



# the REFORMATION *herald*

Vol. 61, No. 4

## A Time for BIG CHANGES

Congress of the  
began and held at the City of New York  
on the 4th of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty

CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

ous Declaration of the thirteen united States

When in the course of human events  
the separate and equal station to which the  
rights of the Colonies have been brought  
to, that among these are Life, Liberty and the  
pursuit of Happiness. — That whenever any Form of Govern-  
ment becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the  
People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Govern-  
ment, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its  
powers in such form, as shall seem to them best for their  
safety and happiness. In extending the limits of the  
United States, it is the right of the People to alter or to  
abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its  
foundation on such principles and organizing its powers  
in such form, as shall seem to them best for their  
safety and happiness.

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do hereby adopt and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

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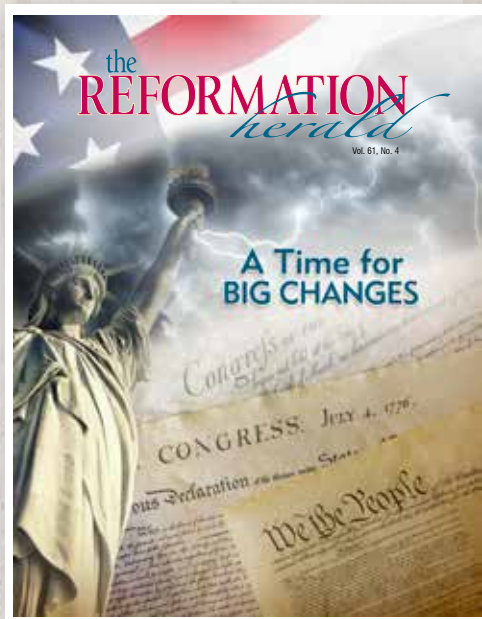
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*Have you ever thought of  
distributing The Reformation  
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meet or already know?  
More and more, this  
magazine is being designed  
to answer the real spiritual  
hunger of people in today's  
society, tapping into the  
exact train of thought being  
triggered by current events.  
As Bible prophecy unfolds  
before our eyes, why  
not keep some of these  
magazines on hand in a large  
ziplock bag, ready to share  
with honest, thinking people  
who fear God and are eager  
to know what in the world is  
going on?*

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"The greatest want of the world is the want of men—  
men who will not be bought or sold."—Education, p. 57.

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# A FORTRESS AMID A PLAGUE



**T**he year is 1527. The highly contagious bubonic plague is invading the continent of Europe. Not long before, in October 1347, the “Black Death” had hit so hard that from among those contaminated by it, nearly half died. And now, Martin Luther is being perceived as the divider of society. While the Protestants are regarding the pestilence as a token of the wrath of God because of the Roman apostasy, the Catholics are accusing the Protestants for disrupting Christian unity in the time of such terrible crisis.

Now it is August 1527; the city of Wittenberg is being visited by the plague. The government represented by Elector John “the Steadfast,” among many decisions, orders the personnel of the University of Wittenberg to move their activities to a different area.

Katharina von Bora, Luther’s wife, is pregnant with their second baby. Their older son is struck by the plague and for almost eight days has not eaten anything. Luther is in great distress. His dilemma: To leave or to stay? The sense of duty and his conscience are calling him to stay to help those afflicted, many of whom are counting their days or even hours of life. And now the plague is visiting his home, too.

Katharina refuses to leave. Luther, on one hand, is amazed and on the other hand encouraged and

boosted by her firm stand. This is not the first time that Katharina has served him lessons of faith in a time of crisis. Luther is now determined; he will confront death in the name of Jesus. He is getting out, helping the dying and giving communion in the church, praying with the ones who are discouraged, satisfying the need of the soul. He is at peace with his God. While serving his fellow neighbors, his heart is at home with his wife and his son who is struggling for life.

The news is soon communicated to Luther: His son is well; he is healing. Tears of joy and gratitude towards the heavenly Father overflow the heart of the reformer. It would not be surprising to consider that possibly in those exact days of struggle is when the Holy Spirit inspires him to write, “A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; our helper he, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing. For still our ancient foe does seek to work us woe; his craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal,” or maybe as Katharina recovers from the pestilence, Luther may be writing his definition of faith in the second verse of the song: “Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing, were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing. You ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;

Lord Sabaoth his name, from age to age the same; and he must win the battle.”

We don’t want to nail down a specific moment identified in the life of Luther that may have triggered that avalanche of inspired words, but what is certain is that the lyrics of the hymn show the waves of experience in the ups and downs of Luther’s life. When his daughter died, his courage did not fail. He continued to feed his faith with the words of the song: “And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure; one little word shall fell him.”

Just as Luther did, so we as Christians exposed to the same present crisis, defined in modern language as COVID-19 or even another plague worse than this one, can and will, by God’s grace stand with Luther in singing the last verse: “That Word above all earthly powers no thanks to them abideth; the Spirit and the gifts are ours through him who with us sideth. Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still; his kingdom is forever!”

“So God help us.” *R*



# IS THIS AN AGE OF REASON?

By Barbara Montrose



**T**here is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). The wise man also says, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). One of these inventions came along even before the world was made.

## IMPROVISING ON THE CREATOR'S PLAN

God made the holy angels upright, perfect, pure, and innocent. They delighted to do His bidding out of abundant love for His style of governing (Psalm 103:20, 21; Hebrews 1:14).

Yet there was one beautiful and talented angel, Lucifer, who came up with the notion to take a different twist. Instead of being thankful for all the bounties bestowed upon him, he decided to complain and sow discontentment in order to egotistically draw attention to himself—to such a degree that he became known as Satan, the adversary.

"O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou has said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend

above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:13, 14).

"Satan's words, the lie against God, was received and the world has ever since received the words of a tempting devil, once a high and exalted angel in glory, who became an apostate and fell from his high and holy estate. He insinuated that the law of God was not perfect and needed to be remodeled. This insinuation grew until his presentation to the angels was of such a deceiving character that he carried a large number with him. God expelled him from the abodes of bliss with all his satanic sympathizers, but he has worked ever since to make his lies appear as truth. With his long practice in deception and evil-working in his evil assertions, his masterly deceptive statements make the grossest errors appear as truth. All who allow the wisdom of men to guide them, who do not cleave to their Bibles to read and search and believe the Word, but accept the assertions of men, and voice the words of the great deceiver, are just as surely under the curse of God as was pronounced upon Satan."<sup>1</sup>

Hungry for personal gain and power, this fallen angel, Satan, quickly began his diabolical plot to weaken planet earth in its infancy by inciting rebellion against the commandments of God. Adam and Eve,

our first parents, were warned not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They had known only goodness in blissful paradise; they were meant to be spared the misery that would result from giving ear to perverse reasoning for evil. They had been faithfully warned that death would be the sure consequence of partaking of the fruit of that tree. But the archenemy disputed, implying that the Creator of both himself and them was just plain wrong. "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). (We've all heard the sly, familiar line, "Awww, come on, it's not going to kill you!") This was his argument, and he then proceeded to tell what may have seemed like plausible reasoning—but was actually just a nasty, envy-driven lie to turn the pure pair against their Creator who loved and cared for them so perfectly. Such was the beginning of sorrows on our planet.

## FAST-FORWARD: MÜNZER'S CHAOS

During the time that Martin Luther was carrying out a reformation appealing to Christian believers to uphold the Word of God as revealed in the sacred Scriptures to be the sole foundation for their faith and doctrine, a contrasting movement rose up to compete against it. Among the various challenges to the



great Reformation, this competing movement was one that set aside the Holy Scriptures and instead exalted human wisdom as the source of religious truth and knowledge. This notion of religious rationalism idolizes human reasoning and sets it up as the basis for religion.

“Religious Rationalism asserts the claims of reason against those of revelation or authority. The fundamental principles of religion are held to be innate or self-evident and revelation unnecessary.”<sup>2</sup>

In Luther’s day, this type of idea was promoted by Thomas Münzer, a man of considerable ability who, like Lucifer, thirsted for fame and recognition. He renounced the Reformers’ reliance upon Scripture, preferring instead to rely on his own impressions to be the source of guidance. As a result, some of his followers even burned their Bibles.

“Münzer’s teaching appealed to men’s desire for the marvelous, while it gratified their pride by virtually placing human ideas and opinions above the word of God. His doctrines were received by thousands. He soon denounced all order in public worship, and declared that to obey princes was to attempt to serve both God and Belial. “The minds of the people, already beginning to throw off the yoke of the papacy, were also becoming impatient under the restraints of civil authority. Münzer’s revolutionary teachings claiming divine sanction, led them to break away from all control and give rein to their prejudices and passions. The most terrible scenes of sedition and strife followed, and the fields of Germany were drenched with blood.”<sup>3</sup>

Did the rationalist movement end in Germany? Unfortunately, no.

### A TITLE BOASTING A BIG CLAIM

In the early 18th century, Thomas Paine (1737–1809), a British-American activist, wrote a book entitled *The Age of Reason*. As a deist, his logic could not deny that a Creator did exist, but he touted that this Creator was totally uninvolved in the lives and mechanisms of the creation. (The

notably impressive talents, abilities, and accomplishments of that era were not typically credited to the Source of all knowledge and understanding, but rather were simply attributed to the mere creature.) Tainted as his book was with arrogance and sarcasm, the influence of Paine turned many people into infidels.

“It matters not whom Satan makes to speak, if his object is only accomplished. He was intimately connected with Paine upon earth, aiding him in his work, and it is an easy thing for him to know the very words and the handwriting of one who served him so faithfully and accomplished his purposes so well. Satan dictated much of Paine’s writings.”<sup>4</sup>

So, it may have been an age of reason—but whose reason?

### THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

After France had renounced the worship of the living God, it was not long before the nation descended into degrading idolatry. “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 14:1).

Soon after the spirit of hatred that had waged the horrible St. Bartholomew Massacre for two months, mercilessly dragging 70,000 Bible-believers of all ages out of their homes at midnight for slaughter in cold blood, the French Revolution (1789–1799) soon waged

The infamous goddess of reason.





all-out war against God and His holy word.

"The worship of the Deity was abolished by the National Assembly. Bibles were collected and publicly burned with every possible manifestation of scorn. The law of God was trampled underfoot. The institutions of the Bible were abolished. . . .

"Infidel France had silenced the reproving voice of God's two witnesses [the Old and New Testament]. The word of truth lay dead in her streets, and those who hated the restrictions and requirements of God's law were jubilant. Men publicly defied the King of heaven. Like the sinners of old, they cried: 'How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?' Psalm 73:11."<sup>5</sup>

As things degenerated even further, it was not long before France descended into the degrading idol worship of the Goddess of Reason, in the person of a profligate woman: "To this person, as the fittest representative of that Reason whom they worshipped, the National Convention of France rendered public homage.

"This impious and ridiculous mummery had a certain fashion; and the installation of the Goddess of Reason was renewed and imitated throughout the nation, in such places where the inhabitants desired to show themselves equal to all heights of the Revolution. The churches were, in most districts of France, closed against priests and worshippers—the bells were broken and cast into cannon—the whole ecclesiastical establishment destroyed. . . .

"Intimately connected with these laws affecting religion, was that which reduced the union of marriage, the most sacred engagement which human beings can form, and the permanence of which leads most strongly to the consolidation of society, to the state of a mere civil contract of a transitory character, which any two persons might engage in, and cast loose at pleasure, when their taste was changed, or their appetite gratified. If fiends had set themselves to work to discover a mode of most effectually destroying whatever is venerable, graceful, or permanent in domestic life, and

of obtaining, at the same time, an assurance that the mischief which it was their object to create should be perpetuated from one generation to another, they could not have invented a more effectual plan than the degradation of marriage into a state of mere occasional cohabitation, or licensed concubinage."<sup>6</sup>

The legislative assembly of France was urged to acknowledge no divinity but Reason. This was followed by the public burning of the Bible. The populace revolted against the monarchs whose cruelty had known no bounds because of their rejection of the Reformation.

After the remaining Huguenots (who were faithful adherents to Scripture) had been compelled to flee for their lives, France was in truly a dire situation.

"With the flight of the Huguenots a general decline settled upon France. Flourishing manufacturing cities fell into decay; fertile districts returned to their native wildness; intellectual dullness and moral declension succeeded a period of unwonted progress. Paris became one vast almshouse, and it is estimated that, at the breaking out of the Revolution, two hundred thousand paupers claimed charity from the hands of the king. . . .

"The gospel would have brought to France the solution of those political and social problems that baffled the skill of her clergy, her king, and her legislators, and finally plunged the nation into anarchy and ruin."<sup>7</sup>

### A CONTRASTING DEVELOPMENT

Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the Atlantic, a noble document being penned back in 1776—the founding document of the United States—the Declaration of Independence, refreshingly asserted that, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."<sup>8</sup> And the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, declaring that "Congress shall make

no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."<sup>9</sup>

"The framers of the Constitution recognized the eternal principle that man's relation with his God is above human legislation, and his rights of conscience inalienable. Reasoning was not necessary to establish this truth; we are conscious of it in our own bosoms. It is this consciousness which, in defiance of human laws, has sustained so many martyrs in tortures and flames. They felt that their duty to God was superior to human enactments, and that man could exercise no authority over their consciences. It is an inborn principle which nothing can eradicate.' Congressional documents (U.S.A.), serial No. 200, document 271."<sup>10</sup>

The implementation of these documents brought a brighter future not only to the new nation that signed them—but the principles therein became an inspiration to many other thinking people around the world as well.

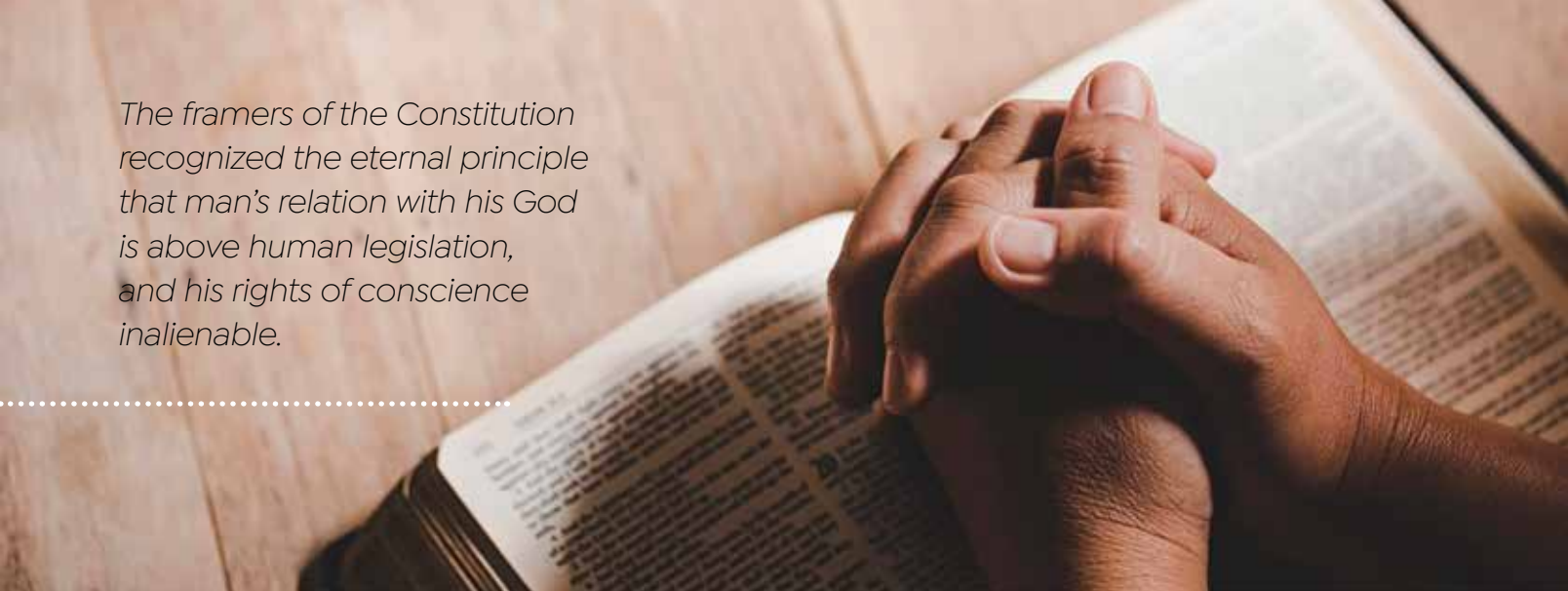
### A DARK CLOUD: SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM

"The year 1848 was the high-water mark of socialist mass movements and marked the beginning of a new type of socialist theory and practice. In the beginning of that year the Communist Manifesto was written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx and Engels appropriated what they found valid in previous socialist movements, but they contrasted the romantic idealism of 'utopian socialism,' with their own 'scientific socialism' which claimed to demonstrate that the victory of the working class (the proletariat) over the capitalist class, and thus the appropriation by society as a whole of the means of production was historically inevitable. Following a few 'birth pangs' the coercive structures of the bourgeois [middle class] state would eventually 'wither away.'

"Marx and Engels used the word 'communist' to describe this classless society, and generally reserved the word 'socialist' to refer to transitional phases and movements in



*The framers of the Constitution recognized the eternal principle that man's relation with his God is above human legislation, and his rights of conscience inalienable.*



which the proletariat had indeed acquired the means of production but in which the state had not yet vanished. The party they founded in 1847 was called the 'Communist League.' "<sup>11</sup>

(Many still alive today remember with dread the scenes perpetuated by scientific socialism, particularly as it spread like a plague throughout eastern Europe in the 20th century. The eventual collapse of that system in that part of the world brought a welcome reprieve to those who suffered under it for decades.)

Meanwhile, in the mid-1800's, another landmark piece of confusion came on the scene, highlighted with the book, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* by Charles Darwin. (Most are not familiar with the entire title of Darwin's book and thus may not be aware of the wicked horror that his exposition of the theory of evolution implied.)

Yet thankfully, in stark contrast around the same time, great hope for all humanity was offered by the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, which confirmed the God of heaven as Creator of the entire human race as a whole—and carefully formed in His own image.

### FREEDOM JEOPARDIZED

Strangely, another landmark in history came in 1871, when Albert Pike, the high-ranking member of

secret society, wrote of an international plan for three world wars, the third of which would ultimately wipe out the human race. The occultic nature of his wicked connections reveal the actual source of such evil plotting—and the philosophy that eventually crept in to corrupt much of the free world.

Such philosophy is contrary to the wholesome ideology of free and just societies established on noble principles. Yet, gradually, a series of steps have worked to undermine those basic tenets throughout the world. Freedom of speech, of the press, and of religion, are being chipped away from those who fear the Creator of heaven and earth, while those whose philosophies and practices that blatantly defy the moral uprightness of the God of heaven are aggressively promoted even at the expense of the life, liberty and basic pursuit of happiness for all. The message being asserted with cultic zeal is a quick road to mediocrity and failure; it stamps out the precision and accuracy necessary for quality, responsible production, the objectivity necessary for fundamental fairness to others, the individualism necessary for basic human dignity, the comfort necessary for mental and physical health, and the gracious social interaction necessary for the pursuit of an atmosphere of mutual happiness.

But that's just the tip of the iceberg. Government buildings torched, statues toppled down

(many with a hidden agenda to replace them with Luciferian monuments), churches vandalized and set ablaze, Bibles burned in the streets, and history grossly distorted—all are actually part of a sinister plot to erase every trace of human dignity and reverence for God.

It's sadly true that human governments have human imperfections; heroes depicted on statues were but flawed humans with shortcomings in their specific stage of development, and history on a fallen planet inevitably has its shameful moments. Yet these all are put in perspective in a stable society based upon the distinct ideals and principles intended for the benefit of all. When those ideals and principles are ruthlessly attacked with a distorted slant steeped in hatred and bitterness, lawless misery is the result.

### THE SPIRITUALIST CONNECTION

Besides the lawlessness, what about the occult connection? Are multitudes preparing to be deceived? Founding instigators from which much violence has recently spawned proudly boast spiritualism as a basic premise of their philosophy. The groundwork for widespread spiritualism has been laid for decades with television programs, movies, and videos laced with ghosts and supposed communication with and worship of the dead.



## CULTURAL CHAOS

A “new normal” appears to be where Scientism is considered a god to control your temporal destiny, using stark intimidation to confront whomever might wonder about the changeable nature of scientific development in its unfolding.

A “new normal” appears to be one where sudden bitterness triggered from outside sources estranges old friends, and a perverse and exaggerated sense of guilt and gross humiliation are heaped upon people. It seems as if no one is even permitted to trust anyone else, much less be encouraged to do so. The logical, legitimate need for physical spacing and understandable precautions during pandemic conditions often results in cold, compulsory estrangement from our fellowmen.

Although Bible prophecy has foretold that this would happen, it certainly is not what the God of all comfort wants to see.

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (Matthew 24:6–10).

“A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends. A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good” (Proverbs 16:28, 29).

The bitterness and violence prevailing in this world are actually not reasonable. Thus, the so-called age of reason has not produced the goal it boasted.

“The spirit of anarchy is permeating all nations, and the outbreaks that from time to time excite the horror of the world are but indications of the pent-up fires of passion and lawlessness that, having once

escaped control, will fill the earth with woe and desolation. The picture which Inspiration has given of the antediluvian world, represents too truly the condition to which modern society is fast hastening.”<sup>12</sup>

## VIRTUOUS REASON

We have spoken here about the concept of reason. Is reason in itself bad? No, quite the contrary! Our power of intelligent reasoning comes from the Creator Himself. The only problem arises when we have the audacity to arrogantly presume to exalt our own tiny tidbit of reasoning above His limitless, eternal Omniscience.

In His tender kindness—instead of treating us like mindless robots steeped in stupidity—our infinite Creator actually appeals to the intelligence He has bestowed upon us erring mortals when He says: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 1:18–20). He knows we have all been beaten and bruised by the adversary in various ways, so He tenderly bids us come unto Him for refuge.

Yes, under the shadow of His wings, the Master of the universe invites us to take advantage of the blessing He wants to give to every single human being. All are made in His image—and He who watches even over the sparrows tenderly cares about every child of Adam and Eve.

“As the time of Christ’s second appearing draws near, the Lord sends His servants with a warning to the world to prepare for that great event. Multitudes have been living in transgression of God’s law, and now He in mercy calls them to obey its sacred precepts. All who will put away their sins by repentance toward God and faith in Christ, are offered pardon.”<sup>13</sup>

## WHAT ABOUT HISTORY? DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

Should not all who value truth beware of that which would tamper with history? What are some people trying to hide? “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

Yet we see a common thread in most of the various landmark events mentioned above: a hatred of the sacred scriptures—even to the burning of Bibles, all stemming from a reckless thirst for power steeped in a satanic hatred of God and eternal truth.

Instead of trying to distort reality, the Bible actually employs utter candor regarding both the virtues and failures of all in its biographical accounts of men and women. Likewise, a free and just society has nothing to hide; in its growing pains, it gains greater fortitude through resolutely learning from the mistakes and shortcomings of the past. To distort history is to teach a lie—thus breaking the ninth commandment of the moral law of God. “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). Thus Scripture clearly has strong words to speak against liars. Jesus is the “way, the truth, and the life” and “no lie is of the truth” (John 14:6; 1 John 2:21, last part).

For all who value honesty, “we have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”<sup>14</sup>

## HOW CAN I BE PART OF THE SOLUTION INSTEAD OF THE PROBLEM?

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

Despite the complaints which Christ and His disciples might have



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uttered with regard to the authorities managing the Roman empire in their day, no such sentiments escaped their lips.

In fact, “the government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart.

**“Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ’s nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit.** ‘As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor

of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God’ (John 1:12, 13). Here is the only power that can work the uplifting of mankind. And the human agency for the accomplishment of this work is the teaching and practicing of the word of God.

“When the apostle Paul began his ministry in Corinth, that populous, wealthy, and wicked city, polluted by the nameless vices of heathenism, he said, **‘I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified’** (1 Corinthians 2:2). . . .

“Now, as in Christ’s day, the work of God’s kingdom lies not with those who are clamoring for recognition and support by earthly rulers and human laws, but with those who are declaring to the people in His name those spiritual truths that will work in the receivers the experience of Paul: ‘I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me’ (Galatians 2:20). Then they will labor as did Paul for the benefit of men.”<sup>15</sup>

Each believer can extend to others a message of eternal hope through Christ. This is an amazing invitation designed for every human being!

“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. . . . The meek [not the thugs and arrogant bullies!] shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psalm 37:7, 8, 11).

A final promise for every believer is: “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:13). Amen! *R*

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- <sup>3</sup> *The Great Controversy*, pp. 191, 192.
- <sup>4</sup> *Early Writings*, pp. 264, 265.
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- <sup>11</sup> *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, volume 10, Micropaedia, p. 926.
- <sup>12</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 102.
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- <sup>14</sup> *Life Sketches*, p. 196.
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# FROM BOASTFUL ATHEISM TO BLIND RELIGION

Part 2 of 3

By Walter Lukic

## TWO WITNESSES ARE KILLED IN THE "GREAT CITY"

During the long period of 1,260 years God's two witnesses, the Holy Scriptures, prophesied in sackcloth; the Bible was obscured and misinterpreted, and the faithful servants of God were persecuted. However, the apostate Christianity in that long period did not completely reject the Bible and the Christian faith, at least not nominally. The Bible was still recognized as a source of divine revelation and its religious and moral teachings as interpreted by the mainstream church, were still viewed as binding both on the church and the entire society.

All this was to dramatically change during the French Revolution, particularly in the period known as the "Reign of Terror" (September 1793–July 1794). The two witnesses, as foretold in Revelation 11:7, 8, were "killed," "and their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."

The Old Testament often refers to the great cities (like Nineveh, Tyre, Babylon) as the places where God was opposed and His people were oppressed. Further, Revelation contrasts the "great city" known as Babylon with the "holy city" named Jerusalem. It is noteworthy that in the book of Revelation many things

come in pairs (two insignias—"the seal of God" and the "mark of the beast"; two resurrections—the first and the second; two mothers—a pure woman and a harlot; and two cities—the "holy city" and the "great city").

Babylon as a great city refers consistently to the evil power that stands in opposition to God (Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 19, 21). Opposite to Babylon is the "holy city," Jerusalem, a city name used to signify first a literal celestial city built by God that will one day descend to this earth: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2). But like Babylon, New Jerusalem also represents a class of people called the Lamb's "bride" who has "made herself ready" and is "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:7, 8).

From the foregoing we can clearly see that the phrase the "great city" in the book of Revelation stands for "Babylon." Babylon in the days of the prophet Daniel (6th century B.C.) was the capital of a mighty empire, but in the days of the apostle John (1st century A.D.), the ancient city of Babylon was a heap of ruins. Therefore, the "great city" or Babylon in Revelation 11:7,

8 cannot refer to the literal city of Babylon. That name is rather a symbol of a vast community of people who, similarly to the ancient Babylon, blaspheme God and persecute His saints. In that sense the "great city" (Babylon), representing the apostate Christianity, is a counterpart of the "holy city" (Jerusalem), representing the true followers of Christ.

But then we are told in Revelation 11:8 that the dead bodies of the two witnesses "shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." Could the "great city... where also our Lord was crucified" be the literal city of Jerusalem where Jesus was literally crucified, as some Bible interpreters have suggested? We do not think this to be the correct interpretation of the text. In Revelation 21:2 the "holy city" is identified with the "New Jerusalem," not with the literal, earthly city of Jerusalem. The "holy city" or New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:2 is contrasted with the "great city" or Babylon in Revelation 18:10 (also in 18:2, 16, etc.) which we have seen cannot refer to the literal city of Babylon.

Further, the "great city" is qualified spiritually or allegorically as "Sodom and Egypt." The biblical city of Sodom was notorious for the luxury, pride, sexual immorality,





and vice of its inhabitants. There is ample biblical evidence for this qualification (see Genesis 19:1–4 and Ezekiel 16:49, 50, 56–58). To discover the allegorical meaning of the second qualification of the “great city”—Egypt, we need to understand which negative spiritual qualities Egypt and its rulers had displayed according to the biblical records. The Scriptures are explicit that Egypt oppressed God’s people and that its king denied the existence of Israel’s God: “And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go” (Exodus 5:2). This Pharaoh’s utterance is patently atheistic because it denies the existence of the true God.

### IDENTIFYING THE “GREAT CITY” – REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE

Did the prophecy of Revelation 11:7, 8 find its fulfillment toward the end of 1,260 days? Did the beast coming out of a bottomless pit make a war with the two witnesses, overcome them, and kill them in a great city that is spiritually or allegorically called Sodom and Egypt? Without any hesitation we answer this question in affirmative—Yes! This prophecy found its most striking fulfillment in the traumatic social upheavals of revolutionary France.

Besides Sodom, hardly any other biblical city could more fittingly represent the excessive luxury and vice of European nobility and royalty and the immoral practices associated with the French Revolution. And scarcely any other biblical characters other than the Pharaoh of Egypt so defiantly and boldly challenged the biblical God as did the atheistic ideologues of revolutionary France.

Further, Hebrew 6:4–6 helps us understand that Jesus has been crucified wherever His people depart from the truth that He taught and practiced and His apostles revealed in the Holy Scriptures. When the professed followers of Christ, after being enlightened by the biblical truth, fall away, or commit apostasy, “they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:6).

We have earlier observed that the first dark force (the apostate church) trampled upon the holy city for 1,260 days or years (A.D. 538–1798). During this period, the two witnesses (the Holy Scriptures and faithful human witnesses) prophesied in sackcloth, or in other words, in sadness and obscurity. At the end of this long period, the second dark force, the atheistic force embodied in the French Revolution crucified Jesus by declaring an open war on Christianity—by carrying out an unprecedented at-

tack on the Bible and the Christian religion.

It is noteworthy that Revelation 11:13 refers to a “great earthquake” during which “the tenth part of the city fell.” It appears that the earthquake’s epicenter was placed in a “tenth part” of the city and that it took place at the close of 1,260 years (sometime in 1790s). If we consider that France was the oldest Christian nation in western Europe (“the eldest daughter of the Church”) and that during the revolutionary period it violently revolted against the dominant church and against Christian religion, we can see how France crucified Christ. On the other hand, it should be noted that the great earthquake affected only a “tenth” of the great city. Therefore, the great city must be larger than France. As noted above, the great city is the entire western European Christendom, and of that larger religious-political community, France makes up only one tenth.

### DESCENT INTO CHAOS—THE DESTRUCTION OF LIFE, CHRISTIAN MORALITY, AND RELIGION

Space does not permit us to plot the history of the French Revolution in greater detail. For a fuller account of this historic event we would refer the reader to any acknowledged



historical work on the French Revolution, particularly on the Reign of Terror. We would like to offer here only a summary of some of the most notable acts of the French Revolution that poignantly demonstrate the extreme hostility which Revolutionary France showed to Christian religion.

On August 4, 1789, the newly convened National Constituent Assembly drafted one of its first major documents—the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.” The core values of the Declaration were inspired by the Enlightenment philosophers, central to which was the doctrine of “natural right”—rights of man held to be universal. That same day, the Assembly abolished the privileges of the First (clergy) and Second (aristocracy) Estate. Notably, it abolished the tithes gathered by the Catholic clergy, that is, the taxing power of the Church. On October 10, 1789, the Assembly seized the properties and land held by the Catholic Church, the largest landowner in France (owning and deriving benefits from about 10% of all land in France) and decided to sell them as assignats (a kind of paper money used during the French Revolution and backed by the value of properties formerly held by the Catholic Church). From that time onward, France experienced dramatic and quick changes. Over the next year the French society would be completely dismantled and rebuilt from ground up. By June 1790, the Assembly had officially abolished the nobility, and on July 12 it passed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. This act was to bring the Revolutionary France on a direct collision course with the Roman Catholic Church and gradually unleash a fierce conflict with the Christian religion.

“Cross and Tricolour had become opposing symbols for millions of Europeans by the end of 1793. In France, the fatal split between Church and Revolution, opened wide by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, now seemed unbridgeable.”<sup>1</sup>

The Civil Constitution essentially attempted to bring the Catholic Church into line with the demo-

cratic institutions of the new France. However, in that attempt the state took away from the Church the fundamental right of ecclesiastical self-governance and placed her under the direct authority of the civil government. That meant that Church officers, including bishops, were elected by popular vote, depriving the Pope of the power to appoint bishops, and further, that the number of bishoprics was reduced to the number of existing administrative territorial units or departments (83), that the Church gradually lost its independent source of income making the clergy dependent on the state for their sustenance, and that the clergy were compelled to take an oath of loyalty to the nation of France before any other cause. This last-mentioned government action caused a massive split within the Church into the abjuring priests or jurors known also as “constitutional clergy” (those who took the oath) and nonjuring or refractory priests (those who refused the oath). No wonder that on April 13, 1791, Pope Pius VI issued a bull condemning the Civil Constitution and the French Revolutionary government. The leaders of the Revolution became increasingly suspicious of the clergy and of the Church as an institution. This soon unleashed an open war on the Church and on Christian religion.

### “THE REIGN OF TERROR”— THE DECHRISTIANIZATION OF FRANCE

The French political, economic, military, and social conditions became increasingly precarious during the year 1792. On September 22, 1792 the Legislative Assembly (National Convention) declared the abolition of monarchy and proclaimed the First Republic, or officially, the French Republic (*République française*). Sadly, the emerging Republic was rapidly descending into chaos. In the first week of September of 1792, the Parisian mob with the assistance of paramilitary forces broke into prisons and murdered between 1,100 and 1,600 prisoners (September Massacres). Three Church bishops and more than two hundred priests were

massacred by angry mobs. Not long thereafter, in December 1792, the deposed French monarch, Louis XVI, was put on trial and convicted. On January 21, 1793 he was executed by guillotine. Facing foreign invasion, food shortages and riots in the spring of 1793, by April 6th, the Convention had created the Committee of Public Safety, an infamous nine-member provisional government (initially led by Danton), that ushered in the Reign of Terror which plagued France until the death of Maximilien Robespierre (July 27, 1794). In the ensuing months, tens of thousands of French citizens became imprisoned or exiled to penal colonies, and thousands of them were summarily convicted of capital crimes and were led to the guillotine. In that period, France turned into a large bloodbath, a merciless slaughterhouse where no one felt safe, and particularly not the Church and her priests and nuns.

The respected French statesman and historian of French Revolution, Adolphe Thiers, in his magisterial opus, *The History of the French Revolution*, published middle of the 19th century in several volumes, wrote in volume II of his History these sobering lines about the fear that arrested the French nation:

“People dared no longer express any opinion. They were afraid to visit their friends, lest they might be compromised with them, and lose liberty and even life. A hundred thousand arrests and some hundreds of condemnations, rendered imprisonment and the scaffold ever present to the minds of twenty-five millions of French.”<sup>2</sup>

What took place in the Reign of Terror was a culmination of a process known in history as the dechristianization of France during the French Revolution. The programme of dechristianization of France was initially waged against Catholicism, but it gradually spread over all forms of Christianity. It was a part of a larger process of making a radical break with all traditional values and conventions that were viewed as oppressive, superstitious, and out of harmony with reason and nature.

A. Thiers provides us with a perceptive description of the revo-



## THE REIGN OF TERROR

lutionary tendency to radically remake the society and redefine the established order. One of the primary objectives of the revolutionary system was to remove all religious and royalist influences from the calendar. Further, it was part of a larger attempt at decimalization in France:

"It was precisely at this time, when the government was not afraid to do violence to all received ideas, to all established customs, that the plan for introducing a new system of weights and measures, and changing the calendar, was carried into execution. . . . They had already changed the Gregorian era into a republican era, and dated the latter from the first year of liberty. They made the year and the new era begin with the 22nd of September, 1792, a day which, by a fortunate coincidence, was that of the institution of the republic and of the autumnal equinox. . . . The month consisted of thirty days; it was divided into three portions of ten days each, called decades, instead of the four weeks. The tenth day of each decade was dedicated to rest, and superseded the former Sunday. Thus there was one day of rest less in the month. The Catholic religion had multiplied holidays to infinity. The Revolution, preaching up industry, deemed it right to reduce them as much as possible. . . . The last revolution, the most difficult, the most accused of tyranny, was that attempted in regard to religion."<sup>3</sup>

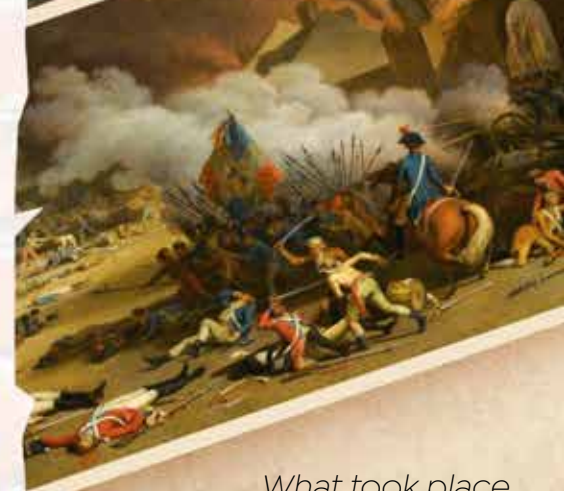
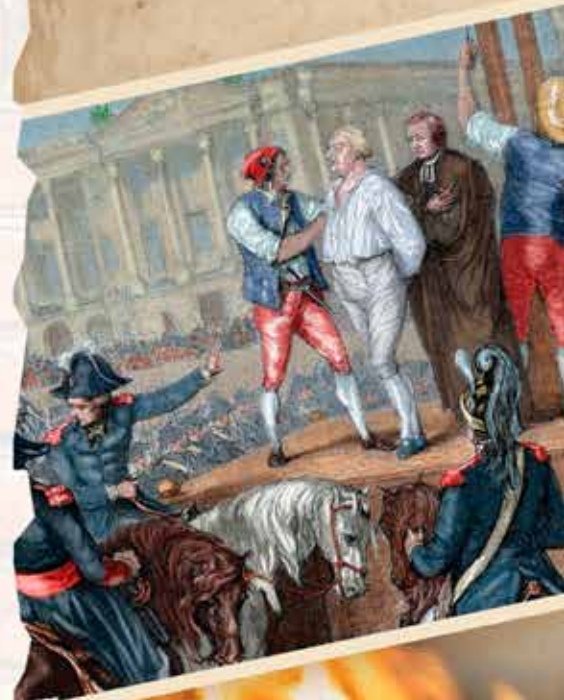
Giving the voice to the revolutionary minds of that time, A. Thiers, wrote: "As minds became daily more and more excited, people began to ask, why, when all the old monarchical superstitions were abolished, there should yet be retained a phantom of religion, in which scarcely any one continued to believe, and which formed a most striking contrast with the new institutions and the new manners of republican France."<sup>4</sup>

The words and actions that followed this kind of thinking were unprecedented in the history of any Christian nation. The historian Thiers, as well as other noted historians (e.g., A. Aulard, *Christianity and the French Revolution*. Boston.

1927), provide a shocking account of the extremes to which the godless leaders and populace of the Revolutionary France were prepared to go to get rid of any vestiges of Christianity. Professor J. Walsh of Oxford University summarized the excesses of the Revolutionary France in respect of the Christian religion:

"Helped by troops and local patriots, the representatives stopped the mass, desecrated churches, executed captive non-jurors, and browbeat priests into apostasy or the semi-apostasy of enforced marriage. Christian worship was replaced by a Cult of Reason and the Republic. After the famous Feast of Reason in Notre Dame de Paris (November 9, 1793) the campaign was taken up by the Paris sections, with prompting from the bourgeois anti-clericals of the Commune. As sensational as the violent dechristianization of the Commune was the legislative dechristianization of the Convention. The ancient clerical monopoly of education was swept away, and in October 1793 France deliberately broke with her religious past when the Convention voted the most anti-Christian act of the Revolution, the replacement of the ancient Gregorian calendar, woven intricately into the whole cycle of national life, by the new calendar of the Revolution (Appendix, pp. 691-2)."<sup>5</sup>

It is important to note that the dechristianization of France during the French Revolution did not do away with every appreciation of supernatural or "divine." The Christian God, the God of the Bible, was replaced by other objects of worship. Initially it was the patriotic cult (*patrie*), which expanded into the cult of "Reason," celebrated in the Christian churches converted into the "Temples of Reason" (e.g., the church Notre Dame in Paris). The worship of "Reason" was taking place not on a traditional Catholic Christian day of worship (Sunday), but on the new day of rest—*Décade*—each tenth day of the month (cult of the *Décadi*). The first festival of Reason was held with pomp on the 20th of Brumaire (the 10th of November 1793), and it involved a procession featuring a young lady representing the goddess



What took place in the Reign of Terror was a culmination of a process known in history as the dechristianization of France during the French Revolution.



of Reason. The last cult in Revolutionary France was introduced in May 1794 by M. Robespierre and was called the Cult of Supreme Being. That cult represented a form of deism and attempted to form a bridge between theists, Catholic and non-Catholic, in which “without constraint, without persecution, all sects can coalesce in the universal Religion of Nature.”<sup>6</sup>

Professor Walsh shares with us his insights about the meaning and purpose of the cults in the Revolutionary France: “But even in its destructive aspects, dechristianization was more than a simple Saturnalia of impiety. . . . The cults were to some extent artificial creations. . . . The cults were attempts—somewhat improvised—to replace Catholicism, with its super-natural frame of reference, by a secular religion of humanity which, in various forms, runs through the subsequent history of Europe. . . . [The patriotic cult] had its credo in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, its priesthood in the lawgivers, its baptismal ceremonies in the civic oaths administered at ‘altars of the patrie’, its symbols in the cockade, tricolour and cap of liberty, its hymns, processions and calendar. From its various festivals evolved the revolutionary cults of 1793–1802. . . . In the Cult of Reason (November 1793 to spring 1794) worship of the revolutionary Republic was primary; philosophical rationalism and the worship of nature and reason were secondary.”<sup>7</sup>

## REFLECTIONS ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION FROM THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

With the death of Maximilien Robespierre on July 27, 1794, the Reign of Terror came to its end, but this was not the end of the French Revolution. The period between the ousting of Robespierre (July 27, 1794) and the inauguration of the French Directory (November 1, 1795), known in the historiography of the French Revolution as the Thermidorian Reaction (or Thermidorian Convention), was marked by gradual relaxation of the most radical policies of the left wing Revolutionaries

(Montagnard Convention). Incidentally, the political terms “left” and “right” were coined during the French Revolution, referring to the seating arrangement in the French Estates General (those that sat to the left, generally opposed the monarchy and supported Revolution and the Republic; those to the right, were supportive of the traditional institutions of the Old Regime).

From November 2, 1795, until November 9, 1799 (the year when Napoleon I seized power, establishing the Consulate, and the French Revolution officially ended), France was then governed by the five-member committee known as Directory (or Directorate). Napoleon Bonaparte was a promising young military commander, appointed by the Directorate in March of 1796 commander in chief of the army in Italy. At that time France was in war with most of its neighbors, including Italy, where the nation scored major military victories. Of interest to students of the Bible prophecies are the France’s relations with the Roman Church and with the Papacy. The historic records indicate that the war against the Church, commenced in 1789 by the French Revolution, was transferred from France to the heart of the Catholic Church:

“Before 1795 the Revolution had threatened the existence of the Roman Church in France and Belgium. When it spilled over into the Italian peninsula it threatened to engulf the heart of Catholicism itself. In February 1797, under the Treaty of Tolentino, France detached the Legations from the Papal States: the murder of General Duphot in Rome in December led to the occupation of the city by General Berthier in February 1798, and to the proclamation of a Roman Republic. In 1799 ‘citizen pope’, Pius VI, was removed to captivity in France, where his death at Valence seemed to portend the dissolution of the Papacy.”<sup>8</sup>

This historic evidence is of great importance for the fulfillment of the apocalyptic prophecies recorded in two chapters of Revelation—chapters 11 and 13. Our long excursion in the history of the French Revolution has not been without merit. In

the first part of this article (see *The Reformation Herald*, Vol. 61, No. 3), we have stated that the dark force employed by Satan lacks unity and that it typically swings like a pendulum between its opposite poles. One pole is represented by the apostate Christian church; the other pole stands for the secular, humanist, rationalist, and mostly atheistic and agnostic counterpart. In the last quoted reference above, the learned British historian informed us in the last quoted reference that in 1798 and 1799 an impartial observer of the European political and church affairs could not have escaped the conclusion that the Papacy was about to be dissolved. He correctly noted that the humanist, secularist, and liberal political-ideological actor incapacitated his religious, traditionalist, and conservative opponent—the Ancien Régime (the Old Regime) and its loyal patron and apologist—the Roman Church.

The extreme hostility that the French Revolution exhibited toward the Catholic Church and Christianity in general, has in fact fulfilled more than one apocalyptic prophecy. First, the devastating anti-Christian work caused a great damage to the cause of Christ not only in France but all over Europe and wherever European culture and civilization have reached. These effects have been profound, worldwide, and lasting. Second, the unprecedented demolition job which atheistic France executed through dechristianization of its population and its public institutions, permanently injured the French nation and inflicted a “deadly wound” to the Papacy. In the next issue of *The Reformation Herald*, we will provide scriptural support for these statements by reflecting on these damaging effects of the French Revolution in the light of the Bible. *R*

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# LIFT UP YOUR HEADS!

B. B. WILSON, M.D.

[Emphasis added throughout.]

Once upon a time, there was a baby eagle. Somehow, the little chick got separated from its eagle family and found some baby chickens on a nearby farm. Even though it looked different, the chickens were kind and adopted the eagle. They spent time together and soon grew bigger, looking for worms and grubs in the ground. For a long time, the eagle was happy with its newfound family, content with life as a chicken. As the tale goes, one day the eagle looked up into the sky and noticed a flock of eagles. Surprised, it wondered, “who’s that”? The chickens noticed the puzzled bird and said, “Oh, those are eagles. They are the king of the sky. But you are just a chicken, like we are.” The eagle never put any more thought to it and lived out its life as a simple chicken.

Are you like that eagle? How many Christians seem to want to live their lives like everyone else! They are content with the worms and grubs that the world has to offer. They are engrossed in the news and the media updates of this world. They only look horizontally. And as soon as they start to look upward, their friends tell them, “Hey, you don’t want to be different. You are one of us.”

But Ephesians 5:11 instructs us, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Are you living up to your full Christian potential? Or do you chicken-out of your calling?

God calls you to be an eagle. An eagle doesn’t get tired or discouraged. An eagle doesn’t forage in the dirt for food. An eagle soars above the clouds. An eagle has incredible vision. Do you have such endurance? Do you live above the sorrow of this world? Do you keep a vision of the future foremost in your mind or are you shortsighted, looking only at the present? “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall **mount up with wings as eagles**; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

## OUR SALVATION IS NEARER THAN WE BELIEVED!

It’s easy to get caught up in all the discouragement and sorrow that surrounds us these days. But what we have to realize is that the worst is yet to come, but more importantly, the best is yet to come. True, we will have to pass through difficulties, but there is plenty of hope to focus on if we remember that Jesus is coming soon and He’ll take us home to a

perfect place where there’s no more sin, suffering, or unfairness.

In Luke 21, we find a prophecy of the last days: “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; **men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth:** for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.** And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, **when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand**” (Luke 21:25–31).

Have you noticed men’s hearts failing them for fear? Ah, yes, there’s lots to be worried about. But God’s children are called to exhibit a different reaction—one that’s diametrically opposed to the response predominating the unbelieving world. Jesus says, “when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads;



for your redemption draweth nigh." There's a reason to look up—our eternal redemption is coming soon. Jesus is coming to take us to Heaven, and the faster prophecies are fulfilled, the sooner we can go home. Jesus told us that when we'd see the signs of the times being fulfilled, we could be assured that the everlasting kingdom of God is coming soon.

### HOW WILL THIS KNOWLEDGE IMPACT OUR LIVES?

As Christians, we have hope. We are to have hope. I can only imagine how scared people must be who don't know that there is a happy ending to this story of humanity. So, while we will face added persecution because of our faith, we must be able to glorify God even through tribulations, rejoicing that we are counted worthy to suffer for His sake. Now, while we still enjoy freedom and many blessings, we must cultivate the attitude of gratitude and hope in spite of whatever inconveniences and difficulties we face.

"Praise God, brethren, with heart and soul and voice. Even when amid trials, **we should be the happiest people on the earth**, because our life is hid with Christ in God, and when He shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory. We are not living for the applause of the world; we are living for the future, immortal inheritance. We are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. **When sorrow takes hold of your soul, when persecuted and afflicted, lift up your head, for your redemption draweth nigh.** You are to have a life that measures with the life of God. **You are not to seek to meet the world's standard, but to be commandment-keepers, to be members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King, and to enjoy eternal riches.**"<sup>1</sup>

### HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE IN SUCH DISCOURAGING TIMES?

Even though we know that these things have been prophesied

and that there is something to look forward to, if you listen to the news and look at what's happening around you, it might seem impossible to lift up your head. But that's when we are to turn to God—the One and Only true Solution. Psalm 3:3 reads, "**But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.**" God is the one who is willing to lift up our heads—to spark hope in a hopeless heart, to spread light and dispel darkness, and to shield us from the prevailing wickedness.

### TWO OPPOSING CHARACTERS

Have you ever questioned where God is when we suffer, or why He allows hardship and ultimately persecution? He's there and He hears and He knows and He feels just what we're going through. "It is great kindness on the part of our heavenly Father when he allows us to be placed under **circumstances that lessen the attractions of earth**, and lead us to place our affections on things above. Frequently, the loss of earthly blessings teaches us more than their possession. When we pass through trials and afflictions, it is no evidence that Jesus does not love and bless us. **The pitying Lamb of God identifies His interest with that of His suffering ones. He guards them every moment.**"<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus lifts up your head, He's asking you to look to Him, to love Him more, to put your affections on things above. He only allows suffering to drive us closer to Him and purify our hearts from the worthless dross of this sin-loving world. God simply permits Satan to unveil his evil character and hideous nature. Throughout the great controversy, we see a revelation of God's loving care and merciful goodness contrasted with the enemy's fiendish desire for destruction and devastation.

"The time of trouble is the crucible that is to bring out Christ-like characters. . . . **The last conflict will reveal Satan to them in his true character**, that of a cruel tyrant, and it will do for them what nothing

else could do, uproot him entirely from their affections."<sup>3</sup>

### GOD IS STILL ON THE THRONE

When we look back throughout history, we see a record of men and women of faith—individuals who stood on the side of right, no matter the cost. We can observe that it was never easy for them. Nor should we expect it to be any different for us. Nevertheless, we find out that the all-powerful God of Heaven was always in control. No matter how dire the circumstances, God is over all. He promises to make "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

### HOW DO WE KNOW THIS?

We are instructed to give thanks, and praise God's name. We are to recount past blessings. Another wonderful encouragement is found in observing God's plan for Bible characters and watching how God has always been in control. "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore. Remember his **marvellous works** that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth" (Psalm 105:1-5).

So, let's go ahead and look at some examples:

### JOSEPH

Joseph had a dream—what seemed like an odd dream at the moment, but was actually a prophecy that nobody believed. How was the little kid going to receive the homage of his whole family? Although he was his dad's favorite child, even his dad wasn't too convinced of this idea, much less his brothers who hated him with intense jealousy.





*Whom will you worship? How far will your faith take you?*

*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn't stoop down and pretend to go with the flow. They were true to their God and stood firm to principle.*

Life soon got much worse for Joseph. His closest kin—his very own brothers—wanted to kill him but then decided to just throw him into a pit, while they enjoyed the food that he had traveled for days to bring them. As if that wasn't

enough, they then sold him to some nomadic merchantmen for a lifetime of slavery. As he was taken captive to an unknown country, he left the shelter of his home life, to instead be treated as a belonging. No longer was he the beloved son of his father. His life was valued at merely 20 pieces of silver.

Joseph had a harsh awakening to what a tough life meant. If anybody has an excuse to question God, it could have been Joseph. But instead, he made a commitment to follow the God of his fathers no matter what.

When he arrived in Egypt, he didn't stew in self-pity. Instead, he got busy and did his best at his assigned tasks. As a result of his faithful conduct, his owner noticed that everything he did prospered. Sadly though, Joseph would face even more injustice. He is falsely accused and sent to prison.

How would you feel if you were stuck far away from home in a foreign prison with no hope of escape? Would you cultivate a spirit of hopefulness and usefulness? Well, Joseph must have exhibited an extraordinary character, because we find out that the warden grew to trust and appreciate him and put him in charge of the other prisoners.

Had God forgotten about his servant, Joseph? Oh no. We read, "But **the Lord was with Joseph**, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (Genesis 39:21). The Lord was with Joseph through it all. And we all know the end of the story. God had a bigger plan for Joseph and every trial in Joseph's life served a purpose.

Later on, we see that Joseph recognized God's hand in turning the evil purposes of his brothers into the means of life for him, his family, and all of Egypt. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but **God meant it unto good**, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

Yes, God allowed a famine to come, but first He sent someone who would make provision so there wouldn't be a shortage of supplies: "Moreover he called

for a famine upon the land. . . . He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant" (Psalm 105:16, 17). As a result of this whole experience, it says, that God "increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies" (Psalm 105:24).

But what if Joseph hadn't kept his head lifted and his spirits high? I'm afraid we would find a very different end to this story. God worked mightily. Joseph was cooperative with God's plan.

### SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO

Whom will you worship? How far will your faith take you? These were the questions faced by the three young men in Babylon. They had grown up to be faithful, God-fearing young men. But now, their faith had brought them to the brink of death. The heathen Babylonian king had rejected God's vision of the future and set up an alternative version more suited to his prideful fantasy. A decree had gone forth that all the people should fall down and worship the imposing golden idol. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn't stoop down and pretend to go with the flow. They were true to their God and stood firm to principle.

The Chaldeans were ready to find fault and accuse the faithful children of God. Soon enough, the king got word of these young men. So, he called them in, offering them a second chance to recant their supposed "mistake" and join in the false worship. But they were not swayed. They made it clear that they had no intention of falling down and worshipping the image.

"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that **we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image** which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:17, 18). What faith! The three Hebrew worthies exhibited confidence in God's power and trust in God's will, no matter what.



They knew that God could save them from the burning furnace, but even if He didn't choose to work a miracle to save them physically, they were still committed to staying faithful. Why? Because they believed that God's will is perfect.

How many times do we let our faith be subject to a desired outcome? In other words, we pray for God to perform our will. If He doesn't, we tend to automatically get discouraged. But the lesson we learn here is to maintain an unshakable confidence in God's answers, even when they don't make sense to us at the moment. We must be ready to die rather than sacrifice our faith.

## DANIEL

We find a similar experience when we look at the story of Daniel and the lion's den in Daniel 6. Again, the worship of God was at stake. Daniel remained faithful. Though prayer was prohibited by law, Daniel understood that prayer is the life of the soul. Nothing could stop him from continuing to communicate with his Creator. He wasn't ashamed of his actions either; he opened the window, as usual. When he got thrown into the den of lions, I'm sure his prayer life continued even more ardently. We know that the Lord worked miraculously in the situation and ultimately, His name was vindicated, His follower was protected, and the evil culprits were destroyed.

## WILL YOU BE A CONQUEROR?

God is the expert in turning circumstances around. When people intend harm, God works through those very situations to bring good out of it. Though the future may appear dreary, we can look forward to watching God's hand at work on our behalf—we can lift up our heads and point our hopes heavenward.

"When the law of God has been made void, and apostasy becomes a national sin, the Lord will work in behalf of His people. **Their**

**extremity will be His opportunity. He will manifest His power in behalf of His church.**"<sup>4</sup> God is no different than He ever has been. In ages past, He has wrought mightily for His people. He will do the same for us, if we are on the Lord's side.

In *The Great Controversy*, there is a beautiful description of God's care for His followers in the end. We can and we should claim this promise over and over so that when we reach those difficult times, we'll remember the approaching outcome. "The people of God—some in prison cells, some hidden in solitary retreats in the forests and the mountains—still plead for divine protection, while in every quarter companies of armed men, urged on by hosts of evil angels, are preparing for the work of death. It is now, in the hour of utmost extremity, that the **God of Israel will interpose for the deliverance of His chosen.**"<sup>5</sup>

"Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty One of Israel. **And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard,** and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones" (Isaiah 30:29, 30). The question is: will we have a song when imprisoned? Will we have gladness of heart while suffering persecution and faced with death?

"With shouts of triumph, jeering, and imprecation, throngs of evil men are about to rush upon their prey, when, lo, a dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth. **Then a rainbow, shining with the glory from the throne of God, spans the heavens and seems to encircle each praying company.** The angry multitudes are suddenly arrested. Their mocking cries die away. The objects of their murderous rage are forgotten. With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the symbol of God's covenant

and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness.

**"By the people of God a voice, clear and melodious, is heard, saying, 'Look up,' and lifting their eyes to the heavens, they behold the bow of promise.** The black, angry clouds that covered the firmament are parted, and like Stephen they look up steadfastly into heaven and **see the glory of God and the Son of man seated upon His throne.** In His divine form they discern the marks of His humiliation; and from His lips they hear the request presented before His Father and the holy angels: 'I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.' John 17:24. Again a voice, musical and triumphant, is heard, saying: 'They come! they come! **holy, harmless, and undefiled.** They have kept the word of My patience; they shall walk among the angels;' and the pale, quivering lips of those who have held fast their faith utter a **shout of victory.**"<sup>6</sup>

In order to look up in that day, we have to practice looking up spiritually today. We must, as the eagle, be soaring above the clouds of this world. Our minds need to focus on where we're headed—where we belong.

Are you a resident *of* this world or are you just a pilgrim *in* this world? If you want to be victorious, you must be holy, harmless, and undefiled. So, don't be content to preoccupy yourself with the sin and suffering in this world, because those things are temporary.

A glorious day is coming. . . . We are on the brink of eternity. . . . Are you ready? "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9).

God's name will be vindicated. His people will be saved. So, look up! *R*

## References

<sup>1</sup> *The Review and Herald*, September 3, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, August 12, 1884.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 388.

<sup>5</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 635.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 635, 636.



# MAN OF PRAYER— MAN OF POWER

By Septimiu & Bethany Muresan



## BENT!

What a shame... How could we have done that? We all were so distracted when that happened. Now, we find ourselves in big trouble. Especially me. I was the oldest one in that group of children. What would my parents say? How embarrassing for the son of a minister.

During a winter vacation, we were visiting our sanitarium. There were no patients at the time, so we as children were free to enjoy the exercise room. Staff members in other parts of the building were busy cleaning and preparing the premises for the first session in the new year. So, since the adults were busy, we as children found plenty of time to have fun playing in this gym. We made tents using the mattresses, we jumped on the massage bed pretending it was a trampoline, and we made up lots of activities for ourselves to enjoy.

Finally, when it was time for us to put things back into order, I realized that the crank of the massage bed was bent and it was beyond our strength to pull it back into its normal position. The bed would no longer function properly for its medical purposes. . . . We were so scared. We well knew how many efforts our church had made to establish that

health center as a light in the community.

At lunchtime, I quietly asked one of the strongest-looking young men I could find in the room to come and help me. He pulled the crank with all his strength, but it simply wouldn't straighten. He excused himself even though he felt sorry for us. Now, my fears only grew. What could I do? Everyone would find out and I would be so embarrassed.

But then a thought occurred to me. Something that might save the day! I would pray. And pray I did. I hoped that God would give me supernatural strength. And I believed that. Despite my childish fears, I put my trust in God. I prayed with all my heart. After that, trusting in God's help, I started pulling the crank. It was totally amazing for me to see that suddenly I was able to pull it back into position.

It might be a childhood experience, but for me it was the first time when I had really "experimented" with God in prayer in a big way. We have the greatest privilege to experience God in prayer! When there is no other human solution and no powerful guy to help us, God invites us to put our whole confidence in Him.

## LACKING HUMAN SOLUTIONS

Have you ever been in a situation where there just wasn't any way out—where there was no solution in sight? We like to be in control of things. Sometimes, though, life spirals out of control. We realize that we are powerless to change our circumstances or the state of the world or ourselves. Then what?

In this article, we'll be looking at the secret to power. No, we won't be talking about the art of warfare to conquer, because history shows us that many so-called "conquerors" were often lacking power in their personal lives. We're not talking about some self-help mechanism that relies on the innate power within our being—because that's not enough. "We cannot change our hearts, we cannot control our thoughts, our impulses, our affections."<sup>1</sup> If we cannot even change ourselves, how about fixing other people or the world around us?

The challenges we face in this day and age often appear insurmountable. Today's society offers no lasting remedy. Differing factions propose sometimes-plausible explanations, but how many offer true solutions? It seems that the news



changes from one day to the next—always taking a turn for the worse.

Now, the good news is that amid whatever is going on, there shines a beacon of opportunity. The question is: Do we want to make bad situations even worse or do we want to make use of the privilege that brings hope and power within our reach?

“The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of the privileges that God has given them in the divine appointment of prayer. Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven’s storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence?”<sup>2</sup>

## A MEGA-STORM ON THE HORIZON

There is talk of a “new normal”—and as bleak as the outlook is at this point, we must realize that there’s nothing normal about what lies ahead. “In our land of boasted freedom, religious liberty will come to an end.”<sup>3</sup> At the end of it all, we know that freedom of religion will be sacrificed. In the process, however, many other fundamental liberties are being extinguished. The shallow promises of safety and security are costing us our freedoms.

Regardless of how the politics and logistics play out, the overall outcome is clear. Whether it’s now or whether God sees fit to delay the loosening of the four winds in fullest measure is not for us to know. What we do know for certain is that a crisis is approaching and the only way to be prepared is to connect ourselves with the Omnipotent One.

How do we achieve this vital connection? It is through prayer that humans have the possibility of connection and communication with our Creator—the all-powerful One. This is a one-of-a-kind experience. Nowhere else can we find such peace in time of danger, such hope amid despair.

“It was by self-surrender and

confiding faith that Jacob gained what he had failed to gain by conflict in his own strength. God thus taught His servant that divine power and grace alone could give him the blessing he craved. Thus it will be with those who live in the last days. **As dangers surround them, and despair seizes upon the soul, they must depend solely upon the merits of the atonement.** We can do nothing of ourselves. In all our helpless unworthiness we must trust in the merits of the crucified and risen Saviour. None will ever perish while they do this. . . . He who listened to the cries of His servants of old, will hear the prayer of faith and pardon our transgressions. He has promised, and He will fulfill His word.”<sup>4</sup>

## ENTIRE DEPENDENCE ON GOD IS OUR ONLY HOPE

Regardless of what goes on around us, we should desire to place our trust in God and in His promises. Then we, like the psalmist, will be able to say: “In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me” (Psalm 56:11).

This attitude, founded in an ongoing connection with the Almighty and trust in God’s Providence and wisdom, creates courage in the heart of the believer. We know what lies beyond the clouds. By faith, we may see the light at the end of the tunnel.

“Why do we not show that we have a living Saviour, one who can walk with us in the darkness as well as in the light, and that we can trust in Him? . . .

“We have seen clouds interpose between us and the sun, but we did not mourn and clothe ourselves in sackcloth for fear that we should never see the sun again. We manifested no anxiety about it, but waited as cheerfully as possible until the cloud passed away and revealed the sun. Just so in our trials and temptations. Clouds may seem to shut from us the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness; but we know that the face of our Redeemer is not forever hidden. He is looking upon us with love and tender compassion. Let us not cast away our confidence,

which hath great recompense of reward, but when clouds hang over the soul, let us keep our eyes fixed where we can see the Sun of Righteousness, and rejoice that we have a living Saviour. Think how beautiful was the light which we enjoyed, keep the mind stayed on Jesus, and the light will again shine upon us, and dismal thoughts will flee. We shall have joy in Christ, and shall go singing on our way to Mount Zion.”<sup>5</sup>

We serve a living Saviour. Don’t we see His hand of mercy, recognize His voice of cheer? If maybe we’ve forgotten what it means to find joy in Christ, then it’s time to turn the eyes of faith Heavenward, through prayer. An answer will come. Beams of holy joy will shine through. The question for us is: Is our faith persevering?

The Bible admonishes us: “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:6). And the promise is: “The fervent prayer of the righteous is never lost. The answer may not come according as we expected, but it will come, because God’s word is pledged.”<sup>6</sup>

## HISTORY CONFIRMS THE POWER OF PRAYER

There are so many powerful examples of prayer—in the Bible, throughout Christianity, and hopefully in your daily life. Let’s look at the versatility of prayer for a moment. No matter where you are or what you’re facing, the power of prayer is not just at your fingertips; it’s literally a thought away.

“Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. . . . And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time” (Nehemiah 2:4, 6).

“The man of God did not venture to reply till he had sought direction from One higher than Artaxerxes. He had a sacred trust to fulfill, in which he required help





*Prayer brings us closer to the Creator. That means we must be willing to be ennobled, to be brought into closer likeness to the image of God. "Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him."*

from the king; and he realized that much depended upon his presenting the matter in such a way as to win his approval and enlist his aid. 'I prayed,' he said, 'to the God of heaven.' In that brief prayer Nehemiah pressed into the presence of the King of kings and won to his side a power that can turn hearts as the rivers of waters are turned.

"To pray as Nehemiah prayed in his hour of need is a resource at the command of the Christian under circumstances when other forms of prayer may be impossible. Toilers in the busy walks of life, crowded and almost overwhelmed with perplexity, can send up a petition to God for divine guidance. Travelers by sea and land, when threatened with some great danger, can thus commit themselves to Heaven's protection. In times of sudden difficulty or peril the heart may send up its cry for help to One who has pledged Himself to come to the aid of His faithful, believing ones whenever they call upon Him."<sup>7</sup>

Another example of the power of prayer is found in 2 Kings 19. Here we find a lesson as to the purpose of prayer.

"And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. Lord, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only" (2 Kings 19:15-19).

Oftentimes, we might pray. But what is the attitude with which we come? Is it simply because we want some blessing or another? Or is it with the heart-felt purpose of glo-

rifying God? This is something for us to consider. "If we will come to God as little children, asking for His grace and power and salvation, not for our own uplifting, but that we may bring blessing to those around us, our petitions will not be denied. Then let us study the Word of God that we may know how to take hold of His promises and claim them as our own."<sup>8</sup>

Prayer brings us closer to the Creator. That means we must be willing to be ennobled, to be brought into closer likeness to the image of God. "Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him."<sup>9</sup>

### PRAYER CREATES A PURE CHARACTER

Are you hoping for success in the Christian life? Do you want strength to overcome? Do you desire power, wisdom, and strength? "**Prayer is heaven's ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character.** The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, 'Ye shall receive.' "<sup>10</sup>

"We must be much in prayer if we would make progress in the divine life. When the message of truth was first proclaimed, how much we prayed. How often was the voice of intercession heard in the chamber, in the barn, in the orchard, or the grove. Frequently we spent hours in earnest prayer, two or three together claiming the promise; often the sound of weeping was heard and then the voice of thanksgiving and the song of praise. Now the day of God is nearer than when we first believed, and we should be more earnest, more zealous, and fervent than in those early days. Our perils are greater now than then."<sup>11</sup>

We don't need to be worrying. We know that we live in perilous times, but the Bible instructs us: "Be



## When our lives are characterized by prayer, God is able to work mightily in our behalf. “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet” (Psalm 91:13).

careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6). Worrying won’t help, but praying will.

“Secret prayer sustains this inner life. The heart that loves God will desire to commune with Him, and will lean on Him in holy confidence.”<sup>12</sup>

“True prayer takes hold upon Omnipotence and gives us the victory. Upon his knees the Christian obtains strength to resist temptation.”<sup>13</sup>

### PRAYER WORKS WONDERS

When our lives are characterized by prayer, God is able to work mightily in our behalf. “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet” (Psalm 91:13)

What do you think of Daniel? How could he have survived the lions? Hadn’t many others threatened with similar conditions died? What made the difference? God promises that if we ask according to His will, He will grant us our request. Daniel simply believed, trusted, and asked for Divine Protection. He probably asked that God would allow him to live and be a testimony there in Medo-Persia. We can see that this was part of his life to be in close connection with his Creator. He did not fear. In answer to his prayer, God closed the mouths of the lions.

Do you think that Daniel would have survived in the lion’s den had it not been for his faithfulness? Even the king recognized that Daniel

served God continually. Thus, God vindicated the cause of his servant. Daniel was a prayer warrior. If this godly man prayed three times a day in normal circumstances, imagine how hard he must have been praying that night, surrounded as he was by those wild beasts ready to devour him at any moment!

Earlier, we already explored the fact that prayer brings us close to our Creator. This is where all true hope is found. “It is only through Christ that Satan’s power is limited.”<sup>14</sup> That should be reason enough to make us want to stay close to Christ, through prayer.

### THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RESPONSE TO PRAYER MAKES GOD’S PEOPLE INVINCIBLE

There’s something else we should be praying for as well. “Every church is in need of the controlling power of the Holy Spirit; and now is the time to pray for it.”<sup>15</sup>

We won’t receive this special blessing unless we recognize our need and ask for it in earnestness. “Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received.”<sup>16</sup>

It is our duty to prepare for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is only possible as we fix our eyes upon Jesus—the perfect Pattern. He will aid us and send the Holy Spirit to guide us each step of the way. Christ will give us the strength necessary to perfect our characters and do a mighty work in His cause.

Prayer gives us hope, power, confidence, courage, and strength

in a world filled with despair and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. God wants to give us the Holy Spirit in greater measure than ever. Are we ready to embrace that promise and claim His invincible power in our lives?

When you look backwards, don’t look at the problems in your life. Look at what God has done for you, look at what tremendous lessons you gained from every difficult trial! Write your problems in sand but engrave your special moments in stone! Look backwards with understanding and look forward with hope and faith! Grasp the arm of God! Grasp it with tremendous confidence!

“Let us look to the monumental pillars, reminders of what the Lord has done to comfort us and to save us from the hand of the destroyer. Let us keep fresh in our memory all the tender mercies that God has shown us—the tears He has wiped away, the pains He has soothed, the anxieties removed, the fears dispelled, the wants supplied, the blessings bestowed—thus strengthening ourselves for all that is before us through the remainder of our pilgrimage.”<sup>17</sup> *R*

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- <sup>1</sup> *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 176.
- <sup>2</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 94.
- <sup>3</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 236.
- <sup>4</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 202. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>5</sup> *Our High Calling*, p. 65.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- <sup>7</sup> *Prophets and Kings*, p. 631.
- <sup>8</sup> *In Heavenly Places*, p. 113.
- <sup>9</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 93.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 564. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>11</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 161, 162.
- <sup>12</sup> *Our High Calling*, p. 130.
- <sup>13</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 615.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 294.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 266.
- <sup>16</sup> *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 327.
- <sup>17</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 125.





# GOOD NEWS FOR SOME— BAD NEWS FOR OTHERS

By Rômulo P. Borges

Every day we are receiving news. We would like the news to be only good—but unfortunately, we also get bad news. The amazing thing is that the same news can be good for some and bad for others. A clear example is the second coming of Christ with the establishment of His heavenly kingdom. This event will be bad news for the wicked, but for Christians the best news of all. Throughout the centuries, the children of God have cherished this great hope of seeing the end of the history of sin and the glorious triumph of good over evil. In the establishment of Christ's eternal kingdom was His assurance of victory and salvation. In that event, all Old Testament patriarchs and prophets were comforted. Likewise, in the New Testament period, the holy men of God had in this event their inspiration and motivation to live with Christ and for Christ. And we, too, have this hope.

We want to see the King, we want to participate in His royalty, participate in His life and His glory. This glorious manifestation will be good news for God's people; it will be the deliverance that "Michael,

the great Prince" will provide for the sincere and faithful according to the prophetic narrative. But the same Michael who stands up for His people, will stand up against His enemies to destroy them—then His manifestation will be good news for God's people and bad news for those who will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

## THE BOOK OF DANIEL: GOOD AND BAD NEWS

The book of Daniel is an important and impressive anthology of divine revelation. The book is full of interesting dreams, visions and interpretations. These outline the march and purpose of history—the rise and fall of great empires, God's involvement in human affairs, how God's people are often oppressed, and how God intervenes to ensure protection, deliverance, and salvation for His children.

This prophetic book emphasizes that the Great Judge has control of all things in His hands and that truth will triumph and iniquity will be destroyed. The prophet Daniel's

record also presents good news for some and bad news for others.

Within this context, we will highlight a part of the last vision given to the prophet:

"But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 11:44–12:3).





## GLIMPSES OF THE PROPHECIES

In Daniel 11, God's detailed account of world events to the end is presented. It is a reliable account drawn up by the Omniscient One—He who knows everything.

"The complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations, He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of the earth."<sup>1</sup>

In this regard, Daniel 11 is one of the most comprehensive descriptions found in the Old Testament. Studying this chapter, we discover details regarding the Roman Empire and the battles between the King of the North and the King of the South. These details also reflect the attacks on God's people, thus displaying yet another picture of the battle waged against the faithful of God as described earlier in the preceding chapters of Daniel 7 and 8.

Taking into account the prophetic harmony that exists between the books of Daniel and of Revelation, we see in chapters 13 to 19 of Revelation, that papal Rome (as incorporated in the great Babylon) is identified as an apostate, oppressive and persecuting power against the

people of God. In view of this, there is strong evidence in Daniel 11:44, 45 of a connection with that power (papal Rome) that rises against Heaven, against the truth, and against the children of God.

In the prophetic revelation of Daniel 11, there is a sequence of the rise and fall of kingdoms. Between ascents and falls, powerful iron Rome emerges. From pagan Rome, a new empire emerged: papal Rome. Papal Rome emerged after the Christian church decayed in piety and distanced itself from the divine truths that made it a separate and peculiar church.

In view of this, the church that should have remained pure—without merging with civil power—lost its purity and allied itself with the State. It presumptuously thought to change biblical truth by adding human traditions, mixing the sacred with the profane, imposing its will with the support of the weapons of the State—and all this in the name of faith. The apostate church became the ecclesiastical political empire of papal Rome.

Although there are many divergences in the interpretation of Daniel chapter 11, especially regarding the King of the North, most scholars of

this prophecy agree that the power cited in the final two verses (Daniel 11:44, 45) is a persecuting power that will be regimented against God's people, but it will be annihilated (Daniel 11:45). Yes, Michael the Great Prince stands up for the children of God. Thus, chapter 11 climaxes with the final attack on God's people. But the good news is that victory is already guaranteed for the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. All those who love Jesus will win.

## MICHAEL STANDS UP FOR HIS PEOPLE

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1).

When reading the above verse, some questions arise: Who is Michael? What time of trouble is this? What is the book and to whom is it ascribed? In answering these questions, it appears that God intervenes in a wonderful way in the last



events in history and differentiates between His treatment of the saints and the wicked, in relation to His people and His enemies. Anyway, there is good news for some and bad news for others.

## MICHAEL, THE GREAT PRINCE

The word Michael means: "Who is like God?" The main biblical references about Michael are in Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7.

"The words of the angel, 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God,' show that he holds a position of high honor in the heavenly courts. When he came with a mes-

sage to Daniel, he said, 'There is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael [Christ] your Prince.' Daniel 10:21. Of Gabriel the Saviour speaks in the Revelation, saying that 'He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.' Revelation 1:1. And to John the angel declared, 'I am a fellow servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets.' Revelation 22:9, R. V. Wonderful thought—that the angel who stands next in honor to the Son of God is the one chosen to open the purposes of God to sinful men."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, Michael is another name given to Christ. He is the heavenly guardian of God's people who will rise when the apostate

power and its allies are focused on destroying the children of God.

## THE TIME OF TROUBLE

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book.' Daniel 12:1. When this time of trouble comes, every case is decided; there is no longer probation, no longer mercy for the impenitent. The seal of the living God is upon His people. This small remnant, unable to defend themselves in the deadly conflict with the powers of earth that are marshaled by the dragon host, make God their defense."<sup>3</sup>

"When the third angel's message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. The people of God have accomplished their work. They have received 'the latter rain,' 'the refreshing from the presence of the Lord,' and they are prepared for the trying hour before them.

## THE MAIN EVENTS RELATED TO THAT TIME ARE:

- The gospel will have been preached throughout the world under the power of the latter rain.
- Papal Rome and its confederation are enraged by the universal preaching of the gospel exposing their farces and heresies.
- Those who have accepted the gospel message under the loud cry and have been demonstrated as faithful and loyal to God and His law have been sealed with the seal of God.
- The time of probation closes and the case of all the inhabitants of the planet is decided for life or for death.
- The investigative judgment ends with the conclusion of Jesus' priestly work in the heavenly sanctuary.
- The forces of evil are enlisted against the people of God to destroy them.
- The last seven plagues are poured out (Revelation 16)—

God's judgments unmingled with mercy.

- The final anguish of the people of God takes place and their deliverance in the glorious manifestation of Jesus Christ, Michael the archangel.





Angels are hastening to and fro in heaven. An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received 'the seal of the living God.' Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, 'It is done;' and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as He makes the solemn announcement: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' Revelation 22:11. Every case has been decided for life or death. Christ has made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The number of His subjects is made up; 'the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven,' is about to be given to the heirs of salvation, and Jesus is to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords."<sup>4</sup>

### THE BOOK AND THOSE WHO ARE REGISTERED IN IT

The book quoted at the end of Daniel 12:1, "thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" refers to the book of life (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 20:15; etc.), also called the Lamb's Book of Life:

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Revelation 3:5).

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27).

The book of life contains the names of the children of God, those who were judged in the investigative judgment, who had their sins blotted out from the record books and were declared righteous by the great Judge. These names remained in the book and were not crossed

out. Michael stands up for those whose names were written and remained in that book.

"When we become children of God, our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and they remain there until the time of the investigative judgment. Then the name of every individual will be called, and his record examined, by Him who declares, 'I know thy works.' If in that day it shall appear that all our wicked deeds have not been fully repented of, our names will be blotted from the book of life, and our sins will stand against us."<sup>5</sup>

### THE SPECIAL RESURRECTION PORTRAYED IN PROPHECY

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

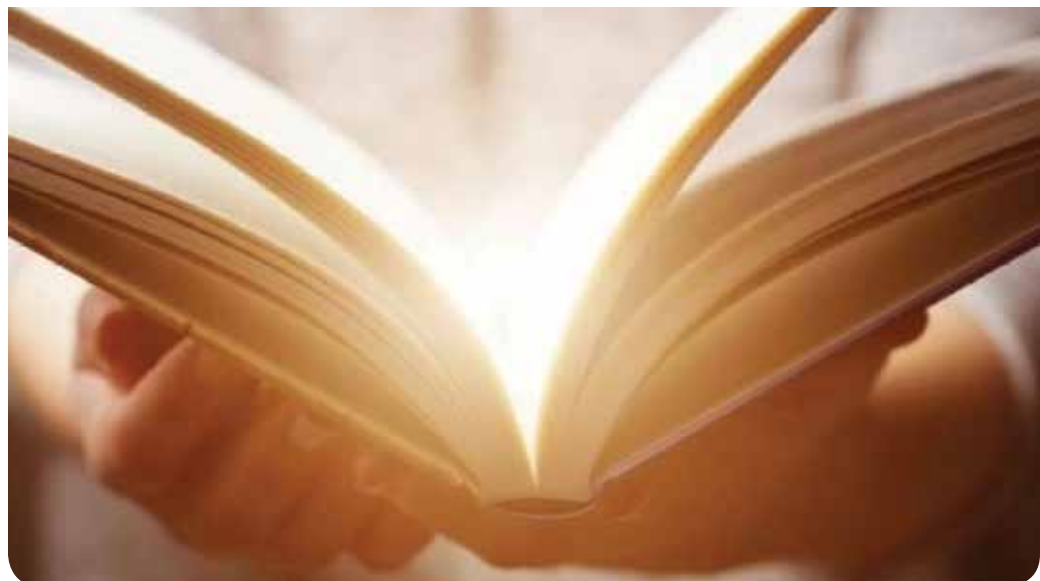
At Christ's second advent, only the righteous will be resurrected (1 Thessalonians 4:16) and after the millennium, in the second resurrection, only the wicked will be resurrected for the final judgment (Revelation 20:5, 6). Therefore, the

text above describes a mixed resurrection that occurs at the voice of God, shortly before the return of Jesus Christ. This resurrection is made up of the just and the unjust. The righteous are the faithful who died under the threefold angels' message and the unjust are those who pierced Christ, including also the fiercest enemies of the truth.

We read in Revelation 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" sheds light on the understanding of this great truth. All those who were connected with Christ's condemnation at His first advent as the Son of man are resurrected just before the second advent to witness His glorious return (Matthew 26:64).

"That voice [of God] shakes the heavens and the earth. There is a mighty earthquake, 'such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.' Revelation 16:17, 18. The firmament appears to open and shut. The glory from the throne of God seems flashing through. The mountains shake like a reed in the wind, and ragged rocks are scattered on every side. . . .

*"When we become children of God, our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and they remain there until the time of the investigative judgment. . . ."*





# "If our wicked deeds have not been fully repented of, our names will be blotted from the book of life."

"Graves are opened, and 'many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth . . . awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' Daniel 12:2. All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. 'They also which pierced Him' (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient."<sup>6</sup>

## THE ETERNAL MORNING AND THE ETERNAL NIGHT

Christ's manifestation in the clouds of heaven marks the end of the history of sin and the beginning of eternity. On the Saviour's glorious return, the eternal day will dawn for all of God's faithful children. But this event that brings life and triumph to the winners marks the evening of the eternal night of sin for the wicked. It is the end of those who were unfaithful; the end of lovers of the world and sin.

"With earnest longing, God's people await the tokens of their coming King. As the watchmen are accosted, 'What of the night?' the answer is given unfalteringly, 'The morning cometh, and also the night.' Isaiah 21:11, 12. Light is gleaming upon the clouds above the mountaintops. Soon there will be a revealing of His glory. The Sun of Righteousness is about to shine forth. The morning and the night are both at hand—the opening of endless day to the righteous, the settling down of eternal night to the wicked."<sup>7</sup>

On that great day, the separation of humanity will occur. The difference between the just and the wicked will be seen very clearly, between those who do God's will and those who do not.

The children of God who sleep in the dust of the earth will rise immortal and the living will be transformed, because "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:52, 53).

The children of God will be brought forth to meet the King and the wicked will be destined for eternal destruction (Matthew 25:41).

## THE WISE WILL SHINE

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

This verse reveals the reward of those who have shone as lights in the world. The righteous absorbed the truth and shared it. They were not selfish! The person who truly discerns the things of God knows the need to share this message with others. Divine wisdom leads one to be a propagator of the knowledge of God's will, His ways, and His empowering love.

"In order to determine how important are the interests involved in the conversion of the soul from error to truth, we must appreciate the value of immortality; we must realize how terrible are the pains of the second death; we must comprehend the honor and glory awaiting the ransomed, and understand what it is to live in the presence of Him who died that He might elevate and ennoble man, and give to the overcomer a royal diadem."<sup>8</sup>

"Though kings shall be cast down, and nations removed, the souls that through faith link themselves with God's purposes shall abide forever. 'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever' (Daniel 12:3)."<sup>9</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The words of the prophecy point to two distinct groups: those who serve God and those who do not—and the fate of each group in the final controversy. Over the course of history, God's people were mistreated and persecuted by the enemies of truth, but they were supported and sustained by the Lord.

One of the most impressive aspects of all this is that, from the manifestation of God's enemies to the intervention of Michael the great prince, there is good news for some and bad news for others. Now, the significant question is: In the final scenes of the history of this world, where will you be? Among the saved or among the lost? Is the manifestation of Christ in glory good news or bad news for you?

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . . Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:31–34, 41).

My prayer is that we may be awarded the King's welcome—the good news of deliverance and salvation. May we enjoy the privilege of dwelling with Christ and the redeemed through the endless centuries of eternity. AMEN! *R*

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *Education*, p. 178.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 99.
- <sup>3</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 212, 213.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 613.
- <sup>5</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 987.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613, 614.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 632.
- <sup>8</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 620.
- <sup>9</sup> *This Day With God*, p. 352.



# WHEN THE CELESTIAL REALITIES OPEN BEFORE OUR EYES

By Marius Stroia



## REAL NEWS

In a world of ongoing informational warfare, the quest for what is real, may prove of vital importance. And it looks as if the more news we are being exposed to, the less we know for sure. In this case, “no news” is definitely better than some false information, since the one who doesn’t know is at least aware of this fact and stays alert, while the one who believes that he or she knows everything, relying upon wrong sources, is being lulled into a false feeling of safety, which is correspondingly more dangerous.

There has never before been a time when information was so easily and rapidly circulated around. But although the times we live in are absolutely unique in this respect and there is an unprecedented amount of information distributed every day, we cannot claim that we know more than the preceding generations, nor that we are happier because of it.

As a matter of fact, we keep receiving contradictory news, each party claiming to be right and to know better than anybody else. “Fake news” is a widely-used tool to manipulate the masses to act according to the plans and interests of certain groups and the media (whether it be mainstream media, alternative media, or last but not least social media) plays a tremendous part in it.

Speaking about the end-time

circumstances, the Bible anticipates almost universal confusion, saying that “none of the wicked shall understand” and it is only “the wise” who “shall understand” (Daniel 12:10) because they relate to the One who is “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). And this doesn’t apply only to controversial daily news or to the real causes of certain events, but to very reality as such! Because people will have a hard time telling apart reality from illusion—which is both dangerous and harmful—they are likely to trade their fortune, their resources, and ultimately even their life for things they regard as being real and which will finally turn out to be mere deceptive illusions.

Oftentimes, people consider as real only those things they can see, feel, touch, i.e., perceive with their senses. And they regard all other things which they cannot apprehend with their immediate perception as being unreal. Yet, it must not necessarily be so! The “real things” are supposed to be there, to be lasting and enduring, and not to vanish away in the flash of a second as a dream. In spite of that, many people view this world and its material objects as real, because they can feel them, and, since they cannot perceive them with their senses, they consider the spiritual, immaterial things as unreal. Nonetheless, the Bible says, that “the things which are seen are temporal; but the things

which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Regarded from this perspective, the immediate, material things people enjoy during their relatively short life on earth are like a tiny, irrelevant drop in the endless ocean of eternity. They are actually the shadow, the dream, the illusion when compared to the immortal, everlasting realities of eternity—which, in the long run, are the only real facts.

It would be wise on our part to be aware of the transient character of this world and the things belonging to it, and to grant them importance accordingly: “And those who use the things in the world as though they were not dependent on them. For the world in its present form is passing away” (1 Corinthians 7:31, NIV). The same thought is emphasized by the apostle John, who explains that “the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:17)—as well as by the apostle Peter, reminding us that: “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

This same idea is visually depicted in King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream by the stone rolling down



and hitting the image representing the world's empires, destroying them unto dust and growing into a huge mountain, that would last forever, as God's never-ending kingdom (Daniel 2:44, 45).

In fact, this is the only reality, which actually deserves bearing this name—everything else being a mere illusion, even though apparently supported by “material evidence.”

Throughout time, God's promise of “a new heaven and a new earth” was to keep these celestial realities alive in the people's hearts and minds. And the “sure word of prophecy” was to provide the milestones of human history, indicating where we are on the timeline of unfolding events.

## THE END-TIMES

The Bible talks about a beginning and an end of the world, which is to be preceded by some end times. During these end times, shortly before the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, some unique events are due to happen:

The Bible foretells among others “famines and pestilences” (Matthew 24:7) that will lead to “troubles,” and these will be just “the beginnings of sorrows” (Mark 13:8).

“The commencement of that time of trouble,’ here mentioned does not refer to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a short period just before they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary. At that time, while the work of salvation is closing, trouble will be coming on the earth, and the nations will be angry, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the ‘latter rain,’ or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out.”<sup>1</sup>

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the

earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:11–17).

Before this end-time prophecy is to be fulfilled, there are several things which need to happen in order to make it possible:

1. There needs to be some form of international, global government with jurisdiction over “all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond.”
2. To impose such sanctions, the fundamental human rights and basic liberties of the people need to be suspended and the democratic freedoms, as we know them, to be done away with.
3. In order for the people to be ready and willing to give up their freedom, there needs to be some dramatic event to scare them out of their wits, so that they would agree to trade their freedom for the illusion of safety.
4. There needs to be some kind of worldwide, universal administrative structure, to keep record of the people and to distinguish the ones who are to receive the mark of the beast from those who refuse it.

5. Since the latter ones, the so-called “outlaws” are supposed to be banned from any economic activity, there needs to be a technical way of blocking the accounts of the noncompliant ones. A cashless society based exclusively on cards and online banking provides the perfect conditions for that.

6. An atmosphere of suspicion needs to be created, so that the ones who refuse to receive the mark are to be presented as a “social danger” and a “public threat” to the effect that persecution against them (i.e., those who will actually be those obedient to the invisible God) should have the endorsement of society.

7. The issue at stake will be a religious one, and it will have to do with worship, since in Revelation chapters 13 and 14, people are warned against worshipping the beast and its image.

## WHAT'S GOING ON NOW?

Out of these 7 conditions listed above, the first 6 are being quite fulfilled by the latest developments. . . . But, let's take a look at the current situation: Without getting into speculations about how large-scale was the actual reality concerning the danger of the COVID-19 pandemic, at least one thing is certain: The consequences, economically as well as socially, are real for sure! In spite of the fact that it hasn't been the most widespread or the deadliest pandemic ever—and not even close to some other pestilences which have plagued the human race—there are still some unprecedented features of this situation:

1. It was probably the first time in world's history in which more than half of the world's population, in around 50 countries, has been put into some form of lockdown (or maybe the second, if you also count the time Noah and his family spent in the ark).
2. It has been remarkable to see that countries traditionally an-



tagonistic to one another—countries such as China, the USA and Russia—adopted a more or less similar approach to the situation, and took drastic measures in spite of the fact that these would deeply affect their economies. (In the USA alone over 40 million jobless claims were reported soon afterwards.) But in the face of a common enemy, national interests may become secondary and nations can unite at a world-wide level to promote their common agenda—just as the book of Revelation foretells.

3. Since this was considered a worldwide problem, a worldwide solution was required, which led to the call for some supranational authority, which should coordinate the response—which echoes an older request for “a true world political authority”—made by the Pope in his *Laudato Si*. It will be advocated that only a global government will be able to deal with the crisis properly. And what will begin as hygienic, sanitary, social and economical measures, will eventually turn into compulsory religious measures for all the inhabitants of the earth.
4. It has been shown how easily one individual may become a suspect or a public enemy, without having to do anything special to this effect. Or how, even in a democratic society, one may be imprisoned in his own home for an indefinite period of time without any charge at all, just because he is “suspected” of being infected. All this shows how frail and unstable all the democratic values and freedoms may prove to be and how fast the world we once knew may change to a totally new reality.
5. The reasoning that cash transactions may contribute to the spread of some kind of infection may easily lead to a cashless society, in which all transactions should be conducted exclusively by means of cards and bank

transfers. The tragic death of George Floyd and the subsequent riots can be tracked back to the mistake of having paid cash with a 20-dollar bill which was suspected to be fake. But how many of us check bills for their authenticity, when giving or receiving cash (or even know how to)? And it’s highly likely that this will also be turned into a reason to plead for a cashless society.

6. Large-scale riots and lootings may come along with the economic recession and the escalating violence may bring about more drastic measures from the authorities, which will take more and more powers and reduce the civil rights of individuals. Presently we can see the National Guard and other U.S. troops deployed on the streets of large American cities as a response to the civil unrest, and people fear that the curfews may be transformed into Martial Law to protect against the so-called “domestic terrorism.”

## WHAT IS NEXT?

Apparently, the stage is set, ready for the unfolding of the prophetic events prior to Jesus’ second coming, the fulfillment of which we are closer than ever before. Facing the present confusion and anticipating the future turmoil and chaos, some choose to enjoy the present moment to the utmost; others choose to go out on the streets, while still others choose to become preppers, hoarding food, medicine and survival gear, hoping to survive whatever situation may come up, and to continue living happily in this world after its main problems have been fixed.

In reality, the only true preppers—those who will make it into a better world—are the ones who get spiritually prepared by allowing the Holy Spirit to change their lives and characters into the likeness of Christ. It is only those who will be able to stand firm through the coming trials and reach the blessed shore of eternity.

In that new world, which God has prepared for His faithful children, “He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:3, 4).

That’s the difference between the human transient “realities” and God’s eternal reality in which He is on the verge of bringing to pass. And He assures us that the words about Him making all things new “are true and faithful” (Revelation 21:5).

Actually, faith is nothing else than a more profound form of realism, which takes into consideration the unseen realities, which will eventually prevail over the illusion created by the material world: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) And on the soon coming day of the Lord—“when the faith shall be sight,”—all the overcomers will triumphantly proclaim: “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isaiah 25:9).

But until then, let us live in faith, one day at a time, letting our hearts go on singing and holding fast “the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Hebrews 3:6), knowing that we “shall see him by and by.” It is then that we will meet Him again, our hearts shall rejoice, and no man will ever take our joy away (John 16:22) because we shall be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17), enjoying the wonderful and everlasting celestial realities, such as “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). *R*

## References

<sup>1</sup> *Early Writings*, p. 85. [Emphasis added.]



## 1) Baptisms in the Philippines

The two baptisms were held on June 20 in Buntis and August 7, at Bacolod City.

*The brethren in the Philippines recently had the opportunity to welcome fourteen precious souls to our SDARM family.*



## 2) Baptism in Sesimbra, Portugal

October 4, 2020

On October 4, 2020, a baptism was held in Lagoa de Albufeira in Sesimbra, Portugal.

*That Sunday, our church family in Portugal grew as it welcomed four new brethren in Christ. Brother Pedro Conceição performed the baptism of three souls, and another brother was also fellowshiped along with the newly baptized members.*



## 3) Ordination Ceremony in Rwanda

September 24, 2020

*On September 24th, 2020, an ordination ceremony was held in our church in Rwanda. We praise the Lord for the health of our brethren, and that the Rwandan police authorized the ordination service after the mandatory COVID-19 tests returned negative.*



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MOVING? Please let us know.

# Right in God's Eyes

The Bible speaks of a very sad time in history when “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

It might sound okay to do whatever we want, but does that always turn out well?

What would happen to a child who really liked candy and would always eat as much as he/she wanted any time of day or night? Would that child stay healthy—or finally get sick? I think we know the answer. . . .

What about if some mean people would come to steal from you and hurt you because they decided that was okay to do? Would that be nice or would it be bad? I think we know the answer. . . .

Sometimes people think things are right when they are not really right at all. This makes big problems for everyone.

So, how do we know what is right?

God wrote with His own finger on two tables of stone a set of ten rules. We have ten fingers to help us remember them. Yes, you have heard of them—the Ten Commandments.

Jesus, the Son of God, came to Earth in human flesh to live a perfect life and show us how to live by the Ten Commandments. He even allowed Himself to die so we can be forgiven for all those times we have not done right. In God's strength, He rose from the dead and now is in Heaven, helping us from there.

When we pray to God and ask Him to write the Ten Commandments in our minds and hearts, we are happier ourselves and nicer to others. We end up doing what is right in the eyes of God, not just our own eyes.

“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3). He sees us and everything we do just as if we were in a video. But He doesn't only see the outside. Our Creator can even read our thoughts and know what we are thinking. He wants to help us think and do what is good, noble, and true.

So, the best prayer we can ask Him is, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. . . . Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit” (Psalm 51:10, 12).

Yes, with a right spirit given by God, we can be not only clean in His sight, but joyful in ours. May this be our aim!—BHM.

