WHO IS THE FALSE PROPHET?
Over 100 years ago John Thomas identified the apocalyptic “False Prophet” with the Papal power. Two short extracts from his writings are of interest in the context of our cover story.

The Apostle Paul teaches that we can be in the kingdom of God “If ye be Christ’s.” Our editorial considers what this involves — both in terms of Faith and obedience to the command of Christ.

Frank Abel explains the need for Christadelphians to witness against false systems which will bring destruction upon those who associate with them.

The late Graham Pearce takes a general look at the signs of the end of the age. Basing his remarks upon Christ’s Mt. Olivet prophecy he gives a convincing analysis.

John Ramsden considers this question, looking at Scripture, history and the current religious world. He identifies some key principles for us.

Don Pearce continues to keep pace with developments that show us that the coming of Christ is near. The growing ties between Russia and Germany are expected because Scripture has told us to watch for them. Now they becomes a reality!
The prophecy concerning “the King” in the eighth chapter is evidently descriptive of the Latino-Greek power in its pagan constitution, known in history as the destroyer of Jerusalem, and Judah “the people of the holy ones;” but with a hint also of its future ecclesiastical peculiarity, as appears from the testimony that “through his policy he shall cause falsehood to prosper by his power.” These few words are descriptive of the character, or nature of the power since Constantine the Great set up its throne in Constantinople to the present hour; and will be so predominantly, when its administration shall pass from the Sultan to the Autocrat of all the Russias. As the head of a confederacy of the adherents of the Greek and Latin churches, it will be his policy to cause their priesthoods to be respected as useful co-operators in the subjection of Europe to his will.

The power causing falsehood, or False-Prophetism, to prosper, must hold Jerusalem at the crisis of the accomplishment of the indignation. By False-Prophetism, I mean, papalism. Hence, the Sultan must be ejected, that a dynasty patronizing a High Priest who forbids to marry, may come in. When, therefore, the Czar, (or leader of Russia—Ed) gets possession of Constantinople he will not be hostile to the pope. On the contrary, he will honor and acknowledge him, and be the enemy of the Holy Land.

From The Exposition of Daniel

TWO EXTRACTS BY JOHN THOMAS RELEVANT TO OUR COVER STORY ARE REPRODUCED ON THIS PAGE

THE BIBLE MAGAZINE VOL. 14. ISSUE No.2.

From Elpis Israel

DANIEL & THE REVELATION

REVELATION CHAPTER 16:13,14.

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

It is worthy of observation here, that the text of Revelation 16:13 says, “out of the mouth of the false prophet,” and not “out of the mouth of the image of the beast.” In the beginning of the chapter, while the first vial is supposed to be pouring out, the Papal Jupiter is styled the beast’s image (verse 1); but in the thirteenth verse of the same chapter (Rev. 16), while the spirits are at work, he is termed the false prophet; and in verse twenty of chapter nineteen also, where it speaks of his perdition. This change of style is by no means accidental.

If the reader take a view of the Papal dominion at the close of the last century; then view it as it is now, and compare the views together; he will doubtless come to the conclusion, that the Pope is no longer the image of the imperial head of the beast. He has no dominion really, for it is so far consumed, that what remains is of little or no account. He is then no longer imperial, and consequently, has fallen from his Iconism, and become a simple prophet.

Protestant and Papal scribes are in the habit of applying the epithet “false prophet” to Mohammed, and therefore do not perceive its applicability to the Roman bishop. But neither Mohammed, nor his successors, are termed “the false prophet” in the Apocalypse. The Arabian was false enough, doubtless; but he was a far more respectable character than any Pope that has ever reigned; and were I to choose between the two superstitions, I would rather be a Moslem than a Papist. It was the glory of Mohammed to destroy idolatry; it is the infamy of the Popes to be the high priests of the “queen of heaven.” The Saracens were God’s locusts to torment, and the Ottomans, God’s cavalry to slay with political death, the Catholic image-worshippers of the Asiatic third part of the Roman dragon. Mohammed was the star; and his successors, the “commanders of the faithful,” the “angel of the bottomless pit; whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon” (Rev. 9:1-11). These names in English signify Destroyer; which is indicative of the mission of those who marshalled themselves under the standard of the Arabian.

The epithet “false prophet” is singularly applicable to the Roman bishop. It is a part of his function to preach or prophesy; that is, to “speak unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort” (1 Cor. 14:3). From him these blessings are supposed to flow to all “his children.” Aaron was given to Moses to be his prophet because he could speak well. As Aaron, then, was speaker, mouth, or prophet, to Moses; so the Pope is now the mouth, or prophet, or speaker, of the papacy, and no more. He is virtually stripped of his dominion; he can prophesy, but his rule is a thing of name, and not a fact. A false prophet is he; truthless as Satan; sporting himself with his own deceivings, and thereby provoking a speedy fate, which is “capture and destruction.”
Those who believe the “great and precious promises” of the Gospel know that the God of heaven will soon set up a kingdom upon earth that shall stand for ever. This is a certainty—and “when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swear by himself” and He “confirmed it by an oath” says Hebrews chapter 6.

The fulfillment of those promises are thus inevitable. The question that faces us then, is whether we ourselves can participate—are we the heirs of promise? The apostle Paul puts it this way in Galatians 3:29.

“...if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

So are we Christ’s? When the Lord Jesus comes he will declare whether we are his or not of course—but in the meantime he has left with us his word in written form, and he has stated his basis of acceptance or rejection therein. The words of his apostle are these:

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Galatians 3:26-29.

Faith in Christ Jesus, and baptism into Christ are the conditions stated here. Other Scriptures expand on this somewhat—for example Jesus told his disciples:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matt. 28:19-20)

In carrying out these instructions, we find in Acts 2:38 Peter saying:

“...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

Also in chapter 8:12 we read:

“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (Acts 8:12)

As we read these passages it becomes clear that “faith in Christ Jesus” involves believing “things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.” In other words, faith in Christ means believing certain things about him.

The name Christ of course, is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah, or Anointed. Priests and kings were anointed in Israel, so the name really indicates his position—see Luke 1:31-33; John 18:37;

Hebrews 6:20; 7:1-2. To believe in Jesus Christ then, must include some comprehension of his kingship and kingdom. The name “Christ” is a doctrine.

The name Jesus was given for another reason. Joseph was told (Matt. 1:21) “...thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Jesus is the Greek form of the name Joshua. This name is composed of the Hebrew name of God, Yahweh, and the word yasha—to free, save, deliver. So the name Jesus carries the idea that Yahweh shall save. Here also is a doctrine.

Whereas it is not our purpose here to expound these doctrines, we do draw attention to them—and to the fact that there cannot be a Scriptural faith in Jesus Christ without an understanding and belief of them. It is important for us to appreciate that there is a real Christ (the one spoken of by the apostles in the Bible), and that there is “another Jesus”, one that is taught by a counterfeit Christendom elsewhere considered in this issue of The Bible Magazine. It is our wisdom to rightly divide the word of God and to abide in “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John, verses 7-9). If, then, we believe these things, we must be baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19); which is the same thing as being baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27), or being baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38). These different expressions carry the same significance, because, as we have said, the name of Jesus Christ is a doctrine. The doctrine of the Name includes the name of the Father as well as of the Son—as Jesus himself said, “I am come in my Father’s name” (John 5:43). Indeed, his Father’s Name, Yahweh, was part of his own name—Yahshua.

The Name of God however is not a mere label; it tells us about Him. Look at Exodus 34:5-7 (and also verse 14) and we will see that God’s Name has to do with the attributes of His character—it tells us what He is like. More than that though, if we understand the significance of the Hebrew Name that is used, Yahweh, it has purpose to it. In the marginal notes of the Revised Version, at Exodus 3:14-15, the reading is given, “I WILL BE, Heb. Ehyeh. Jehovah (i.e. Yahweh—Ed) from the same root as Ehyeh.” In other words these notations are telling us that the Hebrew carries the idea of I WILL BE in the name Yahweh. If that is so, then Exodus 34:6 is telling us that the Lord (Hebrew: Yahweh, I will be) God (Hebrew, Elohim, mighty or powerful ones), merciful and gracious, long-suffering...etc. So the Father will be Mighty Ones who show forth these attributes. Character and purpose are involved in His Name.

“...ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ... And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Galatians 3.
For Jesus to tell us that he had come in his Father’s Name then, is to tell us that he manifested, displayed or revealed the glorious attributes and purpose of his Father. As the apostle John expresses it, “...we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14). And again, “...For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us” (1 John 1:2).

So here was a quality of Life, and a Way of Life —the manifestation of a character—that was with the Father and which had now been seen in His Son by the apostles.

Now such qualities in a person could, quite appropriately, be called a holy spirit—meaning of course the disposition of the person. The word spirit being used in the sense of 1 Peter 3:4; “a meek and quiet spirit.” We are not suggesting that the term “holy spirit” is confined to this sense, but it does include the idea (see Romans 1:4).

John tells us that the “Comforter” (literally, Helper) is the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). He also tells us that it is “the spirit of truth” (chapter 15:26), and that it comes from the Father. One of its functions says Peter, was to move or impel holy men of God in their teaching (2 Peter 1:20,21). It gave them “utterance” (Acts2:4). Jesus himself pointed out: “...the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses,” says the apostle, “the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). This process can only work where there is an absence of pride, and a strong desire to learn the truth—receiving the word with all readiness of mind, and searching the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so—Acts 17:11.

When a man or woman has come to understand and believe the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ, he or she will want to be enrolled for the kingdom and united with the Name and Life of Christ. This is accomplished by an act of obedience in being baptized (immersed) into Christ. One cannot be in the kingdom without being united to the Name, and the only way to “put on Christ” is through immersion into His Name—as Paul says: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

There is a lot of significance in the act of baptism and we cannot explore that whole subject here—but let us realize that those who spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:13,14). There must be a desire and a seeking after truth—we cannot expect a casual and shallow treatment of Scripture to reveal to us “the deep things of God” (verse 10). Neither will “the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10 etc.) be imparted to us through off-the-cuff group discussion and an exchange of uninformed opinions. The most profitable method is the one suggested by Scripture itself: “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him who teacheth in all good things” (Gal. 6:6)—or to put the same advice another way: “...the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses,” says the apostle, “the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). This process can only work where there is an absence of pride, and a strong desire to learn the truth—receiving the word with all readiness of mind, and searching the

“The Bible Magazine Notice Board

UK PROPHECY DAY. “Signs of Our Times.”

We apologise for a mistake as to the date of this event published in our last issue. The Prophecy Day will be held God willing on Saturday June 2nd, 2001, at the Coventry Grosvenor Road Christadelphian Hall. Speakers this year are Roger Long (Coventry UK), Don Pearce (Rugby UK) and Frank Abel (Shelburne, Canada).

Subjects Are:

Restoring Again the Kingdom to Israel (Roger Long).

All Nations Against Jerusalem... (Don Pearce).

Come Out of Her My People (Frank Abel).

MILESTONES 2000

The Milestones Annual by Don Pearce is now available, reviewing world events of the year 2000 in the light of Bible prophecy. No other publication gives the background, insight and coverage that this booklet does. For those whose busy lives do not allow them the time to sift through the mounds of information arriving today, this enlightened analysis is a must!

Milestones 2000 can be ordered through CSSS agents, or direct from: Milestones. 76 High Street, Hillmorton, Rugby, CV21 4EE United Kingdom. In North America contact Mrs Carol Wilson RR#1, Grand Valley, Ontario, Canada. LON 1G0.
TIME TO TELL THE WHOLE TRUTH!

Why do Christadelphians believe that they must witness against the false religious systems of our day? And, what is their motive for doing so? Consider the reasons given here.

By Frank Abel (Shelburne, Ont.)

When Joab the captain of David’s troops had killed Absalom and retired from the battle, it was time to send word back to David about the events that had taken place (2 Samuel 18).

Joab chose Cushi, a young man, who probably was used to telling ‘Good’ news as well as bad. Ahimaaz, however, was known to be a bearer of ‘Good’ tidings, possibly, all of the time, and he keenly sought license of Joab to also run with the news of the victory.

Joab saw Ahimaaz to be unsuitable for this task, but Ahimaaz persisted in his request until finally, Joab gave him permission to run as well. When the two runners approached Mahanaim where David was, Ahimaaz was in the lead and arrived ahead of Cushi. He told David about the victory, but when asked about the fate of Absalom, he withheld the whole truth. Cushi, however, had a message prepared that included news about the death of his son, and although hearing about the death of Absalom desolated David, he had been given the whole truth.

There is a lesson in these events that we can benefit from. Many times a preacher of the gospel is very eager to tell people of the ‘Good News’, that is, about the return of Jesus, the Resurrection, the establishment of the Kingdom, etc., but is very reluctant to speak of the great destruction that must occur amongst those who resist his kingship. It may be very unwelcome news for the hearer, and quite distasteful to the bearer of the tidings, but it is the whole truth and whether welcome, or unwelcome, it may in fact, make the difference between life and death for the one who hearkens.

Further, there is an urgency in carrying out this task. If in the light of Bible prophecy, we have determined that we live very near the time of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must also therefore, be very close to the time of the great judgements that are yet to take place. What should be told to people in churches of Christendom whose doctrines set them on a course that will cause them to reject Christ at his coming? Surely, mention should be made of the great and precious promises that are now ‘saving’ us, but also that God has provided a window of opportunity to get out of these organizations before they are swept away in the time of the wrath and indignation of our God.

In Mercy, God Warns People of the Coming Judgments

The message in the book of Revelation emphasizes the Judgments of God. In all of his judgments God proves to be ‘true and righteous’ just as Abraham assessed the judgments of God when he said, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25). God is true and righteous because He states what righteousness is, He sets the limits, and then clearly states the judgment applicable to those who overstep the mark. In God’s judgments, there is a point not to be missed, for it says of him ‘He is not willing that any should perish’. Do we follow that principle, or by our silence are we to show that we are willing that some should perish? This is not the position of the Christadelphian.

When God states “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, nor receive of her plagues,” He is witnessing to His intention that none should perish. To the Bible student this is not new, for there are a number of other places in His word where He similarly warned of a coming judgment. However, it does bring an interesting fact to light. He warned the people of Noah’s day of the coming great flood whereby the whole world was to perish. He did this through the preaching work of Noah. In the time of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, just before the earth rent underneath them and ‘swallowed them up’, He
warned the people to get out from among them through the actions and words of Moses. Prior to the judgments upon the city of Babylon he warned the Jews in Babylon to get out of her through the words of Jeremiah. As the judgments against Jerusalem in A.D. 70 loomed on the horizon, God warned the people to ‘get out’ through the ministry of the Lord (Luke 21:21). The point of interest to the Christadelphian is, by whom does God warn the people of our day of the coming of the great judgments on mankind; who are the preachers now?

**Jesus Hated Iniquity and Said so**

The Lord Jesus Christ is highly commended in Hebrews 1:9, because as it says, along with loving the Truth, he hated iniquity. He was careful to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God, he nurtured twelve men to carry on the work of spreading the good news, he demonstrated compassion for the poor well beyond the standards of his contemporaries, but he was not ashamed, nor afraid, to declare the judgment of God when it came to evaluating events of everyday life— and particularly the days of suffering that lay ahead of his audiences. His outspokenness against evil was not appreciated, and in fact, many hated him for it. As he said,

“The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.” (John 7:7).

Jesus overcame the natural human tendency to be liked by everyone. Instead, he stood up and spoke the whole truth, declaring the righteousness of his God thereby. When the leaders of the nation recognized they could not fault his righteous life, they planned to kill him. The Scriptures declare that Jesus continued to the end to try to get people out of the religious organizations of the day which were doomed to the disaster of A.D. 70. Speaking out of compassion for those who he came to save, he stated:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:38).

Similarly, we must not only proclaim the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, but must also testify against the evils of our age, and herald the judgments written against those who are unreformed. It may be that some will listen and get out before it is too late.

**The Apostle Paul Declared the Whole Counsel of God**

The apostle Paul warned Timothy of the need to take every opportunity to proclaim the Truth, because ‘the Spirit spoke expressly’ of the days coming when people would readily trade the truth for error because it tickled their fancy (2 Timothy 4:2). The apostle was very explicit:

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

The apostle himself, spoke out against the godlessness of the world around him as Demetrius testifies in Acts 19:26:

“Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands.”

And again in Athens, the apostle spoke against the idolatry of the place, Acts 17:22
“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.”

The reaction was almost always the same,

“And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed.”

Paul had preached the ‘whole gospel,’ he openly declared God’s view of idolatry and the fact that God gave people an opportunity to ‘get out’ of that way of life. The Lord was obviously working through the apostle and people hearkened to the whole truth.

Preparing to Preach the Whole Truth

One of the reasons why many do not engage the public more often over the evils of society is that they are unsure of their own position, or are unsure of how to answer the arguments of the opposition. This is a matter of education, for as the apostle says in 2 Cor. 10:4-5,

“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

There can never be a successful argument against ‘the Truth.’ There is a need to invest more time and energy into learning the Scriptures so that the reasonings of the opposition can be exposed from the Scriptures, and so show forth the praises of our Heavenly Father.

Again, looking into the advice given in other places of the epistles, we are encouraged to invest in the whole armour of God before engaging the enemy. The items mentioned in the text include, a helmet, breastplate, sword, shield, loinwear, footwear and discipline. The discipline being, giving proper attention to the conduct of our warfare by communicating with our captain in prayer.

Who is prepared in these days, to go across to those who pretend to speak on God’s behalf and tell them the whole truth?

An Opportunity to Tell the Whole Truth

If God allows the Pope to carry out his plan to visit Canada during the end of July, 2002, there will be an opportunity to speak openly the whole truth.

He plans to come to celebrate an event of his creation called World Youth Day of bi-annual occurrence. This gathering is designed to attract hundreds of thousands of young people from around the world, and is intended to be a celebration of faith and culture, and one to which our own young people will be invited.

How should we respond? Not being used to speaking negatively in public, we could just ignore the whole thing and pretend it will never take place. Or, we could still do nothing, and let the event take place, allowing those with a little more curiosity to mix with the crowds and make their own assessments. Or, we could treat the visit of this man to the place of our sojourning as a challenge to the survival of our Faith and hence, rise to the occasion and speak the whole truth concerning the fate of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Bible has nothing good to say about the Roman Catholic Church because it represents the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning an ‘apostasy’ and a departure from the truth. The Bible, however, does provide an opportunity for Catholics to ‘get out’ of that organization before the great wrath of God brings the fulfillment of his warnings. The Scriptures appeal to those who have an ear to hear, to ‘come out’ while there is still time. Further articles on this issue are to be prepared, God willing, for The Bible Magazine.

Canada’s Prime Minister, Jesuit trained Pierre Trudeau meets the Pope in 1983. Canada’s leading statesmen have been Roman Catholics over many years, supporting the Social teachings of the Church to the advantage of that system. Another step forward is now planned as the Church seeks to prepare the rising generation.

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THE EBBA TABLETS (Book Extract)

On the basis of the information supplied to him, Professor David Freedman as editor of The Biblical Archaeologist emphasized the importance of the Biblical associations... The Ebla tablets, said Freedman, generally confirmed or at least supported the work of previous archaeologists who had related their finds to the Bible, “while undercutting the prevailing scepticism and sophistry of the larger contingent representative of Continental and American scholarship.”

Wilson says:

“After the initial claims that the Ebla tablets were highly relevant for early Bible records, there has been a chorus of voices raised to suggest that there should be more caution. It is entirely possible that this is more politic than scholarly as such, and Professor Freedman has been the subject of attack as to his supposed overreactions to relate the finds to the early Bible records.”

The scholars directly concerned with the discovery—Pettinato, Matthiae, and Dahood—then attempted to minimize the relevance of the Ebla texts to the Scriptures—and it has been suggested that this was due to pressure from various sources, including the Syrian Government. Wilson quotes Biblical Archaeology Review for Sept/Oct 1978, “The Syrian government, however, would like to play down, if not suppress this (biblical) aspect of the tablets.” The Syrians, apparently, did not want any evidence that might be construed as support for Israel’s ancient claim to the land of Palestine.

Pettinato, the man who had translated the tablets and announced the Biblical links was banned from the excavation site and “replaced” by Alfonso Archi who subsequently wrote a scathing attack on the work done by Pettinato. — “Warnings From The Dust,” by Paul Billington.
The Master outlined in Luke 21 the distress and turmoil in the world that we are beginning to witness. He outlined the disastrous state of the world just prior to, and during, the setting up by the God of heaven of a kingdom that shall not be destroyed.

The world’s distress and fears are set out thus:

1. “Signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars”

These are political events affecting the ruling ‘heavens’, the governments of the world in Church and State. The language expresses the alarming instability of governments, leaders swept from power, coups, assassinations, new leaders and new regimes established.

2. “Upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity”

The ‘earth’—the people, hoping for the peace and prosperity their leaders talk about, instead suffer from the general instability, oppression, and corruption of governments, together with ‘natural’ calamities of their own making or as part of God’s judgments.

3. “The sea and the waves roaring”

This is a scriptural figure (see Psalm 65:7). It is an apt description of power in the hands of the people, power used irresponsibly; it is particularly appropriate to our time where education has put power into the hands of the masses, bringing mass protest and violence.

4. “Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth”

There is to be a growing unease, tenseness, apprehension, developing into panic, as normal life degenerates.

5. “The powers of heaven shall be shaken”

This is the great Day of the LORD, spoken about by the prophets and in the Revelation. Christ having gathered together his saints, and glorified them with divine nature, they are ready to “Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” Then follows the shaking of the powers of heaven; they are shaken so as to be totally removed (see Haggai 2:6,7; Heb. 12:27). This is the collapse of all human government, so that on the ruins thereof the kingdom of God can be established. In the apocalyptic sequence, this shaking is the great earthquake of the 7th vial, the last vial of God’s wrath. It is poured on the ‘air’ (on the ruling constitutions of men) and the great earthquake occurs that shakes all rulers and human systems into ruin:

“And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great” (Rev. 16:18).

6. “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory”

“They shall see,” that is the world, and not the saints. The saints are already with Christ as the accompanying cloud. The symbol is taken from Daniel 7:13, 14 (see also Rev. 10:1 “clothed with a cloud” and also Rev. 1 for the Son of man similitude). The “coming in great power and glory” does not mean just a physical appearance, but the establishing of the Christ community as the New Jerusalem rulership over all the world. In his first coming he was seen as the Saviour, the Lamb of God; in his second coming he will be seen enthroned as the Lamb on Mount Zion with his 144,000 (Rev. 14:1).

Then the Master gives words of encouragement:

“When ye see these things begin to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

For the world, the immediate future is all calamity; to the watchers for the kingdom of righteousness, the gathering storm is paradoxically the dawning of the day of Zion, as the sun just before day-break illuminates the eastern sky. Let us each ask ourselves where we stand. Are we really standing with the world full of fear and foreboding; or are we truly in the ark of safety, confident of the Master’s care? Are we in the world but not of it; being sanctified by the word of God in preparation for the task of cleansing the earth from its evil, that God’s glory may be
established? The Master gives us his advice:

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

His words raise the questions, How are we acting now, how are we watching, how are we praying? Our response will determine whether we are “accounted worthy to escape” all these things, and to stand accepted by the judge. If we are not accounted worthy, we shall be sent back into the world to share its misery:

“Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 25:30).

Violence

In the world-stress around us, so accurately foretold in Luke 21, the one element that increasingly dominates the scene is violence. Will this be the main element in “Men’s hearts failing them for fear?” It could well be. Violence is a present reality, something met increasingly dominates the scene is violence. Will this be the main element in “Men’s hearts failing them for fear?” It could well be. Violence is a present reality, something met face to face, far more fearful than the distant terrible abyss. Awful ebullitions rise from the abyss. We have lost altogether the sense of security of our Western civilisation. Men are wondering what is wrong. It is perfectly clear what is wrong. The law of God has been torn up as though it were a scrap of paper, and the inevitable result is appearing with ever greater clearness. When will the law be rediscovered? When it is rediscovered it will be a day of terror for mankind: but it will also be a day of joy; for the law will be a schoolmaster unto Christ” (Bible League Quarterly, July-Oct. 1984).

Judgment

Let us look at the growing world distress from another angle. Paul in Romans reasons that all people have a responsibility to recognise the Creator:

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

But beyond this, the Word of God is now known in many countries and brings more definite responsibility. ‘Christian’ countries, Catholic and Protestant, nominally acknowledge the Bible, though they misuse it and generally ignore its teaching. The prime area of responsibility is Europe, viewed from the Apocalypse; but Christianity has spread much farther afield, encompassing the Americas, and the English-speaking peoples. Where responsibility exists, there the governments and people are subject to divine judgment.

The Old Testament record gives us an extensive account of God’s judgments arising from man’s waywardness, chiefly in relation to the children of Israel, who had a high degree of responsibility because of their covenant relationship. The record shows God operated His judgments largely through natural events and calamities. Ezekiel speaks of this in his 14th chapter—God sends famine, evil beasts, the sword and the pestilence to destroy the land. These are called His four sore judgments:

“How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?” (Ezekiel 14:21).

We must not read this just as some distant record, gone long ago. God does not change; He still acts in the same way.

War—‘the sword’—often generates all the other ‘sore judgments’—famine, pestilence, and the devastation of the land. War is generally God’s hand of judgment:

“O thou sword of the LORD, how long wilt it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it.”

“Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood” (Jer. 47:6; 48:10).

Often calamities are of man’s own making; as the greed that eventually brings famine, or the ambition and lust that brings war, or the dishonouring of the body that brings national depravity and sickness. Even so, they are God’s judgments, subject to His control and direction. At other times these calamities are specifically the hand of God; as the plagues on Egypt, the three years famine in David’s time, the three and a half years famine in the time of Elijah, and the seven
years famine in the time of Joseph. This field of divine judgment is a complex one, and beyond our ability to assess in many cases. But let us take the general point that national and world events are not haphazard, and much of what happens is, in one of its aspects, a matter of judgment of God; and this applies to the world crises of today.

If we come near to our own time and note the Biblical comment on events as being God’s judgments, it may help us to develop the attitude of looking at events from God’s point of view.

**Wars in Europe**

The first five vials of Revelation 16 were fulfilled in the work of Napoleon in the wars that devastated Europe over a period of some 20 years. Note the calamitous language of the Revelation, as the five vials are poured out:

“A grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.”

“The sea ... became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.”

“... upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.”

“Men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues.”

“His kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores” (Rev. 16:1-11).

Surely this describes a calamitous and bitter time. Compare it with the historical records of the time. The following is an illustration. It is taken from official records regarding Napoleon’s campaign in 1813:

“We have before our eyes many thousands of the adjacent villages and hamlets—landed proprietors, farmers, ecclesiastics, schoolmasters, and artisans of every description—who were some weeks since in circumstances more or less easy, but now without a home, stripped of all their all, and with their families perishing with hunger. All around is one wide waste. The numerous villages and hamlets are almost all entirely or partially reduced to ashes...

“The destruction and distress which marked the countries through which the French army fled from the bloody fields of Leipzig were altogether indescribable. Dead bodies covered the roads. Half consumed French soldiers were found in the ruins of the villages destroyed by the flames. Whole districts were depopulated by disease.” (Eureka Vol. 3, 5th Vial).

The description is typical of the horrors of war. Men ask, Why does God allow such things? This is the important question, and the reason for directing the reader’s attention to the situation of the vials of Revelation 16. God gives His answer to Why; under the third vial:

“I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments” (Rev 16:5-7).

Those who suffered were not the ones who had actually shed the blood of the saints, but they approved those deeds, they were of the same mind. Notice how these judgments failed to change the minds of the people: they blasphemed God, and repented not of their deeds. And so the vials initiated by Napoleon, continued their work through the 19th and 20th centuries, with Europe wracked with wars and consequent distress.

Europe is an area of gross Catholic superstition and blasphemy against heaven, men of unchaste thoughts from the days of the five vials.

As these calamities increase while we wait the Master’s return, let us wisely ponder that God is a God of judgment as well as a God of mercy; His perfect character involves both. And we too have a day of judgment. Ours is to higher standards than the world:

“For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreveligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11-13 R.S.V.)

God’s children have been in similar situations to ours at the ending of previous ages. At the calamitous ending of Judah’s monarchy, Zephaniah admonished the faithful (and us):

“Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’s anger” (Zephaniah 2:3).

Peter, at the end of Judah’s Commonwealth, another time of great calamity and divine judgment, exhorts the believers (and us):

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness ... Therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness” (2 Peter 3:11, 17).

“Peace’-time disasters are becoming so large-scale and destructive that in many countries the war-time rescue services are being made operative for peace-time use. In Britain a Bill is to be introduced in Parliament allowing Civil Defence units to be used for peace-time emergencies; and appropriate training will take place. The humanitarian aspect may appeal to us, but joining the world’s rescue organisations is not part of our calling in Christ. We have a limited, important task toward the world (see Ephesians 6:12-17). Let us take care, as Peter says, not to be led away towards the world, to be joined to it in its troubles. As individuals we give help to our neighbour as need arises.


**ROME & JERUSALEM**

By Graham Pearce

We highly recommend this book in which there is an excellent section on The False Prophet. Available through most agents.

THE BIBLE MAGAZINE VOL. 14. ISSUE No.2. Page 11
The recent dramatic rise in power and influence of both Militant Islam and the Papacy has caused many people to wonder what the Bible means when it refers to the False Prophet. The situation becomes more perplexing when we see these two great powers jockeying for position in the struggle for the ultimate control of Jerusalem. In recent months this rivalry has given way to apparent co-operation in their opposition to Jewish claims for the exclusive control of the city.

So What Does the Bible Say?

At first sight, not very much! In fact there are only three references to the False Prophet and all of them are in the closing chapters of the book of Revelation. That fact alone should sound a warning to us to proceed with care in our studies.

We must remember that Revelation is addressed by Jesus himself to his servants and conveys his message in signs and symbols. As such, it reveals events relevant to believers down the ages, and which would occur before Christ returns to the earth. It does not deal, for example, with the return of the Jews to their land, or with the perennial conflict between them and their Arab neighbours. That was not the purpose of Christ's message to the churches as those matters are covered elsewhere in the Bible. Rather is it to warn His brethren and sisters about problems which would arise from those who deserted the original teachings of Christianity and became false teachers, while still pretending to be “Christian.”

What is a Prophet?

Contrary to the way the term is commonly used today, a prophet is one who is basically a teacher: or, as has been quaintly said, “one who forth-tells rather than only foretells.” True, prophesying future events could well be part of his role if instructed by God to do so, but as Paul told the believers at Corinth, a good prophet is one who teaches the believers with sound words of education, comfort and encouragement (1 Cor. 14:3). So a false prophet is one who teaches lies and promotes error, causing believers to stray away from the earlier truths they once believed. And, as the New Testament shows, there were plenty of them about!

Indeed, Jesus constantly warned his followers to beware of “pseudo-prophets” which is what the original Greek text actually means. He cautioned them that many such evil men would arise who would actually deceive the believers. Peter, John and Paul also added their warnings that, as they approached the end of their Jewish age when the Romans would destroy Jerusalem (i.e. in A.D.70) there would be a significant departure from the True Gospel as they had learnt it. Amazingly, this would grow out of the Church itself: it would not be some external, rival, religious system: it would be a corrupt form of Christianity.

The Apostle Peter speaking firstly about his own day, and foreshadowing our own “last days,” spoke of false teachers who “would bring in damnable heresies,” (2 Peter 2:1). That is why John urges believers, even today, to examine carefully any new “spirits,” or doctrinal and prophetic ideas as they come along to see if they be of God “as many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). We note carefully that he says the false prophets will originate from within the Christian Church.

Old Testament False Prophets

False teachers abounded in Old Testament times too, thereby leading the people of Israel astray, seducing them into not believing what the true prophets of God had said would happen. Jeremiah provides many examples of their wicked works, the best example being that of Hananiah who operated in the time of King Zedekiah just prior to the invasion by the Babylonians. Israel had been warned to expect 70 years of trouble in captivity, but Hananiah
knew that people would not like that sort of “negative thinking” about the future. So he lied to them: he offered them an alternative opinion about the future course of events promising them that they would suffer for only two years. Obviously this scenario of future events was much more attractive to them. But God condemned him as a false prophet and he died two months later (Jeremiah 28).

Another passage in Jeremiah (5:31) tells us why so many false prophets succeed in their destructive mission. Why? “Because my people love to have it so.” That reminds us of Paul’s warning to Timothy: “For the time will come when they shall not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3).

It is also instructive to note in passing that when Moses told his people not to heed the words of a false prophet he added the reason: “...for the LORD your God proveth you to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 13:3). So sometimes, the presentation to us of wrong doctrinal and prophetic teaching is God’s way of testing us out—to see if we really do love the things of the truth and, indeed, if we know what they actually are.

**The Latter Day False Prophet**

So what are we to make of those references in Revelation to a power described as “The False Prophet”? We must bear in mind the prophecies that false teachers would arise from within the true church, the ecclesia, and that many simple-hearted, honest believers would actually be deceived.

The Apocalypse provides a beautiful, continuously unfolding revelation of how God has been at work in the kingdoms of men—both secular and religious—since the time just after A.D. 70 through to Christ’s Millennial reign in his kingdom when he returns. Its major concern has not been to provide commentary on the whole realm of world affairs, or even events in the Middle East surrounding the land of Israel, but rather to provide his faithful followers with both hope and faith-strengthening messages of the certainty of his eventual return.

Jesus reveals to John what was to happen to Christians all down the ages: how the then Roman Empire would undergo a series of metamorphoses, changing its nature over time: but lasting for almost a thousand years centred on Europe, and then to be known as the Holy Roman Empire, on which the European Union is but a latter day variation.

Revelation tells us of the way in A.D. 606, by the Decree of the Emperor Phocas, the Bishop of Rome became extremely powerful in a materialistic way. That prophecy also indicates (13:5) that it came to an end 1260 years later, that is in the late 1860’s, so much so that by 1870 the Pope was stripped of his temporal power and his territorial possessions, ironically by the French. Being thus virtually imprisoned in the Vatican he ceased to be the mirror “image” of his contemporary European emperors, portrayed in symbolic terms as beasts, and so he concentrated on spreading his power by means of building up his own, by now very powerful, religious system.

But the Pope was no true Christian teacher; he was, and the system he promotes remains, in Biblical terms the False Prophet. His first achievement was to proclaim his own infallibility, an amazing claim to be made by anyone who had so obviously departed from the way of Bible truth. There is no Biblical justification for so many of his teachings, let alone any justification for his very title of Pope. This is really papa or father and was a title adopted by Pope Leo in A.D. 451. And what did Jesus say? “Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your father, which is
in heaven” (Matt. 23:5). Earlier his Church, which was already a totally corrupt religious system had, in the days of Pope Gregory VII in 1079 A.D. decided that Catholic preachers and Bishops must be celibate in blatant defiance of Paul’s insistence that “Bishops should be the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2).

In the panel above we list just some of the completely unbiblical teachings introduced by the false teachers which have emerged from the original Christian church. Not for nothing therefore, does Jesus in Revelation describe the whole system as the False Prophet, or teachers of lies.

What will be his End?

Such is the abhorrence which Christ has for those who betray, distort and pervert his gospel message, that when he comes he will make sure such a system is utterly destroyed. It could not be put more plainly than in Revelation 19:20, “the beast (Europe, see The Bible Magazine Vol. 12, Issue No.4.) was taken and with him, the false prophet that wrought miracles... with which he deceived them that worshipped his image. These were both cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

When we think of the persecution the saints and believers have suffered all down the ages, the Inquisition, the Bartholomew’s Day massacre and many others — and the horrific desecration of God’s people and Word— one cannot help but see the justice of what is to befall this system. As we read in chapter 16:12, it will also play a very influential part in that great assembly of beast-like nations who gather together against the land of Israel at the time of Armageddon. Thus, as we read again in Revelation 20:10 “…the false prophet...shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” in that symbolic lake of fire and brimstone— which is a symbol for everlasting death.

So Why not Mahomet?

Why, then, do some people regard Islam as the latter day “False Prophet”? There is absolutely no Biblical reason for doing so. It arises from a failure to grasp the essential nature of the False Prophet religious system: from misunderstanding the role of Islam, or from misapplying Scripture concerning those whom the secular world today refers to as “The Arab Nations.”

Today, Islam is indeed a powerful religious system, but so too is Buddhism in the world’s most populous nation China. Similarly, Hinduism in India. And one must never forget that three quarters of the world’s Muslims live well outside the Arab nations. So Islam is by no means exclusively the religion of the Arab nations surrounding Israel.

Mahomet—the founder of Islam in 622— cannot possibly be the False Prophet of Christendom as defined by the Bible. He never accepted Christianity—in fact he rejected it. He could never conform to Paul’s description of having fallen away from it! (2 Thess. 2:3). He was born 500 years after the apostate Christian Church had already embraced the non-biblical ideas about the immortality of the soul and the doctrine of the Trinity. Indeed, Mahomet struggled hard to convert his followers from their polytheism and paganism to believe in only one God whom he called “Allah”—this in contrast to his contemporaries in the emerging Catholic Church who believed in three gods in one! Not only that, he insisted that they should give up idolatry at the very time the so-called Christian Church was promoting it! Curiously, Mahomet had respect for Jesus, albeit he regarded him just another teacher totally rejecting the idea that “Allah” could actually have had a son. Yet here was the Christian Church worshipping Mary as the Queen of Heaven—something which the Koran condemns.

Islam in Revelation

Although Revelation makes no reference to the Arabs as they are known today, it does describe the rise of Mahomet and the power of Islam. In the ninth chapter, the Fifth Angel makes a “coded symbolic reference” to the emergence of a power whose mission was to start the process of removing from the scene of history what remained of the eastern, “Byzantine,” Roman Empire. Adopting the very appropriate symbolism of the Ishmaelites from the Old Testament, the Angel instructs this power, known as the Saracens, to rise up and sweep the occupying powers out of Jerusalem (which is why we have the Dome of the Rock there today)— and then proceed toward Europe. Later on, the Sixth Angel (9:13) summoned the marauding hosts from east of the Euphrates to finish the job by conquering Constantinople in 1453 and sending Islam on its way right up to the very gates of Vienna—the capital of the then Catholic Holy Roman Empire—which was reached in July 1683.

That invasion struck terror into the hearts of the Catholic Emperors, Popes and Bishops especially in the light of the declaration by Mahomet II when on August 2nd 1469 he stated his intention: “…not to give sleep to my eyes, nor turn my face from the West to the East, till I overthrow and trample under the feet of my horses those gods of wood, brass, silver, gold or of paintings which the Christians have

Mahomet is said to have founded the religion of Islam prior to his flight (“The Hegira”) from Mecca in A.D.622. Mahomet united the desert Arabs in a holy war against the infidel — that is, against Jews and Christians as well as the heathen and idolatrous Khuraishites. He died in 632 A.D.

The Catholic Church (at that time united throughout the Roman Empire) were the first to claim the religion of Mahomet was the False Prophet of the Apocalypse.
made with their hands” (c/p Rev 9:20).

A little later on Martin Luther started the rebellion against Catholic doctrine and practice which marked the beginning of the Reformation. This was based on his identification of the Pope and the Roman Catholic system as the Harlot of Revelation 17. In order to combat what they saw as a life threatening heresy, the Catholic Jesuits got to work developing a strategy designed to direct attention away from the understanding of Revelation—and they did so by coming up with two alternatives.

The Origins of Futurism

In effect they offered a choice of either believing that Revelation was substantially about Israel and its fate in A.D. 70, or another alternative known as the “Futurist” view which sought to place much of Revelation far out in the future—thus proving it could have nothing to do with Rome. This view made it virtually impossible to understand just what the symbols of Revelation meant. Such remains the principal attraction of the Futurist view of Revelation even today!

In that context, who could be the False Prophet? There was certainly no doubt in the minds of the Popes of the 7th Century A.D. when they saw Mahomet and his followers threaten the very existence of the Catholic Church system. As the Encyclopaedia Britannica reminds us:

“When Islam was founded in the 7th Century as a new, higher religion, it considered the revelation received by the Prophet Muhammad to be superior to the former levels of Old and New Testament revelation. Christianity fought Islam as a Christian heresy...this new threat was seen as the fulfillment of the Apocalypse concerning the coming of the False prophet.”

So passionate was the hatred for this new rival for power in the Middle East and the Holy Places of Jerusalem, that eventually Pope Urban with the assistance of the King of France initiated the First Crusade against the Muslims. Subsequent Popes kept up the pressure with further Crusades directed against “The Infidel”—or the False Prophet.

By 1754 the Anglican Bishop of Bristol, Thomas Newton was in no doubt. He wrote: “...papists contend that the character of the Man of Sin (i.e. the False Prophet—J.R.) was drawn for the great impostor, Mohammed. He likewise rose upon the ruins of the Roman Empire... He was not properly an apostate for he and his countrymen were not Christians but Heathen.”

It was following the Pope’s declaration of his own infallibility that other Protestants such as B.W. Johnson in his book Visions of the Ages (1881) recognised what was going on and offered yet another idea, which, curiously enough, is enjoying a revived popularity today. Basically, it involves seeing the three powers in Revelation chapter 16 called the Dragon, Beast and False Prophet as referring to Russia, Catholic Europe and Islam—yet again another attempt to divert attention from what the False Prophet really is.

The Situation Today

This is the position in which Bible readers find themselves today. The idea that Islam is the False Prophet is not, as some would have us believe, based upon fashionable ideas and opinions for discussion about Biblical texts: it was intended as a Roman Catholic diversion away from a correct understanding of Revelation and the accompanying identification of false teaching in the Church. Originally the Protestant Churches saw Rome the way that Martin Luther did, and so too did virtually all the smaller non-conformist communities. But sadly there has been a dramatic change over the last hundred years or so, which has seen the vast majority of Protestant and non-conformist communities drifting towards and succumbing to the ecumenical blandishments of Rome. Such evangelical leaders as Billy Graham, David du Plessis and Hal Lindsey have led the way back to Rome by adopting the Catholic Futurist views of prophecy which Christadelphian Bible students continue to steadfastly reject today as they have done for over 150 years.

We appreciate that many well-meaning Christians, despite the unmistakably clear warnings given to them by Jesus and the Apostles, just do not like to think about their fellow Bible-reading Christian friends in these terms. As a result, instead of seeing these developments as being the very remarkable fulfillment of important New Testament prophecies, they find themselves being irresistibly drawn towards ideas which they may regard as being “new, interesting, independent, fresh thinking.” In fact they originated from the Catholic Church itself in the 16th Century and, indeed, even before that. And sadly, therein, lies the very fulfillment of the words of Jesus in the Gospels that “false teachers would arise and draw away many.”
S

o the year 2000 has now come and gone and here we are at the start of the 21st century. Our Lord still has not come to call his household to him, but be watchful — the signs of his coming abound!

Milestones 2000 was completed just over a fortnight ago, so this update enables us to ponder some of the fascinating trends that were only just becoming clearer at the end of the year.

One of the Scriptural passages that we examined in detail in Milestones 2000 is Ezekiel chapter 38, which deals with the future invasion of Israel. It paints a picture of a confederacy of nations — nations we can trace who migrated and settled in what we today identify as Western Europe and Russia, with outposts in Iran, Iraq and Ethiopia. At the heart of this confederacy is Gog who is linked with the land of Magog — modern Germany. Gog, who is described as Prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal (v2 RV), we identify with Russia. The other interesting point that we find in this chapter of Ezekiel, is the picture of a revival in Gog’s fortunes prior to her leading the nations against Israel.

Russia and Germany—an overview

One of the exciting things last year was to witness Germany and Russia being woven together by a series of strands. During the year there were several meetings between the two leaders, with chemistry developing between them. Who would have imagined that Putin who honed his fluency in speaking German, and built up his intimate knowledge of the country as a cold war KGB officer spying on Germany, would one day welcome the German Chancellor to his home? Not just any visit but one to spend Christmas together and share his wife’s birthday celebrations! It almost reads like the plot of a novel! Yet these two powerful men — one leader of a country that is rich in raw materials, the other a leader of a country highly skilled in manufacturing have become great friends. Russia is deeply in debt to Germany — Germany was prepared to invest in Russia at a time when others were fearful. These great enemies of the past — having lost millions on the battlefield — have chosen to seek peaceful co-operation. They need each other. Russia’s mineral and fuel reserves are enormous, and Germany — and much of the rest of the EU — needs these resources. Germany has the money, Russia has the goods. It is a logical partnership.

What gives Germany an added incentive is that here is a power that can be a substitute for American military might. There is no doubt that behind the EU’s plan for a European Army is the hope of reducing America’s influence in Europe. France is the greatest force to drive America away, but Germany is inclined this way, after 55 years, to press for what she considers her true position, leader of Europe. The American prop can now be removed!

America, Britain and the EU, an overview

America is indeed quite willing to take herself away! At long last the presidential election has been resolved and Mr Bush is, as I write, being sworn in. Surely it was not a chance event that the affair was so protracted. With no clear mandate, America’s new president is unlikely to pursue such a global role as his predecessor. It sets the scene for a change on the world stage. The withdrawal of US troops from Bosnia is already under consideration. Into that vacuum, Mr Putin is ready to lead his forces. He has already offered his troops to work in the new European Army. At this stage this offer is only being talked about, but it seems a likely scenario that will draw Russia and the EU much closer together.

The EU is in the grip of two full-scale health scares. One concerns the health risks from “mad-cow” disease, or BSE. France is bitterly laying the blame for this at the feet of Britain. The other, is the effect of the use of depleted uranium in the Bosnian conflict by the American led Nato forces. It serves as another “nail in the coffin” in EU/American relations and also affects British/EU relations. Britain also used these weapons, and failed to warn their allies of the possible dangers of low-level radiation.

Again Britain is annoying her EU partners by turning to America for replacement aircraft for her aircraft carriers. In spite of being a partner in the Eurofighter, she has discovered that the naval version of this plane can’t be used on the British carriers. And so a deal has been signed with America for US planes.

Mr Putin is making spectacular gains in power. He has snubbed America’s plans to build a missile shield, and countered it by courting China and India. Russia is supplying arms to both countries, as well as into the Middle East. He has made overtures to countries on the Russian borders, countries that in the past were directly under Soviet control, but have since gained independence. Unlike Mr Yeltsin, Mr Putin has rebuilt bridges and is actively turning them back out of the arms of the West, into the Russian embrace.

Let’s look at these and other stories

Russia resumes Far East naval patrols

God spoke through the prophet Daniel in ch.11, that the latter day King of the North would sweep down with, amongst other things, “many ships.” The Soviet navy was powerful and numerous, but with the fall of communism, it has largely been left to rust in various ports around the world. Mr Putin has signalled his intention to rebuild that fleet. He has made a
priority the building of bridges with the Ukraine, where the Black Sea Fleet resides. In an effort to break the stalemate between the two countries, he has started rebuilding and repairing the ships. Two items, which have just appeared, give us a flavour of Russia’s naval intentions:

“A flotilla of naval ships set sail for the first time in five years from the freezing port of Vladivostok yesterday on a mission to reassert Russia’s role in Asian security after a decade of military decline.

“The two antisubmarine warships and the tanker put to sea after Moscow and Beijing revealed plans for a strengthened “strategic partnership” to counter American global dominance and, in particular, to underwrite their opposition to the incoming Bush administration’s proposals for a US missile defence shield.

“Last month the Admiralty in Moscow announced that it would be resuming patrols in the Pacific and Indian Ocean on a scale not seen since the end of the Cold War... Now Asia’s two largest countries (India and China) are to sign an agreement later this year to cover arms sales and space co-operation that will emphasise their political rapprochement.” The Times 16-1-01

Many Asian countries have been purchasing submarines to patrol these important Asian shipping lanes. It is estimated that half the world’s supertankers pass through the region, as well as half the world’s merchant fleet (by tonnage). In any conflict guarding (or destroying) these cargoes would be very important. At a time when America has reduced its Pacific fleet patrolling the area by 40%, Russia is sending a clear signal, that she is able and willing to help her allies to defend their security and their economy by keeping their shipping lanes open. The Russians are also calling at Hanoi, Vietnam, an important Russian ally. Russia supported North Vietnam in its war against the US backed South Vietnam. "If realised, the proposals would make Germany the dominant economic player in its former Baltic stronghold which, until now had been considered irrevocably consigned to Russia.”

Apparently the matter was discussed during Schroder’s Christmas visit to Putin. Poland is sandwiched between Germany and Kaliningrad, but she is in the front line for membership of an enlarged EU. This deal would effectively bring all the territory of the pre-WW1 German Empire within the EU. With growing German domination of the EU affairs, this is an interesting development.

Don Pearce writes:

Having transmitted my update to The Bible Magazine, the next day this was the dramatic headline in the Sunday Telegraph 21-01-01. (News cutting below picture opposite—Ed).

“Germany has launched a secret initiative to acquire economic domination over the former East Prussian capital of Konigsberg in return for waiving part of Moscow’s £22 billion debt to Berlin. Russia’s Baltic enclave was captured by the Red Army and renamed Kaliningrad in 1945.

“If realised, the proposals would make Germany the dominant economic player in its former Baltic stronghold which, until now had been considered irrevocably consigned to Russia.”

These large and powerful vessels outmatch anything that Taiwan has; indeed these 8,000 - ton vessels could deal with US warships based in the area by 40%.

“A flotilla of naval ships set sail for the first time in five years from the freezing port of Vladivostok yesterday on a mission to reassert Russia’s role in Asian security after a decade of military decline.

The deployment of tactical missiles in the Baltics could be used as a bargaining chip at any future arms-control negotiations (The Times 5-01-01).

This week there were reports of Germany’s realignment in Europe. Poland had launched a secret initiative to acquire economic domination over the former East Prussian capital of Konigsberg in return for waiving part of Moscow’s £22 billion debt to Berlin. Russia’s Baltic enclave was captured by the Red Army and renamed Kaliningrad in 1945.

"Germany has launched a secret initiative to acquire economic domination over the former East Prussian capital of Konigsberg in return for waiving part of Moscow’s £22 billion debt to Berlin. Russia’s Baltic enclave was captured by the Red Army and renamed Kaliningrad in 1945.

“If realised, the proposals would make Germany the dominant economic player in its former Baltic stronghold which, until now had been considered irrevocably consigned to Russia.”

Although it was classed as a private visit they discussed Russian debt repayment. Mr Putin wants the huge $48 billion debt that they inherited from the Soviet Union to be restructured. Germany is owed some 40% of this debt. There has been discussion that part of the debt could be exchanged for German control of certain Russian businesses. They also discussed the return of looted German treasures. President Putin has raised hopes that much of the world’s biggest collection of looted art, seized from Germany by the Red Army at the end of the Second World War, could be returned in a grand gesture of reconciliation. Mr Putin said that he wanted to remove all obstacles to stronger ties with Germany.

Russia has been flexing its military muscles to counter what it regards as the threat of Nato’s eastward expansion. It is also greatly concerned about the new Bush Administration’s commitment to build a National Missile Defence, a shield that would protect America from incoming missiles. The deployment of tactical missiles in the Baltics could be used as a bargaining chip at any future arms-control negotiations (The Times 5-01-01).

It is the 300th anniversary of the founding of Prussia by Frederick I. The occasion is being marked by more than 350 events. Many of the Prussian royal family gathered to celebrate. Prussia was dissolved 53 years ago by the Allies for being a “militaristic and reactionary” power that led to the rise of Adolph Hitler. Berlin’s mayor, Eberhard Diepgen, has said that “Prussian Year” will not dwell overtly on the state’s preoccupation with territorial conquest and undemocratic, authoritarian rule that allowed the Nazis to boast of their Prussian roots and lionise the Prussian monarch Frederick the Great. “Prussia was more closely entwined in the Third Reich than many people are prepared to accept,” said Heinz Kittsteiner, a professor of modern history at Brandenburg’s Viadrina University. He fears that the celebrations may be used to rekindle the idea of a reborn Prussia that could emerge from a planned political merger of Berlin and Brandenburg. “The event allows politicians to give a nod and a wink to the idea of recreating Prussia. This is a dangerous concept which would inevitably raise questions about the future of former East Prussia that now belongs to Russia,” he said referring to the enclave of Kaliningrad (Where it is alleged Russia has deployed nuclear arms, referred to above).
When the disciples of Jesus asked him when the buildings of the temple would be thrown down, and what the sign would be when all these things were to be fulfilled—his answer was not what we might expect. His reply was: “Take heed lest any man deceive you…” (Mark 13:5). He did go on to give them many signs of their times, but brought them back again to this warning:

“For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, it it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things” (verses 22,23).

So Jesus did predict certain signs—he “foretold” certain things, but so would false Christs and false prophets! They would show signs and wonders in order to seduce, if possible, the elect themselves. This fact tells us that there has been a genuine and true construction of prophecy from earliest Christian times. There has also been a counterfeit and false construction of it. In this article we intend to identify the importance of prophecy, and also some of the signs which tell us how to discern that which is false.

The Evidence of Prophecy

We are frequently asked whether prophecy is important—Does it matter? Our reply is that prophecy forms an integral part of revealed Truth. It is part of the word of God, and we have no authority to minimise this part more than any other. It seems to us that God has so ordered it.

When Jesus promised “the spirit of truth” to his immediate disciples (that is, the Comforter, helper or holy spirit—see John 14:26 and 15:13) he said that it would bring all things to their remembrance, would testify or witness of him, guide them into all truth and “show you things to come.” So part of the inspired message that the apostles would deliver (and write) included this aspect of the Truth.

In the Old Testament this phenomenon of foretelling or prophecy, was given as evidence of the genuineness and authority of God’s word. In Deuteronomy 18:21,22 we read:

“And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

In the words written by Isaiah, the challenge is very emphatic:

“Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew unto us things for to come; Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.”

There is no other book, and there is no other writer outside of the Bible, that can demonstrate this kind of evidence. The story of the Jews, written over 2,500 years ago, is unique as a clear prophecy that has been and still is confirmed by living witnesses of its truth. Here is a fact which can have only one explanation—it requires the existence of supernatural intelligence, for no human mind could have produced it.

Evidence for Truth

This foreknowledge that is revealed in the Bible was recognised to be evidence and grounds for faith by earlier writers. For example, Thomas Newton writing in 1754 wrote:

“Men are sometimes apt to think, that if they could but see a miracle wrought in favor of religion, they would readily resign all their scruples, believe without doubt, and obey without reserve. The very thing that you desire, you have. You have the greatest and most striking of miracles in the series of scripture-prophecies accomplished; accomplished, as we see, in the present state of almost all nations, the Africans, the Egyptians, the Arabians, the Turks, the Jews, the Papists, the Protestants, Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, the seven churches of Asia, Jerusalem, and Rome. And this is not a transient miracle, ceasing almost as soon as performed; but is permanent, and protracted through the course of many generations. It is not a
miracle delivered only upon the report of others, but is subject to your own inspection and examination. It is not a miracle exhibited only before a certain number of witnesses, but is open to the observation and contemplation of all mankind; and, after so many ages, is still growing, still improving to future ages. What stronger miracle therefore can you require for your conviction? or what will avail, if this be found ineffectual? Alas, if you reject the evidence of prophecy, neither would you be persuaded though one should rise from the dead. What can be plainer? You see, or may see, with your own eyes, the scripture-prophecies accomplished: and if the scripture prophecies are accomplished, the scripture must be the word of God.”

Similarly, Alexander Keith wrote his work entitled “Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion, derived from the literal fulfillment of Prophecy...” to make the point: “Little need be said on the nature of proof from prophecy. That it is the effect of divine interposition cannot be disputed. It is equivalent to any miracle, and is of itself evidently miraculous. The foreknowledge of the actions of intelligent and moral agents is one of the most incomprehensible attributes of the Deity, and is exclusively a divine perfection. The past, the present, and the future, are alike open to his view, and to his alone; and there can be no stronger proof of the interposition of the Most High than that which prophecy affords.”

If it is recognised that “prophecy proves the Bible true” (as the saying goes), those who would wish to undermine the authority of the Bible must neutralize and obscure the evidence that its prophecies provide.

A Great Deception

It is a remarkable feature of the New Testament that its predominant prophetic warnings concern the corruption of the original apostolic gospel, and the appearance of false prophets, false apostles and deceivers. In the words of the apostle Paul recorded in Acts 20, the objective of these men would be “to draw away disciples after them” (verse 30). They would desire positions of leadership; they sought a following.

The words of Jesus are in harmony with this. In Mark 13 he says, “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ (or, I am he—R.V.); and shall deceive many” (verse 6). Luke (21:8) expands on this by recording the words: “...for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ (he); and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.”

So there would arise prominent teachers among Christian communities who would set themselves forward saying: “I am he” (which is to say, I speak with the authority of Christ) and, “...the day of Christ is at hand” (2 Thess. 2:2) or present (c/p R.V.). These false teachers would teach that the kingdom was to be present in the church—that this was the true and spiritual reign of Christ and not some political earthly kingdom of the future.

This teaching, called by the apostle “iniquity” or “lawlessness” was already at work and active. Weymouth translates 2 Thess. 2:7 in a more meaningful sense with the wording: “For lawlessness is already at work in secret...” The idea was being planted in the minds of the believers privately, and even by the circulation of counterfeit letters. But, says Paul, “Let no one in any way deceive you, for it cannot come unless the apostasy comes first, and the appearing of the man of sin...”

This apostasy, or revolt from the Faith, says the apostle, would come “with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness (deceit)...” There was to be a great religious deception, and it was to develop out of a “falling away” from the early Christians.

False Apostles

An “apostle” is according to the Greek, literally, “one sent forth” says Vine. A false apostle (2 Cor. 11:13) is therefore one who claims that he has been sent or specially commissioned, but is a fake. Paul writes: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Such were those who came preaching “another Jesus” and “another gospel” (verse 4). In order to expose these men Paul reminds the Corinthians of his own credentials: “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (chapter 12:12). The inference is clear—Where are the signs and credentials of these deceivers? Can they claim to have had visions and revelations” as other apostles (chapter 12:1)?

The believers at Ephesus had “tried them
which say they are apostles, and are not, and had found them liars” (Rev. 2:2). Perhaps as a result of Paul’s letter the Corinthians did likewise—but we know that their influence was not altogether eradicated, for John tells us of those false prophets who were preaching another Jesus, by saying that he had not come in the flesh (1 John 4:1-3). This doctrine concerning the nature of Christ identified the spirit of “error” or delusion (Gk. plane) that Paul warned of in 2 Thess. 2:11, and it has been the characteristic doctrine of the apostasy ever since.

The Question of Authority
False apostles and false prophets could not meet the challenge and test that we saw described in Deuteronomy 18 and in Isaiah chapters 41 and 44. They could not prove their claim to authority by showing things to come (John 16:13), and so came with “pretended signs and wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9, R.S.V.). Whatever their bag of tricks may have contained however, the apostle John gave a further means of detecting the spirit of truth and the spirit of error:

“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:5-6).

It may look impressive when a preacher makes a lot of converts—when the world hears such people—but if the message has been tailored to please men (Gal. 1:10), then it is not true service to Christ. The message is to be in harmony with the words of the apostles of Christ—we must hear them, and today we can only hear them through their writings which are preserved in the New Testament (cf. p John 17:20).

This feature is consistent with what we find in the Old Testament. There, the rule was:

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20).

Thus the Bible is the authority—“the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). Whenever others claim an equal teaching authority, then we are to demand the evidence in support of that claim—and it is to include (amongst other things) the clear testimony of prophecy.

The Futurist Diversion
Jesus had said “Take heed that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Matt. 24:4-5). Not that these deceivers would claim to be Jesus of Nazareth—but that they were his representatives.

This had been one of the signs that Jesus gave of the approaching end of the Jewish age. John refers to this saying:

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time” (1 John 2:18).

These “many antichrists” were the “many” that Jesus had said would come in his name, saying that they were the authority to be heeded. These people had separated from the apostles and formed their own church. John says:

“They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out...” (verse 19).

Being impatient of the authority of Christ’s true apostles these leaders had led away disciples after themselves and “went out” from Christ’s assembly. In this they had started their own Church and were thus its “fathers.” John called them antichristos—translated Antichrists in English versions. Of this word Vine’s Expository Dictionary says the word “can mean either against Christ or instead of Christ, or perhaps, combining the two, one who, assuming the guise of Christ, opposes Christ.”

Now this charge which John initiated would be taken up by those who contended earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude verse 3). The “fathers” of the new Church movement had to respond to it. The evidence is that they did so by claiming that antichrist had not yet arrived—There was some truth to this but John and Paul both say that the spirit of Antichrist was already at work—there were “even now” many antichrists.

These antichrists taught the theory of Futurism; the concept of a Future Antichrist, and so diverted the identity away from themselves.

Irenaeus was one of these early “Church Fathers” who wrote in about A.D. 170. It is said that he had been instructed by Polycarp and Papias—two church leaders who were contemporaries of the apostle John.

In a treatise entitled Irenaeus Against Heresies (and therefore written “against” people with whom Irenaeus was not in agreement), he says that when Antichrist comes he will sit in the temple of God in Jerusalem “endeavouring to show himself as Christ” and so establish “the abomination of desolation” spoken of by Daniel. He will come for a period of “three years and six months, during which time, when he comes, he shall reign over the earth.” He will remove his kingdom into that earthly Jerusalem “and shall sit in the temple of God leading astray those who worship him, as if he were Christ.”

This Futurist idea gained a firm hold amongst second and third century church leaders. Hippolytus (said to have died about A.D. 235) refined it in a work entitled Treatise on Christ and Antichrist. His idea was that this “vessel of Satan” would:

• Gather the Hebrew people from their dispersion.
• Promise to restore their country.
• Establish again their kingdom and nation.
• Will be worshipped by them as a God.

“Above all, moreover” says this Hippolytus, “he will love the nation of the Jews. And with all this he will work signs and terrible wonders, false wonders and not true, in order to deceive his impious equals... he will work wonders, cleansing lepers, raising paralytics, expelling demons... raising the dead... reconciling in love men who contend... Above all others shall the nation of the Hebrews be dear to the tyrant himself...” He will reign on earth for three and a half years. He willappoint demons, in the form of men, as princes over his subjects. Then he will no longer seem pious, but harsh and severe and vengeful. He will raise and excite “against us” (i.e. the church) “open war even to battle and slaughter.” And for those who do not worship this antichrist “the heavens will not give their dew, the clouds will not give their rain, the earth will refuse to yield its fruits...”

It seems that Hippolytus was taking some of the teachings of his opponents and building them into the framework of his descriptions of Antichrist (compare Zech 14:17,18).

If so, it was a subtle way of saying—“You say we are Antichrists; we reply no, because he has not come yet. You heretics are his champions as can be seen from your doctrines about a future earthly kingdom of the Jews.”

Rome Exposed
It was the Protestant Reformers who, upon reading the Bible, followed earlier writers in identifying the Church of Rome with the Man of Sin and the Antichrist. This was not merely name-calling—for the Pope certainly did match the criteria laid out in the New Testament concerning the great apostasy.

The Roman Church was seen as a corruption of the original Apostolic Christianity revealed in the Bible. It was a “falling away;” an apostasy (2 Thess. 2:3).

The Pope was seen as a man that “exalteth himself” (2 Thess. 2:4) and had even used the title of “Holy Father,” and was in fact called God on several occasions.

Here was a religious system that was already
Sin was as certain as anything could be. Enmity against the Truth. Could anything worse could hardly be any clearer evidence of their writings of the Apostles of Jesus Christ—there translated it—when its officials supervised the reading of Scripture and put to death those who the name of Jesus Christ.

Idolatry, and there could be no doubt that the adoration of images—seen by Protestants as from the Christianity of the Bible. Add to this the mystery cults of paganism. It was far removed of magical incantations reminiscent of the ceremonial displays that took on the appearance “saints” and so forth, was accompanied by release souls from hell or purgatory, to create Thess. 2:9-10). Its claim to forgive sins, to system characterized by deceit and falsehood (2 Thess. 2:7) and which had a long continuous historic line which would continue until it was Thess. 2:7) and which had a long continuous.

Further, the Roman Church was seen to be a system characterized by deceit and falsehood (2 Thess. 2:9-10). Its claim to forgive sins, to release souls from hell or purgatory, to create “saints” and so forth, was accompanied by ceremonial displays that took on the appearance of magical incantations reminiscent of the mystery cults of paganism. It was far removed from the Christianity of the Bible. Add to this the adoration of images—seen by Protestants as idolatry, and there could be no doubt that the whole corrupt system was a blasphemy against the name of Jesus Christ.

When this same religious system forbade the reading of Scripture and put to death those who translated it—when its officials supervised the public burning of the Holy Bible—that is, the writings of the Apostles of Jesus Christ—there could hardly be any clearer evidence of their enmity against the Truth. Could anything worse have been committed? The identity of the Man of Sin was as certain as anything could be.

This conviction found expression in the 39 Articles of the Church of England: “The Roman Doctrine concerning purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.”—Article XXII

“The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of England.”—Article XXXVIII

The identity of the Man of Sin was also reflected in the preface to the King James Authorized Version of the Bible.

Understanding Prophecy

Irenaeus it seems, had overlooked the “many antichrists” already at work (1 John 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:7) and concentrated his focus upon the as yet future revealing (apocalypse) of the Man of Sin. This was a shrewd approach and placed the emphasis upon the future antichrist. At that time however, there was still enough knowledge of prophecy for Irenaeus to point to a probable candidate. He wrote:

“But, knowing the sure number declared by Scripture, that is, six hundred sixty and six, let them await, in the first place, the division of the (Roman) kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning, and beginning to set their affairs in order, and advance their kingdom, let them learn to acknowledge that he who shall come claiming the kingdom for himself, and shall terrify those men of whom we have been speaking, having a name containing the aforesaid number, is truly the abomination of desolation... Then also Lateinlos has the number six hundred and sixty-six; and it is a very probable (solution), this being the name of the last kingdom (of the four seen by Daniel). For the Latins are they who at present bear rule: I will not, however, make any boast over this (coincidence).”

So it is quite certain that “the Latins” (i.e. Rome) was earmarked as the seat of the coming Antichrist system, from very early times (Irenaeus wrote A.D. 170). Other writers such as Tertullian (162-240) and Hippolytus (??-236) also pointed to Rome as the future seat of the apostasy.

As we move down the centuries we find that this identity of the apostasy in the understanding of the prophecies survived. For example, the Articles of the Waldenses (dated A.D. 1189 by John Foxxe and Josiah Pratt) states: “The church of Rome is the very Babylon spoken of in the Apocalypse; and the pope is the fountain of all errors, and the very antichrist.”

This was also the understanding of the 16th Century Protestant Reformers as we have seen. It made a powerful impact upon society—and particularly upon England and the English-speaking world. Writers such as Mede, Flemming, Thomas Newton, Isaac Newton and Elliot (title pages shown left) helped to mould a truly Protestant (we might say anti-Catholic) social environment. Laws were passed—the so-called penal Laws which involved a range of private and public disabilities.

Rome Fights Back!

If early Christian writers could avoid being classed among the “many antichrists” of 1 John 2:18, 19, by emphasising a future antichrist—could not the Roman Catholic Church deflect Protestant accusations by a similar strategy?

What was required in order to accomplish this was the re-interpretation of prophecy—to popularise an explanation of these key prophecies which would place the mysterious antichrist and man of sin in the future. In fact, most of the necessary ingredients were already to hand in the work of the 3rd Century writer Hippolytus (quoted earlier).

In order to place these prophecies in the future it was necessary to discredit the idea, followed by Protestants, that there was a gradual fulfillment unfolding down the centuries of history—the so-called Continuous Historic interpretation. This would disengage prophecies such as Daniel, the Man of Sin prophecy and the Revelation from the accomplished history and institutions of Europe—and so teach the inapplicability of these prophecies to the Church of Rome.

There would be a further consequence too. These prophecies would become disconnected from events in the contemporary world—and so virtually irrelevant to the lives of ordinary men and women. They would see no connection between prophecy and their own day-to-day environment—so the study and contemplation of them would cease. These prophecies could then be allowed to fade into obscurity. As men and women became unaware of the powerful evidence of prophecy, and of its testimony to the authority of the Bible, they would be more susceptible to the beguiling influences of the Church and, eventually, to its claim to speak with an infallible authority.

In the 1964 papal Encyclical letter, The Decree on Ecumenism, a paragraph that emphasised Catholic “truth with good will” declared:

“The mentality of separated brethren must be explored... It is necessary that properly
prepared Catholics should improve their knowledge of their brothers’ particular teaching and history, spiritual and liturgical life, religious questions on a basis of equality, provided that those who take part, with the bishops keeping watch, are real experts...”

**Jesus in Action**

In a booklet entitled *The Great Controversy*, the Seventh-Day Adventist writer, E.G. White, wrote:

“Throughout Christendom, Protestantism was menaced by formidable foes. The first triumphs of the Reformation past, Rome summoned new forces, hoping to accomplish its destruction. At this time the order of the Jesuits was created, the most cruel, unscrupulous, and powerful of all the champions of popery... There was no crime too great for them to commit, no deception too base for them to practice, no disguise too difficult for them to assume. Vowed to perpetual poverty and humility, it was their studied aim to secure wealth and power, to be devoted to the overthrow of Protestantism, and the re-establishment of the papal supremacy.”

But it is the Jesuits themselves, a special order of Roman Catholic priests, that tell us that they were the instruments that overcame the interpretation of the Apocalypse that had related those visions to history. In a booklet entitled *Antichrist* by C.C. Martindale S.J. (pub. 1948, cts) we read the following:

“There is today, we think, no danger of anyone supposing that the visions of the Apocalypse are meant to represent a series of historical events succeeding one another chronologically...”

“The real renaissance of scientific study of the book took place in Spain in the sixteenth century, and the Jesuits themselves were largely responsible for it, especially Alcazar, 1614 and 1619, and Mariana, about the same time.”

Such a confession is borne out by the facts—yet, incredibly, even when this background is presented it is dismissed by those who have espoused the Futurist delusion. A few years ago even a daily newspaper could state:

“He (Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order) did his work so well that the Jesuits, especially through education, were the principal instrument behind the Counter Reformation which reversed the all-conquering tide of protestantism... as recently as the 1950’s, the Jesuits could be numbered among the 20 most powerful international bodies on Earth.” The *Sunday Telegraph* Nov. 22, 1992.

Today, the Vatican’s propaganda has succeeded. The smiling and genial pope is seen as a sincere and harmless old man who is striving to maintain moral standards in an unbelieving world. As the well-known evangelical writer Hal Lindsey expressed it: “...I have some profound theological differences with the pope and Roman Catholicism, especially his devotion to Mary. But John Paul II is, in my opinion, a truly devout person who claims a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”

The same writer in his best-selling book *The Late Great Planet Earth*, (1970) wrote: “The time is ripe and getting riper for the Great Dictator, the one we call the “Future Fuhrer.”

One of the main tools that Rome has used to lead people away from the Bible’s authority—and to cover her identity as the great false Church—has been the Futurist interpretation of prophecy. In accepting this (or its alternative Praeterist counterpart, which makes the Apocalypse apply to the events of A.D. 70), we become blinded to the great religious deception that is taking place in our time. It is through a right understanding of prophecy that we are not only alerted to this danger, but we are also confirmed in our belief that the Bible is indeed the written word of God given for our instruction. This book is the only religious authority extant. The words of Jesus to the religious leaders of his day were: “O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky: but can ye not discern the signs of the times?” (Matt. 16:3).

**Keys that Fit**

There is of course much more that could be said on this subject, but we will close this present consideration with some words written by the late John Carter. They appeared in *The Christadelphian* magazine in July 1958 (page 314) and stand as relevant now as they did then:

“Take away the continuous historic method of interpretation and there are no fixed marks from which to measure, no programme to determine how far history has gone. Our belief that we are in the last days rests basically upon this method of interpretation of Daniel and Revelation. To surrender it is like throwing overboard both chart and compass. If the continuous historic interpretation will not stand the strain of scrutiny then we are in that respect building upon sand. But we must recognize what its surrender entails in relation to our hope.

“But we do not think there is room for misgiving. The foundations of the method of interpretation are established by the Spirit in the keys provided in the revelation itself. We take heed to these keys—they fit the lock and the door opens which brings to view the evidence that God rules and fulfils the words of His servants the prophets. Those “servants” of the Lord for whom the message was sent may be assured the night is far spent, the day is at hand.”

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**HAL LINDSEY: Term by a biographer**

“The Father of the Modern-Day Bible Prophecy movement” looks for a future Antichrist and sees the pope as a sincere and devout Christian.

This is the one who is predicted in the Scriptures very clearly and called the “Antichrist”.

The results of Jesuit activity ought to be obvious!

More evidence of the same kind was seen when Billy Graham, the supposed leading Protestant evangelist, received an honorary degree at the Roman Catholic Benedictine Belmont Abbey. He even described the pope as “the moral leader of the world.”

England was once known as “Protestant England.” It is this Jesuit activity that has brought about the death of that Protestant nation.

**So What?**

Protestantism has not been without its blemishes and some readers may feel that a transfer of allegiance from the Queen (or Archbishop of Canterbury) is not that much of a loss.

That is not the point.

Our purpose has been to show that the warning of Jesus Christ about false prophets arising, and the predictions of the apostles about an Apostasy that would deceive the world—have been fulfilled. If, as we have shown, mainline Protestants have been turned away from the Bible—and even a whole nation turned away from its traditional culture and beliefs by the activity of the Roman Church—then it is an exceedingly powerful force to be reckoned with. The words of Jesus should be read carefully: “Take heed lest any man deceive you...”
MILESTONES Update

The Berlin city government is discussing plans to rebuild the former Prussian Imperial palace which was razed by communist East Germany for ideological reasons in 1953. A vault in Berlin’s main cathedral containing the remains of successive Prussian kings has just been lavishly restored (Sunday Telegraph 31-12-00).

One of the claimants to the German throne, Georg Freidrich Hohenzollern, has indicated that he would be willing to wear the crown in a restored monarchy. In Milestones2000 we discuss the links that the Romanov heir, George Mikhailovich, who is favoured by the Russian Church and political leaders, has with the German throne. We also see how Russia has restored the Tsar’s throne at great cost, and has canonised the last Tsar, making the country’s peace with the events of the 1st W.W. that ended the monarchy. If Russia has moved missiles to the Old East Prussia, is she being a clever chess player, and leaving her bargaining chips in any possible merging of territory? The break-up of Nato?

The controversy over the European Army, or Rapid Reaction Force as Britain likes to call it, rumbles on. The discovery that America had used depleted uranium in its weapons used in Bosnia in 1995 has added to the strains. Many of the countries that had men on the ground have reported a higher than normal incidence of cancers and leukaemia. This has forced Nato on the defensive, and the “fallout” is feared to put a strain of relations between Nato and the EU. The whole drive for this force is flawed. France and Britain have been the driving forces behind it. France because she sees it will push America out of Europe, and Britain, because here was an opportunity to demonstrate “what good Europeans we are” in doing something that Britain is good at — organising armies.

Plans for the new European defence force could lead to the breaking up of NATO as the main instrument for western defence and security, according to Sir John Weston, formerly British ambassador to the alliance. He mounted a fierce attack on the provisions in the EU treaty drawn up at Nice last month for a European defence identity. Sir John said the defence provisions in the treaty were “excruciatingly bureaucratic” and it defied common sense for the EU to set up a complete set of military institutions in parallel with NATO. He said that 60 pages of the Nice treaty devoted to the defence identity suggested a more ambitious interpretation of EU aims than the simply stated ones of occasional humanitarian, rescue and peacekeeping tasks. “Why else would one need a separate EU Military Staff Committee at Chiefs of Defence level, a fully fledged military staff organisation, a strategic planning capability, a satellite centre, an institute of security studies and a force catalogue currently listed in the document as 100,000 strong with 400 combat.”

Turning point for American foreign policy

This was the heading of a Daily Telegraph article (20-01-01) that appeared on the day of President Bush’s Inauguration. American foreign policy is at a crossroads...The strains between Washington and its European allies have grown in proportion to the social and economic integration of Europe. With the prospect of military integration represented by the European Security and Defence Policy, those strains could become more apparent. However it concluded: In the Middle East, Mr Clinton has left affairs out of balance and, with Ariel Sharon likely to become the next Israeli prime minister, American policy will have to be reshaped. But it is certain that America under Mr Bush will strongly support Israel. The Jerusalem Post 19-01-01 made the observation that as former oil man, Bush would be expected to show a greater sympathy to Arab concerns. But it added, “he is unlikely to forget how Arafat sided with Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War, which was launched by his father, former president Bush.” Already troop withdrawals from the Balkans are being planned. At the moment there are some 10,000 US ground troops there. Over a 4 year period these would all be withdrawn. It would mark a symbolic change of policy in Washington.

The situation in Israel.

A headline in the Daily Telegraph (20-01-01), summed up the situation — Peace hopes buried with shot boy. It reported how an Israeli teenager met a contact that he had made on the Internet. They then travelled to a Palestinian neighbourhood, where gunmen stopped them and he was shot dead. In the past 16 weeks 367 people have died in this conflict. The Israelis had high hopes of Mr Barak when he took office, but now they have turned away from him. Israeli elections have been called for February 6th, and the pollsters predict a victory for the 73-year-old Ariel Sharon. The crowds were chanting “Sharon, shalom (peace)” and saying that “only Sharon can bring shalom.” They see in Sharon a man “who will bring more security — the Arabs are more afraid of him — but peace.” The Israelis are resigned to the troubles never being far away. We wait the outcome of the elections. When will God’s people learn that peace lies in His hands? Peace will probably only come when there is a measure of reform in Israel, under the hand of Elijah, prior to the revealing of Messiah to his people.

Papal envoy appeals for peace.

The Pope has sent a special envoy to Jerusalem to celebrate the end of the Jubilee year. A special mass was held in the Basilica of the Nativity at Bethlehem on January 2nd, and letters from the Pope delivered to Mr Barak and Mr Arafat. A day earlier a Basque-French Cardinal celebrated the “World Day for Peace” in the Cathedral of the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem. The message of peace that he brought from the Pope was for a “dialogue between cultures for a civilisation of love and peace. Please no war in the name of God. No bloodshed in the name of religion, because our God is a God of love and is the God of all His creatures.” Jerusalem Post (19-01-01). If we had not the guidance of Scripture, we could easily be misled by such sentiments. But the Lord Jesus knows the true intents of the heart and has declared the truth long ago:

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration (astonishment).” Rev 17:6.

“...and in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” Rev 18:24.

The Palestinians have been working with the Vatican — a matter we expand in Milestones2000 and show a cartoon from the Israeli viewpoint. Here (centre) is a cartoon, which was entitled Holding The key to Palestinian aspirations, that appeared in an Arab publication. It shows that both Arab and Israeli see that the Pope has the key to the Arab desire to control Jerusalem, their hoped for capital of their desired Palestinian State. The article was written at the time of the Pope’s visit to Israel last March, and is headed Arab press celebrate Pope’s support (of a Palestinian homeland).

Gulf leaders sign defence pact

Russia has been busy during the past few months rebuilding trade with Iraq in defiance of American sanctions. She has also been working in Iran, formally Persia. This is in line with our expectations from Ezekiel 38 that Persia is in the confederacy with Gog. The original Persian Empire spread over 127 provinces, from the border of India to the east across today’s Iraq and Syria to what are Turkey’s western borders, and did include Egypt.
“Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.”
Job 37:14.

The arctic tern shown in these illustrations flies from pole to pole, and along amazing elliptical flight paths. How they navigate is a mystery. These creatures can fly at 31 miles per hour (faster if wind-assisted), and records indicate that they complete a round journey of at least 24,000 miles in the 8 months of the nonbreeding season. They can also sustain flight for hours on end.

One commentator considers the incredible flight of these birds, sometimes travelling alone, yet arriving quickly at the traditional wintering area, thousands of miles distant. “How is this possible?” he asks. “In effect the bird appears to carry in its brain a chronometer, a form of sextant, and the essential charts for the traditional migration passage.”

On this question, like so many others, the evolutionists are stuck for answers. Look at the navigation equipment required to fly a 747! It seems that the arctic tern has it all stored in his head! In one experiment migratory birds were hatched and reared in captivity (no flying or navigation instructions), yet upon release the birds immediately took off and headed for the traditional home grounds. But again there is the hand of an all wise Creator seen in these things. The people of Israel, though long dispersed in all countries now “fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows” — Isaiah 60:8. They know their season also!