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The Story of His Glory [Steven Hawthorne]

The Bible is basically a story about God. When we turn to the Bible as a self-help book, we end up bored or frustrated with what seems to be a rambling collection of stories. What if the Bible is more about God than it is about us? How thrilling to discover that every element of scripture—the reports of events, the verses of distilled wisdom, the lyrical prophecies—converge in one central saga of one worthy Person. We're used to the idea that the Bible is a true story. It's so true that the story is still unfolding to this minute. We are used to hearing that the Bible is a love story. But we tend to see only one side of the love: how God loves people. If the main point of the Bible is that God is to be loved with heart, soul, mind and strength, perhaps it would be wise to read the entire story from God's point of view. When we look at it all from God's viewpoint, the grand love story finally makes sense: God is not just loving people. He is transforming them to become people who can fully love Him. God is drawing people as worshipers to offer freely to Him their love-inspired glory. God can be loved only when He is known. That's why the story of the Bible is the story of God revealing Himself in order to draw to Himself obedient worship, or glory, from the nations. With God's passionate love at the core, the Bible is truly the story of His glory.

Basic Concepts of Glory]

To trace the story of God as the Bible presents it, we need a grasp of three related ideas which define the story at every juncture: glory, the name of God and worship. Don't be thrown off by the religious-sounding word "glory." Glory is the relational beauty that every person's heart yearns to behold and even to enter. The word "glory" in scripture refers to the essential worth, beauty and value of people, created things and, of course, the Creator Himself. The Hebrew word for glory is a word meaning weight, substance, and at the same time, brilliance or radiant beauty. To glorify someone is to recognize their intrinsic worth and beauty, and to speak of that feature in a public way. To glorify God is to praise or to speak of Him openly and truthfully. Glory is at the heart of true worship throughout the Scriptures: All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord; and they shall glorify Your name (Ps 86:9). We...worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus...(Phil 3:3). The idea of "glory" also describes honor that can be given or awarded. When someone is exalted or made great, they are, to some extent, in a biblical sense, glorified. God is so rich in glory that He bestows extravagant honors upon His human servants without compromising His own majesty in the slightest. Jesus exposed our habit of seeking "glory from one another," and yet failing to "seek the glory that is from the one and only God" (John 5)

The Name of God

Throughout the larger story, the biblical authors use the idea of the "name of God" as a key idea. To distinguish the functions of reference, revelation and reputation, it may help to sort out the usages with three easy-to-remember categories: name-tag, window and fame name.

Name-tag names

First, there are the names themselves used to designate God in the Bible. God is never anonymous in His story. He uses many names for Himself. Because the function is reference, we can call these names, for our purposes, the "name-tag" names of God since a name-tag distinguishes and identifies someone. It is just as true to refer to the God of scripture as "Lord of hosts" as it is to refer to Him as "God Almighty," or "Judge of all the earth" or "King of glory." Each of these names is truly God's name.

Window name

Second, God is pleased to disclose Himself accurately by any of the Biblical names. The function is revelation. For example, anyone who spends a few minutes pondering the biblical name "The Lord is my Shepherd" will have a better understanding of the nurturing kindness of God.

Fame name

The third usage of the phrase "the name of God" is the most abundant in the Bible, even though it is little recognized. "God's name" most often refers to the idea of His public renown. I call it God's "fame name." The function is God's reputation. God's name is His global namesake. It is the open memory, based on historical incidents, which establishes a reputation worthy of future trust. God's name is the body of truth about Himself which He has displayed and declared in the long-unfolding story of the Bible. The Hebrew people were not only to treasure this story, but they were also to tell it. Unlike the way of many religions, God's revelation was never to be a secret affair for a few people. Isaiah calls Israel to "make known His deeds among the peoples," so that the nations are steadily reminded that "His name is exalted" (Isa 12:4). As we shall see, much of the story of the Bible recounts what God has done to make His

name great among the nations. Why does God want to be known with such precision? God wants to be more than globally famous—He yearns to be truly worshiped.

God Reveals Glory to Receive Glory]

God's glory flows in two directions. The first direction of His glory is toward the world. He shows His glory to people throughout the earth. He reveals who He is and what He has done in order to bring about the second direction of glory—that people might give Him glory in loving worship. God reveals glory to all nations in order that He might receive glory from people through worship. Psalm 96 shows these two directions of glory. God mandates a declaration of His glory to the nations in verses 2 and 3:

“Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.

What an eloquent portrayal of the evangelization of the world! But the Psalmist goes on to tell the purpose for world evangelization by describing the second aspect of God's glory: a response of glory from the nations toward God in verses 7 to 9:

Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Give to the LORD glory and strength.
Give to the LORD the glory of His name; Bring an offering, and come into His courts.
Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; Tremble before Him, all the earth.”

The heart of mission flows in this amazing economy of glory: God reveals His glory to all nations in order to receive glory from all creation.

A Purpose Beyond Salvation]

People are indeed saved by the global declaration of God's salvation, but the ultimate value of their salvation is not to be seen in what they are saved from, it is what they are saved for that really matters. People are saved to serve God in worship. In this respect, we can say that world evangelization is for God. However accustomed we may be to seeing people as being of paramount importance, the Bible is clear: The rationale for mission is the colossal worthiness of God. Examine the logic of Psalm 96:2-4:

“Proclaim good tidings of His salvation....Tell of His glory...among all peoples. For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.”

A Rationale Greater than Supremacy

The rationale for mission seems simple enough: Since God is supreme, every creature should bow down in subjection. But can this really be the logic at the center of the universe? Our hearts won't buy it. There is something more. The Scriptures are loud about the truth that God is love. God calls people to love Him with all that they are. Where is God's love, and ours, in response?

A God who demands worship just because He's supreme doesn't seem like a very loving God. In fact, such a God might not seem like He is worthy to even be admired. God's penchant for praise might make Him appear to be struggling with a low self-image problem. It's foolish to speak of God's jealousy for worship as if He were a petulant tribal deity threatened by rival gods. God is not threatened; rather He is immeasurably saddened by false worship. When people worship anyone or anything besides Him, they become like it. God has better intentions for people. What is true worship anyway? Worship takes place when people recognize who God is and offer public acknowledgment and freely approach God, personally offering face-to-face gratitude and day-to-day allegiance. Worship is genuine relational interaction with God. That's why God always welcomes us to worship with a gift. He never needs the worship gifts. But the gift brings the giver. That is why the nations are urged to come bringing a gift, offering God tokens of their finest worth (Ps 96:8 and many others). By their sacrifices and gifts, they offer themselves.

Fully Bestowing His Love

Why is God so desirous of worship? Two reasons: He is delighted by the sincere love that comes to Him in true worship. But there is more: By wooing people into true worship, God is able to fully bestow His love upon them. You can see it in Psalm 96:6.

“Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.”

“Splendor and majesty” do not refer to God's self-experience. Rather, along with “strength and beauty” (the parallel passage says “joy” in 1 Chr 16:27), they are features of God's presence that are to be the experience of people who approach Him in true worship. There can be nothing more splendid or majestic for humans than to be elevated and placed in the gorgeous, heart-stopping grandeur of God's regal presence. Worship is the way that people glorify God. When looked at from God's point of view, we can see that worship is also God's way of glorifying people—in all the best sense of bringing people into their highest honor. Worship fulfills God's love. He loves people so vastly that He wills to exalt them to something better than greatness; He wants to bring them into an honored nearness to Him. Stretch your mind and your heart as far as you can, but you'll never perceive the extent of what God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9). Perhaps John got a glimpse of the “splendor and majesty” of those courts in Revelation 5:1-14. He heard all of heaven's myriads raise their voices acclaiming the marvel that God Himself has purchased people from every tribe and tongue. Why has God bought such ignoble humans at the extravagant cost of the blood of His Son? Furthermore, why has He purchased some from every single ethnicity? Of what value are these ones? Their precious value is this: They will be His priests. Some from every people will gladly offer to God the distinctive honors and redeemed glories of their people. Each of the peoples has eternal

worth because of Christ's blood. Each of the peoples has an appointed place before Him. God has set His mighty heart to bring them there. It must come forth. The passion of this unrequited love of God for each of the peoples is the very soul of any true missionary enterprise.

The Bible as God's Story]

The Bible is the astounding drama of God's love drawing the worship of the nations. Remember the basic thesis: God reveals his glory to all peoples so that he may receive glory from all creation. This double dimension of glory can help make sense out of an apparent jumble of ancient stories.

Abraham]

When Abraham arrived in the land of promise, he did not excel as a brilliant missionary, however we might define that role. He's certainly not on record as a great evangelist. He was actually thrown out of Egypt in disgrace (Gen 12:10-20). Abraham's neighbors frightened him into lying about his family. Abraham's rationale for falsely presenting his wife does not reveal an evangelist's confidence that lives might change: "Surely there is no fear of God in this place" (Gen 20:11). But for all his failings, he did the most missionary thing he could have done when he first arrived in the new land: His first act was to establish ongoing public worship of God. "He built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD" (Gen 12:7-8). His household may have been the only worshipers at that altar, but God was explicitly worshiped by name and in a public way. Blessed to Be a Blessing to Be a Blessing At one point Abraham rescued some of his powerful neighbors from an alliance of marauding nations (Gen 14). After the miraculous victory, Abraham refused to accept the windfall of reward from the king of Sodom. If he accepted the largess, he knew that from that point, he and his family would always be viewed as living under the patronage of that city. Instead he chose to keep himself positioned before the nations as one specifically blessed by God.

With the nations watching, Abraham resolutely named God as the one who would reward and bless him. His bold words (Gen 14: 21-24) were substantiated by the gift of goods Abraham offered God. Abraham offered to God the wealth of Sodom as well as that of other nations. He helped foreign nations present a tithe to God, a recognized formal act of worship (Gen 14:18-20). With Melchizedek as presiding priest, Abraham functioned, as a priest, by offering worship gifts on behalf of other nations. Abraham was blessed in order to be a blessing to the nations (Gen 12:1-3). But the purpose goes beyond the blessing of nations. God Himself is blessed! Melchizedek openly recognized that Abraham was blessed by God. By God's power, Abraham had been a blessing to his neighbors by rescuing enslaved families and their goods. But the grand result was that God Himself would be blessed in praise! Listen to Melchizedek: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High...And blessed be God Most High..." (Gen 14:18-20). What do we learn from the entire series of events? Abraham made God's name known by his ongoing worship. God made His name great by dramatic redemptive power through His people. The outcome was a multi-national gathering of grateful honor in which God was explicitly worshiped in truth.

Global Purpose Confirmed by Obedience in Worship

The crucial, proving moment of Abraham's life was a worship event (Gen 22). God told Abraham to bring His son Isaac to offer him in an act of worship. It was a test to prove what Abraham and his family would be. Would God find in Abraham an obedient, priestly passion for God (literally, "a fearer of God," Gen 22:12)? Would Abraham prove to be zealous to offer the worship God desired? If so, God would find him to have the kind of faith that God wanted multiplied among the nations. You know the story. At the very moment that Abraham obeyed in worship, God spoke from heaven with solemn oath, declaring forcefully His global purpose to bless the peoples of the earth through Abraham's family (22:18).

The Exodus]

God did more for His name than to gain early worship from Abraham. God went global in a big way at the Exodus. At first glance, the story of the Exodus doesn't look like a great missionary event. Thousands of Egyptians died. Grief covered every Egyptian home. What was God doing? The key passage is Exodus 9:13-16 in which Moses gives an ultimatum to Pharaoh, with a bold word about His purposes:

"Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. But indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth"

Take note that God never said, "Let My people go!" That's just half the sentence, without the purpose. Take care to hear the entire cry of salvation: "Let my people go, that they may worship Me!" (Ex 8:1, 20, 9:1, 13, 10:3) 4 Pharaoh well understood the entire demand of Moses that the people be released to worship. Pharaoh probably thought that the appeal for a worship vacation was a ploy to disguise plans for escape. Perhaps many of the Hebrews made the same mistake. How many of them may have thought that the plans to worship God in the wilderness were but a ruse to dupe the authorities? Is it any wonder then that many of them remained fixated on matters of comfort, diet, safety and entertainment? They were slow to comprehend that in their escape, God had a purpose for Himself in the sight of the nations. They had turned salvation inside-out: They seriously thought that their rescue was the predominate concern of God. Instead, God was orchestrating a powerful plan to draw the attention of the nations to Himself.

God Brings Global Attention to His Name

God was singling Himself out from all the gods of earth. He was making an "everlasting name" for Himself at the Exodus (Isa 63:11-14 and Neh 9:9-10). He wanted everyone in Egypt and beyond to know that there was absolutely no god like the only living God. He

wanted the world to watch a mob of slaves marching in procession to worship Him. God established His reputation as one greater and absolutely different (truly holy, not just holier) than every other deity ever dreamed up by man—an exquisite, almighty, resplendent God. The Exodus was to be a reference point for all subsequent revelation to the world of his character, His holiness, and His power. How did chaos in Egypt reveal the ever-living God?

Judging the Gods of Egypt

Some scholars have noted that every one of the plagues of Egypt was either aimed against the false gods of Egypt or the oppressive power structures that were revered with fanatical zeal.⁵ Some Egyptian deities, such as the Nile River, or the great sun god, were embarrassed directly by the plagues of blood and darkness. Other deities were indirectly shamed by exposing their complete inability to do what they were supposed to do. There were gods who were revered as being able to deal with infestations of insects or to protect cattle from disease. The powerful religious elite was shamed. The deeply revered military was summarily annihilated. Why was God wrecking Egypt before the watching world?

“God was executing judgments “against all the gods of Egypt” (Ex 12:12). He was not aiming at destroying people, but devastating one of the most highly regarded collection of false gods in all the earth. If He wanted to destroy the people of Egypt He could have done it quickly. “For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you..., you would then have been cut off from the earth. But indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain...to proclaim My name through all the earth” (Ex 9:15-16).

The Nations Take Notice]

Did it work? Did the world take notice of God making His name great? The devastation recorded in the book of Exodus didn't make headlines in Egyptian hieroglyphics, but we should understand that events which put Egypt in a bad light never were chipped into stone.

The Bible reports that the waves of the Red Sea hadn't quite calmed down before Moses led the people in singing, “The LORD is His name....Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness?” Then they began to list some of the surrounding nations, stating clearly that: “The peoples have heard, and they tremble...” (Ex 15:3,7,15).

Jethro had married into Moses' family, but was still very much a Gentile. He had certainly heard about the God of the Hebrews for years from Moses. Perhaps many peoples and cities had heard something of this great God without trusting or worshipping Him. But listen to Jethro after the plagues of Egypt. “Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people” (Ex 18:11). Jethro was a leading priest of a foreign people, well-qualified to evaluate religious matters.

As we read the story of Moses confronting Egypt today, it might appear that Egypt was just another harsh empire that abused slaves. In Moses' day it was open knowledge that Egypt was a complex of religious, economic, and military powers inextricably enmeshed with spiritual powers. God unraveled the system to show it for what it was at the core—horrid, spiritual evil, dedicated to diverting worshipers from coming to Him. God had blessed Egypt, but Egypt had made itself an enemy of God. God's “judgments” of the plagues and the awesome Red Sea affair (Ex 12:12) are not to be understood as mere punishment for bad deeds. God's intervention put down oppressive evil in order to liberate people. Why were they freed? “Let my people go, that they may worship Me.” God had orchestrated the Exodus events so that He revealed His glory by establishing His name in a global way. Then, with the world watching, He drew the people to Himself to establish a way of worship that all other nations could enter.

The Conquest]

The conquest of Canaan should be seen in the same light of God winning to Himself a single, holy people of worship. To that people, and by their witness, He will draw every other people to revere and know Him.

Just Recompense

At first glance to modern readers, the conquest may seem like a genocidal land grab rather than an act of a good and loving God. But a close look at the pertinent passages of Scripture shows that God ordained the conquest of Canaan with a double purpose. First, God was bringing just recompense for the “wickedness” of the peoples of the land (Deut 9:5). Long before this God had told Abraham that “the iniquity of the Amorites (was) not yet complete” (Gen 15:16). God had allowed sin to run its full course. We might wonder how the Canaanites felt about God's wrath. The one statement about the conquest recorded from a Canaanite came from a king who acknowledged the righteous execution of God's justice: “As I have done, so God has repaid me” (Judg 1:7).

Demolishing False Worship

The second, and primary reason for the thorough ferocity of the Hebrew conquest was this: God was demolishing systems of false worship in order to preserve the singular devotion of His people and the holiness of His name. Almost every passage describing the rationale behind ousting the peoples living in the land offers this reason: Canaanite worship would swiftly turn the Hebrews “away from following Me to serve other gods.” (Deut 4:15-24, 6:13-15, 7:1-8, et al.).

Joshua and Moses both voiced the same God-given rationale for the violence of the conquest: it was, at the core, an annihilation of false worship. God had mandated the destruction so that Israel would never “mention the name of their gods,...or serve them, or bow down to them” (Josh 23:7). While there are difficulties in fully understanding this part of the story of God's people, one thing is clear about the conquest: the point was pure worship. God's objective was not that Israel would be the only people that worshipped Him. His point was to insure that He was the only God that they worshipped.

Idolatry Would Profane the Name

Idolatry doesn't seem to threaten most believers today. The first four commands of the Ten Commandments can mystify or even bore us. Why was God so ferociously passionate about idolatry? Without grasping His global purposes for glory, it may seem that God is over-wrought about a nasty, primitive habit. But look at idolatry from God's point of view. God had distinguished His name far above any other. Any kind of idolatry would, in effect, profane (that is, bring down as common) God's name, the very name God had just singled out and sounded forth to the world. Look again at the conquest. The point of the invasion was not that Israel deserved someone else's homeland. God told Israel clearly that they weren't special or favored because of their intrinsic righteousness or their great nobility (Deut 7:6-7). Israel was told repeatedly that God would destroy them just as swiftly if they turned away from His worship to other gods.

The record is clear that the Hebrew people were at several points precariously close to being destroyed. Why? Hadn't God specially loved and saved them? For all the special love God had promised the descendants of Abraham, God was resolute in working for His glory. God was not averse to taking a delay and dealing with another generation. The issue at every juncture was the worship of the people to God and their testimony to His glory.

One instance makes this constant purpose of God clear: the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea. Israel had followed God through a divinely opened way, and stood on the threshold of fulfilling God's purposes. Spies were sent to check out the land and the people. Ten of the spies spooked the entire people, touching off a hysterical rebellion for self-preservation (Num 13:17-14:10). God was ready to destroy the entire people and start over with Moses, making out of him another people "greater and mightier" than the Hebrews. The point is not that the people had done something so bad that God had become fatally angry. God simply required for His purposes a nation who would at least believe in Him.

Moses actually argues with God, bringing up, as he had in a previous instance (Ex 32:1-14), that the nations were watching. They had heard something of God's name which could be falsified by what God was about to do. "Now if You slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Your fame (literally "name") will say, 'Because the Lord could not bring this people into the land...'" Moses challenges God, telling Him that the nations will conclude that the Hebrew God is weak—all beginnings, but no finish (Num 14:15-16).

Then Moses asks God to magnify Himself according to how God Himself had summarized His name: "The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression...."⁶ A long pause from heaven, and then God said that He had pardoned Israel according to the prayer of Moses. Then God raised His voice, I think, using some of the strongest expressions possible:

"But indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord!" (Num 14:17-21). What was God saying? That He would continue to use the nation, but wait for another generation. Even though He was taking a delay, He remained everlastingly resolute to bring forth His purpose on earth: to fill the earth with "the glory of the Lord." To fulfill that purpose required an obedient, worshiping, witnessing people.

The Temple]

Perhaps the first clear mention of the temple is made on the plains of Moab prior to Joshua leading the people into the land. Moses issues God's directives to destroy "all the places where the nations...serve their gods." Instead of remodeling any of the former places of worship, the shrines were to be completely ruined in order to "obliterate their name from that place." God's name is never to be equivocated with the name of any other deity. Instead, a new and special place would be built, "to establish His name there for His dwelling" (Deut 12:2-14, especially verse 5).

Consider God's declaration of purpose for the temple: "to establish His name there for His dwelling." God wanted to do two things in this special place. First, He wanted to reveal Himself by "His name." It would be a place of revelation as worshipers continually exalt His character and voice the stories and songs about His working. Second, God desired a place of encounter, of relationship, of dwelling. From the earliest mention of a tabernacle God intimated His desire to enjoy an exalted nearness amidst His people, "that I may dwell among them" (Ex 25:8). To "dwell" is a relational affair. It is consummated worship. God coming near His people as they come near to Him. Solomon knew that the temple was not God's domicile. As he dedicated the fabulous structure, he prayed: "But will God indeed dwell with mankind on the earth? Behold, heaven and highest heaven cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built" (2 Chr 6:18).

David had designed the temple as a place of approaching God with praise. Solomon installed the choirs and priestly musicians that his father had planned. These choirs were to continually "praise and glorify the Lord" using some of the Davidic songs, and no doubt using David's dedicatory hymn found in 1 Chronicles 16:23-33 (another rendition of Ps 96, discussed above), which explicitly beckons "all the families of the peoples" to worship God (v. 28).

According to Solomon's dedication, the house of the Lord is to be a place where God would see, hear and answer His people. But the house was not just for Israel. Solomon makes special mention of "the peoples." He knew that God's purpose for the temple was to welcome all nations to worship. Solomon knew the story up to that point. God had made Himself vastly famous. People of other nations would seek to know the God of Israel personally. Listen to Solomon's astounding prayer:

"Also concerning the foreigner who is not of your people Israel, when he comes from a far country for your name's sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm); when He comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You as do Your people Israel..."(1 Ki 8:41-43).

Solomon did not pray for a few of the individuals to come, but for many from every one of the peoples. Solomon prayed that the nations would meet God as they came to the house to pray and to worship. He did not ask that Gentiles know God in their own Gentile way, but rather that they would know God just as Israel did. Solomon envisioned all peoples joining Israel in the same kind of humble, joyous, worshipful walk with God that Israel enjoyed—"the fear of the Lord."

The Nations Begin To Come]

Did the report of God's name go out to the world? Did foreigners ever come to the house of the Lord and learn of the fear of the Lord? Did God answer Solomon's prayer? The best answer to these questions is "Yes" as well as "No."

The record shows that soon after the temple was complete (1 Ki 9:25), the Queen of Sheba "heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord"(10:1, my emphasis). She came to learn, she listened to Solomon's wisdom (v. 8), and came away with understanding of the covenant-keeping God who "loved Israel forever." As only a royal potentate might see, she realized that God Himself had established the power of Solomon, and the hope that through God's rulership, there might be "justice and righteousness" (v. 9).

Was this an isolated instance? Apparently not. A few verses later it says that, "All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart" (v. 24). The world didn't honor Solomon for being brainy or clever with court cases. The world recognized that God himself had put wisdom in this man's heart. And what was the first lesson in wisdom that Solomon put forth to the world? "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 1:7, 9:10). Solomon was introducing the world to the worship of God as well as the life of wisdom under God.

God's purposes were apparently being fulfilled. His name was great. Israel was making it known so that the nations were coming to know God personally. What could have possibly slowed God's unfolding plan to draw the nations to Himself? Only one thing. It was the issue about which God most stringently warned His people: idolatry.

And of all the possible horrors, probably the worst thing happened—Solomon himself led the way into grotesque idolatry. It was one of history's most bitter ironies. Imagine the brilliant hopes with the riches and the desires of the nations turning to Israel. Solomon had consecrated the temple in a spectacle of unimaginable glory. He had closed that event with a blessing of purpose on the building and nation, "so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no one else" (1 Ki 8:60).

And then just three chapters after this climactic opening of doors to the nations to know and fear the only God by name, Solomon's heart was turned "away after other gods." He actually constructed shrines within sight of the holy mountain of God (1 Ki 11:1-8). Can any believing reader of these verses not feel disappointment to the point of nausea? It's hard not to speculate about what might have happened if worship had been pure and steady for at least another generation.

The Persistence of God]

God's plan was simple: God would make His name great and then Israel could make His name known. He has always purposed to single out His name from all other gods, and then to welcome the nations to worship Him personally in the light of that revealed name through the witness of the people of Israel. The story from this point becomes a prolonged up-and-down struggle with idolatry.

Various episodes revive fidelity to God's worship, but are followed by stunning new lows of profaning God's name. The uppermost issue throughout the generations is God's glory by Israel's worship. At times the people disregarded the worship of God so greatly that generations would pass without the slightest attention to the simple regimens by which God had invited Israel to meet with Him (the ordinances for worship in the books of Moses). The words of some of the prophets show that even when worship patterns were followed, they were often performed superficially. The prophets exposed perfunctory worship, showing that it perversely lacked the justice and the kindness which was supposed to have thrived behind every offering and prayer to God (Isa 1:11-15, Amos 5:21-24, Mic 6:6-8). Although God delayed the great shaking of Israel and Judah, He finally separated the people from the land which was to showcase the blessing of God. They were exiled to distant lands. And then the utmost tragedy: The house of God was burned and broken to rubble.

Near the end of the time of exile, Daniel cried out for God to enact His promise to restore the temple and His people. Daniel was intensely aware of the entire saga, how God had brought His people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand... "(to) make a name for yourself, as it is this day" (Dan 9:15). Daniel's over-riding concern was that the ruins of intended glory on the temple mountain in Jerusalem was a continuing reproach to God's glory to "all those around us." He prayed that God would restore the people and the city so that the glory of His name would be restored. Daniel did not base his request on the supposed greatness of Israel, but "for your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people are called by your name" (Dan 9:16-19).

Ezekiel, a near contemporary to Daniel, breathed the same themes. God had restrained His wrath at several junctures from destroying Israel, but God's restraint had been for the sake of His name (Ezek 20:5-22). The dealings of God with Israel were not because of sickly favoritism, but solely for His glory among the nations:

Thus says the Lord God, 'It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord.' (Ezek 36:22-23)

The Destiny of Israel: Glory From All Nations

Daniel and Ezekiel weren't the only prophets who saw the ongoing story of Israel as focusing on God's name and glory. Other prophets and psalmists spoke of the history and the destiny of Israel in terms of the nations being drawn to God by name, and worshiping Him with diverse, lavish glory.

Shout joyfully to God, all the earth. Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious. Say to God, 'How awesome are your works!' Because of the greatness of your power your enemies will give feigned obedience to you. All the earth will worship you. And will sing praises to you; they will sing praises to your name (Ps 66:1-4).

All the kings of the earth will give thanks to You, O Lord, when they have heard the words of Your mouth. And they will sing of the ways of the Lord. For great is the glory of the Lord (Ps 138:4-5).

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14).

For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord, to serve him shoulder to shoulder. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my worshipers, my dispersed ones will bring my offerings (Zeph 3:9-10).

For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to my name, and a grain offering that is pure; for my name will be great among the nations (Mal 1:11).

These are but a sampling of the scores of prophetic words which tethered Israel's identity to the culmination of God's purposes: the glory of God on earth drawing the worship of all peoples. When the people of God were finally brought back to the land, building the temple was to be top priority. Haggai made it clear that the temple was for God's glory, and for a greater glory than had ever come before. "And I will shake all the nations; and the desired of the nations will come; and I will fill this house with glory" (Haggai 1:8, 2:7 KJV). From the exile onward, Israel avoided idolatry. But the lesser national glory they desired never came. They were waiting for a messianic deliverer to free them from oppression. They almost missed the Messiah when He came because Jesus' vision of redemption was for God's kingdom to be enacted among all peoples.

The Glory of God in Christ]

Christ is the crescendo of the story of God's glory. At the end of all things, He will have bought and brought people from every tribe and tongue to honor the Father. It's no surprise then, to see how His every move was part of pressing the story of God's glory toward its culmination for all nations. Jesus summed up His ministry in terms of bringing global glory to His Father:

"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." And what was the work? "I manifested Your name to the men You gave Me out of the world" (John 17:4,6).

Sanctify Your Name

The prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray can be easily misunderstood because of the antiquated English translation, "Hallowed be Thy name." This prayer is not a statement of praise. It is explicitly a request in the original language: "Father...sanctify your name!" To paraphrase, "Father lift up, single out, exalt, manifest, and reveal Your name to the people of earth. Become famous for who You really are. Cause the people of earth to know and adore You!" The prayer can be prayed most thoroughly in the global dimension that Jesus taught: "on earth as it is in heaven." There is no question of the primacy of this prayer for all believers. The prayer has to be understood. There can be little doubt that Jesus is teaching the Church to pray for the fulfillment of ancient purposes revealed in the Law, the stories, the songs and the prophecies of Israel for the glory of God.

In one telling encounter with the non-Jewish Samaritan woman, Jesus declared God's future for her and other Gentile nations: "An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers" (John 4:23).

A House of Worship from All Peoples

In His most public hour and most passionate moment, Jesus made an issue of the worship of the peoples. He cleansed the temple of the religious commercialism which formed a blockade prohibiting the nations from approaching God. He quoted Isaiah 56:7, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." The religious leaders listening to Him immediately recalled the rest of the passage that Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 56:6-7. Jesus intended for them to hear it fully:

Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord,...even those I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar. For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.

Just before going to His death, He displayed His life purpose, and the purpose of His soon-coming death (John 12:24-32). He openly considered the option of asking the Father to rescue Him from death: "What shall I say, Father, save Me from this hour?" But instead of asking to escape, He said, "But for this purpose I came to this hour."

What purpose was this? The purpose bursts forth from His heart in His next statement. It becomes the prayer of His death and His life: "Father! Glorify Your name!" And then, to the bewildered amazement of those standing near Him, God the Father Himself answered Jesus from heaven: "I have both glorified it (My name), and will glorify it again." God's answer from heaven still thunders, if you can hear it. It is God's answer to anyone who yields their life to the Father for the greater glory of His name. Jesus said that the answer

didn't come for Him, but for His followers who would come to similar moments of choosing to follow Him (12:30) in accordance with God's ancient purpose. How would Jesus' death glorify God's name? "If I be lifted up, I will draw all people to Myself" (12:32).

Ministry of Surpassing Glory with Paul]

Paul saw his life as continuing the ancient purpose toward a huge global outpouring of obedient worship from all nations. His most precise statement of mission purpose was to "bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations for His name's sake" (Rom 1:5, emphasis mine). Paul saw the entire world as divided into two categories: where Christ was "named" and where Christ was not yet named. Paul resolutely prioritized his efforts so as to labor where Christ was not named (Rom 15:20).⁸ We can see the double direction of God's glory in Paul's ministry. On the one hand he labored to glorify God by revealing Christ to the nations—getting Christ "named." But his highest zeal, the very boast of his being, was in that which was to come back to God from the nations. "Because of the grace that was given to me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, [priesting] the gospel,⁹ that my offering of the nations might become pleasing, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God" ¹⁰ (Rom 15:15-17).

Paul's passionate ambition to "preach the gospel" was based on the far more fundamental commission (or in his language, a "grace that was given") which he had received from God to "priest the gospel." There's no mistaking the imagery. Paul sees himself before God, serving the nations as if he were a priest, instructing and ushering them near to God, helping them bring the glory of their nation to God for His pleasure. Paul's job was not to change the societies and cultures. The Spirit of God was at work transforming and sanctifying the finest possible display of glory from the peoples.

Paul labored at great cost with a brilliant vision before him. It was something he knew was worth working and waiting for. "With one voice" many diverse streams of believers, Jew and Gentile, weak and strong, will together "glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 15:6).

A Rehearsal for Eternal Glory]

At the end of history, we will marvel at how abundantly God's love has been fulfilled. His love will have triumphed by winning passionate devotion from all peoples. Jesus will have thoroughly fulfilled the promise He uttered to His Father, "I have made Your name known to them, and I will make it known; that the love wherewith You loved Me may be in them..." (John 17:26).

Beyond history, we will have found that all of the worshipful service of the many nations throughout the generations will have been a rehearsal for greater affairs of love and glory, still involving the beautified glory from every people.

Heaven will fill earth: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His peoples,¹¹ and God Himself shall be among them" (Rev 21:3).

The peoples will endure everlastingly. The city which is heaven on earth will be adorned by kings of the peoples continually bringing the treasure and fruit of the peoples to God's throne (Rev 21:22-26). We will serve Him, awed and honored by having His very name on our faces. And gazing into His face, we shall serve Him as beloved priests (Rev 22:1-5).

What is an Evangelized World For?]

Until now we have cried, "Let the earth hear His voice!" Let us never cease voicing His Word to every creature. But soon comes the day when, by most reckonings, the earth will have heard. What then?

There is another cry, far more ancient. It is a shout for earth's destiny. It is to be lifted today more than ever: "Let all the peoples praise You!" (Ps 67:3-5). We hear even now growing praise from the nations. Now let us focus our deepest affections and boldest plans on the splendor of every people loving God with the sanctified best of their society. What a magnificent hope!



Mandate on the Mountain [Steven C. Hawthorne]

“And the angel answered and said to the women, ‘...Go quickly and tell His disciples that...’ He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him.” Matthew 28:5-7

“Go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me.” Matthew 28:10

“But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. And when they saw Him, they worshiped some were doubtful.” Matthew 28:16-17

They waited on the mountain, one of the highest hills overlooking the Sea of Galilee. There wasn’t any question of being in the right place. They had met with Jesus there before. Jesus had sometimes prayed there. In James, John and Peter took them to the very spot where said Jesus had appeared in blazing white glory.

They stared at the lake below, breaking the silence to remember out loud some of the things that happened around the lake. There were only eleven of them now. To a man, each of them wondered privately what would happen when came. Expectations ran high and wild. Time passed slowly. They waited and wondered.

He had never been predictable, even in the early Galilee days. What would happen now that He had died? Or was He alive? Each of them had already seen Him again, or what seemed to be Him. None of the encounters had been routine. He had walked through locked doors. Or He had managed to walk for miles at the side of close friends while remaining incognito, then vanishing when they recognize Him. Or He had appeared to be a gardener doing morning routines. Or just another guy on the beach. You could be staring at Him and not know it was Him, and then look again and nearly die of shock when you suddenly recognized Him. Ever since His death, and what certainly looked like His resurrection, He had met them unannounced, by surprise, apparently at random moments. But now there was an appointed meet Him. What would He say? It’s hard to imagine Jesus could have arranged an encounter that would have gotten their attention any more than He did.

Even though they were each looking out for Him, He finally appeared, He startled them all as He slowly walked toward them from a distance. Who was this person? Was He really alive? Or was He a ghost? Some doubted, but every single one of them bowed down and worshipped. That must have surprised them too. This was the first time they had worshiped Him in full-blown honor of who He was. They would never forget it. And they would not forget what He said.

When He spoke, His voice wasn’t loud, but the words were so direct that it felt like He was speaking right through them. As if there were a crowd of people behind them. Later they would realize that He had been speaking to everyone that would ever follow Him.

Four times in His statement, Jesus used the word “all” to declare the destiny of all of history. Looking at each of the four “alls” may be the simplest way for us to understand what He said: all authority, all peoples, all that He commanded, and all the days.

All Authority]

There was something different about Jesus as they watched Him stride closer to them. Yes, He was alive from the dead. That was enough to addle their minds; but there was something else about Him, as if He was supercharged with an awesome power. He exerted confident authority as long as they had known him. He had always been open about His authority: He had simply done whatever His Father had given Him to do with heaven-bestowed authority. But He was greater now. He was not wearing a crown or swinging a scepter He was their friend Jesus, with the same deep and patient grace. But He was somehow immense before them. He was regal and global and dangerous. He was king of all the earth. They knew it before He even said a word.

“All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.” It didn’t surprise them at all that Jesus spoke about Himself. It made sense as He spoke. God Almighty, the Ancient of Days, had bestowed upon Jesus unsurpassed authority. They would ponder it for years and never fathom the depths of it all, but it made sense: Christ had triumphed over evil at the cross. Because of that victory the Father had exalted and honored His Son as the head of all humankind. He now held dominion over angelic entities that inhabit unseen heavenly realms. He now had power to push history in any direction that suited Him. He had been given kingdom authority to bring forth the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

I think John, one of the eleven who was there on the mountain, much later in his life was shown this very transfer of authority from Father to the Son from heaven's time-altered viewpoint (Rev 5:1-14). John was shown God Almighty, seated on His throne, holding a seven-sealed scroll in His hand. All of heaven yearned to see what was in this document, virtually the deed of earth's destiny. God's answer to every injustice and grief appeared to be bound in it, ready for implementation. The scroll contained the fates and glories of the final generation of every nation. The highest hopes ever imagined are all surpassed in it: every evil vanquished; every worthy person: honored. It was the missing final chapter to the human story, a wondrous finale' under the headship of a Messiah.

Why did John weep when he saw hope in written form? Without a worthy person, God's purposes would be left unfulfilled. There was no executor. Could it be that there was no one with authority to carry out His will? "Stop weeping" John is told. A worthy one was found: "behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals" (Rev 5:5). The person of God's choice is fully human, from the lineage of David, but He is altogether divine, the Lamb that comes from the very center of the throne. The Father grants this glorious man Christ Jesus the ultimate authority to carry out all of His will.

The Ancient of Days has awarded all things to the Son of Man. Who will ever withstand His wisdom? Who can daunt His determination to heal the nations? What demonic power might ever intimidate Him in the slightest way? Who can deflect His desire to gather all peoples to Himself? Never has there been such power in the hands of any person. He will never be surpassed. He will never abdicate His Kingship. He will never stop until He has finished the fullness of the Father's purpose.

All the Peoples]

This glorious man now stood before them. He paused after speaking of His authority, letting purpose virtually crackle in the air. He could authorize anything. What would He call for?

"Therefore... go and disciple all the peoples."

They understood then what later readers of translations may miss, that the primary action word was "disciple." The other action words, "go...baptizing... and teaching" were all commanded actions, but they each filled out part of what Jesus meant by the pivotal command: "Disciple all the peoples."

A Goal, Not a Process]

Jesus spoke as if they could see every single nation from the hill on which He stood. To disciple each one of the nations meant that there would be a once-for-all change among every one of the tribes, languages, and peoples.

In the syntax of His sentence, the Greek word translated "make disciples" required an object for the discipling action. The scope of that object (in this case "all the peoples") would define the extent of the discipling action. The mandate should never be abbreviated as merely "make disciples," as if Jesus simply wanted the process of disciple-making to happen. The expression must stand as a whole: "disciple all the peoples." Jesus was setting out a super-goal. A discipling movement was in the destiny of every people on earth. He was giving them the task of starting the movements.

Jesus did not emphasize the process of communicating the gospel. In fact, He said nothing about the gospel itself. They were not mandated merely to expose people to the gospel. They were commissioned to bring about a result, a response, a global following of Jesus from every people. It was a task to be accomplished. And it would be completed. No doubts crossed their minds about that. Jesus always finished everything He set out to do.

The Peoples]

Most translations today read "all nations." When modern ears hear the word "nation" we immediately think of the idea of a "country" or a "nation state." But the Greek word is *ethne* from which we get our word "ethnic." Although the term sometimes was used to refer to all non-Jews or to all non-Christians, when it is used with the Greek word meaning "all," it should be given its most common meaning: an ethnic or cultural people group. For clarity we use the term "people group."

Today, as it was in the days of those disciples, people still group together in enduring ethnic identities. There are several facets to the way people groups are identified: Linguistic, cultural, social, economic, geographic, religious, and political factors can each be part of what gives formation to the peoples of the earth. From the viewpoint of evangelization, a "people group" is the largest possible group within which the gospel can spread as a discipling, or church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.

The disciples would not have for a moment mistaken the mandate to refer to the political nation-states of the world. Each of the eleven were from a region called "Galilee of the Gentiles" (the Greek word translated "Gentiles" in Matt 4:15 is the identical word *ethne* which means "peoples" or "nations" in Matt 24:14 and 28:20). Galilee in that day was known for a multiplicity of diverse peoples living with different languages and customs (John 12:20-21, Matt 8:28 and others).

They knew the Scriptures spoke of peoples. They knew themselves as descendants of Abraham, destined to bless the clans and extended "families" of the world (Gen. 12:3, 22:18, 28:14). They knew of the Messianic Son of Man, whose kingdom reign would extend over "all peoples, nations, and people of every language" (Dan 7:14).

Going to the nations Christ told them to be ready to change locations in order to do this task. The “going” was not an incidental matter, as if He was saying, “whenever you happen to go on a trip, try to make a few disciples wherever you are.” For years they had traveled with Him, watching and helping as He systematically covered entire regions (Mark 1:38, Matt 4:23-25). He had sent them more than once to specific peoples and places, always directing them to enter into significant relationships in order to stimulate lasting movements of hope in Christ’s kingdom. The gospel was not to be announced without actually going to the places where all people lived (Matt 10:5-6,

11-13, Luke 10:1-3, 6-9). Now He was sending them to distant lands to do more of the same in order to leave behind household-based movements of discipleship and prayer.

All that I Commanded]

Jesus gave them two simple specifics about discipling the peoples: baptizing and teaching. Before we interpose our much later understanding of what baptism was all about, or what makes for ideal topics for teaching, consider what those first followers of Jesus must have heard.

A People For His Name]

Jesus phrased the directive, “baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” They had met Jesus while John was baptizing people. That baptism marked a repentance from former life, a cleansing and a participation in the people of God ready for the fullness of the kingdom of God.

The disciples had begun to baptize people too, eventually baptizing even more than John the Baptizer (John 4:1-2). By that baptism people had declared their repentance and readiness to follow the soon-to-come Messiah. It marked a loyalty change. The baptized person was virtually pledging themselves to live under the governance of the Messiah when He arrived.

Now Jesus was again sending them to baptize. They could not have fully comprehended at that moment, but they would later see what Jesus meant by the result: A new community would be formed by this baptism. The three-fold name was not a formula to chant emptily while performing the ritual. Those they baptized were to be introduced to God personally as He had fully revealed Himself. They were no longer waiting for a mystery Messiah. Every baptized disciple could relationally encounter the Father who had given His Son, and who would bestow on them the Holy Spirit of God.

World-over, by this baptism, God would gain for Himself a people who would know personally what God wanted declared globally. The baptized people would wear His name publicly in every people group. They would later recognize that God was forming, from all the peoples, “a people for His name” (Acts 15:14)

Living Under His Lordship]

When Jesus said “teaching” they would not have had the slightest impression that they were to transfer mere knowledge to newcomers. They heard Him say, “teaching them to obey.” They were not sent to round up students for classes in Hebrew ways and thought. They were supposed to train people to know and follow Jesus in the fullest way that He could be known. Their evangelism was to be primarily a matter of life-obedience rather than pressing for conformity of beliefs. It was all about faith, but aimed, as Paul described it later, for “the obedience of faith among all the peoples.” (Rom.. 1:5).

Obedying Jesus had never been a vague, subjective affair, with every devotee of Jesus fabricating His own sense of discipline. Jesus had taught them very few and very clear commands. None of these commands had anything to do with the legalistic merit-making of religious systems. The primary command is a simple and universal command, addressed to all of His followers: “Love one another.” It’s impossible to love “one another” on one’s own. It takes two or more to fulfill this reciprocal command in a conscious way. Jesus was forming a community of life-giving joy under His Lordship.

They were amazed by the rightness of it all. How fitting, how proper, how calmly urgent it was to summon people to follow Him from every nation. Jesus wasn’t expressing runaway ambitions. The Ancient of Days had exalted Him as the only redeemer and the final judge of every man, woman, and child who had ever lived. Only He could fulfill the destiny of every clan and tribe of earth’s peoples.

All the Days]

“And lo, I am with you...” The final command was actually “Behold” which meant “Watch for me. Keep utterly focused on me. Lean and look to me.” He had just commissioned them to go the most distant places of the planet. But He was not sending them away from Him. He was actually beckoning them to come nearer to Him than they ever had been. He was not merely passing on some of His power. That might have been the case if He was announcing His departure. Instead, He declared that He was on the planet to stay, wielding every ounce of His authority until the end of days. He Himself would be with them every single day until the end of the age.

Not long after, from another mountain near Jerusalem, they would watch Him as He was lifted into the sky (Acts 19-12). From that city “they went out and preached everywhere.” As they went, they were convinced that Jesus had not just disappeared. He had been Enthroned in heaven. But they remembered what He had said about being with them. And He was! As the Gospel of Mark records it, at the same time that Jesus sat “at the right hand of God,” He also “worked with them” as they departed to the four corners of the planet to evangelize distant lands (Mark 16:19-20).

The age of which Jesus spoke has not yet ended. Every day since that meeting, Jesus has been “with” those who are fulfilling His mandate.

As you read this, today is also one of those days. Jesus knew this very day would come when He spoke on the mountain. He knew about you. And He knew about the peoples that would follow Him during the days of your life. Can you imagine yourself on the mountain, knees to the ground, eleven men at your side, hushed to hear Him say these words? You have every right to imagine yourself being there, because Jesus actually spoke these words. And when He spoke these words, He spoke with deliberate clarity to every person who would ever follow Him. That includes me and you. What shall we do in response to Him? He has given all of His people a mandate to labor with all of his authority to bring about obedience to all He commanded among all the peoples. How can we do other than give Him all that we are?

End Notes]

1. Angels had directed them to Galilee “He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him” (Matt 28:7) and to a mountain “to the mountain which Jesus had designated” (Matt 28:16). It was probably the same mountain near the Sea of Galilee (Mark 9:9,14,30) where Jesus had appeared in glory, hearing the Father’s voice with Peter, James, and John present (Mark 9:1-9 = Matt 17:1-8 = Luke 9:28-36). This event is sometimes referred to as “The Transfiguration.”
2. After Jesus had been seen walking on water, Matthew 14:33 mentions that those who were in the boat worshiped him. Mark says that they were merely astonished with hardened hearts. Matthew 28:17 may be describing a similar occasion of bewildered fear, but in my view, Matthew 28 is the beginning point of sustained worship of Jesus for all that they knew him to be.
3. The verb “mathetuesate” in this form is transitive, which means that it requires a direct object to make sense. The entire phrase must be taken together, “mathetuesate panta ta ethne” as an integral verbal idea.
4. Some English versions translate the word for “Behold” as an interjection instead of an imperative with the word “Surely” or “Lo.”
5. The Greek expression translated “every day” uses the same Greek word translated as “all” three times earlier in the passage
6. Regarding the expression “I am with you,” compare Genesis 26:3, 24; 28:14-21; Exodus 3:12; Deuteronomy 31:8, 23; Joshua 1:5; Judges 6:16. When God speaks to Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua and Gideon, saying “I am with you” it is in the context of a nearly impossible mission. Temple builders Solomon, and later, those working with Haggai, were told to look for God being with them (1 Ki. 1 1:38, and Hag 1:3, 2:4). Since God announces that He Himself will be the primary power as each of these accomplished their respective missions, it is almost as if God was really saying to them, “You will be with me.” In these passages, and most likely in Matthew 28:20, the point is not reassurance or comfort in solitude, but rather God’s empowering leadership.



The Kingdom Strikes Back [Ralph Winter]

Man has virtually erased his own story. Human beings as far back as we have any paleological record have been fighting each other so much that they have destroyed well over 90 percent of their own handiwork. Their libraries, their literature, their cities, their works of art are mostly gone. Even the little that remains from the distant past is riddled with evidences of a strange and pervasive evil that has grotesquely distorted man's potential. This is strange because apparently no other species treats its own with such deadly hatred. The oldest skulls bear mute witness that they were bashed in and roasted to deliver their contents as food for other human beings. An incredible array of disease germs also cuts down population growth. World population in Abraham's day is estimated at 27 million--less than the population of California in AD 2000. But, the small slow-growing population of Abraham's day is mute, and ominous evidence exists of the devastating combination of war and pestilence, both the relentless impact of the Evil One. World population growth back then was one-sixteenth of today's global rate. As hatred and disease are conquered, world population instantly picks up speed. If today's relatively slow global growth rate to have happened in Abraham's day, our present world population (of 6 billion) would have been reached back then in just 321 years! Thus, in those days, evil must have been much more rampant than now.

We are not surprised, then, to find that the explanation for this strange evil comes up in the oldest detailed written record surviving documents that are respected by Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions whose adherents make up more than half of the world's population. These documents called "the Torah," by Jews, the "Books of the Law" by Christians, and "the Taurat" by Muslims not only explain the strange source of evil but also describe a counter-campaign and then follow the progress of that campaign through many centuries.

To be specific, the first eleven chapters of Genesis constitute a scary "introduction" to the entire problem, indeed, to the plot of the entire Bible. Those few pages describe three things: 1) a glorious and "good" original creation; 2) the entrance of a rebellious and destructive evil--superhuman, demonic person--resulting in 3) a humanity caught up in that rebellion and brought under the power of that evil person. Don't ever think that the whole remainder of the Bible is simply a bundle of divergent, unrelated stories as taught in Sunday School. Rather, the Bible consists of a single drama: the entrance of the Kingdom, the power and the glory of the living God in this enemy-occupied territory. From Genesis 12 to the end of the Bible, and indeed until the end of time, there unfolds the single, coherent drama of "the Kingdom strikes back." This would make a good title for the Bible itself were it to be printed in modern dress (with Gen 1-11 as the introduction to the whole Bible). In this unfolding drama we see the gradual but irresistible power of God reconquering and redeeming His fallen creation through the giving of His own Son at the very center of the 4000-year period ending in 2000 BC. This is tersely summed up: "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:6).

This counterattack against the Evil One clearly does not await the appearance of the good Person in the center of the story. Indeed, there would seem to be five identifiable epochs of advance prior to the appearance of Christ as well as five after that event. The purpose of this chapter is mainly to describe the five epochs after Christ. However, in order for those later epochs to be seen as part of a single ten-epoch 4,000-year unfolding story, we will note a few clues about the first five epochs.

The theme that links all ten epochs is the grace of God intervening in a "world which lies in the power of the Evil One" (1 Jn 5:19), contesting an enemy who temporarily is "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4) so that the nations will praise God's name. His plan for doing this is to reach all peoples by conferring an unusual "blessing" on Abraham and Abraham's seed (Abraham's children-by faith), even as we pray "Thy Kingdom come." By contrast, the Evil One's plan is to bring reproach on the Name

of God. The Evil One stirs up hate, distorts even DNA sequences, perhaps authors suffering and all destruction of God's good creation. Satan's devices may very well include devising virulent germs in order to tear down confidence in God's loving character.

Therefore this "blessing" is a key concept. The English word blessing is not an ideal translation. We see the word in use where Isaac confers his "blessing" on Jacob and on Esau. It was not "blessings" but "a blessing," the conferral of a family name, responsibility, obligation, as well as privilege. It is not something you can receive or get like a box of chocolates you can run off with and eat by yourself in a cave, or a new personal power you can show off like rippling muscles. It is something you become in a permanent relationship and fellowship with your Father in Heaven. It returns "families," that is, nations to His household, to the Kingdom of God, so that the nations "will declare His glory." Preventing the nations from declaring His glory are any evidences of God's inability to cope with evil. If the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the Devil, then what are the Son of God's followers and "joint heirs" supposed to do to bring honor to His Name? This "blessing" of God is in effect conditioned upon its being shared with other nations, since those who yield to and receive God's blessing are, like Abraham, those of faith who subject themselves to God's will, become part of His Kingdom, and represent the extension of His rule, His power, His authority within all other peoples.

First Half The 4,000-Year Story]

The story of the “strike back” as we see it in Genesis 12 begins in about 2000 BC. During roughly the next 400 years, Abraham was chosen, and moved to the geographic center of the Afro-Asian land mass. The time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (often called the Period of the Patriarchs) displays relatively small breakthroughs of witness to the surrounding nations even though the central mandate to restore God’s control over all nations (Gen 12:1-3) is repeated twice again to Abraham (18:18, 22:18), and once to both Isaac (26:4) and Jacob (28:14,15).

Joseph observed to his brothers, “You sold me, but God sent me.” He was obviously a great blessing to the nation of Egypt. Even Pharaoh recognized that Joseph was filled with the Spirit of God (Gen 41:38, TLB). But this was not the intentional missionary obedience God wanted. Joseph’s brothers, for example, had not taken up an offering and sent him to Egypt as a missionary! God was in the missions business whether they were or not.

The next four periods, roughly 400 years each, are: 2) the Captivity, 3) the Judges, 4) the Kings and 5) that of the Babylonian Exile and dispersion (diaspora). During this rough and tumble, the promised blessing and the expected mission (to extend God’s rule to all the nations of the world) all but disappear from sight. As a result, where possible, God accomplished His will through the voluntary obedience of His people, but where necessary, He accomplished His will through involuntary means. Joseph, Jonah, the nation as a whole when taken captive represent the category of involuntary missionary outreach intended by God to force the extension of the blessing. The little girl carried away captive to the house of Naaman the Syrian was able to share her faith. Naomi, who “went” a distance away, shared her faith with her children and their non-Jewish wives. On the other hand, Ruth, her daughter-in-law, Naaman the Syrian, and the Queen of Sheba all “came” voluntarily, attracted by God’s blessing-relationship with Israel.

Note, then, the four different “mission mechanisms” at work to bless other peoples: 1) going voluntarily, 2) involuntarily going without missionary intent, 3) coming voluntarily, and 4) coming involuntarily (as with Gentiles forcibly settled in Israel--2 Kings 17).

Thus, we see in every epoch the active concern of God to forward His mission, with or without the full cooperation of His chosen nation. When Jesus appears, it is an incriminating “visitation.” He comes to His own, and “His own receive Him not” (John 1:31). He is well received in Nazareth until He refers to God’s desire to bless the Gentiles. At that precise moment (Luke 4:28) an explosion of homicidal fury betrays the fact that this chosen nation--chosen to receive and to mediate the blessing (Ex 19:5, 6; Ps 67; Isa 49:6) has grossly fallen short. There was indeed a sprinkling of fanatical “Bible students” who “traversed land and sea to make a single proselyte” (Matt 23:15). But such outreach was not so much to be a blessing to the other nations as it was to sustain and protect Israel. They were not always making sure that their converts were “circumcised in heart” (Deut 10:16, 30:6, Jer 9:24-26, Rom 2:29).

In effect, and under these circumstances Jesus did not come to give the Great Commission but to take it away. The natural branches were broken off while other “unnatural” branches were grafted in (Rom 11:13-24). But despite the general reluctance of the chosen missionary nation--typical of other nations later--many people groups were in fact touched due to the faithfulness and righteousness of some. These groups come to mind: Canaanites, Egyptians, Philistines (of the ancient Minoan culture), Hittites, Moabites, Phoenicians (of Tyre and Sidon), Assyrians, Sabaeans (of the land of Sheba), Babylonians, Persians, Parthians, Medes, Elamites and Romans.

Second Half of the Story]

The next 2,000-year period is one in which God, on the basis of the intervention of His Son, makes sure that the other nations are both blessed and similarly called “to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.” In each case, “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him (of that people) shall much be required.” Now we see the Kingdom striking back in the realms of the Armenians, the Romans, the Celts, the Franks, the Angles, the Saxons, the Germans, and eventually even those ruthless pagan pirates further north called the Vikings. All these people-basins will be invaded, tamed and subjugated by the power of the gospel, and in turn expected to share that blessing with still other peoples (instead of raiding them).

But in one sense the next five epochs are not all that different from the first five epochs. Those nations that are blessed do not seem terribly eager to share that unique blessing and extend that new kingdom. The Celts are the most active nation in the first millennium to give an outstanding missionary response. As we will see--just as in the Old Testament--the conferral of this unique blessing will bring sober responsibility, dangerous if unfulfilled. And we will see repeated again and again God’s use of the full range of His four missionary mechanisms.

The “visitation” of the Christ was dramatic, full of portent and strikingly “in due time.” Jesus was born a member of a subjugated people. Yet in spite of her bloody imperialism, Rome was truly an instrument in God’s hands to prepare the world for His coming. Rome controlled one of the largest empires the world has ever known, forcing the Roman peace (the “Pax Romana”) upon all sorts of disparate and barbaric peoples. For centuries Roman emperors had been building an extensive communication system, both in the 250,000 miles of marvelous roads which stretched throughout the empire, and in the rapid transmission of messages and documents somewhat like the Pony Express on the American frontier. In its conquests, Rome enveloped at least one civilization far more advanced than her own Greece. Highly-educated artisans and teachers were taken as slaves to every major city of the empire where they taught the Greek language. Greek was thus understood from England to Palestine.

Equally important to our thesis is the less known but empire-wide substratum of obedience and righteousness--the massive and marvelous presence of diaspora Jews, more respected in their dispersion than in their home land! Scholars agree that their number had grown to 10 percent of the Roman population. The virile element within this Jewish presence--those “circumcised in heart”-played a large part in attracting many Gentiles to the fringes of the synagogues. Many of these Gentiles, like those of Cornelius’ household, became earnest Bible readers and worshipers--people the New Testament “devout persons” or “Godfearers.” Thus, the faith jumped the ethnic borders! Such God-fearers became the steel rails on which the Christian movement expanded. This movement was basically the Jewish faith in Gentile clothing, something--take note-which was understandably hard for earnest Jews to conceive. How else could a few Gospels and a

few letters from St. Paul have had such a widespread impact within so many different ethnic groups in such a short period of time? Stop and ponder: Jesus came, lived for 33 years on earth, confronted His own unenthusiastic missionary nation, was rejected by many, was crucified and buried, rose again, and underscored the same longstanding commission to all who would respond, before ascending to the Father. Today even the most agnostic historian stands amazed that what began in a humble stable in Bethlehem of Palestine, a backwater of the Roman Empire, in less than 300 years was given control of the emperors' palace in Rome. How did it happen? It is a truly incredible story.

No Saints in the Middle]

It is wise to interrupt the story here. If you haven't heard this story before you may confront a psychological problem. In church circles today we have fled, feared or forgotten these middle centuries. Hopefully, fewer and fewer of us will continue to think in terms of what may be called a fairly extreme form of the "BOBO" theory--that the Christian faith somehow "Blinked Out" after the Apostles and "Blinked On" again in our time, or whenever our modern "prophets" arose, be they Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Joseph Smith, Ellen White or John Wimber. The result of this kind of BOBO approach is that you have "early" saints and "latter-day" saints, but no saints in the middle.

Thus, many Evangelicals are not much interested in what happened prior to the Protestant Reformation. They have the vague impression that the Church was apostate before Luther and Calvin, and whatever there was of real Christianity consisted of a few persecuted individuals here and there. For example, in the multi-volume Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching, only half of the first volume is devoted to the first 15 centuries! In evangelical Sunday Schools, children are busy as beavers with the story of God's work from Genesis to Revelation, from Adam to the Apostles--and their Sunday School publishers may even boast about their "all-Bible curriculum." But this only really means that these children do not get exposed to all the incredible things God did with that Bible between the times of the Apostles and the Reformers, a period which is staggering proof of the unique power of the Bible! To many people, it is as if there were "no saints in the middle."

In the space available, however, it is only possible to outline the Western part of the story of the kingdom striking back--and only outline. It will be very helpful to recognize the various cultural basins in which that invasion has taken place. Kenneth Scott Latourette's History of Christianity gives the fascinating details, a book extending the story beyond the Bible. (A book more valuable than any other, apart from the Bible!) Note the pattern in the chart on page 21 Latourette's "resurgences" correspond to our "renaissances."

In Period I, Rome was won but did not reach out with the gospel to the barbaric Celts and Goths. Almost as a penalty, the Goths invaded Rome and the whole western (Latin) part of the empire caved in.

In Period II, the Goths were added in, and they and others briefly achieved a new "Holy" Roman Empire. But this new sphere did not effectively reach further north with the gospel. In Period III, again almost as a penalty, the Vikings invaded these Christianized Celtic and Gothic barbarians. In the resulting agony, the Vikings, too, became Christians.

In Period IV, Europe now united for the first time by Christian faith, reached out in a sort of pseudo-mission to the Saracens in the great abortion known as the Crusades.

In Period V, Europe now reached out to the very ends of the earth, but still done with highly mixed motives; intermingled commercial and spiritual interests was both a blight and a blessing. Yet, during this period, the entire non-Western world was suddenly stirred into development as the colonial powers greatly reduced war and disease. Never before had so few affected so many, even though never before had so great a gap existed between two halves of the world. What will happen in the next few years?

Will the immeasurably strengthened non-Western world invade Europe and America just as the Goths invaded Rome and the Vikings overran Europe? Will the "Third World" turn on us in a new series of "Barbarian" invasions? Will the OPEC nations gradually buy us out and take us over? Clearly we face the reaction of an awakened non-Western world that is suddenly beyond our control. What will be the role of the gospel? Can we gain any insight from these previous cycles of outreach?

Period I Winning the Romans, A.D. 0-400]

Perhaps the most spectacular triumph of Christianity in history was its conquest of the Roman Empire in roughly 20 decades. There is a lot more we would like to know about this period. Our lack of knowledge makes much of it a mystery, and the growth of Christianity sounds impossible, almost unbelievable. Especially if we do not take into account the Jewish substratum. Only the early part of the story starts out emblazoned in the floodlight of the New Testament epistles themselves. Let's take a glance at that.

There we see a Jew named Paul brought up in a Greek city, committed to leadership in the Jewish tradition of his time. Suddenly he is transformed by Christ and gradually comes to see that the essence of the faith of the Jews as fulfilled in Christ could operate without Jewish garments. He realized that an inner circumcision of the heart could be clothed in Greek language and customs as well as Semitic! It should have become crystal clear to everyone that anyone can become a Christian and be transformed in the inner man by the living Christ, whether Jew, Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, male or female. The Greeks didn't have to become Jews--undergo physical circumcision, take over the Jewish calendar of festivals or holy days nor even observe Jewish dietary customs--any more than a woman had to be made into a man to be acceptable to God. What was necessary was the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5, 16:26).

Paul based his work on the radical biblical principle (unaccepted by many Jews to this day) that it is circumcision of the heart that counts (Jer 9), and that the new believers of a new culture did not have to speak the language, wear the clothes, or follow all the customs of the sending church. This meant that for Greeks the cultural details of the Jewish law were no longer to be considered mandatory. Therefore, to the Jews, Paul continued as one "under the law of Moses," but to those unfamiliar with the Mosaic law, he preached the "law of Christ" in such a way that it could be fulfilled dynamically and authentically in the new circumstances. While to some he appeared to be "without law," he maintained that he was not without law toward God. Indeed, as far as the basic purpose of the Mosaic Law is concerned, the Greek

believers immediately developed the functional equivalent to it in their own cultural terms while most of them held on as well to what is often called the Old Testament. After all, it was “the Bible of the early church” (as well as of the Jews), that had led them to belief in the first place.

We may get the impression that mission activity in this period benefited very little from deliberately organized effort. That may well be only because its structure was transparent: Paul apparently worked within a well-known “missionary team” structure used by the Pharisees. Even by Paul himself when he was a Pharisee! Paul’s sending congregation in Antioch certainly undertook some responsibility. But, basically, they “sent him off” more than they “sent him out.” His traveling team had all of the authority of any local church. He did not look for orders from Antioch.

There is good reason to suppose that the Christian faith spread in many areas by the “involuntary-go” mechanism, because Christians were often dispersed as the result of persecutions. We know that fleeing Arian Christians had a lot to do with the conversion of the Goths. We have the stories of Ulfilas and Patrick whose missionary efforts were in each case initiated by the accident of their being taken captive.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to suppose that Christianity followed the trade routes of the Roman Empire. We know that there was a close relationship and correspondence between Christians in Gaul and Asia Minor. Yet we must face the fact that the early Christians of the Roman Empire (and Christians today!) were only rarely willing and able to take conscious practical steps to fulfill the Great Commission. In view of the amazing results in those early decades, however, we are all the more impressed by the innate power of the gospel itself.

One intriguing possibility of the natural transfer of the gospel within a given social unit is the case of the Celts. Historical studies clarify for us that the province of Galatia in Asia Minor was called so because it was settled by Galatoi from Western Europe (who as late as the fourth century still spoke both their original Celtic tongue and also the Greek of that part of the Roman Empire). Whether or not Paul’s Galatians were merely Jewish traders living in the province of Galatia, or were from the beginning Celtic Galatoi who were attracted to synagogues as “God fearers,” we note in any case that Paul’s letter to the Galatians is especially wary of anyone pushing over on his readers the mere outward customs of the Jewish culture and confusing such customs with essential biblical faith which he preached to both Jew and Greek (Rom 1:16). A matter of high missionary interest is the fact that Paul’s preaching had tapped into a cultural vein of Celtic humanity that may soon have included friends, relatives and trade contacts reaching a great distance to the west. Thus Paul’s efforts in Galatia may give us one clue to the surprisingly early penetration of the gospel into the main Celtic areas of Europe, comprising a belt running across southern Europe clear over into Galicia in Spain, Brittany in France and up into the western and northern parts of the British Isles.

There came a time when not only hundreds of thousands of Greek and Roman citizens had become Christians, but Celtic speaking peoples and Gothic tribal peoples as well had believed within their own forms for various versions of biblical faith, both within and beyond the borders of the Roman Empire. It is probable that the missionary work behind this came about mainly through unplanned processes involving Christians from the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In any case this achievement certainly cannot readily be credited to the planned missionary initiative of Latin-speaking Romans in the West. This is the point we are trying to make. One piece of evidence is the fact that the earliest Irish mission compounds (distinguished from the Latin-Roman type by a central chapel) followed a ground plan derived from Christian centers in Egypt. And Greek, not Latin, was the language of the early churches in Gaul. Even the first organized mission efforts of John Cassian and Martin of Tours, for example, came from the East by means of commune structures begun in Syria and Egypt. Fortunately, these organized efforts carried with them a strong emphasis on literacy and literature and the studying and copying of Biblical manuscripts and ancient Greek classics.

As amazed pagan leaders looked on, the cumulative impact of this new, much more acceptable clothing of biblical faith grew to prominent proportions by AD 300. We don’t know with any confidence what personal reasons Constantine had in AD 312 for declaring himself a Christian. We know that his mother in Asia Minor was a Christian, and that his father, as a co-regent in Gaul and Britain, did not enforce in his area the Diocletian edicts commanding persecution of Christians. However, by this time in history the inescapable factor is that there were enough Christians in the Roman Empire to make an official reversal of policy toward Christianity not only feasible but politically wise. I well recall a lecture by the late Professor Lynn White, Jr. of U.C.L.A., one of the great medieval historians, in which he said that even if Constantine had not become a Christian, the empire could not have held out against Christianity more than another decade or two! The long development of the Roman Empire had ended the local autonomy of the city-state and created a widespread need for a sense of belonging--he called it a crisis of identity. At that time Christianity was the one religion that had no nationalism at its root, partly because it was rejected by the Jews! It was not the folk religion of any one tribe. In White’s words, it had developed “an unbeatable combination.”

However, this virtue became a mixed blessing once it became aligned with the Empire. Thus, it is the very power of the movement which helps to explain why the momentous imperial decision to tolerate Christianity almost inevitably led to its becoming (roughly 50 years later) the official religion of the Empire. Not long after the curtain rises on Christianity as an officially tolerated religion, the head of the Christian community in Rome turns out astonishingly to be the strongest and most trusted man around. That’s why Constantine, when he moved the seat of government to Constantinople, left his palace (the famous Lateran Palace) to the people of the Christian community as their “White House” in Rome. In any case, it is simply a matter of record that by AD 375, Christianity had become the official religion of Rome. If it had merely been an ethnic cult, it could not have been even a candidate as an official religion of the Empire. Ironically, however, once Christianity became locked into a specific cultural tradition as it tended automatically to alienate all who were anti-Roman. Even being tolerated instantly created suspicion and then soon widespread slaughter of “Christians” in Arabia and what is now Iran. This persecution stopped for three years, when a Roman emperor (Julian the Apostate) opposed Christianity and tried to roll things back to the pagan gods! Meanwhile, even in the case of anti-Roman populations within the Empire’s boundaries, as in North Africa, the foundation was laid for people to turn to Islam as an alternative. This in one sense was a cultural breakaway from Christianity just as Christianity had been a breakaway from the Jewish form of the biblical faith. Similarly “Black Muslims” today deliberately reject the “white man’s” religion.

Thus, the political triumph that eventually came to be known as Christianity was in fact a mixed blessing. The biblical faith could wear other than Jewish clothes; it was now dressed in Roman clothes; but if these new clothes were normative, it would not be expected to spread far beyond the political boundaries of the Roman Empire. It didn’t, except in the West. Why was that? No one questions that when

Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, it became ill-equipped by its very form to complete the Great Commission with any populace that was anti-Roman. As we might expect, only Christianity of a heretical variety was accepted by the Germanic tribes while Rome was still strong militarily. But once the tribal peoples discovered it possible to invade and conquer (the western half of the Roman Empire) the Catholic and Orthodox forms of the faith became less threatening because the Goths and others could now try to acquire the prestige of the Roman language and culture without being dominated by the Roman legions.

Note, however, the domino results of partially Christianized Gothic barbarians threatening Rome: the Romans in defense pulled their legions out of Britain. As a result, four centuries of Roman literacy in southern Britain were soon extinguished by a new form of invading barbarians--Angles, Saxons and Frisians who, compared to the Goths, were total pagans, cruel and destructive. What would happen now? Thus began the "First of the two Dark Ages."

Period II [Winning the Barbarians, A.D. 400-800]

It is a fact that when the earlier (Gothic) tribal peoples became Christianized into an antagonistic Arian form of the faith, they became a greater and greater military threat to Rome. All it took for this threat to become a true menace was for the feared Huns to punch into Europe from Central Asia. This pushed the panicked Visigoths (and then the Ostrogoths and then the Vandals) inside the Empire. In the turmoil and confusion these tribal incursions somewhat unintentionally wrecked the entire network of civil government in the West (in today's Italy, Spain and North Africa). Later they tried seriously to rebuild it.

(Was all this something like the post-colonial chaos in Africa after the Second World War?) In fact, the only reason the city of Rome itself was not physically devastated by the invasions, which arrived finally at the gates of Rome in 410, was that these Gothic Barbarians were, all things considered, really very respectful of life and property, especially that of the churches! It was a huge benefit to citizens of Rome that earlier informal missionary effort--for which Latin Roman Christians could claim little credit--had brought these peoples into at least a superficial Christian faith. Even secular Romans observed how lucky they were that the invaders held high certain standards of Christian morality. Not so the Angles and Saxons who invaded Britain.

We are tantalized by the reflection that this much was accomplished by informal and almost unconscious sharing of the gospel--e.g. the news and authority of the blessing being extended to all Gentile nations. How much better might it have been if the Romans during that brief hundred years of official flourishing of Christianity (310-410) prior to the first Gothic invasion of the city of Rome--had been devoted to energetic and intentional missionary effort. Even a little heretical Christianity prevented the Barbarians from that total disregard of civilization which was to be shown by the Vikings in the third period. Perhaps a little more missionary work might have prevented the complete collapse of the governmental structure of the Roman Empire in the West. Today, for example, the ability of the new African states to maintain a stable government is to a great extent dependent upon their degree of Christianization (that is, both in knowledge and morality).

In any case, we confront the ominous phenomenon of partially Christianized barbarian hordes being emboldened and enabled to pour in upon a complacent, officially Christian empire that had failed effectively to reach out to them. The tribal peoples were quick to acquire Roman military skills, often serving as mercenaries in the Roman legions.

[These events may remind us of our relation to the present-day colossus of China. The country of China, like the Barbarians north of Rome, has been crucially affected by Christianity even though bitterly opposed to its alien connections. And they have gained nuclear power. Can you imagine why they vigorously opposed the Pope's appointment of a Cardinal within their midst? After the Second World War they adopted "Chinese communism" extensively and profoundly, which was a kind of superficial "faith" embodying a number of distinctively Christian ingredients--despite the often grave distortion of those Christian elements. Just as a modicum of Christian faith in some ways strengthened the hand of the Barbarians against the Romans, so the country of China today is awesomely more dangerous due to the cleansing, integrating and galvanizing effect of the Communist philosophy and cell (structure which is clearly derived from the West, and indirectly from the Christian tradition itself). You can imagine the Barbarians criticizing the softness and degeneracy of the Roman Christians just as the country of China denounced both the Russians for failing to live up to Communist standards and the West for its pornography and crime.]

Whether or not the Romans had it coming (for failing to reach out), and whether or not the Barbarians were both encouraged and tempered in their conquest by their initial Christian awareness, the indisputable fact is that while the Romans lost the western half of their empire, the Barbarian world, in a very dramatic sense, gained a Christian faith.

The immediate result: right within the city of Rome appeared two "denominations," the one Arian and the other Athanasian. Also in the picture was the Celtic "church," which was more a series of missionary compounds than it was a denomination made up of local churches. Still less like a church was an organization called the Benedictines, which came along later to compete with the Celts in establishing missionary compounds all over Europe. By the time the Vikings appeared on the horizon there had spread up through Europe over 1,000 such mission compounds.

Mission compounds? Protestants, and perhaps even modern Catholics, must pause at this phenomenon. Our problem in understanding these strange (and much misunderstood) instruments of evangelization is not so much our ignorance of what these people did as our prejudice which developed because of decadent monks who lived almost a thousand years later. It is wholly unfair for us to judge the work of a traveling evangelist like Columban or Boniface by the stagnation of the wealthy Augustinians in Luther's day--although we must certainly pardon Luther for thinking such thoughts.

It is indisputable that the chief characteristic of these "Jesus People" in this second period, whether they were Celtic peregrini (wandering evangelists) or their parallel in Benedictine communes, was the fact that they held the Bible in awe. They sang their way through the whole book of Psalms each week as a routine discipline. It was primarily they who enabled the Kingdom and the power and the glory to be shared with the Anglo-Saxons and Goths.

It is true that many strange, even bizarre and pagan customs were mixed up as secondary elements in the various forms of Christianity that were active during the period of the Christianization of Europe. The headlong collision and ongoing competition between Western Roman and Celtic (mainly of Eastern origin) forms of Christianity undoubtedly resulted in an enhancement of common biblical elements in their faith. But we must remember the relative chaos introduced by the invasions, and therefore not necessarily expect to see the usual parish churches that once were familiar in rural America dotting the landscape.

Enter The Orders]

Under the particular circumstances of that time, similar to many chaotic corners of the world today, the most durable structure around was the order--a fellowship much more highly disciplined and tightly-knit than the usual American Protestant congregation today. Its "houses" came to dot the landscape of Europe. We must admit, furthermore, that these novel Christian communities not only were the source of spirituality and scholarship during the Middle Ages, but they also preserved the technologies of the Roman industrial world--tanning, dyeing, weaving, metalworking, masonry skills, bridge building, etc. Their civil, charitable and even scientific contribution is, in general, grossly underestimated--especially by Protestants who have developed unfriendly stereotypes about "monks." Probably the greatest accomplishment of these disciplined Christian communities is seen in the simple fact that almost all our knowledge of the Roman world is derived from their libraries, whose silent testimony reveals the appreciation they had, even as Christians, for the "pagan" authors of ancient times.

Thus, in our secular age it is embarrassing to recognize that had it not been for these highly literate "mission field" Christians who preserved and copied manuscripts (not only of the Bible but of ancient Christian and non-Christian classics as well), we would know no more about the Roman Empire today than we do of the Mayan or Incan empires, or many other empires that have long since almost vanished from sight.

Many Evangelicals might be jolted by the Wheaton professor who wrote an appreciative chapter about these disciplined order structures entitled, "The Monastic Rescue of the church." One sentence stands out:

The rise of monasticism was, after Christ's commission to his disciples, the most important--and in many ways the most beneficial--institutional event in the history of Christianity (p. 84).'

Curiously, our phrase Third World comes from those days when Creek and Latin were the first two worlds and the barbarians to the north were the Third World. Using this phrase, Barbarian Europe was won more by the witness and labors of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon converts of the Celts--"Third World missionaries"--than by the efforts of missionaries deriving from Italy or Gaul. This fact was to bear decisively upon the apparently permanent shift of power in Western Europe from the Mediterranean to northern Europe. Even as late as AD 596, when Rome's first missionary headed north (with serious faintheartedness), he incidentally crossed the path of the much more daring and widely-traveled Irish missionary, Columban, one of the scholarly Celtic peregrini who had worked his way practically to Rome's doorstep and who was already further from his I birthplace than Augustine was planning to go from his.

We are not surprised that Constantinople was considered the "Second Rome" by those living in the East, nor that both Aachen (in Charlemagne's France) and Moscow were later to compete for recognition as new Romes by the descendants of the newly Christianized Franks and Slavs, respectively. Neither the original Rome as a city nor the Italian peninsula as a region were ever again to be politically as significant as the chief cities of the new nations--Spain, France, Germany, and England.

Enter Charlemagne]

Toward the end of the second period, as with the end of each of these periods, there was a great flourishing of Christianity within the new cultural basin. The rise of a strong man like Charlemagne facilitated communication throughout Western Europe to a degree unknown for 300 years. Under his sponsorship a whole range of issues--social, theological, political--were soberly restudied in the light of the Bible and the writings of earlier Christian leaders in the Roman period. Charlemagne was a second Constantine in certain respects, and his influence was unmatched in Western Europe during a half a millennium. But Charlemagne was much more of a Christian than Constantine and as such industriously sponsored far more Christian activity. Like Constantine, his official espousal of Christianity produced many Christians who were Christians in name only. There is little doubt that the great missionary Boniface was slain by the Saxons because his patron, Charlemagne (with whose military policies he did not at all agree) had brutally suppressed the Saxons on many occasions. Then, as in our own recent past, the political force of a colonial power did not so much pave the way for Christianity, as turn people against the faith. Of interest to missionaries is the fact that the great centers of learning established by Charlemagne were copies and expansions of newly established mission compounds deep in German territory, themselves outposts that were the work of British and Celtic missionaries from sending centers as far away to the west as Britain's Iona and Lindisfame.

Indeed, the first serious attempt at any thing like public education was initiated by this great tribal chieftain, Charlemagne, on the advice and impulse of Anglo-Celtic missionaries and scholars from Britain, such as Alcuin, whose projects eventually required the help of thousands of literate Christians from Britain and Ireland to man schools founded on the Continent. It is hard to believe, but formerly "barbarian" Irish teachers of Latin (never a native tongue in Ireland) were eventually needed to teach Latin in I Rome. This indicates extensively how the ' tribal invasions of other barbarians had broken down the civilization of the Roman Empire. This reality underlies Thomas Cahill's book, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*.

The Celtic Christians and their Anglo-Saxon and Continental converts especially treasured the Bible. Mute testimony to the Bible as their chief source of inspiration is that the highest works of art during these "dark" centuries were marvelously "illuminated" biblical manuscripts and devoutly ornamented church buildings. Manuscripts of non-Christian authors, though preserved and copied, were not illuminated. Through the long night of the progressive breakdown of the Western part of the Roman Empire, when the tribal migrations reduced almost all of life in the West to the level of the tribesmen themselves, the two great regenerating ideals were the hope

of building anew the glory that was once Rome, and the hope of making everything subject to the Lord of Glory. The one really high point, when these twin objectives were most nearly achieved, was during Charlemagne's long, vigorous career centered around the year 800. As one recent scholar put it, In the long sweep of European history, from the decline of the Roman Empire to the flowering of the Renaissance nearly a thousand years later, his [Charlemagne's] is the sole commanding presence.

No wonder recent scholars call Charlemagne's period the Carolingian Renaissance, and thus replace the concept of a single lengthy "dark ages" for a more p perspective of a First Dark Ages early in this period, and a Second Dark Ages early in the next period, with a "Carolingian Renaissance" in between.

Unfortunately, the rebuilt empire (late be called the Holy Roman Empire) was unable to find the ingredients of a Charlemagne in his successor; even more ominously, a new threat now posed itself externally. Charlemagne had been eager for his own peoples to be made Christian--the Germanic tribes. He offered wise, even spiritual leadership in many affairs, but did not throw his weight behind any kind of bold mission outreach to the Scandinavian peoples to the north. What missionary work was begun under his son was too little and too late. This fact contributed greatly to the undoing of the his empire.

Continued in The Kingdom Strikes Back part 2.



The Kingdom Strikes Back: Part II [Ralph Winter]

Period III [Winning the Vikings A.D. 800-1200]

No sooner had the consolidation in Western Europe been accomplished under Charlemagne than a new menace appeared to peace and prosperity. This new menace—the Vikings—would create a second period of at least semi-darkness to last 250 years. These savages further north had not yet been effectively evangelized. While the tribal invaders of Rome, who created the First Dark Ages, were rough forest people, they were, for the most part, nominally Arian Christians. The Vikings, by contrast, were neither civilized nor even lightly Christian. There was another difference: the Vikings were men of the sea. This meant that key island sanctuaries for missionary training, like Iona, or like the offshore promontory of Lindisfarne (connected to the land only at low tide), were as vulnerable to attacking seafarers as they had been invulnerable to attackers from the land. In this new period both of these mission centers were sacked more than a dozen times, their occupants slaughtered or sold off as slaves. It seems unquestionable that the Christians of Charlemagne's empire would have fared far better had the Vikings had at least the appreciation of the Christian faith that the earlier barbarians had when they overran Rome. The very opposite of the Visigoths and Vandals who spared the churches, the Vikings seemed attracted like magnets to the monastic centers of scholarship and Christian devotion. They took a special delight in burning churches, in putting human life to the sword right in the churches, and in selling monks into slavery. These deprived people even sold into North African slavery the raided daughters of nearby antagonistic Vikings. A contemporary's words give us a graphic impression of their carnage in "Christian" Europe:

The Northmen cease not to slay and carry into captivity the Christian people, to destroy the churches and to burn the towns. Everywhere, there is nothing but dead bodies—clergy and laymen, nobles and common people, women and children. There is no road or place where the ground is not covered with corpses. We live in distress and anguish before this spectacle of the destruction of the Christian people.

No wonder the Anglican prayer book contains the prayer, "From the fury of the Northmen, O Lord, deliver us." Once more, when Christians did not reach out to them, pagan peoples came after what the Christians possessed. And once more, the phenomenal power of Christianity manifested itself: the conquerors became conquered by the faith of their captives. Usually it was the monks sold as slaves or Christian girls forced to be their wives and mistresses who eventually won these savages of the north. In God's providence their redemption became more important than the harrowing tragedy of this new invasion of barbarian violence and evil which fell upon God's own people whom He loved. After all, He spared not His own Son in order to redeem us! Thus, again, what Satan intended for evil, God used for good.

In the previous hundred years, Charlemagne's scholars had carefully collected the manuscripts of the ancient world. Now the majority were to be burned by the Vikings. Only because so many copies had been made and scattered so widely did the fruits of the Charlemagnic literary revival survive at all. Once scholars and missionaries had streamed in peace from Ireland across England and onto the continent, and even out beyond the frontiers of Charlemagne's empire. Under the brunt of these new violent invasions from the north, the Irish volcano which had poured forth a passionate fire of evangelism for three centuries cooled almost to extinction. Viking warriors, newly based in Ireland, followed the paths of the earlier Irish peregrini across England and onto the continent, but this time ploughing waste and destruction rather than new life and hope.

There were some blessings in this horrifying disguise. Alfred the Great, a tribal chieftain ("king") of Wessex, successfully headed up guerrilla resistance and was equally concerned about spiritual as well as physical losses. As a measure of emergency, he gave up the ideal of maintaining the Latin tongue as a general pattern for worship and began a Christian library in the vernacular—the Anglo-Saxon. This was a decision of monumental importance which might have been delayed several centuries had the tragedy of the Vikings not provided the necessity which was the mother of this invention.

In any case, as Christopher Dawson puts it, the unparalleled devastation of England and the Continent was "not a victory for paganism." The Northmen who landed on the Continent under Rollo became the Christianized Normans, and the Danish who took over a huge section of middle England (along with invaders from Norway who planted their own kind in many other parts of England and Ireland) also were soon to become Christians. The gospel was too powerful. One result was that a new Christian culture spread back into Scandinavia. This stemmed largely from England from which came the first monastic communities and early missionary bishops. What England lost, Scandinavia gained.

It must also be admitted that the Vikings would not have been attracted either to the churches or to the monasteries had not those centers of Christian piety to a great extent succumbed to luxury. The switch from the Irish to the Benedictine pattern of monasticism was an improvement in many respects, but apparently allowed greater possibilities for the development of an unchristian opulence and glitter which attracted the greedy eyes of the Norsemen. Thus, another side-benefit of the new invasions was their indirect cleansing and refinement of the Christian movement. Even before the Vikings appeared, Benedict of Aniane inspired a rustle of reform here and there. By 910, at Cluny, a novel and significant step forward was begun. Among other changes, the authority over a monastic center was shifted away from local politics, and for the first time beyond anything previous whole networks of "daughter" houses arose which were related to a single, strongly spiritual "mother" house. The Cluny revival, moreover, produced a new reforming attitude toward society as a whole.

The greatest bishop in Rome in the first millennium, Gregory I, was the product of a Benedictine community. So also, early in the second millennium, Hildebrand was a product of the Cluny reform. His successors in reform were bolstered greatly by the Cistercian revival which went even further. Working behind the scenes for many years for wholesale reform across the entire church, he finally became Pope Gregory VII for a relatively brief period. But his reforming zeal set the stage for Pope Innocent III, who wielded greater power (and all things considered, greater power for good) than any other Pope before or since. Gregory VII had made a decisive step toward wresting control of the church from secular power--this was the question "lay investiture." It was he who allowed Henry IV to wait for three days out in the snow at Canossa. Innocent III not only carried forward Gregory's reforms, but had the distinction of being the Pope who authorized the first of a whole new series of mobile mission orders.

Our First Period ended with a barely Christian Roman Empire and a somewhat Christian emperor--Constantine. Our second period ended with a reconstitution of that empire under a Christianized barbarian, Charlemagne, who was devoutly and vigorously Christian. Can you imagine an emperor who wore a monks habit? Our third period who wore a period ends with a pope, Innocent III, as the strongest man in Europe, made strong by the Cluny, Cistercian and allied spiritual movements which together are called the Gregorian Reform. The scene was now an enlarged Europe in which no secular ruler could survive without at least tipping his hat to the leaders in the Christian movement. It was a period in which European Christians had not reached out in missions, but they had at least with phenomenal speed grafted the entire northern area, and had also deepened the foundations of Christian scholarship and devotion passed on from the Europe of Charlemagne.

The next period would unfold some happy and unhappy surprises. Would Europe now take the initiative in reaching out with the Gospel? Would it sink in self-satisfaction? In some respects it would do both.

Period IV Winning the Saracens A.D.1200-1600]

The fourth period began with a spectacular, new evangelistic instrument--the Friars--and after the disaster of the prolonged plague would end with the greatest, the most vital, and most disruptive reformation of all. However, the Christian movement had already been involved for a hundred years in the most massive and tragic misconstrual of Christian mission in all of history. Ironically, part of the "flourishing" of the faith toward the end of the previous period led to disaster: never before had any nation or group of nations in the name of Christ launched as energetic and sustained a campaign into foreign territory as did Europe in the tragic debacle of the Crusades. This was in part the carryover of the Viking spirit into the Christian Church. All of the major Crusades were led by Viking descendants.

While the Crusades had many political overtones (they were often a unifying device for faltering rulers), they would not have happened without the vigorous but misguided sponsorship of Christian leaders. They were not only an unprecedented blood-letting to the Europeans themselves and a savage wound in the side of the Muslim peoples (a wound which is not healed to this day), but they were a fatal blow even to the cause of Greek/Latin Christian unity and to the cultural unity of eastern Europe. In the long run, though Western Christians held Jerusalem for a hundred years, the Crusaders by default eventually gave the Eastern Christians over to the Ottoman sultans. Far worse, they established a permanent image of brutal, militant Christianity that alienates a large proportion of mankind, tearing down the value of the very word Christian in missions to this day.

Ironically, the mission of the Crusaders would not have been so appallingly negative had it not involved so high a component of abject Christian commitment. The great lesson of the Crusades is that goodwill, even sacrificial obedience to God, is no substitute for a clear understanding of His will. Significant in this sorry movement was an authentically devout man, Bernard of Clairvaux, to whom are attributed the words of the hymn Jesus the Very Thought of Thee. He preached the first crusade. Two Franciscans, Francis of Assisi and Raymond Lull, stand out as the only ones in this period whose insight into God's will led them to substitute for warfare and violence the gentle words of the evangel as the proper means of extending the blessing God conferred on Abraham and had always intended for all of Abraham's children-of-faith.

At this point we must pause to reflect on this curious period. We may not succeed, but let us try to see things from God's point of view, treading with caution and tentativeness. We know, for example, that at the end of the First Period after three centuries of hardship and persecution, just when things were apparently going great, invaders appeared and chaos and catastrophe ensued. Why? That followed the period we have called the "Classical Renaissance." It was both good and not so good. Just when Christians were translating the Bible into Latin and waxing eloquent in theological debate, when Eusebius, as the government's official historian, was editing a massive collection of previous Christian writings, when heretics were thrown out of the empire (and became, however reluctantly, the only missionaries to the Goths), when Rome finally became officially Christian... then suddenly the curtain came down. Now, out of chaos God would bring a new cluster of people groups to be included in the "blessing," that is, to be confronted with the claims, privileges, and obligations of the expanding Kingdom of God.

Similarly, at the end of the Second Period, after three centuries of chaos during which the rampaging Gothic hordes were eventually Christianized, tamed and civilized, Bibles and biblical knowledge proliferated as never before. Major biblical-missionary centers were established by the Celtic Christians and their Anglo-Saxon pupils. In this Charlemagnic (actually "Carolingian") renaissance, thousands of public schools led by Christians attempted mass biblical and general literacy. Charlemagne dared even to attack the endemic use of alcohol. Great theologians tussled with theological/political issues, The Venerable Bede became the Eusebius of this period (indeed, when both Charlemagne and Bede were much more Christian than Constantine and Eusebius). And, once again, invaders appeared and chaos and catastrophe ensued. Why?

Strangely similar, then, is the third period. In its early part it only took two and a half : centuries for the Vikings to capitulate to the "counterattack of the Gospel." The "renaissance" ensuing toward the end of this period was longer than a century and far more extensive than ever before. The Crusades, the cathedrals, the so-called Scholastic theologians, the universities, most importantly the blessed Friars, and even the early part of the Humanistic Renaissance make up this outsized 1050-1350 outburst of a Medieval Renaissance, or the "Twelfth Century Renaissance." But then suddenly a new invader appeared--the Black plague--more virulent than ever, and chaos and catastrophe greater than ever occurred. Why?

Was God dissatisfied with incomplete obedience? Or was Satan striking back each time in greater desperation? Were those with the blessing retaining it and not sufficiently and determinedly sharing it with the other nations of the world? More puzzling, the plague that killed one-third of the inhabitants of Europe killed a much higher proportion of the Franciscans: 120,000 were laid still in Germany alone. Surely God was not trying to judge their missionary fire. Was He trying to judge the Crusaders whose atrocities greatly outweighed the Christian devotional elements in their movement? If so, why did He wait several hundred years to do that? Surely Satan, not God, inflicted Christian leadership in Europe so greatly. Would not Satan rather have that happen than for the Crusaders to die of the plague?

Perhaps it was that Europe did not sufficiently listen to the saintly Friars; that it was not the Friars that went wrong, but the hearers who did not respond. God's judgment upon Europe then might have been to take the Gospel away from them, to take away the Friars and their message. Even though to us it seems like it was a judgment upon the messengers rather than upon the resistant hearers, is this not one impression that could be received from the New Testament as well?

Jesus Himself came unto His own, and His own received Him not, yet Jesus rather than the resisting people went to the cross. Perhaps Satan's evil intent--of removing the messenger--God employed as a judgment against those who chose not to hear.

In any case, the invasion of the Bubonic plague, first in 1346 and every so often during the next decade, brought a greater setback than the Gothic, the Anglo-Saxon or Viking invasions. It first devastated parts of Italy and Spain, then spread west and north to France, England, Holland, Germany and Scandinavia. By the time it had run its course 40 years later, one third to one half of the population of Europe was dead. Especially stricken were the Friars and the truly spiritual leaders. They were the ones who stayed behind to tend the sick and to bury the dead Europe was absolutely in ruins. The result? There were three rival Popes at one point, the humanist elements turned menacingly humanistic, peasant turmoil (often based in justice and even justified by the Bible itself) turned into orgies and excesses of violence. "The god of this world" must have been glad, but out of all that death, poverty, confusion and lengthy travail, God birthed a new reform greater than anything before it.

Once more, at the end of one of our periods, a great flourishing took place. Printing came to the fore, Europeans finally escaped from their geographical cul de sac and sent ships for commerce, subjugation and spiritual blessing to the very ends of the earth. And as a part of the reform, the Protestant Reformation now loomed on the horizon: that great, seemingly permanent, cultural decentralization of Europe.

Protestants often think of the Reformation as a legitimate reaction against the evils of a monstrous Christian bureaucracy sunken in decadence and corruption. But it must be admitted that this reformation was much more than that. This great decentralization of Christendom was in many respects the result of an increasing vitality which--although this is unknown to most Protestants--was just as evident in Italy, Spain and France as in Moravia, Germany and England. Everywhere we see a return to a study of the Bible and the appearance of new life and evangelical preaching. The Gospel encouraged believers to be German, not merely permitted Germans to be Roman Christians. Nevertheless, that marvelous insight was one of the products of a renewal already in progress. (Luther produced not the first but the fourteenth translation of the Bible into German.) Unfortunately, the marvelous emphasis on justification by faith--which was preached as much in Italy and Spain as in Germany at the time Luther loomed into view--became identified and ensnared with German nationalistic (separatist) hopes and was thus, understandably, suppressed as a dangerous doctrine by political powers in Southern Europe.

It is merely a typical Protestant standing that there was not as much a revival of deeper life, Bible study and prayer in Southern Europe as in Northern Europe at the time of the Reformation. The issue may have appeared to the Protestants as faith vs. law, or to the Romans as unity vs. division, but such popular scales are askew because it was much more a case of over reaching Latin uniformity vs. national and indigenous diversity. The vernacular had to eventually conquer.

While Paul had not demanded that the Greeks become Jews, nevertheless the Germans had been obliged to become Roman. The Angle-Saxons and the Scandinavians had at least been allowed their vernacular to an extent unknown in Christian Germany. Germany was where the revolt then reasonably took place. Italy, France, and Spain, which were formerly part of the Roman Empire and extensively assimilated culturally in that direction, had no equivalent nationalistic steam behind their reforming movements and thus became almost irrelevant in the political polarity of the scuffle that ensued.

However--here we go again--despite the fact that the Protestants won on the political front, and to a great extent gained the power to formulate anew their own Christian tradition and certainly thought they took the Bible seriously, they did not even talk of mission outreach. Rather, the period ended with Roman Europe expanding both politically and religiously on the seven seas. Thus, entirely unshared by Protestants for at least two centuries, the Catholic variety of Christianity actively promoted and accompanied a worldwide movement of scope unprecedented in the annals of mankind, one in which there was greater Christian missionary awareness than ever before. But, having lost non-Roman Europe by insisting on its Mediterranean culture, the Catholic tradition would now try to win the rest of the world without fully understanding what had just happened.

But why did the Protestants not even try to reach out? Catholic missionaries for two hundred years preceded Protestant missionaries. Some scholars point to the fact that the Protestants did not have a global network of colonial outreach. Well, the Dutch Protestants did. And, their ships, unlike those from Catholic countries, carried no missionaries. This is why the Japanese--once they began to fear the Christian movement Catholic missionaries planted--would allow only Dutch ships into their ports. Indeed, the Dutch even cheered and assisted the Japanese in the slaughter of the budding Christian (Catholic) community.

Period V [To the Ends of the Earth, A.D.1600-2000]

The period from 1600 to 2000 began with European footholds in the rest of the world. Apart from taking over what was relatively an empty continent by toppling the Aztec and Inca empires in the Western hemisphere, Europeans had only tiny enclaves of power in the heavily populated portions of the rest of the non-Western world. By 1945, Europeans had achieved virtual control over 99.5% of the non-Western world. This would not last. The peoples inhabiting the colonial empires had grown significantly in knowledge and initiative, just as the Goths had grown strong outside the bounds of the Roman empire. The Second World War mightily distracted the Western nations from their colonial hold on the rest of the world. That did it. Nationalism exploded.

Twenty-five years later, the Western nations had lost control over all but 5% of the non-Western population of the world. This 1945-1969 period of the sudden collapse of Western control, coupled with the unexpected upsurge of significance of the Christian movement in the non-Western world, I have elsewhere called "the twenty-five unbelievable years." If we compare this period to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire's domination over its conquered provinces of Spain, Gaul and Britain, and to the breakdown of control over non-Frankish Europe under Charlemagne's successors, we might anticipate--at least by the logic of sheer parallelism--that the Western world itself will soon be significantly dominated by non-Westerners.

With some reason, ever since the collapse of Western power became obvious (during "the twenty-five unbelievable years"), there have been many who have decried the thought of any further missionary effort moving from the West to the non-Western world. Perhaps they have confused the inappropriateness of political control with a need to cut ties of faith in any further foreign missions. The true situation is actually very different. In fact, the absence of political control for the first time in many areas has now begun to allow non-Western populations to yield to the Kingdom of Christ without simultaneously yielding to the political kingdoms of the Western world. Here we see a parallel to the Frankish tribal people accepting the faith of Rome only after Rome had lost its military power.

This new openness to Catholic Christianity continued among the Angle-Saxons, Germans and Scandinavians up until the time when the emergence of strong papal authority, mixed with power politics, became a threat to legitimate national ambitions, and led to a Reformation which allowed nationalized forms of Christianity to break away. The present spectacle of a Western world flaunting the standards of Christian morality in more obvious ways than ever may dissuade non-Christian nations from embracing the Christian faith; but it may also tend to disassociate the treasure of Christian ideals from a Western world which has, until this age, been their most prominent sponsor. When Asians accuse Western nations of immorality in warfare, they are appealing to Christian values, certainly not the values of any nation's pagan past. In this sense, Christianity has already conquered the world. No longer, for example, is the long-standing Chinese tradition of ingenious torture likely to be boasted about in China nor highly respected anywhere else, at least in public circles.

But this worldwide transformation has not come about suddenly. Even the present, minimal attainment of worldwide Christian morality on a tenuous public level has been accomplished only at the cost of a great amount of sacrificial missionary endeavor (during the four centuries of Period Five), missionary labors which have been mightier and more deliberate than at any time in 2000 years. The first half (1600-1800) of this fifth period was almost exclusively a Roman show. By the year 1800 it was painfully embarrassing to Protestants to hear Roman missionaries writing off the Protestant movement as apostate: simply because it was not sending missionaries. But by that same year, Roman missionary effort had been forced into sudden decline due to the curtailment of the Jesuits, and the combined effect of the French Revolution and ensuing chaos which then cut the European economic roots of Catholic missions.

However the year 1800 marks the awakening of the Protestants from two-and-a-half centuries of inactivity, if not theological slumber, in regard to missionary outreach across the world. The 1800 to 2000 year period is treated in the chapter "Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions." During this final period, for the first time, Protestants equipped themselves with organizational structures of mission comparable to the Catholic orders and began to make up for lost time. Unheralded & unnoticed, and all but forgotten in our day except for ill-informed criticism, Protestant missionary efforts in this period, more than Catholic missions, led the way in establishing throughout the world the democratic apparatus of government, the schools, the hospitals, the universities and the political foundations of the new nations. Rightly understood, Protestant missionaries, along with their Roman Catholic counterparts, are surely not less than the prime movers of the tremendous energy that is mushrooming in the Third World today.

Take China, for example. Two of its greatest modern leaders, Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kaishek, were both Christians. Teng HsiaoP'ing's

"Four Modernizations" were principal emphases of the Western mission movement in China. Missions had planted a university in every province of China, etc. But, if the Western home base is now to falter and to fail as the tide is reversed through the rising power of its partially evangelized periphery (as is the pattern in the earlier periods), we can only refer to Dawson's comment on the devastation wrought by the Vikings--that this will not be a "victory for paganism." The fall of the West will, in that case, be due in part to a decay of spirit. It will also be due to the pagan power in the non-Western world emboldened and strengthened by its first contact with Christian faith. It may come as a most drastic punishment to a Western world that has always spent more on cosmetics than it has on foreign missions--and lately ten times as much. From a secular or even nationalistic point of view, the next years may be a very dark period for the Western world. The normal hopes and aspirations of Christian people for their own country may find only a very slight basis for optimism. But if the past is any guide at all, even this will have to be darkness before the dawn. The entire Western world in its present political form may be radically altered. We may not even be sure about the survival of our own country. But we have every reason to suppose from past experience that the Christian, biblical faith will clearly survive in one form or another. We can readily calculate that during the 20th century, Westerners dropped from 18% to 8% of the world population. But we cannot ultimately be pessimistic. Beyond the agony of Rome was the winning of the Barbarians. Beyond the agony of the Barbarians was the winning of the Vikings. Beyond the agony of the Western world we can only pray that there will be the defeat of Satan's power holding millions of people hostage in thousands of peoples--peoples which have too long "sat in darkness" and who "shall see a great light" (Matt 4:16). And we can know that there is no basis in the past or in the present for assuming that things are out of the control of the Living God.

If we in the West insist on keeping our blessing instead of sharing it, then we will, like other nations before us, have to lose our blessing for the remaining nations to receive it. God has not changed His plan in the last 4,000 years. But how much better not to focus on how to retain but to strive intentionally to extend that marvelous "blessing" That way "in you and in your descendants all of the peoples of the world will be blessed." This is the only way we can continue in God's blessing. The expanding Kingdom is not going to stop with us (although it may leave us behind). "This Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all peoples, and then shall the end come" (Matt 24:14). God can raise up others if we falter. Indeed, the rest of this book indicates that is already happening.