Rae.

> "… [a]nd the work was so exhausting, the conditions so brutal, the birth rate so low and the mortality rate so high, that on average West Indian plantation owners had to replace one tenth of their workers every year. This may have seemed wasteful, but the planters had worked it out and the consensus among them was that it was 'cheaper to buy than to breed.' "

As more and more Israelite slaves were forced to interact with whites, prejudice ripened. True Israel in this case became a nation of reproach in the eyes of even common-born European citizens. Of this Yah promised through the prophet Jeremiah:

> 18 "I will pursue them with sword, famine, and pestilence, and will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, a terror, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, 19 because they did not pay attention to my words…"
>
> —Jeremiah 29:18 – 19

Author Noel Rae adds:

> "Unlike the aristocratic Portuguese adventurers, who waged war on Africans but did not despise them, the middle- and lower-class north Europeans were soon complaining about the innate vices of the people they were busy enslaving. According to John Barbot, the Yarays were 'perfidious' and 'expert at stealing'; the Senegalese were 'lazy to excess … knavish, revengeful, impudent, liars, impertinent, gluttonous, extravagant'; the natives of Guinea were 'the greatest and most cunning thieves that can be imagined.' … The Dutchman, Willem Bosman, writing of the Gold Coast, declared that 'the Negroes are all, without exception crafty, villainous and fraudulent … These degenerate vices are accompanied with their sisters, sloth and idleness, to which they are so prone that nothing but the utmost necessity can force them to labour.' "

Among modern whites, many of these things are still being said about so-called blacks today. What is more, the Europeans who directed those accusations at slaves were themselves guilty of the very things they condemned: perfidiousness (or being untrustworthy), theft, laziness, vengefulness, impudence, gluttony, craftiness, villainy, and extreme fraudulence. These were people who owned vast tracts of land that was taken from native inhabitants through theft or trickery, which they refused to work themselves. Because Europeans were too lazy to cultivate their own fields, they turned to slave labor, using so-called Negroes—who did not see a slim dime from their grueling efforts—to do what they would not. Yet slaves were accused of being lazy.

That said, the low societal status of so-called blacks was prophesied from of old, being a

result of our sin and rebellion against the Most High, who we swore we would serve through a ratified covenant. It is a plight we brought on ourselves as a people, in other words, but it is not one that will have to be endured much longer, per many other prophecies.

CHAPTER 30

CAPITALISM: A NEW RELIGION

THE AMERICAN COLONIES WERE ALL commercial ventures on the part of England, intended to prop up their burgeoning empire through slave labor. To facilitate this expansive endeavor, forests were cleared, and the fields they yielded had to be tilled. That required settlers. Christians of various denominations were attracted to the new world and therefore migrated to different colonies, spreading their European culture and custom, which subsequently established the foundations of what would become America. The Quakers settled in Pennsylvania, the Catholics in Maryland, and the Dutch Reformed in New York. Lutherans from Sweden, Huguenots from France, Baptists from England, and Presbyterians from Scotland later settled the colonies as well. What is little discussed today is that each and every one of these Christian groups were steeped in the barbaric culture of colonial slavery. They each depended on Israelite slaves in order to eke out an existence or else thrive on American soil, including the Puritans, who sought to establish a "new Zion" in the New England wilderness, and failed.

With all of these various Christian groups clustered throughout the colonies, denominationalism began to emerge as a way to define the church as it then existed. The term denomination was popularized around 1740 at the time of the Evangelical Revival, spearheaded by men like George Whitefield and John Wesley, but the concept was well-cemented by Puritans of the mid-seventeenth century. The term differed from sectarianism, which implied that a particular sect was authoritative and enjoyed direct access to the Redeemer, and that sect alone. Sectarianism was exclusive, whereas denominationalism was inclusive. The argument that was eventually proposed (which amounts to conformity) was that a Christian group, being called by a particular name, was merely part of a larger group that comprised the entire church. And the church held all denominations. Of course, this view has since changed, and what Christianity has reverted to is sectarianism, even though each group still refers to itself as a denomination.

While Christianity was sorting itself out in the colonies, England was digging its heels into the slave trade and growing into a behemoth thereby. Author Gerald Horne wrote a book titled: *The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy, and Capitalism in Seventeenth-Century America and the Caribbean.* In that book, Horne wrote:

> "[I]t is the seventeenth [century] that stands out conspicuously as the takeoff for London's involvement in the nasty business of enslavement, which simultaneously delivered bounteous profits that set the stage for a racializing rationalization of inhumanity, while setting yet another stage for the takeoff of an enhanced capitalism. A recent study revealed that before 1581 there were no enslaved Africans brought to what was referred to as the 'British Caribbean' and 'Mainland North America.' From 1581 to 1640 there were scores brought to each. But from 1641 to 1700, 15,000 Africans were brought to North America and 308, 000 to the 'British Caribbean.'

> Similarly, trade from Dutch forts in Africa amounted to about 700 of the enslaved yearly between 1600 and 1644 but would increase sixfold by the late 1660s. Europeans generally enslaved some two million Africans during the seventeenth century, half of them from West Central Africa and most of the rest from the states abutting today's Ghana and the Bights of Benin and Biafra."

Highlighting the subtitle of his book, Horne makes a further point that what has been praised as modernity actually bears the stain of slavery, white supremacy, and capitalism. "The bloody process of human bondage," he stresses, is "the driving and animating force of this abject horror."

For many centuries, Christianity in its various forms was dearly held by commoners, nobles, and other elite citizens. But with the "discovery" of the new world, and the expansion of various empires to the Americas, trade and capitalism overshadowed the religious ideals of those in power. Political pursuits also ranked high among the leading colonists, who desired a new republic that was free of monarchs. And those monarchs were able to fill their treasuries with spoils from the new world. The Roman papacy too, which held the power to initiate the slave trade, and did, benefited greatly from slavery. In fact, between the years 1573 and 1826, publications that were critical of slavery were placed on the official List of Prohibited Books, or, as it is called in Latin, the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. Author John Francis Maxwell, who published his book, *Slavery and the Catholic Church*, in 1975, says that writers who were critical of slavery were placed on the index prohibiting their works without any particular errors being specified. All of their opinions were simply condemned.

While the Papacy and the Spanish Empire reaped rich rewards through slavery and their devastating conquests of the sixteenth century, England eventually superseded them both, not only in terms of conquest, but through their control and expansion of the slave trade as well. But this too would not last.

> "London was a prime beneficiary of this systemic cruelty."

Writes Gerald Horne.

> "England had a 33 percent share of the slave trade in 1673 and 74 percent by 1683. Of that dreadful total, the Royal African Company, under the thumb of the Crown, held a hefty 90 percent share in 1690, but with deregulation and the entrance into this sinfully profitable market by freelance merchants, this total had shrunk to 8 percent by 1701. This political and economic victory over monarchy by merchants also undergirded the 'popular' politics they represented, which eventuated in a republicanism that scored its paradigmatic triumph in 1776."

The colonists who desired a new "monarch-free" republic, in other words, established that very republic in opposition to Great Britain on the basis of commerce. With the founding of the United States of America, world trade and commerce grew exponentially decade after decade, and the slave trade was used to increase the wealth of nations throughout the world. In fact, as monarchies weakened over time, merchants rose to prominence and amassed power and wealth through increased trade. The merchant class of England, comprised of both Catholics and Protestants, were opposed to the commercial restrictions imposed upon them by King James II,

which primarily prevented the engagement of direct trade with North America. Growing opposition led to what is called the Glorious Revolution of 1688 resulting in King James II being deposed (not the King James known for the bible translation, but his grandson). Parliament also began to assume primacy over the Crown.

The spirit of revolution spread to the United States as well, when powerful colonists broke with the English monarchy and Parliament in order to trade with whomever they wished. This of course led to the historic events of 1776, when the American colonies severed political ties to Great Britain. Capitalism flourished thereafter. Of this, Gerald Horne writes:

> "[A]s the religious conflicts that animated the seventeenth century began to recede—Christian vs. Muslim; Catholic vs. Protestant—as the filthy wealth generated by slavery and dispossession accelerated, capitalism and profit became the new [deity], with its curia in the basilicas of Wall Street. This new religion had its own doctrine and theologies, with the logic of the market and its 'efficient market theory' supplanting papal infallibility as the new North Star. Management theorists have sanctified capitalism in much the same way that clergymen of yore sanctified feudalism. Business schools are cathedrals of capitalism. Consultants are its traveling friars. Just as the clergy in the days of feudalism spoke in Latin to give their words an air of authority, the myrmidons of capitalism speak in a similarly indecipherable mumbo-jumbo. To this day, a Reformation—akin to Martin Luther's of 1517—has been delayed in arrival. Actually, reducing the present to capitalism is somewhat misleading since today's status quo represents a complex mélange of vestiges of slavery—the still exploited African population in the United States and elsewhere—capitalism, and the feudalism from which it emerged."

This new religion of capitalism and profit, which saw money-worshippers catering to the whims of the worldwide market system—as they do to this day—speaks to Yeshua's words in Matthew 6:24:

> 24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve Elohim and money."

When we get to Revelation 18, which depicts the fall of Babylon and the end of the worldwide beast system which allowed her to live luxuriously, we see that the judgment meted out by Yah is largely aimed at the financial markets. These markets are fueled by merchants of the world, whose trade is disrupted, down to the efforts of the craftsman. Even mills are silenced, demonstrating the completeness of the demise of capitalism. And this corrupt financial system isn't going to be replaced by another one, as part of a feared secular new world order; it will be replaced by Yah's government and economy, as prophesied.

The seventeenth century, therefore, witnessed the rise of capitalism, which exists as the world's most popular "religion" today, and others, beside Gerald Horne, are starting to realize that fact. The oldest continuously published weekly magazine in the United States, *the Nation*, had this to say of one such person:

> "Eugene McCarraher's new book, *The Enchantments of Mammon: How Capitalism*

> *Became the Religion of Modernity*, offers a different rendering of our modern age—one in which the mysteries and sacraments of religion were transferred to the way we perceive market forces and economic development. The new world that capitalism created, McCarraher argues, is characterized not by disenchantment but by a 'migration of the [set apart]' to the realm of production and consumption, profit and price, trade and economic tribulation. Capitalism, in other words, is the new religion, a system full of enchanted superstitions and unfounded beliefs and beholden to its own clerisy of economists and managers, its own iconography of advertising and public relations, and its own political theology—a view of history and politics that is premised on the inevitability of the capitalist system spreading across the world."

The intimate relationship between capitalism and slavery was keenly examined by two editors, Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman. Their book, *Slavery's Capitalism*, reveals that slavery, which was America's main engine for growth, was foundational to our modern economic system. In other words, absent the brutal period of enslaved Israelites, the world we live in today would not exist. The book actually opens with the following:

> "During the eighty years between the American Revolution and the Civil War, slavery was indispensable to the economic development of the United States. Such a claim is at once self-evidently true and empirically obscure. A scholarly revolution over the past two decades, which brought mainstream historical accounts into line with long-standing positions in Africana and Black Studies, has recognized slavery as the foundational American institution, organizing the nation's politics, legal structures, and cultural practices with remarkable power to determine the life chances of those moving through society as black or white. An outpouring of scholarship on nineteenth-century public health, criminal justice, foreign policy, popular culture, and patterns of everyday life leaves little doubt that the new United States was a 'slaveholding republic.' In comparison, only a small segment of recent scholarship has grappled with the economic impact of slavery."

Put another way, it was a widely accepted fact that slavery was an American institution which shaped its politics, laws, and culture, based largely on racial identity. But not until very recently has the impact of slavery included the formation of the modern economy.

> "Only in the past several years has scholarship on finance, accounting, management, and technology allowed us to understand American economic development as 'slavery's capitalism.' And only now is there enough momentum to leverage some basic facts—that slave-grown cotton was the most valuable export made in America, that the capital stored in slaves exceeded the combined value of all the nation's railroads and factories, that foreign investment underwrote the expansion of plantation lands in Louisiana and Mississippi, that the highest concentration of steam power in the United States was to be found along the Mississippi rather than on the Merrimack—into a fundamental rethinking of American history itself."

In our LKP Documentary, *Salt of the Earth*, I stated: "Like salt, Hebrew Israelites have long been the backbone of many economies, especially during slavery, where we were bought and

sold, and produced to fuel economic growth as much as salt." That is no exaggeration. Israelites were a collective commodity in those slaveholding days, even a kind of currency if you will. In America, the old historic narrative would lead many to believe that there was a sharp North-South divide that saw the North shunning the South over slavery and having nothing to do with the peddling of human flesh.

New York City, infamous for being an important component of the triangle trade, dug its heels into flesh-peddling in 1626, when 11 souls captured in West Africa were brought to New Amsterdam against their will in heavy irons and forced to clear land, construct roads and unload ships. The lot at 74 Wall Street, nestled between Water and Pearl Streets, is now home to a towering condominium, but it was once a key auction block. Slave ships used to dock in the East River, while slaves were sold in an open-air market on the corner of Wall and Pearl Streets. And New York became a port city for the trade of Southern agricultural goods derived from slave labor that were thereafter handsomely packaged and shipped throughout the world. In fact, slave capital financed the creation of the New York Stock Exchange, currently the world's largest stock exchange in terms of market capitalization, which amounts to tens of trillions of dollars, all told.

Other northern states benefitted from the slave trade as well, particularly as concerns the slave-labor products that flowed north. Of this, Beckert and Rockman write:

> "Advocates of national economic development presumed the reciprocal relationship of the slaveholding and nonslaveholding states, as well as the mutual interests of the slaveholder, manufacturer, and merchant. 'On the White mountains of New Hampshire we find the sugar of Louisiana, and in the plains beyond the Mississippi the cotton cloths of Rhode Island are domesticated,' explained the famed editor Hezekiah Niles in 1827. Abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison recognized the North as a 'partner in iniquity' and credited the Panic of 1837 with delivering a deserved ruin to those New York City mercantile firms engaged in commerce with the South. In turn, southern nationalists lambasted northern sanctimoniousness. 'Many of the abolitionists of the present day affect to have such tender consciences, and to feel such abhorrence of slavery, that they declare they will not wear the cotton of the South, because it has been cultivated by slaves,' observed the Baltimore minister Alexander McCaine, 'yet, these extremely sensitive, and preeminently holy characters, feel no qualms of conscience, to sell Southern planters their boots and shoes, their negro cloth, and all the *et cetera* that make up a cargo of *Yankee notions*, and put the money, arising from the labour of slaves, in their pockets.' "

While the Virginia colony was among the first to exploit Israelites for slave labor, it was not the first American colony to legally sanction the cruel servitude. The Massachusetts Bay Colony holds that distinction, when in 1641 it published the document the Body of Liberties, wherein "lawful captives taken in just wars, and such strangers as willingly sell themselves are sold to us." As seen in chapter 24 of this book, war had been the going pretext for enslavement since the infamous papal bull that gave the Portuguese the go-ahead to round up the descendants of Jacob from Africa's west coast.

Protestant Boston, led by its clergy, would place profits above duty to the church by becoming a leading port in the slave trade, proving that the North aided in creating the thriving

institution. In fact, all of New England saw great profits from slavery up until the American War for Independence. The year prior to the American Revolution, it has been learned that 5,000 souls had been enslaved in Connecticut—a paltry number compared to South Carolina or Virginia to be sure, but we're talking about the North here. In the Preface of the book *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery*, the authors wrote:

> "[T]he number shocked us. How could we not know this? How could we not know, for example, that in 1790 most prosperous merchants in Connecticut owned at least one slave, as did 50 percent of the ministers? The federal census clearly showed this."

The authors of *Complicity* also expressed that slaves in Connecticut lived on large farms that equaled the size of those in the South, and could also be considered plantations. In effect, their book clearly shows how the North helped create, strengthen, and prolong slavery in America, contrary to popular belief. The institution of slavery was fundamental to the growth of capitalism. And capitalism, it should be known, first flowered in Europe, under the Roman Catholic Church. Historian Randall Collins has confirmed this in his book *Weberian Sociological Theory*, which asserts that capitalism began during the High Middle Ages between 1050 – 1300 CE (which is a period we covered in chapter 21), and "at its heart was the organization of the Catholic Church itself."

The ecclesiastical portion of the church, with its administrative functions and papal bureaucracy, was the forerunner of the capitalism we see today, which includes the monastic orders. Even the church's canon law, Collins argues, acted as a model for capitalism. Collins writes:

> "The rationalized capitalism that emerged was, above all, that of the dynamic monastic movements, and the appropriately regulatory bureaucratic state that went along with it was not the secular states but the papacy in the period when it made a bid for theocratic power over all of Christendom…. [T]he institutional preconditions for capitalism were developed in medieval Europe, not so much in the wider society as in one specialized part of it, the church."

We can look at it another way. Power in those days was held in land, and the Catholic Church alone owned roughly a third of all the land on the European continent. In order to administer so vast a territory, canon law was rolled out across multiple jurisdictions within the empire, including European nations, individual baronies, bishoprics, various religious orders, chartered cities, and it even extended to guilds, confraternities, merchants, entrepreneurs, traders, and so on. The church oversaw local and regional affairs as well, having influence over jurists, arbitrators, negotiators, and judges. And binding all of this together was one language: canon law Latin.

When considering the ecclesiastical offices, clerical celibacy itself informed capitalism, given its clear distinction between the office and person of an individual. Family and property were no longer tied to one another either, unlike the feudal days of old, which relied on strategic marriages as well.

Monastic orders like the Cistercians—a strict branch of the Benedictines—broke away from feudalism as a collective and were early entrepreneurs. They followed a form of rational cost

accounting, which they mastered, and invested profits back into other ventures. They moved capital around from venue to venue and cut losses where they could, while pursuing possible new opportunities. They had a virtual monopoly over iron production in central France and wool production in England. And as Catholics, “They had,” as Randall Collins writes, “the Protestant ethic without Protestantism.”

This was all foundational to modern capitalism. But speaking of Protestantism, when we arrive at the new world, and the institution of slavery, it was Protestants who effectively took capitalism to new heights after breaking away from the mother church. Remember that these very Protestants were former Christians who hailed from various European nations, being essentially part of the beast with ten horns upon whom the prostitute church sat (see Revelation 17:3). Reaching down to verse 16, we see that the same beast, along with its ten horns, have a change of heart concerning their rider.

> 16 “And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire.”
>
> —Revelation 17:16

This reeks of the Protestant Reformation. Following that prophetic event, and the subsequent colonial enterprises that accommodated Protestant migration, Protestant America (made up primarily of former Europeans) declared independence and completely broke with Europe, which led to the American Revolutionary War. The result was a new nation that was patterned after those in ancient Europe, particularly Greece and Rome, and whose religion was akin to Roman Catholicism, being its direct offshoot. In a way, it was like a second beast power had emerged.

Capitalism grew out of slavery, and like the ancient Israelites, who “built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses”—according to Exodus 1:11—their descendants also built many historic structures and the American economy itself. Taking a page from the Egyptian playbook, American plantation owners were just as cruel to the Israelites of their day, in that “they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens” (also verse 11). In detailing the harsh plight of the ancient Israelites, verses 13 and 14 of Exodus 1 give us a glimpse into the fate of those who would survive the Middle Passage.

> 13 “So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves 14 and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.”

Twice a phrase is mentioned: “they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves,” as though it would have a repeat history. And so it did, both in the physical Egypt as well as the spiritual Egypt that is America. Telling too is the growth of the ancient Israelites, whose numbers increased despite their great burden and oppression. One would think that such intolerable conditions would diminish their numbers.

> “But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad.”
>
> —Exodus 1:12

This is true of those who were forcefully taken from the African continent as well. We currently fill the entire world, spread abroad like scattered seeds of Jacob. The ancient Egyptians bore witness to that miraculous increase of souls, for which “the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.” Just as modern Gentile oppressors are in dread of their descendants, who seem to increase on a yearly basis despite their modern burdens.

While the people of the world are currently wrapped in the worship of capitalism, Yah is right now readying his final judgment against this beast system, which will ultimately end the rule of Babylon and free his beloved people. As written in Exodus 7:16, Yah is still pleading to the nations of this world:

16 “Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness.”

CHAPTER 31

AWAKENINGS AND DISAPPOINTMENT

CHRISTIANITY FLOURISHED IN EUROPE for hundreds of years, becoming the de facto religion of peasant and noble alike, with the state itself maintaining Christian laws. Church and state were fused in an age-old union that saw corrupt popes steering moral affairs (and sometimes political ones) while Christian emperors handled secular business (and at times interfered in ecclesiastical matters). This often happy arrangement was disrupted by the Protestant Reformation, which was a great upheaval to longstanding Christian traditions as well as affairs of state. In the place of Catholic order, princes rose up in various regions and attempted to fuse the state of their given nation to new Protestant churches. New laws supported and empowered these churches, some of which became oppressive by foisting new religious obligations on their members.

When the way was opened to the new world, the prospect of new opportunities drew Protestants there in their thousands. A new Christian mode was developed in these new lands, but in time, attempts at establishing a central church on the order of the old model failed. Too many varying beliefs and distinct nationalities were present in the colonies to justify one established church. A case in point of this disparity would be New York, particularly the banks of the Hudson River, which, in 1646 was home to a host of people speaking no less than 18 different languages. All that these varying Christian groups had in common was their innate desire to obtain religious liberty and be allowed to freely proclaim their personal Christian viewpoint. But each Christian group was shoulder to shoulder with another that held a different belief. This meant that each had to learn to cooperate with and tolerate the other.

What is also crucial about this time is that Christianity on a whole existed without the support of any established state. No king or prince with their army of knights, warriors, or hired mercenaries were there to protect Christians in America. The various denominations, which had no states forcing their particular religious views on the public, were now on their own. This meant evangelists had to volunteer to go out and win converts to their church through sheer persuasion, and they had to foot their own bills since there was also no state budget allotted to the cause.

In this period, what is known as the first Great Awakening occurred.

> “What historians call ‘the first Great Awakening’ can best be described as a revitalization of religious piety that swept through the American colonies between the 1730s and the 1770s.”

Writes Professor Christine Leigh Heyrman for the National Humanities Center.

> “That revival was part of a much broader movement, an evangelical upsurge taking

> place simultaneously on the other side of the Atlantic, most notably in England, Scotland, and Germany. In all these Protestant cultures during the middle decades of the eighteenth century, a new Age of Faith rose to counter the currents of the Age of Enlightenment, to reaffirm the view that being truly religious meant trusting the heart rather than the head, prizing feeling more than thinking, and relying on biblical revelation rather than human reason."

While Christianity permeated the colonies in various forms, and only church members could hold any office, which wasn't subject to elections derived from voting, many remained unconverted to the religion and were considered destitute of faith. All such persons were deemed worthy of the fires of hell—hell itself being another misinterpretation of the Messianic Writings by Christians of the day.

The Great Awakening had its beginnings in America among Presbyterians in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. It was among them—and in those colonies—that early religious revivals were initiated in the 1730s, chiefly in the form of fiery sermons given by clergymen of the Tennent family, who were Scots-Irish immigrants. Much like wildfire, the religious fervor spread to the Puritans—or Congregationalists—and Baptists of New England.

> "By the 1740s, the clergymen of these churches were conducting revivals throughout that region, using the same strategy that had contributed to the success of the Tennents."

Writes Professor Heyrman.

> "In emotionally charged sermons, all the more powerful because they were delivered extemporaneously, preachers like Jonathan Edwards evoked vivid, terrifying images of the utter corruption of human nature and the terrors awaiting the unrepentant in hell."

This was, let's say, the first foray into fire and brimstone preaching, which would become wildly popular in future revivals. The first Great Awakening in America, meanwhile, continued to pick up steam with the entrance of George Whitefield, an ordained minister in the Church of England. Molly Worthen, an associate professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, says of Whitefield:

> "He had a charisma that electrified his listeners and he capitalized on that. He relied on public opinion, not the church hierarchy to make him a celebrity. He developed a sophisticated ad campaign, and when he planned to preach in a town, his advance men would be there ahead of time drumming up interest. More important, his revivals centered on the individual experience of the new birth. Whitefield's tactic was not to convince you to obey church authorities, but to persuade you that if you, the individual, would simply recognize your sins, and open yourself up to grace, you could be saved. He put aside that thorny problem of predestination. Wherever he went, he was controversial. Now he was not a social radical; his message was not pro-democracy or overtly political. He endorsed slavery, probably because he wanted to be able to preach in the south."

Because of Whitefield and others, the preaching did extend well into the American South, where Separate Baptists began to emerge. Fear was used to draw tens of thousands to Christianity. Whitefield soon allied with John Wesley, a prominent English theologian and evangelist, in an attempt to reform the Church of England, but this resulted in a revival movement within the church that was led primarily by Wesley. It was known as methodism, and is the foundation for the Methodist church. So, the Methodist denomination is a branch of the Anglican Church, which itself is a direct offshoot of Catholicism, as seen in chapter 28 of this book. But all Christian denominations—each and every one of them—trace their roots back to Catholicism, as prophesied.

John Wesley also disagreed with Martin Luther and John Calvin on the subject of Christian conversion. While he believed in what theologians called justification by faith, he did not believe in predestination. He believed and taught that any sinner could receive the grace of Elohim, not just the elect. But Wesley put a new Methodist spin on what theologians called sanctification, and made it his own.

> "After conversion, he taught that a born-again Christian experiences a process called sanctification."

Says Professor Worthen.

> "This gradually brings them to a state of 'Christian perfection,' and their sinful urges are suppressed. Calvin and the Puritans believed in a sanctification process too, but the emphasis on 'Christian perfection' was distinctly Methodist. Wesley even said that in some people this sanctification could be almost instantaneous. And some of his followers came to believe that this so-called 'second blessing' could make you perfectly holy and totally eradicate any trace of original sin."

That said, a widespread revival along the lines of the first Great Awakening was possible in part because Protestant Christianity was not subject to the control of any government, and this led to a mutual co-existence between various denominations that created something on the order of a common faith. This was something that had not been seen before in the splintered, Protestant arm of the movement. Professor Worthen sums it up wonderfully in stating:

> "The eighteenth century was the period when Puritanism, Scots Presbyterianism, and other traditions merged into a common religious culture that we can call American evangelicalism. Something new and different happened here. Revival movements placed a new stress on individual connection with the divine. They questioned the old established state church model, and they involved a jostling of multiple groups in a new pluralistic context."

On the strength of the success of the first Great Awakening, a second swept the United States between the 1790s and 1830s. The second Great Awakening in effect transformed the country's religious landscape, and Christianity itself was altered, no longer resembling the lackluster version handed down from the papal past. This shift is evident in the statistics left to us from the era. During the start of the American Revolution, Congregationalists—who were the eighteenth-century descendants of the Puritan churches—along with Anglicans (who later renamed

themselves Episcopalians), and Quakers were essentially the largest denominations. However, by 1800, the Methodists and Baptists, became the fastest-growing denominations in America.

The second Great Awakening built on the foundation of the one that preceded it, and Protestants, who could all be considered evangelicals at the time, enjoyed something close to an empire, in that they dominated many cultural institutions in the U.S., and even founded schools like Brown University and Dartmouth College. Indeed, evangelicals gained a degree of political power as well, but some of their reform efforts split the movement, such as the abolition of slavery, which spawned the Southern Baptist Convention, since Baptists in the South were against abolition and black civil rights. At any rate, Christianity seemed to reach its full height in America during this period.

> "The second Great Awakening had huge consequences for Christianity in the West, especially in the young American Republic."

Says Professor Worthen.

> "During the Revolutionary era, the American colonies were a minister's worst nightmare; only a tiny minority of Americans went to church. It's during the second Great Awakening that America really became Christian."

It was in this period that church planting expanded across the western American frontier, with Baptists leading the way. In fact, the first generation of black leaders, or ministers, came out of the revival movement. The first black Baptist churches in South Carolina and Georgia were built during the height of the Revolution. And while the British still occupied Charleston and Savannah, black Baptists were springing up in the hundreds—sensational numbers would come after the Civil War, and emancipation, as we mentioned in chapter 29 of this book. During the second Great Awakening, leaders of new Christian denominations also emerged, leading to branches of the Babylonian arm that include the Mormons, Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Pentecostal movement.

While America was opening up and the country expanded westward, many Christians flooded west in search of opportunity on those new frontiers. When Joseph Smith established the LDS church, many of his followers flocked west in response to his purported revelations, and following his death, thousands more migrated to the Rocky Mountains to populate his proposed Zion on Earth.

Joseph Smith was born in Vermont in 1805, during the second Great Awakening. The Smiths were a hardscrabble farming family that was frequently on the move during his youth. Following major crop failures in 1816, the Smiths moved to western New York in search of better prospects. Joseph Smith, at the time, was swept up in the religious fervor that was prevalent at camp meetings, where Methodist and Baptist pastors delivered their most sensational fire and brimstone sermons. Wherever the people were, be it in the most remote regions, there Methodist preachers and Baptist ministers descended, and both movements grew tremendously as a result. Western New York was one locale these preachers frequented. According to the Joseph Smith Papers:

> "Western New York was particularly noted for revivalism and acquired a reputation as the 'burned-over district' because the fires of revivalism and social activism had

swept through so often."

Presbyterian ministers tried to keep up, and it was amidst the religious jostling of these groups that Joseph Smith first entered the Christian arena at age twelve, when he developed an interest in such matters. His entire family had been swept into the revival movement, and both his parents and grandparents allegedly had visions and dreams they claimed were from the Most High. Smith, who practiced Christian folk magic—which was popular at the time—eventually started having strange visions of his own. While Smith seemed to lean more toward Methodism, he was not entirely sold on any of the Christian movements operating in his day. Besides Christian folk magic, however, Smith added other things to his religious background, all of which informed his particular theology.

> "And yes, Joseph Smith, the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was a Freemason."

Admits the LDS church itself in an official video release.

> "Joseph Smith's brother Hiram was also a mason, and a member of a lodge in Palmyra, New York. And their father, Joseph Smith, Sr., was also known to be a Master Mason in Canandaigua, New York as early as 1818. While prophet and president of the church, Joseph joined the Masonic lodge in Nauvoo, Illinois on March, 15, 1842, rising to the level of Master Mason just a day later under the recognized authority of the Grand Master of Illinois. Masonry wasn't new to the thousands of Latter-day Saint converts already living in and around Nauvoo at the time. Although new to the faith, some members of the church, even those within the ranks of church leadership, were already masons. Eventually, over 1,500 members of the church were listed as Freemasons in Nauvoo alone, more than in all the rest of Illinois."

They try to justify this by further stating:

> "In towns across early America, many elected officials were masons: President George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and many signers of the Declaration of Independence were also masons."

Seeing it was founded during the period of slavery, the LDS church and its many members were a racist and bigoted bunch, and still are to some degree according to several sources. Brigham Young, who took over leadership of the LDS church and founded Salt Lake City, is said to have viewed slaves, the descendants of Jacob—who are from the line of Shem—as being under the curse of Ham. According to the book *Race and the Making of the Mormon People* by Max Perry Mueller, Young was a firm supporter of slavery and believed that blacks "lacked the right to self-rule." Mueller further wrote that "Young called on the legislature to enact a bill that would codify in the law books the truth already written in the Bible: '[African] slaves serve their masters' in perpetuity."

Mueller, in an interview with *The Atlantic*, also said as follows:

> "Whatever you want to say about the origins of the Book of Mormon, it fits its time

> period really well. It's very American. It tells a story of racial schism and how it came to be, dividing the world into a hierarchy of races, and that's a standard American story—especially the idea that people born to a so-called darker-skinned race could not be redeemed."

William Miller was another prominent religious leader who emerged from the Great Awakenings. Like many others in his day, Miller was a farmer, but he also served as deputy chief and justice of the peace, which demonstrates how respected he was in his local community. He fought alongside the 30th Infantry during the War of 1812, where he held the rank of captain, and he was eventually drawn to the Scriptures, which he began to study in great detail. Several years passed and, in 1831, Miller, then a Baptist lay preacher, started preaching at camp meetings, claiming that everyone had a little over a decade left before the Messiah would return a second time, between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844, at which point the world would end. This Miller based on a false reading of Daniel 8:13 – 14, which speaks of a temple cleansing he believed referred to the earth being cleansed by a consuming fire. The word "*cleansed*" in the KJV is actually a mistranslation of *wanisdaq*, since its root, word H6663, refers to "*being in the right*," in the sense of "*being justified*."

In 1833, Miller started to publish his views in the form of a pamphlet. In 1836, a book of lectures followed. Two popular publications became the driving forces of the movement: *The Signs of the Times* and *The Midnight Cry*. Miller himself estimated that between 50,000 and 100,000 people believed his report, but many more probably expected the end to come when he proposed it would. Expectations were raised after a comet was sighted one night in March 1843. But Alas, the proposed time came and went and Miller was forced to admit his error. Though he left the movement he had started, all was not lost … yet. One of Miller's followers, Simon Snow, proposed a new date for the Second Coming, October 22, 1844, based on an interpretative tweak. This was called the Second Advent or the Great Anticipation.

When the Messiah did not return on the new date, the failed event was renamed the Great Disappointment. Despite the Second Advent not coming to pass, William Miller made his mark by introducing new doctrines to the Christian movement; doctrines that were largely adopted by his followers, who convened the next year at the Mutual Conference of Adventists to hash out problematic details in his overall theology. This led to the formation of the Evangelical Adventists, which was the foundation on which all modern Adventist churches were established. Among those who attended the conference were Joseph Bates, a revivalist minister, and James White and his wife Ellen White, who learned from Bates that the Seventh-day Sabbath was still valid according to Scripture.

Ellen White's great grandson, Charles White, says of this period:

> "Following the disappointment, they were part of that company that banded together … and Ellen White was given a vision…."

Not unlike Joseph Smith. And that vision involved the "Advent people," as Ellen White called them, who were walking along a narrow path….

> "… with a light behind them which represented what had happened to them in the past as having value and importance…."

Meaning that the Great Disappointment should be looked at another way. And so the early Advent believers did. Bates and the Whites agreed with Miller's date for the temple cleansing, only they reestablished a basis for the date, saying that it was not the earth that was to be cleansed by a Second Coming of the Messiah, but the temple in heaven was being cleansed in an unseen act that involved an investigative judgment of mankind. After borrowing many of Miller's teachings, and drawing many conclusions that he first drew, the largest proponent of the Advent believers adopted the Seventh-day as their day of worship, and, continuing in the spirit of William Miller, formed the Seventh-day Adventist church in 1863, with Ellen White as its prophet. Charles White goes on to say that, all told:

> "Ellen White wrote over a hundred thousand pages … by hand—twenty-five million words—mostly with a quill pen. She wrote more books in more languages, circulated further than any other woman in history."

That said, it has long come to light that—according to ex-Adventist, Walter T. Rea, a former pastor and author—between 80 and 90% of those prolific writings of White's were plagiarized. Research for his book *The White Lie* reveals that White borrowed from about 75 books of other religious authors to write her own material.

Not all Adventist movements accepted Ellen White as their prophet. One group, which later became the Evangelical Adventist Church, ceased to exist by 1916, but two groups that later became the Advent Christian Church, exist to this day as a first-day denomination. Another group calling itself the Church of God (Seventh Day) split off from those who held to Ellen White, but two other groups split off again, one of which became the Worldwide Church of God, headed by the infamous Herbert Armstrong. Armstrong went so far as to sanction the Levitical feast days in addition to the Sabbath, but many of his other views were controversial and he was suspected of misappropriating church funds. For making predictions that never came to pass and holding to questionable doctrines, Armstrong's writings were withdrawn from print by his own church (now known as Grace Communion International) and he was labeled a false prophet and heretic.

The second major church to emerge from the Millerite movement was the International Bible Students Association, which not only borrowed heavily from Miller, but from Adventists as well. It was founded by Pastor Charles Taze Russell in 1872, and after splitting into various groups following a series of internal controversies, the most well-known among them has come down to us as the Jehovah's Witnesses. The movement is known for its many false predictions of the Second Coming and other events, which failed in the years: 1878, 1881, 1914, 1918, 1925, and 1975. Various problems have since plagued the organization, from racial discrimination to rampant child abuse, which the JW elders—according a former elder—consider a sin but not necessarily a crime, thus these matters are kept as quiet as possible.

But in short, the so-called Great Awakenings spawned many of the various denominations we see today, all of which are the polluted offspring of the mother harlot, Roman Catholicism, by way of other Protestant churches. The same is true of one of their most recent and popular entries, Pentecostalism, the charismatic religious movement that constitute denominations that sprang from the early Methodist and Baptist Holiness churches. Characterized by emotional religious expressionism, enthusiastic signing, spontaneous testimonies, and spirited sermons, Pentecostals regard Spirit baptism perhaps highest of all, signified of course by their misapplied

“speaking in tongues.” They completely miss the point of Acts 2, which details Israelites who convened in one place but spoke different languages, in which case the Spirit of Yah allowed Peter to be heard in the languages they each understood, thus making his message discernable to all. This was a miracle of Yah. Pentecostals twist this to their detriment, speaking indiscernible gibberish as a sign of receiving or being filled with the Ruach.

While they claim to trace their roots to the Israelite emissaries of the first century, Pentecostals emerged during the Great Awakenings. The contemporary Pentecostal movement, however, with its emphasis on conversion, speaking in tongues, faith healing, and other beliefs, gained a foothold in the early twentieth century at a small religious school in Topeka, Kansas known as the Bethel Bible College. There, Charles Fox Parham—who was only one of many ministers fanning the flames of the contemporary Holiness movement—encouraged his students to undergo an Acts 2 experience by engaging in fasting and rigorous Scripture study.

On January 1, 1901, one of his students, Agnes Oznam, was the first to utter the now well-known glossolalia heard in Pentecostal churches. Other students were soon speaking nonsensical gibberish as well, and Parham chalked this up to a sign of the students having received the Spirit. He engaged in supposed faith healing shortly thereafter and, with these events, the flame of modern Pentecostalism was sparked. William Seymour, a holiness pastor and leader of the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission, continued the trend. He was the man behind the Azusa Street revival that started in 1906. Seymour had been exposed to Parham’s teachings at a Houston Bible school and, continuing in his footsteps, he encouraged his congregants to practice speaking in tongues. Before long, rich and poor, white, black, Latino, and even preachers of other languishing ministries embraced the Pentecostal conversion experience.

After a time, a host of new Pentecostal church members were awaiting the latter rain prophesied by the Prophet Joel in the form of a full outpouring of the Spirit in preparation for the final judgment. It never came. Thus, history’s pages were filled with yet another false prophet entry, together with another leavened Christian movement. And so it shall be until the ultimate collapse of Babylon.

CHAPTER 32

THE CALLING OUT PROCESS

CHRISTIANITY EMERGED AMIDST EUROPEAN POWERS, and was therefore Eurocentric in its origin and throughout its formative years. That Eurocentric nature is even evident in the rise of America and other world powers, but this is also according to prophecy. While Christianity enjoyed its greatest European height during the most dominant years of papal supremacy, and it spread like a mysterious plague during the Great Awakenings, its power waned considerably in the twentieth century, being eclipsed by the new unofficial religion called *Capitalism*.

Capitalism, it must be stated, reigns over the entire earth, making merchandise of nearly every conceivable thing, which it then incorporates into its all-consuming structure. Even politics is subject to capitalism—you need only look to Wall Street and the many deep-pocketed lobbyists who descend on Washington, D.C. to note that. But in order to see how this is all according to prophecy, even being fulfilled according to a specific timeline, you would have to apply prophetic symbols to their appropriate existing counterparts. Those who believe that the United States is Babylon, for instance—and use various analogies to prove that out—will not see the true prophetic purpose of America.

Babylon is essentially a "beast rider," not having enough power in and of herself to be considered a beast. She manipulates and influences beast powers. America, on the other hand, is large enough and powerful enough to exist as a beast, however, and does not ride something more powerful than itself. The rules of this great dynamic are carefully laid out in the books of Daniel and Revelation, which both state that beasts are in fact kingdoms, and their horns, kings.

> 2 "Daniel declared, 'I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. 3 And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.' " 19 "Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest…." 23 "Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms…'"
>
> —Daniel 7:2, 3, 19, 23

> 1 "And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. 2 … And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority."
>
> —Revelation 13:1 – 2

Unlike the harlot, Babylon, this beast from the sea is endowed with power from the dragon, who we know from Revelation chapter 12, is the devil:

> 9 "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world."
>
> —Revelation 12:9

The first beast of Revelation 13 arises from the sea because it emerges at a time when a multiplicity of peoples, speaking various languages, exist within burgeoning nations. This is none other than Europe, where Rome emerged as the dominant power prior to being overtaken by a spate of barbarian tribes. These various nations and peoples are represented as a sea, or waters. When the papacy began to manipulate European kings and steer the fate of nations from behind the scenes, this was the prostitute sitting on those waters, as pictured in the 17th chapter of Revelation:

> 15 "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages."
>
> —Revelation 17:15

But a second beast, which is mentioned in the very same chapter, arises not from the sea, but from the earth, signifying an absence of the complex dynamic of nation-states, feudal laws, a state religion, sophisticated economic trade between peoples, and other societal elements present in Europe.

> 11 "Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth."
>
> —Revelation 13:11

Wherever this beast emerged, none of that was present. That cannot be said of the African continent, which was already inhabited by diverse peoples, various tribal nations, and filled with many languages. Asia too must be counted out for the same reasons. In fact, the only puzzle piece that fits are the lands that were inhabited solely by Native Americans, who had not created the kinds of complex and diverse societies seen elsewhere in the world. Other areas of the world could not be conquered in the way they were, and Europeans gazed on their holdings like virgin earth, or virgin territory. In his book, *American Architectural History*, author Keith L. Eggener writes:

> "The first European settlers in what is now the US saw the American landscape as virgin territory, raw and undeveloped. They brought with them tools and memories, patterns and conventions, which they used to shape their new homes…. Never again would the American continent seem so utterly and frighteningly void of design as it did to these first settlers, so in need of ordering systems for its habitation and successful exploitation."

And, as a second witness, Chris Gosden writes in his book *Archaeology and Colonialism*:

> "Virginia was a double play on words. It contained a homage to the Virgin Queen on the part of Raleigh, but it also represented virgin territory for Europeans to acquire and use."

The interesting thing is, the second beast of Revelation 13 is only referred to as the second beast, or "another beast" in this chapter. In subsequent chapters, it is referred to as something else entirely, and I have not heard anyone address this important shift directly, though it is of extreme prophetic importance.

A clue as to what it was called was a subject of our previous chapter. Now, bear in mind, this takes spiritual discernment, as it is not readily apparent to most. Remember, there are two beasts mentioned in Revelation 13, but following that chapter, only the first beast is referred to by the term "beast." This is the case in verses like Revelation 14:11 and 15:2, which are in fact referring to the first beast of Revelation 13, whom the second beast forces the whole world to worship, according to Revelation 13:12. Now, to learn what the primary role of the second beast is, which is revealed in the title it is given in other chapters, you have to understand the following:

> 13 "It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, 14 and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth…."
>
> —Revelation 13:13 – 14

Consider the phrase, "It performs great signs, making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people." What could this be referencing? The answer is found in 1 Kings 18. The full story is told in verses 20 to 40, but in summary, a contest of sorts was arranged at Mount Carmel, between King Ahab's prophets—the prophets of Baal and Asherah—and Elijah, the prophet of Yah. To finally prove who was the true prophet and who were the false, Elijah ordered that two bulls be slain, cut in pieces, and laid on wood piles with no fire kindled. This was to be special burnt offerings, with the idea that the fire that would consume either sacrifice would come from Yah, directly from heaven, which would identify the true prophet.

Ahab's prophets went first, calling on the name of Baal from morning to noon, but there was no answer. In the end, they cut themselves with swords and lances until blood gushed, according to their custom. Elijah's turn came, and he gathered the people around him and went through the motions of preparing his sacrifice. Finally, he prayed to Yah saying: "let it be known this day that you are Elohim in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word." The payoff comes in verse 38:

> 38 "Then the fire of Yah fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."
>
> —1 Kings 18:38

To add to this equation, Yeshua, in revealing the signs of the times to his disciples, said:

> 24 "For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

—Matthew 24:24

These passages are directly related to Revelation 13:13, and are in fact clues that point to the fulfillment of John's prophecy. The second beast power "performed great signs," which is the exact phrasing Yeshua used in describing a distinct group of people who would emerge to lead many astray. By those signs, the second beast was able to "deceive those who dwell on the earth," we are told.

Some may be looking for literal fulfillments of this prophecy, and while there are individuals who literally perform signs and wonders and deceive people, the prophecy concerning this second beast is largely symbolic, given the clues that point to it. The fact that the second beast calls down fire directs our attention to a specific portion of Scripture, which we already covered. This refers to Elijah, who was a prophet. So, all we are being told in Revelation 13:13 is that the second beast is in some way a prophet. The fire-from-heaven phrasing is used as an identifying marker. The rest of verse 13 and 14 give us additional information. This is a false prophet we're dealing with, as its actions fit the very description Yeshua himself gave. And this is exactly why the second beast is referred to as just that in subsequent chapters of Revelation, the first of which is this one:

> 13 And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.
>
> —Revelation 16:13

The second beast—the false prophet in question—rises out of the earth, unlike the first beast. Following the Protestant Reformation, Europeans migrated to the new world, peopling the colonies and infusing them primarily with their borrowed religion, which was Catholicism 2.0. You see, European Catholics invented the thing that is called Christianity. And it was legalized chiefly by European kings like Constantine. History bears that out. Of course, the prostitute who rides that beast power stole the concept from the emissaries and falsely reinterpreted it, but it is essentially a Catholic concept. American Protestantism, on the other hand, is Catholicism with brighter colors and a variety of styles to choose from. It is a repackaging in other words, or the second beast causing the world to worship the first beast by embracing Protestant Christianity. And this it does by way of deception, or false prophecy. This is clear, judging from the events in our previous chapter.

For Christians, heaven is the place where the dead go immediately upon death; and there is no law since everyone is saved by grace; there is a pre-tribulation rapture from which the righteous will be spared; and hell is an eternally burning place, and so many other misconceptions. But as to that last one, let's pursue it further, since it ties directly into our previous chapter, as well as Revelation 13.

It is important to remember that beasts in Scripture represent nations, usually large, powerful ones that control or greatly influence other nations. But the general rule is, in order to qualify as a beast, you have to also control the spiritual fate of citizens within your territorial boundaries, which must include Yah's chosen people: True Israel. This was the case with ancient Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, the Holy Roman Empire, etc. We are told in Revelation 13:14 that the second beast, which rises out of the earth—the false prophet—"it deceives those

who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived."

So, the second beast orders the people to make an image to the first beast. This is interesting language, and people tend to interpret it in all manner of ways. In short, the first chapter of the book of Genesis has Yah saying:

> 26 "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."
>
> —Genesis 1:26

The result was Adam, who was a physical manifestation of the Father and his Son. Then in the fifth chapter of that book we are told:

> 3 "When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth."
>
> —Genesis 5:3

Having something formed in your image, after your likeness, is simply referring to a close copy, or replica. It is safe to say that Adam did not look exactly like the Father, nor did Seth look exactly like Adam, but they were close enough to the original. In considering the second beast of Revelation 13, who orders people to make an image to the first beast, we have to consider what the first beast was like. Heading back to Revelation 13, the first few verses give us a description of the first beast. It has horns and heads and crowns, which signifies rulers and sovereign power. Interestingly, the next description is the appearance, which was like a leopard and bear and lion. If you head over to Daniel chapter 7 and read Daniel's vision of four beasts, you'll see the same animal representations. This means that elements of Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece would be absorbed into the government, culture, economy, societal makeup, and religion of the next ruling power: Rome and its offshoots. The first beast also spoke blasphemies, yet it received worship. Worship is actually a big deal with this beast, seeing it is mentioned several times. This beast also goes out to make war with Yah's set apart ones and succeeds in conquering them. (Read chapters 24 and 29 to see both the first and second beasts fulfilling this action.)

The image of this beast, therefore, must represent several of these characteristics. But most important among the many aspects mentioned, is the religious one. The first beast enforced Catholicism. That was its state religion. The second beast enforced Protestantism, as that was its state religion, particularly during the colonial period. In 2003, Melvin E. Page and Penny M. Sonnenburg released *Colonialism: an international, social, cultural, and political encyclopedia, Volume 1*. On page 496 of that volume, we read:

> "Of all religions, Christianity has been most associated with colonialism because several of its forms (Catholicism and Protestantism) were the religions of the European powers engaged in colonial enterprise…."

One of the characteristics of the first beast is its dependence on an invention known as purgatory, which we have covered over the course of this series. This it coupled with the false notion of hell, and lay Catholics had no hope of bypassing these nonexistent places and heading

off to heaven without the mercy, intercession, and forgiveness of priests and popes. But the concept of hell must be looked at from a proper Hebrew perspective. The word hell is derived from the Hebrew *she'owl*, word H7585. Scholars have attempted to link this word to Catholic concepts like a place of burning or even purgatory, but its foundational meaning is "the grave," or a "pit" for burial. When someone dies, they are usually placed in she'owl or the grave. In Greek this is called *hadés*—some pronounce it "hay-dees"—which is word G86, but the senses have all been mythologized to mean supernatural nonsense. That being said, hell, or hadés, which is the grave, follows death. Simple concept. When we look at Revelation chapter 20, we see something interesting about both.

> 14 "Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire."
>
> —Revelation 20:14

Hell, which is supposedly an eternally burning place, is itself cast into a lake of fire? Doesn't make sense. What does make sense is this: eternity will have no place for death and burial, since each and every soul will be immortal. If you take note of Revelation 19:20 and 20:10, you'll see that the devil, the first beast, and the false prophet—which is the second beast—are all thrown into the same lake of fire, as there will be no place in eternity for these evil beings and institutions either.

But getting back to the hell concept, which is an important aspect of the religion of the first beast, the false prophet orders the deceived inhabitants of the world to make an image to this beast. Then we are told:

> 15 "And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain."
>
> —Revelation 13:15

The word slain here, is killed, word G615, *apokteinō*. While Revelation has a few literal prophetic applications, this one, like several others, is metaphorical, since it relates to concepts within a broad metaphor—beasts and images, a dragon, signs and wonders; you get the idea. So, in considering this, we should jump straight to the second sense of *apokteinō*.

> Sense 2. a. metaphorically, to extinguish, or abolish; to inflict moral death.

Remember, this is referring to the word slain, or killed. We're talking about a metaphoric, moral death, not a literal one. But the second sense gets to the heart of the matter.

> 2. b. to deprive of spiritual life and procure eternal misery.

Essentially in hell. The first beast is guilty of this, for, since ancient times, the prostitute seated upon its back openly declared that souls would be doomed to damnation apart from Catholicism. The second beast breathed these very lies, giving life to an image of this. The fire and brimstone preachers of the Great Awakenings said the very same things, but in a more sensational manner as it pertained to Protestantism. And this has changed little over time.

> “There is no salvation in hell. There’s no savior in hell. There’s no bible in hell. There’s no blood in hell. There’s no altars in hell. There’s no forgiveness in hell. Whatever goes to hell, stays in hell!”

This kind of preaching, as the second sense of *apokteinō* points out, has deprived audience members of spiritual life, leaving many of them to feel they will procure eternal misery in a place of burning called hell if they do not become Protestant Christians by joining a local church. This is Revelation 13:15 in action. Christianity—from the harlot mother church down to her daughters:

> 2 “She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.”
>
> —Revelation 18:2

And this coincides perfectly with Yeshua’s parables of the Kingdom in Matthew 13:31 – 33, which he likens to a tree that grows larger than all other plants in the garden, so that birds make their nests in it. And it is like thoroughly leavened dough. In Matthew 13, Yeshua explained in his parable of the sower, that birds, which snatch away seeds as soon as they fall on the ground, represent the wicked one who snatches away truth from the heart of hearers before they can understand it. These are the same wicked birds that make their nests in Christianity, as pointed out in Revelation 18:2. And we have already gone over the leaven angle in chapter 1 of this book.

An account in the book of Mark also highlights the Christian experience. In Mark 11, Yeshua and his disciples cross the Sea of Galilee and arrive at the Country of the Gerasenes—some manuscripts say the Gadarenes, but both were people of cities situated east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. Also, both were actually Gentile cities, whose citizens were Greek, rather than Semite, hence the many pigs they raised. According to Roswell D. Hitchcock, who authored *An Interpreting Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names* in 1869, the word *Gerasene*, means: “those who come from pilgrimage or fight.”

At any rate, no sooner did Yeshua step off the boat than a man possessed of an unclean spirit approach him from the tombs. There is so much prophetic value here. Remember that Babylon is a dwelling place for demons and a haunt for unclean spirits, and here is a man possessed of unclean spirits living among the tombs. Also remember that Yeshua warned of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which is false teaching or doctrine (see Matthew 16:5 – 12). Well, take note of another identifying mark. Yeshua also said:

> 27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."
>
> —Matthew 23:27 – 28

This represents Christianity, which for two thousand years has been guilty of the same thing. This is why the man possessed of unclean spirits is seen coming from the tombs, where he lived.

We are also told that no one could bind the man for the strength he possessed, since he easily broke his metal bonds. “No one had the strength to subdue him,” we are told in Mark 5:4. This speaks to the strength of the Catholic beast empire that conquered much of Europe under the authority of the dragon, Satan. Revelation 13:4 even asks: “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”

Going back to Mark chapter 5, upon seeing Yeshua, the man from the tombs—filled with demons who believed Yeshua came to torment them—rushes over to Yeshua and falls at his feet. The demons beg that Yeshua not send them out of the Gentile country. Instead—and this is very telling, yet requires discernment—they spot a herd of unclean pigs numbering a certain prophetic number feeding on the hillside, thus they said to Yeshua:

> 12 “ ‘Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.’ 13 So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.”
>
> —Mark 5:12 – 13

About two thousand swine to equal the 2,000 years of leavened Christianity, and into the sea they plunged, which is also prophetic. This entire 2,000-year history has revealed several things. Christianity attempted to replace True Israel, according to prophecy, and in doing so, it in fact paralleled a lot of what Israel experienced. For one thing, Augustine was like its Moses, all the popes and Christian kings are akin to the many corrupt and unrighteous kings and priests we endured. The church was split in two, forming the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox branches, similar to the split between Israel and Judah. Then the Protestant Reformation forced the church to splinter into factions and spread throughout the earth just as the divided nations of Israel and Judah were scattered among the nations. The early persecutions of the church represent the horrors of the Egyptian bondage prior to the Exodus. The repeated barbarian, Arab, and other invasions are akin to the invasions Israel suffered at the hands of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans. In short, if you want to stand in the shoes of True Israel, you must endure what they endured.

In the end, when Yeshua returns, the vast majority of the world will still be Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and other religions, which is why only 144,000 of all the 12 tribes will be sealed in the forehead. And also, this is why in Isaiah chapter 2:1 – 4, many will go up to the mountain of Yah’s house to worship there and get the truth. This will be fulfilled in the millennium. To be clear, Yah raised up Christianity like he raised up the Babylonians, but that doesn’t mean that the ways of ancient Babylon were pure, or that we should all become Babylonians. It was a temporary judgement. But even the corrupt nations and systems he raises up, he eventually destroys, because they are only a means to an end. This is also true of the Christian movement, which started out as the white horse of Revelation 6:2 following the time of the emissaries, before it was usurped and morphed into the papal structure. If people who are in the Christian church are truly living up to what they believe, then Yah can reach them and bring them up to a higher level by removing them from that setting. This is part of the calling out process:

> 4 “Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest

you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues."

—Revelation 18:4

In Mark 3:24 – 25, Yeshua said that a kingdom or house divided against itself cannot stand, and the fact that Christianity—which was never meant to succeed—has been divided for so long, and continues to divide even today—it will not stand, nor can it usher in the Kingdom. But it must exist, for it is the place from which the true servants of Yah will hail. Remember that those servants are told to, "Come out of her." The vast majority of us who are in the truth have all passed through the Christian movement at one point or another, before we were called out. Well, others are still being called out of her now. My hope is that this series will aid in that process.

That wraps it up for Churchianity: Two Thousand Years of Leaven. A publication of Kingdom Preppers.org, this book was written and published by yours truly, Kingdom Prepper. All praise, honor, and glory are due to my boss, Yah Elohim, and to his right hand, Yahushua HaMashiach. Please visit our website for more of our offerings. Shalom.