

THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY (PART 1)

Tom Ballinger

The “Christian Religion,” the largest and most influential of the world’s religions, is not to be found in the Bible. What we have today in Christianity is not the subject of Old Testament prophecy, nor is it a true development of New Testament truth. The “Christian Religion” with all of its divisions, sects and denominations, is not the result of the pure unleavened revealed Word of God. It is in fact the natural outgrowth of confusion, darkness, and error. This is a bold statement to make. This statement sounds absurd to some and is a shock to others, especially to those who are devoutly tied to the “Christian Religion”. Only those who have “ears to hear” can comprehend the truth of this statement.

A study of “Church History” when viewed in the light of the rightly divided Word reveals that every sect, division, and denomination of Christendom has as its source the same foundation. They all, to one extent or another, are the outgrowth of the theology of the so-called Church Fathers.

The World Book Encyclopedia states that the foundation upon which the “Church Fathers” founded the Christian religion “the life and teachings of Jesus”. The “life and teachings of Jesus” is not the basis for present truth. Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision, and He confirmed the promises God made to the fathers of Israel” (Rom. 15:8). His life was one of a Jew under the Law of Moses. His teaching was to prepare the remnant of Israel to enter the Kingdom when His glory was to be revealed.

The “Church Fathers” did not build their visible church organization upon the One Foundation which the “wise master builder” laid.

“According to the grace of God which is given unto ME AS A WISE MASTERBUILDER, I HAVE LAIDE THE FOUNDATION, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-11).

The rise of the Christian religion, as we know it, did not have its roots in the New Testament nor in the Scriptures of the Mystery. Its roots go back to the very end of the first century. This was after the destruction of Jerusalem

in 70 A.D. Christians previously turned away from the Apostle Paul, who only had the answer to what God was doing when He set Israel aside. Failure to recognize that an unprophecied dispensation was ushered in at the close of the Acts period resulted in utter confusion and darkness. Consequently, the "Church Fathers" laid a foundation based upon the error that the "Church" was to replace Israel and assume Israel's promises.

In the studies which follow, we will try to show the conditions as they existed during the Acts of the Apostles, during Paul's time as the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles and the time after the destruction of Jerusalem.

THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY (PART 2)

When a Bible student finally has his "eyes of understanding" enlightened and comes to the knowledge of right division of the Word of Truth, he stands amazed and in dismay because the Christendom from which he came is so far from the Truth. When the believer realizes that the Apostle Paul received a revelation of God's great Secret, which supercedes all other revelations, he ponders why the Christian Church with all its divisions is so entangled in error.

In order to gain an understanding as to why the condition is as it is, we will study THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY. This study is in no way an attempt to belittle those who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. This study is not to criticize those who desire to know "what saith the Scriptures"; but rather, to point out that "thy Word is Truth", and that those who fail to separate tradition from the Word find themselves ensnared "of the devil who are taken captive by him at his will".(2 Tim.2:26). The only way for one to be recovered from this captivity is: "if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth"(2 Tim.2:25).

The question that we purpose to answer is: "How did Christendom evolve into such a state that it is in today?". We will examine the rise of Christianity and notice the general characteristics of the principal groups involved in the rise of the "Christian faith". The groups we will mention will be those during the Acts' period.

UNBELIEVING JEWS

One of the principle groups involved in the rise of Christianity was the unbelieving Jew. The unbelieving Jew was instrumental in the spread of "the faith" which was a result of the persecution administered by them.

The unbelieving Jew, as typified by Saul of Tarsus, thought Jesus of Nazareth was an imposter; they failed to believe that their Messiah had come. They looked for the Messiah to come in glory. They failed to know the Scriptures enough to recognize that He would first come to suffer and then to reign. The unbelieving Jew still clung tenaciously to the "Jews' religion which Jesus Christ said had leavened the Word of God. The Jews' religion was a mixture of Truth and tradition. The unbelievers' attitude towards Christ was that He certainly could not have been the long awaited Messiah because He "transgressed the tradition of the fathers." He denounced the Pharisees "oral law" as being derived from the Devil.

God used the unbelieving Jews in a marvelous way to spread the faith. Again, Saul of Tarsus must be mentioned as a great instrument to spread the Gospel of the Kingdom. This was done by means of Saul's persecution of believers and then the Lord used this great leader of the unbelievers as His own servant to preach the faith that he once tried to destroy.

BELIEVING JEWS

Of course, there were those Jews who believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, first come in humiliation. They expected His speedy return in glory to reign over them as well as the nations. They anticipated that He would regather the dispersed Jews and establish His Kingdom upon the earth.

The believing Jews were Christians. However, they remained Jews as regards to their nationality and their rights to the promises connected with the covenants. The TWELVE were the Apostles of the Circumcision.

There was early unity among the Jewish believers. Between Acts 2 and Acts 6, the record clearly indicates that there was harmony among them as they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship (Acts 2:42). As their numbers grew, and as the believers sold their possessions and "had all things in common" (Acts 4:32), there was real unity. *"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither*

said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own...”(Acts 4:32).

DIVISIONS OVER THE HELLENISTS

Many Greek speaking Jews joined themselves to the assembly at Jerusalem. These Greek speaking Jews were referred to as Hellenists or Grecians. The Palestinian Jewish believers (i.e. Hebrews) did not readily accept those Jews who were non Palestinian Jews.

“And in those days, when the number of disciples was multiplied, THERE AROSE A MURMUING OF THE Grecians (i.e. Hellenists) against the Hebrews (i.e. Palestinian Jews), because their widows were neglected in the daily ministraton” (Acts 6:1).

Isn't it strange how so many folks, who state that the present "Church Age" began in Acts 2, says that the book of Acts is a description of the model church? Six chapters into the "model Church" you find division within it. This division continued from Acts 6 to Acts 10. As a result of the division between the two factions, the Apostles of the Circumcision decided that they were to devote themselves to the Word of God and prayer, and "stop waiting on tables." Seven men were selected in Acts 6 to "serve tables." This selection was to pacify the Hellenists.

DIVISION OVER THE GENTILES

Peter's visit to Cornelius is recorded in Acts 10. Peter and those who went with him were astonished that God allowed the Word to be received by the Gentiles of Cornelius' household (Acts 10:45). When Peter returned to Jerusalem, *“the Apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision CONTENDED WITH HIM, saying, thou wentest into men uncircumcised and didst eat with them.” (Acts 11:1-3).*

These Christians of the circumcision after hearing Peter recount how the Lord directed him to speak the Word of God to the Gentiles, *“held their peace, and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).* They "held their peace" regarding God granting the Gentiles repentance unto life, however, they still did not think it right for them to have intimate contact with Gentile believers.

THE EXTREMISTS

As time went on, the Christian Jews in Jerusalem began to hear the work of the Apostle Paul in Antioch among the Gentiles. It is evident that the Apostles of the Circumcision did not understand what God's program was all about. They took what we will refer to as the Extremists' position. The Apostles of the Circumcision adhered to the principle that "men of other nations" should be subjected to the rights of proselytes; circumcision, water baptism and offerings. The Extremists' posture caused further division among believers. The Extremists were probably made up mostly of Pharisees who believed.

"...there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses" (Acts 15:5).

The Apostles of the Circumcision sent emissaries to the area of Galatia insisting that the Gentile Christians should keep the Law of Moses and be circumcised. Although James denied the fact that anyone was sent from Jerusalem, the testimony in Galatians 2:14 states that Peter was in Antioch compelling the Gentiles to live after that manner of the Jews. This created a wider breach between believers. Peter and James did not understand the Apostle Paul's gospel. In fact, Peter, who at the time headed up the Extremists Christian Jews, went to Antioch for the purpose of compelling the Gentiles to live after the manner of the Jews.

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with the dissimulation" (Gal. 2:11-13).

Paul rebukes Peter for being Antioch associating with the Gentiles but insisting that they live like the Christian Jews in Jerusalem.

"But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as the Jews, WHY COMPELLEST

THOUGH THE GENTILES TO LIVE AS DO THE JEWS?"
(Gal. 2:14).

It is also noted in Galatians that Peter did not really understand the doctrine of "justification by faith" because Paul gives the mighty Peter a lesson on justification by faith without the works of the Law.

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16).

The indication is that Peter "tucks his tail" and goes back to Jerusalem not fully understanding the Gentile position in the Pentecostal Church.

The Apostles of the Circumcision moderated their views after the Acts 15 conference with the Apostle Paul. The Twelve agreed to limit their ministry to the Circumcision.

"And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me the right hands of fellowship; that we should go to the heathen, and they unto the circumcision" (Gal. 2:9).

THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY (PART 3)

Even though the Apostles of the Circumcision extended the right hand of fellowship to the Apostle to the Gentiles, acknowledging the fact that he was the Apostle to the nations, this did not prevent other Extremists from causing him trouble. Throughout Paul's Acts ministry he had to contend with the efforts of the Extremists to undermine his doctrine and authority as an apostle. Abundant evidence of this is found in Galatians and the two Corinthian letters.

In Galatians we notice that Paul's authority is challenged. His apostleship is questioned. The Extremists from Jerusalem, as we have pointed out, were insisting that Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. Those who were from Jerusalem were preaching "another gospel" (Gal.1:6). The Extremists' gospel was not good

news for the Galatians. Paul called it “weak and beggarly elements” (Gal. 4:9).

Later, when he writes to the Corinthians, we find the Extremists switched their tactics from insisting the Gentiles be circumcised and keep the Law to that of trying to create doubts as to Paul’s importance. They tried to make out that Paul was “just another apostle” or even possibly a lesser one.

“For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” (1 Cor. 1:11-12).

Another mention of this is found in 1 Corinthians.

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another I am of Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:1-6).

Paul refers to them as being carnal. There were “envying, and strife, and divisions” among them. This carnality was the result of the influence of the Extremists. The Extremists insisted on keeping the Law. In Hebrews the Apostle refers to the ordinances which were connected with the Law as being “carnal” (Heb. 9:10). Hence the Extremists influence which led to the Corinthians’ carnality must have been associated with these “carnal ordinances.” It was the keeping of these that created the envy, contention and division among the believers. Paul’s conclusion to the matter was, *“Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours” (1 Cor. 3:21-22).*

In the fourth chapter of First Corinthians it is noted again that there were those who attempted to discredit Paul’s credentials, *“Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. I write not these things to shame you, but*

as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have TEN THOUSAND INSTRUCTORS IN CHRIST, yet ye have not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (vs. 13-15). He is saying in Plainer Words that it did not matter if they had ten thousand instructors from Jerusalem, it was I who fathered you in the gospel.

The Christian Jews, who we refer to as the Extremists, in order to defame Paul, undoubtedly questioned his authority to such an extent that he was forced to defend his apostleship.

“Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are ye not my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the SEAL OF MINE APOSTLESHIP ARE YE in the Lord” (1 Cor. 9;1-2).

Paul, even in Second Corinthians, is forced to assert that he “was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles” (11:50)

Without naming them, Paul certainly and most assuredly makes reference to those who maintained the Extremis posture and adversely affected the Corinthian believers when he wrote, *“For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage (i.e. is under Law), if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face...Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ?...I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft” (2 Cor. 11:20, 22-23).* It is amazing that those who were personally fathered by the Apostle Paul into the faith could be subverted by those Christian Jews who failed to understand Paul’s ministry of justification by faith without the works of the Law.

The Extremists were the ones who were the activists among the Gentiles. They were zealous of the Law of Moses. In Acts 21 we note that when Paul arrived in Jerusalem and met with James and the elders he was told, *“Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they ARE ALL ZEALOUS OF THE LAW: and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs” (Acts 21:20-21).*

So here we note that there were thousands who were zealous of the Law and believed false reports about Paul, and evidently had no understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

THE MODERATES

There was another element of Christian Jews who acknowledged that God had indeed called men out of other nations, *"to take out of them a people for his name"* (Acts 15:14). We will call them Moderates. The Moderate Christian Jews decided not to trouble the Gentile believers by insisting that they live as did the Jews (Acts 15:19). The Moderates maintained a separatist's attitude toward the Gentiles not understanding that in Christ there is *"neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Gal. 3:28). The writings of Peter, James, and John indicate that they never saw this truth. No wonder the thousands of Jews who believed were zealous of the Law and could not bring themselves to accept the Gentiles with great enthusiasm.

We have pointed out two groups of believers during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles: (1) the Extremists Christian Jews, (2) the Moderate Christian Jews. The Extremist believed that Gentile believers should become as proselytes; that is, submit to the Jewish rite of circumcision and keep the Law of Moses. Acts 15 states that this group was influenced by those Jews who had been the sect of the Pharisees.

"But there rose up certain of the SECT OF THE PHARISEES which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses" (vs 5).

This clearly points out that the zeal of the Pharisees carried over into New Testament truth. That is, if they were going to make converts from among Gentiles they should become proselytes. The Lord Jesus said of the sect of the Pharisees, that they would compass land and sea to make one proselyte. This zeal was carried over even by those who believed. They were the major influence among the Extremists. Keep in mind also that it was very difficult for those of the sect of the Pharisees to shed completely all the traditions that has been ingrained in them all their lives. The same can be said for many today. Many who name the Name of Christ today can never come to the full knowledge of the Truth because

they are unable or unwilling to let go of the traditional doctrines that they have grown up with.

The Moderate Christian Jews were still “zealous of the law” (Acts 21:20). However, they had announced in Acts 15 under the leadership of James, they would not trouble the Gentiles who believed, only that they should abstain (1) from meats offered to idols, (2) from blood, (3) from things strangled and (4) from fornication (Acts 15:29). The Moderate Christian Jews maintained a separatist attitude. That is to say, they were not going to associate with Gentiles on an intimate basis. In fact, the Apostles of the Circumcision, and they would leave it to the Apostle Paul to minister to the Heathen.

These two groups of Jewish believers, the Extremists and the Moderates, were made up primarily from the following Jewish people.

- The Priests
- The Pharisees
- The Sadducees
- The People
- The Greek speaking Hellenists
- The Essenes

THE APOSTLES OF THE CIRCUMCISION

What was the Twelve Apostles' doctrine? That is, what did the Apostles of the Circumcision teach? In order to find answer to this question, it is suggested that the student carefully read the epistles written by their leaders: Peter, James and John. It would be a gross mistake to read into their epistles truth that was given to Paul. The Apostle Paul was given an abundance of revelations (2 Cor. 12:7) which he developed in his epistles written during the Acts period. This mistake made by most Bible students is to assume that the Twelve understood the doctrines Paul taught, and it is even a graver mistake to assume that the Twelve taught the Circumcision that which they did not understand.

Peter admitted that the things Paul wrote were “hard to be understood”. Not what came from the pen of Peter.

“And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him that written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are SOME THINGS HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD,

which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3: 15-16).

Peter knew what Paul taught, even admitting what Paul wrote was Scripture. The way Peter knew what Paul taught is that “*Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and COMMUNICATED UNTO THEM THAT GOSPEL WHICH I PREACH AMONG THE GENTILES, BUT PRIVATELY TO THEM WHICH WERE OF REPUTATION* (i.e. Peter, James, and John), *lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain” (Gal. 2:1-2).* Therefore we noticed that the leaders of the Twelve had the opportunity to learn Paul’s Gospel, but they did not teach it nor did they write about being “JUSTIFIED FROM ALL THINGS, FROM WHICH YE COULD NOT BE JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW OF MOSES” (Acts 13:39).

As late as Acts 21 James states, ... *Thou seest, brother (Paul), how many THOUSANDS OF JEWS THERE ARE WHICH BELIEVE; AND THEY ARE ALL ZEALOUS OF THE LAW” (Acts 21:20).* By Acts 21 Paul had written all his Acts epistles perhaps with the exception of Hebrews. This is pointed out to show that even as late as 58 or 59 A.D. the Christian Jews in Jerusalem had no faith in Paul’s gospel of justification. They either had no faith in it for they had not been taught it. We believe that they had not been taught it; if they had and if they would have believed it, they would have been “dead to the Law” (Rom. 7:4).

The Apostles of the Circumcision, who agreed to limit their ministry to the Christian Jews’ circle of understanding, appeared not to have progressed any further than the “gospel of the circumcision.” In plainer words, the Twelve brought forth no additional revelation of Truth other than what their Lord had both “began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). They continued doing and teaching what Christ did and taught as a minister to the circumcision, confirming the promises God made to the fathers of Israel.(Rom 18:8).The one exception to this was that they were witnesses to the Resurrection. (Heb. 2:3-4) confirms this statement.

(Heb 2:3) How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

(Heb 2:4) God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

The ministry of the Lord Jesus recorded in the Four Gospels was carried on by the Twelve after the Ascension. There was no break, nor was there a new testimony beyond the fact that Christ arose from the dead. The Apostles were commissioned to REPEAT AND CONFIRM what the Lord has already said. They were true to this commission. It was reserved for the Apostle Paul to make known additional revelations which surpassed the Gospel of the Circumcision.

THE BACKGROUND TO CHRISTIANITY (PART 4)

BORN AGAIN ONES

The Apostles of the Circumcision taught tht believers were regenerated that is to say “begotten of God or “born again.” This ties in with what the Lord Jesus taught Nicodemus in John 3:1-13. The Twelve repeated and confirmed what the Lord has already said. Notice in 1John 3:9.

“Whosoever is BORN OF GOD doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is BORN OF GOD.”

Continuing this teaching, John also says in 1John 5:

(1Jn 5:1) Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

(1Jn 5:4) For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

(1Jn 5:18) We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

The Christian Jews under the influence of John’s ministry would naturally be the ones who by faith were the “born again ones”; that is to say those who were said to be “begotten of God.”

Peter also repeated and confirmed what the Lord Jesus began to teach concerning being born again.

“Being BORN AGAIN, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23).

The Truth the Twelve taught carried them no further than being “begotten of God.” Most Christians during the Acts period limited themselves to the spiritual rudiments which led them to the “new birth.” Those who were content to embrace only the Truth of the new birth were never able to enjoy the higher plane of blessings which were made known by the Apostle Paul. The Apostles of the Circumcision knew what Paul taught and knew that it was an advancement of revelation from God (see Gal.2:1-2). They definitely knew what Paul taught Jews and Gentiles. They never saw fit to teach the same. Perhaps it was not for them nor for them to whom they ministered. The gospel of John is representative of the faith of those who were “born again.”

JUSTIFIED ONES

By contrast to the Apostles of the Circumcision, who only repeated and confirmed what the Lord Jesus Christ taught, the Apostle Paul was given an “abundance of revelations” (2 Cor. 12:7). Under inspiration he developed and revealed doctrine that far surpassed justification by faith without the works of the Law. Justification by faith alone certainly was the one doctrine that the Extremist Christian Jews actively worked against throughout the Acts period. The Scriptural record indicates that the Moderates as well as the Apostles of the Circumcision never fully understood nor appreciated this doctrine of justification by faith alone. Neither did they understand that those who were justified by faith without the works of the Law had “put on Christ” and consequently “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gal. 3:28).

This brings us to another class of believers during the Acts of the Apostles. For want of a better name we will refer to those as JUSTIFIED CHRISTIAN JEWS. These Jews who were justified by faith embraced Paul’s gospel of the Uncircumcision. They were for the most part made up of the Dispersed Jew. Having “put on Christ”, they were justified or free from the Law. They were

independent of the Covenant with Israel. They lived in sphere of reconciliation and justification before God by faith in Christ Jesus. In spirit, that is in Christ, they were no longer Jews, and in this sense no longer under obligation to keep the Law. However, they were not restricted from observing that portion of the Law which was not related to righteousness. "For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 10:4).

The Justified Christian Jew fell into two categories: the "strong" and the "weak" (Rom. 15:1). Paul writes about these 2 groups in Rom. 14:1 to 15:3. Gentiles, who had been influenced by the synagogue's instruction of Moses, would also come under Paul's instruction in Rom. 14 and 15. Those who were "strong in faith" as it related to the Gospel of the Uncircumcision WERE DEAD TO THE LAW. Those who were "weak in faith" still felt obliged to observe days, meats, and drinks. Romans 14 and 15 was written to bring about peace and understanding between the justified ones; that is between the "strong" and "weak" (Rom. 14:19).

During the Acts period the believers to whom Paul ministered were led to Truths which placed them on a higher plane than those Christians who were simply "born again." The "born again" ones continued to keep the Law of Moses and were very zealous of it. As long as they were keeping the Law there was a difference between the Christian Jew and the Christian Gentile. The Law was a "middle wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14) separating the two. Try as they might there could never be an intimacy between Jew and Gentile believers as long as Christian Jews observed the Law. Paul states in Eph. 2 that the Law was an "enmity." The word "enmity" means "the quality of being an enemy; the opposite of friendship; ill will; hatred; unfriendly dispositions (Webster's 1828 Dictionary). The Law with its elaborate system of legal observances publicly marked off the Christian Jew from the Christian Gentile. However, those Christian Jews who embraced the doctrine of justification by FAITH ALONE learned that IN CHRIST THERE WAS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JEW AND GENTILE, BOND OR FREE, MALE OR FEMALE (Gal. 3:28).

While Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles, he also had many Jews who embraced the Truth he taught. An example would be Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18). Paul explained the Christian Jews' relationship to the Law if

they embraced his gospel of being justified without the works of the Law.

(Rom 7:1) Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

(Rom 7:2) For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

(Rom 7:3) So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

(Rom 7:4) Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

In plainer words, Paul is saying to the Jewish believer that if he is justified by faith he is freed from the claims of the Law. How? He is dead to the Law. Not only that but they were now living as those who were alive from the dead and were to walk in newness of life. They were to yield themselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead. Those who did, Paul says in Romans 6, are NOT UNDER LAW, BUT UNDER GRACE!

Briefly stated, the Jewish believers who embraced Paul's doctrine of justification by faith alone lived on a higher plane. They were more advanced than those who were just "born again". They were to live on "resurrection ground" being dead indeed to the Law. In the sphere that they lived, there was no distinction between Jew and Gentile. They lived on reckoning ground. They were crucified with Christ, nevertheless they lived, not really them, but Christ was living in them, and the life that they were living by the faith of the Son of God (see Gal. 2:20). Remember, that as long as the Law was observed by believers there was a difference between Jewish and Gentile Christians. But on the ground that the Apostle Paul called believers to live on during the Acts of the Apostles, there was NO DISINTEGRATION.

What troubled Paul so much during that period was that many of his converts were continually being persuaded to

lapse back to the weak and beggarly elements of the Law which would bring them again into the bondage of the Law (Gal. 4:9). Those who were justified by faith and would return to the observance of the Law as prescribed by the Extremists Christian Jews would be those who Paul said have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4), and Christ would profit them nothing (Gal. 5:2).

JOHN'S DISCIPLES

There was yet another group we find in the Acts of the Apostles. They were disciples of John the Baptizer. While it is generally thought that the Word of God spread with great rapidity during the Acts period, it is interesting to notice that as late as Acts 18 Apollos shows up, knowing no more than what John the Baptist had taught.

(Act 18:24) And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

(Act 18:25) This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

Apollos knew only the baptism of John. That was probably around the year 54 or 55 A.D. Acts 18:26 states that he went into the synagogue at Ephesus and spoke boldly. Aquila and Priscilla heard him and "they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

While it is true that Luke mentions that the Word of God "increased" and grew and multiplied" (Acts 6:7, 12:24) as late as 55 A.D., there were still those Jews who had not heard any more truth than what John the Baptist preached. In Acts 19:1-7 Paul meets twelve disciples of John who knew only John's baptism.

This should point out again the various elements which existed during the Acts of the Apostles. There was not complete agreement or understanding during the Acts period among believers.

THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY (PART 5)

Believers were called Christians during the Acts of the Apostles. It is interesting to notice that in Paul's prison epistles, written after the Mystery was revealed to him, that he never refers to believers as Christians.

(Act 11:26) And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

(Act 26:28) Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

(1Pe 4:16) Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Those of our readers who delight in the strong meat of the Word "even those who by reason of use **HAVE THEIR SENSES EXERCISED**" (Heb.5:14), will recognize that being a Christian, scripturally speaking, was associated with New Testament Truth. Scripturally it is not associated with the revelation of the Mystery and those who have been membered into the Body over which Christ Jesus is the Head.

During the period of the Acts of the Apostles, two callings of Christians existed. These two callings were discussed in the previous paper. The general heading that we listed them under were (1) The Justified Ones and (2) The Born Again Ones. The Apostle Paul had truth for those who were justified without the works of the Law. The Apostles of the Circumcision had truth for those who were born again and were still zealous of the Law.

Most all of the Bible commentators try to harmonize the teachings of Paul and the circumcision Apostles. They fail to recognize that all Christians during the Acts of the Apostles were not called upon to believe the same thing. God provided Truth for those who desired to live "on higher ground" of being justified by faith alone without the works of the Law. This was for the Justified Ones. They had Paul as their minister.

On the other hand God provided Truth for those who were obliged to keep the Law of Moses. This was for the Born Again Ones. The Circumcision Apostles were their ministers.

Failure to distinguish between the two parties has led Bible commentators to synthesize the two callings in an attempt to make them one. They were not one. They never could be one until such time as the Law was abolished. The Law was observed by one group, the Born Again Ones. The other group, the Justified Ones, were dead to the Law.

DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCE

Instead of harmonizing or synthesizing the doctrine of justification between the two groups we will simply show the contrast. Paul's doctrine on justification was truth for those who believed it. James' doctrine on justification was truth for those who believed it. Both apostles' doctrine should be looked at in the light of to whom they were writing.

Paul To
THE JUSTIFIED ONES

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16).

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3-5).

James To
THE BORN AGAIN ONES

“Yes see then how that by works a man is justified AND NOT BY FAITH ONLY” (James 2:24).

“Was not Abraham our father justified by WORKS, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?...Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified BY WORKS, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” (James 2:21, 25).

Notice the Apostle Paul tells those who are justified by faith only, that when Abraham believed God in Gen. 15 he was justified. The contrast is that James tells the Born Again Ones that their father, Abraham, was justified in Genesis 22 when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar. Born Again Ones still observed the Law. James says they must continue to do so, that their faith might be made perfect. If they failed to do so their faith was dead for "faith, if it is not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17).

THE LAW – AN ENMITY

The very nature of the Law created an enmity between the groups. The Law was "middle wall of partition between the ones who were justified by faith and the ones who were only born again.

The Born Again Ones, were for the most part Christian Jews. However, in their ranks were many Gentiles who came under their influence. These Gentiles were Judaized; that is to say, they believed in Jesus Christ as the promised Jewish Messiah but along with this faith they were obliged to keep the Law of Moses as proselytes had done. It is evident throughout the Acts of the Apostles that there was a concerted effort made by certain elements of believing Christian Jews, the Extremists, to intimidate the Justified Ones into keeping the Law. In fact, just about the whole Galatian epistle is Paul's effort to counteract this Judaizing influence. Traces of this refuting the Judaizers is found also in the Roman epistle.

Very few students of the Word have recognized the fact that the Born Again Ones, who were zealous of the Law and still had the zeal of the Pharisees, persecuted the Justified Ones. Not all of the trouble Paul had was from unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, but rather a great deal of it was from Born Again Christians,

Before an overlooked example is given, let us realize that as long as one set of believers kept the Law and another set did not there was an "enmity."

(Eph 2:14) For he (Christ) is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

(Eph 2:15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

The verses noted above were penned by the Apostle Paul after he had received the revelation of the Mystery. In the above verses he states that the Law during the Acts period had been a “middle wall of partition” which kept the two groups of believers separated. Christ had become the believers’ PEACE for during the Acts period there was no peace between the two groups because as long as the Law still stood and was observed by some Christians there was an enmity between the two groups. Keep in mind the two groups were not just Christian Jews and Gentiles. The two groups were what we refer to as the Born Again Ones and the Justified Ones. Both groups were made up of believing Jews and Gentiles. Consequently, there were two callings during the Christian Era. The Born Again Ones had faith but they showed their faith by still observing Moses. The Justified Ones belonged to a higher calling. They were dead to the Law. Because of one group being called to a higher calling where there was no difference between believing Jew and Gentile there was an enmity since the other group made distinctions between believers.

The word “enmity” means hatred. Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary states that enmity “suggests positive hatred which may be open or concealed. It suggests hostility showing itself in attacks or aggression.” Synonyms for the word “enmity” are: hostility, antipathy, antagonism and animosity. Please note that during the Acts period there existed this hostility, this hatred, this animosity between the two groups. But the fact was the aggression was carried on by those who were not part and parcel of the higher calling. The attacks of aggression were mounted by the Born Again Ones not by those who were justified by faith alone.

However, with the revelation of the Mystery we learn through the testimony of the Lord’s prisoner that something happened on the Cross that was not revealed unto God set Israel aside, that is, the Law was abolished! Obliterated! Now there could be PEACE between believers because “in His flesh the enmity” was ABOLISHED.

The hatred and hostility is seen manifested in Acts 21 and 22. The Jews “which were of Asia” were probably Born Again Ones or at least a portion of them were. They are

the ones who accused Paul of taking Trophimus into the Temple. They accused Paul of teaching Jews to forsake Moses. The reason we suggest that part of his accusers were believers is because of the fact that when he addresses the mob he says, "Men, BRETHREN, and fathers" (Acts 22:1). His reference to "brethren" has reference to those who were his brothers in Christ. The enmity existed because some kept the Law and others were not compelled to keep the Law. An example of Christian Jews who were justified by faith and were not obliged to keep the Law were the husband and wife team who worked with Paul, Aquilla and Priscilla.

THE ALLEGORY OF GALATIANS FOUR

The allegory which Paul applies in Galatians the Fourth Chapter has been over simplified by most all the expositors. By this over simplification they have missed the facts that there was an enmity between believers during the Acts of the Apostles. What the expositors and commentators refer to as Judaizers were in fact Christian Jews whom we have labeled Extremists. In the allegory the "children of the bond woman" are not Old Testament Jews (i.e. unbelievers in Christ who persecuted Christians), but rather they were Christian Zealots who were still zealous of the Law, persecuting the Justified Ones.

The main burden of the Galatian Epistle is "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ had made us free, and BE NOT ENTANGLED AGAIN WITH THE YOKE OF BONDAGE*" (Gal. 5:1). The yoke of bondage was the Law. Those who had been justified by faith under the ministry of Paul stood in jeopardy of having received Paul's labor in vain. "*I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain*" (Gal. 4:11).

Extremists came into Galatia questioning Paul's authority and the gospel which he preached. They were insisting that those who took their stand as being justified by faith only, must be circumcised and keep the Law. In plainer words, they preached the Gospel of the Uncircumcision to those who had already embraced the Gospel of the Uncircumcision. Paul marveled that they had so soon removed from Him that called them unto the grace of Christ unto ANOTHER GOSPEL (Gal. 1:6). He goes on to tell them that if any man (that means even Peter, James or John), or if an angel from heaven preach unto them another gospel "let him be accursed" (Gal 1:9). These were very solemn words from Paul.

THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY (PART 6)

It was very serious business for the Galatians to be removed from Paul's gospel by those who insisted that all believers should keep the Law.

Paul said of the Galatians, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should obey the truth" (Gal. 5:7). The hinderers were the Extremist Christian Jews. How could the Galatians turn to "weak and beggarly elements" which would bring them into bondage (Gal. 4:9)? Notice what follows.

(Gal 4:21) Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.(Gal.4:21-31).

This was an allegory which Paul used to teach a truth concerning the Justified Ones and the Born Again Ones. When an allegory is used by a writer or a speaker an exact similitude is not used, but rather one thing is written or said but something different is meant. Dr. Bullinger in his Companion Bible says, "Allegory; or Continued Comparison by Representation (Metaphor) and Implication. Teaching a truth about one thing by substituting another for it which is unlike it."

The allegory in Galatians 4 implies that the Justified Ones were like Isaac, whose mother was a freewoman, as

compared to the Born Again Ones whose mother was like Hagar, a bondswoman. The implications are very interesting. The Justified Ones are outnumbered by the Born Again Ones, *“Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate (the implication is the Born Again Ones) hath a husband” (Gal.4:7).*

“But as then he that was born after the flesh PERSECUTED him that was born after the Spirit, EVEN SO IT IS NOW” (Gal. 4:29). Paul is saying allegorically that the trouble is caused by those who are insisting that the Law be kept. He says elsewhere in Galatians that if he preached circumcision he would not be persecuted (5:11).

As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. (Gal.6: 12,13).

The Extremist Christian Jews constrained the Gentile believers in Galatia to be circumcised. They were preaching the Gospel of the Circumcision to those who had believed Paul’s Gospel of the Uncircumcision. All of this points to ENMITY which existed during the Acts of the Apostles. The hostility stemmed from the Born Again Ones who still kept the Law did not know the higher truth, that faith alone was God’s ground for justifying those who reckoned themselves as having died with Christ and consequently were dead to the Law. It seems clear that possibility existed that those who did not stand fast in liberty, wherewith Christ had made them free, could be dragged down into bondage by drawing back into the ranks of the Born Again Ones. Paul’s expression in Galatians for this falling away is “falling from grace.”

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. (Gal. 5: 2-4)

This idea of falling from grace is mentioned in Heb.10 as “drawing back to perdition.” (Heb 10:38) *Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. (Gal.5:2-4). Because the possibility existed that the Justified Ones would be adversely affected by the Extremists, Paul says in the allegory, *“Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son” (Gal. 4:30).* In plainer words Paul is saying, ‘Cast out of your midst those who are causing the trouble regarding the keeping of the Law.’

THE HEAVENLY CALLING

The believers who were justified by faith alone believing Paul’s gospel, walked by faith as did Abraham. Therefore they were considered to have had Abraham as their father whether in the flesh they were Jews or Gentiles (see Rom.4:11-13). Those who were the Justified Ones were “partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1). The heavenly calling did not mean that those who were partakers of it would realize their hope in heaven; but rather, their expectation was a city, a heavenly city, whose builder and maker was God (Heb. 11:10). The Justified Ones, as did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one. God hath prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:16). Being part of this heavenly calling the Justified Ones looked for a “better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35) than those who were simply the Born Again Ones. This indeed was a better hope, *“God having provided some BETTER THING for us” (Heb. 11:40).*

If the Justified Ones did not draw back they would enjoy their resurrection in the heavenly city. Paul reminds those Hebrews who were justified by faith only, *“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels” (Heb. 12:22).*

Hebrews appears to have been written to point out to the Hebrew Justified Ones that they had better things laid up for them if they persevered and went “on to perfection”(Heb. 6:1). This same truth existed for the Justified Gentiles. Paul covers it in Romans and Galatians.

TO UNLEARN IS HARD

We have noted the various groups of believers during the Acts period. Each group brought to some extent into their new found faith some carry-over ideas from their previous "religion"; whether they were from the sect of the Pharisees or from synagogue-attending Gentiles. It should be kept in mind that it is never easy to "unlearn that which we have been taught" or that "which we always believed." New Testament believers were no different in that respect than we were when we began to come to the knowledge of the Truth. After having embraced the Truth of the Mystery most of us experienced the wrenching from things that we unwittingly tried to hold on to, that is to say, those traditional doctrines we were brought up to believe to be true. We shed those false traditional doctrines slowly, just as dead leaves on trees do not fall off the branches all at once. But they are shed gradually, many still attached to the branches until new growth of spring causes them to lose their grip and fall worthlessly to the ground. Those who will persevere in Truth finally will come to the point that the dead leaves of traditional teaching have fallen to the ground worthlessly and a new growth blooms.

All of that was said to say this, those who came out of the pre-Acts period unto the Acts period carried with them dead leaves. Not all dead leaves fell off upon believing the Truth of the Gospel which was proclaimed by the Twelve or the Apostle Paul. There were carry-over ideas which were not in complete harmony with Pentecostal Truth whether it be for the "Born Again Ones" or for the "Justified Ones."

NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

All New Testament writings were written during the Acts of the Apostles. The writings which make up the New Testament were (the list does not concern itself with the order of the writing): Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, First and Second Peter, James, First, Second, and Third John, Jude, Revelation, First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Hebrews, and Romans.

The writers of these New Testament Books apparently had no idea that what they wrote would one day contribute to what we now call the Bible. They thought the end of the world (or age) was near and that the Lord Jesus Christ would soon return. Their written words were to meet definite needs in the lives of those with whom they were associated. Reading these New Testament

writings, one senses that the writers had no idea of creating a new sacred text.

During the Acts of the Apostles the believers had in their hands what was a Bible to them – the Old Testament. The O.T. Scriptures were read in the churches and in the synagogues. It was the believers' Bible. The O.T. was the Bible of the Lord Jesus Christ. He accepted its history as the preparation of Himself. He taught His disciples to study it for in it they would find Him. He used the Old Testament to justify His mission and ministry. He drew from it many examples. He re-enforced the Law and restored many of its ideals. He fed His own self with its contents. He sustained Himself with it as it was indeed the living and sovereign Word of God.

When Paul taught about Christ, Paul always appealed to the Old Scriptures. Moses was continuously read in the midst of the Jewish believers. The Old Testament was the authority during the Acts period. In plainer words, during that time of the first century the Old Testament was used in "Christian" instruction.

The New Testament writings were not looked upon by the early believers as carrying the weight of the Old Testament. These new writings were not looked upon for one moment as ranking in honor or authority as the Old Testament. Especially those epistles of the Apostle Paul could not possibly be looked upon with favor by those who did not trust him. Only the "Justified Ones" could really appreciate Paul's authority. In fact, many first and second century "believers" questioned whether Paul was really an Apostle.

The documents written by the Apostles of the Circumcision were written to their converts and others who believed their testimony. The fact is that their teaching went no further than confirming what Jesus Christ had both began to do and teach. In their writings there is no teaching which was not already present in principle in the teachings of Christ Himself. These apostles added nothing to His teachings, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they simply interpreted and applied His doctrines. Therefore their teaching, whether orally or in writing, was viewed as authoritative by those to whom the teaching was addressed.

The Apostle Paul on the other hand went beyond what the Twelve taught. He was given an abundance of revelations, which was not only hard for the "Born Again

Ones” to understand, but in the main the “Born Again Ones” rejected the revelations Paul taught. As the close of the Acts period approached it should be noted there was a departure from the truth as Paul taught it. In fact, Paul prophesied that it would take place (cf. Acts 20:28-31).

When the dispensational boundary line is crossed at the end of the Acts of the Apostles, there was no New Testament as we know it. The scattered churches had the Old Testament and perhaps an epistle from an apostle. In these churches the Old Testament was read and studied. They would also read an epistle from an apostle that was written to them (cf. 1 Thess. 5:27). There might have been an assembly to whom Peter wrote that would read the Scriptures and their letter from Peter. The same would be true with James, or John or Jude.

For the most part Christians were taught about Christ from the eye-witness accounts for the Apostles and from the Old Testament. Among the “Christian” assemblies during the Acts period there was no need for the forming of a New Sacred Text since everyone believed that the Lord was ready to return. But suddenly there broke upon the scene a radical departure from Truth which relate to the Acts period. Paul, who was now a prisoner in Rome, announced that Christ was now among the Gentiles apart from Israel. The hope of the Kingdom has been postponed. If his ministry had been hard to comprehend during the Acts economy, what must the believers have thought when they were informed that all the promises were set aside and that an unprophesied administration had been ushered in? And that is not all, Paul was even writing and saying that to him alone was given this revelation of the Mystery which had previously been hidden from ages and generations.

Without going into the details of the aspects of the Mystery we should point out that Paul informed the new calling that they had another set of apostles, excluding the Twelve, or what was left of the Twelve. If the Saints wanted to know what God was now doing they would have to come to grips with the testimony of the Lord’s prisoner. Failure to believe the Apostle was to sit in darkness. Only Paul had the key to the Lord’s postponed return. He alone had the key to what happened to the gifts of the Spirit. He alone had the key to why the Hope of Israel was postponed. Without his knowledge believers were plunged into perplexity and confusion. However, the

crisis which arose when God set Israel aside was not as confounding as it later became. After the revelation of the great secret, the believers who were only regenerated and who had not moved on to perfection continued in the doctrine of the Apostles of the Circumcision as though nothing had happened. They continued in their own way waiting for the Lord's return. The deathblow fell, however, with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This was not suppose to be, as they say it. The Lord was to have come to rescue them. Those who embraced the Mystery understood what had happened. They certainly were in the minority. Christians who rejected the latest report from God misunderstood those who acknowledged Paul's subsequent revelation.

THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY (Part 7)

THE MYSTERY REVEALED

The revelation of the Mystery came upon the world as a sudden surprise. It took Paul and his followers by surprise. When Paul announced it, he no longer could prove by Scripture from the Old Testament that this good news from Glory was in fact a reality. For the Mystery had been "hid in God" until Paul revealed it. He neither could point to the writings of other Apostles to confirm it, nor could he appeal to his previous revelations stating he was to be the administrator and revelator of this new dispensation. His only credentials were his imprisonment and his chain. Not very good credentials to those who had grown up on spiritual gifts.

Those who were the "Born Again Ones" from the Acts period certainly did not believe Paul's latest report. They never believed nor trusted him previously. Perhaps there were a few such as "Jesus which is called Justus" whom Paul says is of the circumcision (Col. 4:11). The "Born Again Ones" continued on in the Apostles of the Circumcision's doctrine. Their mother city still stood. The apostle's testimony was that the angels had said this same Jesus who you see ascending into heaven will so come again in like manner. They were still waiting for the Lord's return. They felt safe in rejecting the testimony of the Lord's prisoner. Scripture indicates that the "Born Again Ones" were responsible for turning many of Paul's converts back to weak and beggarly elements. Those

who had previously received Paul's testimony regarding being justified by faith and were adversely affected by "Christian Law Keepers," in all probability rejected the Revelation of the Mystery.

The "Justified Ones" were for all practical purposes, the ones who would most likely receive the latest report from God concerning the fact that Christ was now among the Gentiles and He was their hope of glory. It would be they who should believe that the middle wall of partition was abolished and that by Christ's work on the cross the enmity had been slain, therefore there should have been peace between the "Justified Ones" and the "Born Again Ones." However, as long as some continued keeping various portions of the Law there was no peace between the two.

Paul was not rightly understood during the Acts of the Apostles, nor after Acts 28. During the Pentecostal period Paul did not limit himself to the first principles of the doctrine of Christ but went further than the Law, the new birth and the remission of sins. He spoke about a spiritual position which was too high to be comprehended by all believers. It was very easy to find excuses to abandon Paul. He did not belong to the group of the Twelve. It was apparent that many said that Paul justified his apostleship on the pretext of visions, but was this proof that he was really and Apostle of Christ? Paul talked about all kinds of new things which were seemingly unknown in the Old Testament. To the Jews and the Christian Jews it was clear that he proposed ideas which were entirely unacceptable. Particularly concerning the Law which they believed to have a lasting and absolute value. Far from being able to agree that the distinction between Jew and Greek could cease to exist as some time or under certain conditions, they were certain that no one could be saved without being incorporated into Israel and observing the Law. As soon as it became obvious that his Gospel did not correspond exactly with that of the Lord and the Twelve, Paul had practically everyone against him. They did not understand, and either turned away from him or became his adversaries.

With the aforementioned, it can easily be seen why so few received the testimony concerning the revelation of the Mystery.

We are of the opinion that Paul received the revelation of the Mystery around 63 A.D. and he probably died around 68 A.D. He lived long enough to tell Timothy that all in

Asia had turned away from him, and in so doing rejected the truth. Light rejected becomes lightning!

Lightning soon struck. Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus the Roman General in 70. A.D. This was a clear indication of God rejecting Israel and the nation being set aside. Paul had already told that Israel was set aside but few believed it. By rejecting the witness of the Apostle Paul, Christians were thrown into confusion failing to understand God's purpose and plan. It is based upon this confusion that the visible Christian church was established.

Neither "Christian writings" nor Scripture tells what went on nor how long it was from the time that the Acts of the Apostles closes until the Apostle Paul becomes the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles. We do know however, that when the Ephesian Epistle is read and comprehended, it is seen clearly by those who have eyes to see that Paul is no longer bound in a chain for the Hope of Israel (Acts 28:20), but rather he is now an "ambassador in bonds" for the express purpose of making known a new dispensation, The Mystery (cf. Eph. 6:19-20, Col. 4:3).

As the Lord's prisoner for the Gentiles, Paul brings forth even more far reaching truth than he did during the Acts period. He no longer speaks about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. No longer does Paul mention the hope of the "Justified Ones" as being the New Jerusalem, but rather he rejoices in the fact that Christ is now among the Gentiles and is their hope of Glory. He talks about a One Body of believers who has already been blessed with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ; who had been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself. He reveals that this new company and calling of believers has been made accepted in the Beloved, and that they were to be the praise of the glory of God's grace. He no longer speaks about a "rapture" at the last trump, or the voice of the archangel, or the Lord descending from heaven; but he now speaks of the facts that this new calling is "one new man" that will one day appear with the Lord Jesus Christ in Glory. He does not speak of Christ as the King, but rather Christ is now the Head of all principality and power and Head over all things to the "church, which is His Body."

Paul, as the prisoner of the Lord for the Gentiles, also points out that according to the Scriptures, more work was accomplished on the Cross than just Christ dying for our sins. One such truth was that God abolished the Law in the flesh of Christ. The Law, which was the ground of contention during the Acts period between the “Born Again Ones” and the “Justified Ones,” was slain by the Cross that God might reconcile both unto Himself in one body. The problem here was that even though the Law was abolished in order that God could reconcile the “Born Again Ones” and the “Justified Ones,” they had to accept the fact that they were reconciled. The enmity between the two during the Acts period was the Law. This enmity was slain, abolished, broken down (Eph. 2:14-16) in order that there could be peace between the two. Those who failed to believe this late report from God continued to observe the Law, consequently there was no peace.

After Paul made the Mystery manifest to all the saints, it is apparent that some believed in Ephesus, Collossee, Philippi, Laodicea, and some of the Praetorian guards in Rome. We are not told to what extent the Mystery was acknowledged by the saints coming out of the Acts period, but it is reasonable to assume that the vast majority of the Acts period Christians did not embrace the Truth of the Mystery. We can safely make this assumption, understanding that Paul’s doctrine during the Acts of the Apostles was mostly not understood or either was not viewed with favor, since so many of the saints did not trust him.

TILL THE UNITY OF THE FAITH IS REACHED

Ephesians four lets us know that the Ascended Christ gave the new calling gifts. The gifts were men. They were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Their specific ministry was for the purpose of:

“perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12).

In plainer words, their ministry was to redirect the saints coming out of the Acts period (i.e. the body of Christ) into the truth of the Mystery. These men were ordained by God, not men, and they were to be on the scene for a limited time – it was until they brought all the saints into the unity of the faith.

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of Go, unto a perfect man, unto the

measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

If the Saints did not receive the work of the special gifted men, they would remain "*children, tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14).*

SECOND TIMOTHY

Paul's last letter to his son in the faith states that "*all they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15).* This is the clear signal that they turned away from the Truth of the Mystery. Paul states that Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul's chain which indicates that most others were. Paul's chain represented his credentials as an ambassador in bonds for the Gentiles' glory. He tells of Demas having forsaken him (2 Tim. 4:10, and when he called upon to appear before Nero "*no man stood with me, but all men forsook me" (2 Tim. 4:16).* All of this indicates that before Paul's death most all those who had acknowledged the Truth now rejected it. Thus, it can safely be said that the saints never came to the unity of the faith of the Mystery. God, through Christ Jesus, appointed no more apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers.

Much of what Paul told Timothy in Second Timothy was fulfilled in Timothy's lifetime. Generally Bible teachers refer to a time yet future when believers shall turn their ears away from the truth and will be turned into fables. We are of the opinion that this took place during the life of Timothy. We think the real application of that prophecy was to be made in Timothy's lifetime.

(2Ti 4:2) Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

This was applicable to Timothy, not necessarily to 20th Century believers in the testimony of the Lord's prisoner. It was in Timothy's day that believers turned from the Truth of the Mystery. And when they turned from the

Truth, they embraced doctrines that were not in harmony with present truth, and consequently they built a religion based upon “fables.” Rejecting the testimony of the Lord’s prisoner resulted in Christians losing the key of wisdom and knowledge, for only as one would acknowledge the Mystery could one find the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ (Col. 2:2-3).

THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY (Part 8)

We are not informed by Scripture what went on among the saints who came out of the Acts period who had never accepted the gospel that Paul preached, or what happened to those who drew back to perdition. All that is recorded for our learning is that even many of those who had acknowledged the great revelation of the Mystery, and the Testimony of our Lord and of Paul His prisoner, had turned away from a “form of sound words.” We can only imagine what confusion the Acts period believers were in when they lived to see Jerusalem destroyed as well as the Temple. In fact, the catastrophe of 70 A.D. only confirmed truth of what Paul pronounced in the Twenty-eighth chapter. Israel was set aside by God. Israel became not God’s people (lo-ammi). I do not necessarily think that the Lo-ammi mentioned in Hosea has a reference to Israel during the Dispensation of the Mystery, however it is without question that they are no longer God’s people.

DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

The years between, say 63 and 70 A.D. constitute one of the most important events in all of human history. It was during this time that Apostle Paul made manifest to the saints alive at that time, that a new dispensation had been ushered in by God. It had been a secret hidden in God and not made known to any of the sons of men as it was THEN REVEALED to the Apostle Paul. CHRIST WAS NOW AMONG THE GENTILES, APART FROM ISRAEL and was the Gentiles’ hope of Glory. The events of 70 A.D. in and around Jerusalem proved to be catastrophic not only for the Jews, but also for the Christians who misunderstood Paul. To them it would seem that the whole purpose of God was frustrated and ended in Failure.

Perhaps many now doubted. Were the prophets wrong? Had the Lord Jesus and the Apostles been mistaken when they spoke of Israel as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people? Only those who had remained faithful to Paul's teaching were prepared for such a catastrophe. Only those who remained faithful to the Lord's prisoner understood that a new dispensation had commenced, and era about which the prophets had never spoke and which formed, as it were, an interruption in the prophesied realization of God's purpose, namely that of using the Israel of God to bring in the Kingdom of God and impose His government upon the nations. The Apostle to the Gentiles had the key of understanding which explained what God was doing. It was revealed in the last revelations given to him that God was dealing with the world on quite a different basis. For a time, God was to deal with mankind preeminently on the grounds of faith and grace.

The research we have done concerning the events which centered around the siege and final destruction of Jerusalem have not answered many inquiries into what part, if any, did Christian Jews have in the events which lasted 134 days. Very briefly we will point out some highlights surrounding the siege and devastation of Jerusalem. This is brought out to emphasize the catastrophe as it related to the Christians who failed to understand its significance, since by far most of them did not understand that Paul had the answer as to why God allowed it to happen.

There had been long-smouldering discontent of the Jews against the Romans. This discontent burst forth into rebellion under the incompetence of Gessicus Florus, 66 A.D. (Ant 20, 11,1). Multitudes of Jews torched palaces and public buildings, and after two days' siege the Antonia itself was captured, set fire, and its garrison slain. (Antonia was the ancient Baris which was probably the replacement of the Citadel of pre-exilic times, which Herod the Great 37-4 B.C. enlarged and renamed it to Antonia. It was located just north of the Temple).

Cestius Gallus, hastening from Syria, was soon engaged in a siege of Jerusalem. He was able to capture the third wall around Jerusalem. When he began to launch an attack upon the second wall, Josephus says that Cestius Gallus was seized with panic and his partial withdrawal developed into an inglorious retreat in which he was

pursued by the Jews as far as Antipatris (Jewish Wars, Josephus 2, 19).

This victory cost the Jews dearly in the long run as it led to the campaign of Vespasian and the eventual crushing of Israel's natural aspirations. He began his conquest in the north, and advanced by slow deliberate steps. He was recalled to Rome as emperor in the midst of the war. The job of continuing the siege and the capturing of Jerusalem was given to his son Titus. None of the calamities which had previously befallen the city could come close to comparison with this terrible siege. In the previous wars the city had never been so magnificent, its fortifications so powerful, its population so crowded. It was Passover time which caused Jerusalem to swell with the dispersed Jews who were there for the Feast Day. Also, thousands took refuge in the city as they fled the approaching Roman legions. The loss of life was enormous. Josephus said that Titus claimed 600,00 (Jewish Wars 5, 13, 7), but this seems incredibly high as a "body count". It would appear that the city simply could not hold that many people within its walls. Whatever the actual figure, it was enormous.

The siege began on the 14th of Nisan, 70 A.D. and ended on the 8th of Elul, a total of 134 days. Within the city, fighting was going on among the Jews themselves. One, Simon, held the upper and lower city. John of Gishala held the Temple. "Ophel" the Idumeans, introduced by the Zealots, fought only for themselves. Yet there was another party, too weak to make their counsel felt, who desired to make peace with Rome. Perhaps some of them could have been Christian Jews remaining in the city, however this is pure supposition. The misery and destruction of life and property during the siege "were at least as much the work of the Jews themselves as of their conquerors" (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, p. 1619).

On the 15th day of the siege the third wall was captured. The second wall was captured on the 24th day. On the 72nd day the Antonia fell and 12 days later the daily sacrifice ceases. THIS WAS MOST SIGNIFICANT to the outward eye that God had set Israel aside and all the spiritual things that was to have gone along with the "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). It was the 105th day that the Temple and lower city were burned. The last day, the 134th, found the whole city in flames. Several towers were spared along with part of the western walls in order

to protect the camp of the 10th Legion, which was left to guard the site. "The rest of the city was dug up to its foundations" (Jewish Wars, Josephus 7, 1, 1).

"For 60 years after its capture silence reigned over Jerusalem. In 130 A.D. Hadria visited the city and found only a few buildings standing" (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia p. 1619).

This event threw Christians into doubt, perplexity, confusion that led to great error since they did not believe the revelation of the Mystery, which is the only answer to what happened, and what is now God's program.

The First Century, no doubt, ended in general confusion for the various groups of believers. It is apparent that a number of different trends began to be developed, some of which already existed in germ-form at the end of the Acts periods.

THE EXTREMIST CHRISTIAN JEWS

This group of Christian Jews had been the ones who were so troublesome to the "Justified Ones." They insisted the Law had to be kept in order to be saved. They saw no place in the "Israel of God" for Gentiles except they become as proselytes.

It is more probable that these "Extremists" gave rise to the Ebionites. Ebionites rejected all of the writings of the Apostle Paul. It has been suggested that the "Extremists" proceeded from the sect of the Pharisees (Acts 15:5). After the fall of Jerusalem perhaps these "Extremists," who maintained there was no salvation outside of Israel, stayed in Palestine and Syria. Some probably strayed into neighboring countries. They remained entirely separated from other Christians. It is from this group that the Ebionites arose. As is the natural thing among the "religious" there existed differing views and conceptions among them. There was an ever falling away from even the rudimentary truths they knew.

About 135 A.D. a document was written called "The Preaching of Peter." In it were expressed the ideas and thoughts the majority of the Ebionites at the time (The Evolution of Christendom by S. Van Mierlo). They believed the Lord was the prophet whom Israel awaited and of whom Moses said should come. This document said that the "Son of man" was come to give a more spiritual form to the Law of Moses, and that when He

returned and established His Kingdom He would do away with the Law. But in the meantime EVERYONE HAD TO OBSERVE IT TO BE SAVED.

According to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia the Ebionites believed that Jesus of Nazareth was not born a virgin, but rather was the natural son of Joseph and Mary. They taught that Divine power came down on Him at His baptism – the reward of His perfect holiness. The theory took this form – the Holy Ghost was the eternal Son of God. Another view was that the power which descended upon Him was the Divine wisdom, the Logos. By the influence of this Divine power He performed miracles and taught with superhuman wisdom. But this Divine power did however raise Him from among the dead and caused Him to ascend on high.

The Ebionites were covertly hostile to the Apostle Paul's teachings. They simply ignored the fact that he ever existed. They taught such doctrines that the Messiah was coequal, or nearly so, with the devil. In writings attributed to them, the Lord Jesus Christ was never referred to as Divine but as "the prophet," "the teacher." Nothing is ever said of His miraculous birth.

The Ebionites had a great deal in common with the Essenes. The Ebionites, while separate from other Christians, had a telling effect upon the "primitive church." In fact, in studying the Doctrines of the Ebionites we notice evidence of its influence even in 20th century Christian literature.

The Ebionites held to the notion that the O.T. had been corrupted, therefore they were able to interpret in their own way. According to the Ebionites the Temple should have never replaced the Tabernacle, hence God's reason for its destruction by Titus. They even believed that Moses' Law with its offerings did not really conform to God's will, but was only tolerated because of Israel's spiritual weakness. Therefore it would seem that by means of criticism they tried to find solutions to the problems arising from the catastrophe of the year 70 A.D. Because of their separation from other Christians they were called heretics and the sect as such died out by the Third and Fourth Century.

THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY
(Part 9)

Not much is known about what went on during the Christian movement between 70 A.D. and perhaps 115 A.D. However, after 115 A.D. we can begin to see some extent the error that was being taught as Truth. It is upon the error of second and third century that the Christian religion has its foundation. The present day 20th century Christian church was not built upon ONE FOUNDATION (1 Cor. 3:11). It is built upon the wrong foundation. It is built upon so called "Church Fathers" began to influence Christian assemblies before the New Testament writings were collected and placed in the canon of Scripture.

We will note some of the doctrines of the "Church Fathers." This will not be done in great detail, since we will leave the interested reader to search out more information for himself. First, however, we will mention individuals who had some effect upon the Christian movement as well as the "Church Fathers."

MARCION

Marcion was born on the coast of the Black Sea. His father was a bishop in Sinope Pontus. Marcion shows up in Rome around 140 A.D. He was a wealthy ship owner who was greatly influenced by the Gnostic teacher, Cerdo. Gnostic ideas began to be strongly promoted within the Christian movement during the second century. The Gnostic influence led Marcion to become one of their chief spokesmen. Some of his ideas were that the God of the O.T. was not the same as the God of the N.T. The God of the Old was only concerned with the Jewish people and He was a vengeful God. Marcion contrasted that with the God of the N.T., who was a God of grace and love for all, who disclosed Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Marcion taught that Jesus Christ was not born of a woman, but rather He suddenly appeared in the synagogue in Capernaun in 29 A.D. He was not like any other man on earth except in His appearance. He was new to being on earth.

Marcion stated that it was necessary for Christ to have suffered on the Cross in order to bring salvation to mankind. Creation was not the act of the God of the N.T.; the Christian must reject the world. The body must be denied and discarded, since the "soul and spirit" alone was redeemed. Marcion rejected the resurrection of the body. Since he believed the God of the O.T. favored the Jews exclusively, he rejected the O.T. entirely as well as

those N.T. writings which he considered favored of the Jews. He accepted a of Paul's writings except 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. He believed Paul was the only Apostle who did not corrupt the gospel of Christ.

Those who embraced Marcion's teachings were called Marcionites. They set up their own churches which were modeled after the other congregations of the time. They had their own orders of clergy and rituals. Their ideas spread throughout Italy and as far afield as Arabia, Armenia and Egypt. In the east they exercised a considerable influence in the Christian movement for many decades. The church in Rome firmly repudiated Marcion and excommunicated him in 144 A.D. His was an anti-Jewish brand of Christianity.

MONTANUS

An enthusiastic young Christian named Montanus began to attract attention in 172 A.D. as a prophet. This was Phrygia, a region in western Asia Minor. Two prophetesses, Prisca and Maximilla, joined Montanus. They claimed to be the mouthpieces of the Paraclete. They claimed that God at times spoke through them in the first person as He did with the O.T. prophets. They urged Christians to relish persecution; "Do not hope to die in bed...but as martyrs." Montanists were "gloriously martyred" in Gaul and Africa. They called all Christians to a demanding asceticism. Marital relations were to be abandoned in favor of chastity; fasts multiplied and food was to be eaten dry.

They had many communities in Phrygia and they were named "Jerusalem." Maximilla predicted: "After me there will be no prophecies, but the End." The Montanists had visions; they spoke in tongues and practiced an intense religious excitement. Montanists survived into the fifth century and longer in Phrygia. They believed that the Spirit was to be as active in their contemporary church as He was during the Acts of the Apostles.

One of the most distinguished Montanists was Tertullian of Carthage. He believed that the prophecies given by Paraclete perfected the "church's" discipline by refusing forgiveness for serious sins after baptism and banning remarriage and flight from persecution."

POLYCARP

Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna and was to have had to direct contact with the Apostle John. He lived from 69 A.D. to 155 A.D. We will quote from one of his letters which will point out the lack of understanding he had for the Truth:

“For you know that we have been saved by His grace, not by what you have done, but by the will of God through Jesus Christ...He who raised Him (Christ) from the dead, will raise us up also, IF WE DO THIS WILL AND LIVE BY HIS COMMANDS, and love what He loved, refraining from all injustice, covetousness, the love of money, evil speaking, false witness: not returning evil for evil or abuse for abuse or blow for blow or curse for curse: but remember what the Lord said when He taught, “Judge not, so that you may not be judged: forgive and you will be forgiven: have mercy so that you will be shown mercy.”

Polycarp's modesty is noted in what follows, but the pregnant admission is that he admits he did not understand Paul.

“For neither I or anyone else like me, can follow the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul, who, when he was among you face to face with the men at that time, carefully and steadfastly uttered his teaching about truth.”

Polycarp as bishop of Smyrna admitted that he could not follow the wisdom of Paul. The reason – no light.

IRENAEUS

Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor and studied under Polycarp, who was bishop of Smyrna. In 177 A.D. Irenaeus went to Gaul where he became Bishop of Lyons. He did much writing against the Gnostics. Since the Gnostics believed they possessed secret wisdom and that those Gnostics who were Christians claimed they possessed secret traditions which came directly from the apostles, Irenaeus countered with his writings “Against Heresies.” He developed an argument from apostolic succession, mainly it was this: The churches preserved public, standard beliefs handed down by THE TEACHERS IN THE CHURCHES. He viewed the eucharist as containing “an earthly and divine reality.” He made a place for the virgin Mary in his theology; she was the new Eve as Christ was the new Adam.

IGNATIUS

Ignatius was bishop of Antioch and was executed in Rome around the years 110-115 A.D. He wrote seven letters on his way to Rome to be executed. He believed that he possessed the Spirit's gift of prophecy. He considered himself inferior to the apostles however. He put a high value on the Eucharist and the communion ritual. He desperately wanted to be a martyr so much that he begged the Christians in Rome not to prevent his execution. In the seven letters he wrote we learn a great deal about Christian beliefs at his time. He laid the foundations for later abuse of the clergy. He veers sharply from Pauline truth.

He wrote, "It is proper for you to run your race in harmony with the mind of the bishop." Notice again what he wrote, "So it is clear we must look upon the bishop as the Lord Himself...I exhort you, be zealous to do everything in Godly harmony with the bishop who is presiding in the place of God." Of course, he himself was a bishop.

"You must do nothing without the bishop and elders."

"When you submit yourself to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, you appear to me to be living not in the human way, but after the manner of Jesus Christ."

"In the same way all must respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, as they do the bishop, for he symbolizes the Father."

It is not permissible to baptize or hold a religious meal without the bishop...It is well to recognize God and the bishop, whoever honors the bishop is honored by God, whoever does anything without the bishop's knowledge is serving the devil...It is right for men and women who are marrying to form their union with the approval of the bishop, in order that their marriage may be in accordance with the Lord's will...Now the Lord forgives all who repent, if in repentance they turn in union with God and the council of the bishop...For all who belong to God and Jesus Christ ARE WITH THE BISHOP...If anyone follows a schismatic, he cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

A schismatic was anyone who separated from the local church. He believed the way for him to reach Jesus Christ was through suffering and death at the hands of the persecutors. As are many religious people, they can be steadfast in the face of death. Willing to die for that which they think is truth.

ORIGEN

Origen was the greatest scholar and most prolific author of the early Christian church. He was born about 185 A.D. in Alexandria. He was a teacher to new converts and later to more advanced students. He led an ascetic life. He died in 254 A.D. after suffering persecution under Emperor Decius.

Origen produced the HEXAPLA which was looked upon by the early church as a great work. Martyrdom was looked upon by many Christians as the ultimate sign of Christian discipline. Even Origen as a boy in Alexandria had to be restrained forcibly by his mother from leaving home to join the martyrs voluntarily in their suffering. It is said that he may have even taken the instruction in Matthew 19:12 literally and had himself castrated. He tried to express the Christian religion in terms of prevailing Platonic philosophical ideas of his time. He speculated in the "pre-existence of the soul and universal salvation."

TERTULLIAN

Tertullian of Carthage, North Africa was the one who concluded the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit was One. It was he who came up with the term "Trinity." He was the author who defended his position on the Trinity against such Christian groups as the Monarchians. The Monarchians emerged in Asia Minor and flourish in the West. They taught that God existed in different "modes" (sometimes they were to as Modalists), but only in one mode at a time. The Father, the Son and the Spirit described the modes God was in at different times. Tertullian wrote vigorously against the Monarchians. He belonged to the Montanist movement, which we have already mentioned. Much more could be said and pointed out concerning the leaders of the early Christian Church, but it is felt that for those who desire to know more we suggest that research can be done on such individuals as Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, Cyprian of Carthage, Novatian of Rome, Antony, Athanasius, Ambrose the Bishop of Milan, Basil the Great, Augustine of Hippo, Jerome, John Chrysostom the Bishop of Constantinople and Pelagian.

All these church fathers had the same thing in common, they thought the church replaced Israel and the Kingdom was to be administered by their rule as church leaders. They all accepted the Platonic notion of the soul. Much of

their focal point of church worship services was the eucharist. It was to be administered only by the bishop or his appointed delegate. They for the most part believed in infant baptismal ceremonies. It was upon the traditions and doctrines of these men and groups mentioned that gave rise to the Roman Church. It was the Roman Church that began to dominate the West. The second and third century bishops sought to bring about a unity among all the various factions in Christendom. As time went by it was finally determined that Christians needed a central authority and a geographic center. As we know, Rome was the logical place for the church to exercise its authority. Rome was the center of the Roman Empire. So the seat of the Catholic Church was found in Rome. Thus, the church was able to develop herself according to the model of the Roman Empire. The organization was autocratic in character and strongly centralized.

At this time we will leave the reader to judge for himself in what measure the present day Christian churches have retained much of the things that Paul told the believers to BEWARE of; vain and deceitful philosophy, and the traditions of men, which is not after Christ.

CONCLUSION ON THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY

Some conclusions perhaps should be drawn after the previous studies which were centered around the Priesthood, the Synagogue, the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes. Personally, I have been enriched by what I learned and it has done me much good. Now I see clearly the danger in not sticking to the revealed written Work of God. The neglect of it caused Israel untold problems. To profess and believe the Work superimposed by traditional doctrine does harmful damage to all who are exposed to the Word of God which has been "leavened" with the "rudiments of the world."

The "rudiments of the world" are the elementary things of religion which has its roots in the Babylonian system, founded by Nimrod, was the embodiment of the Devil's Lie. In this series of studies we looked at the Devil's Lie as it appeared in Genesis 3, but from Genesis 3 to Genesis 10 the Devil had a great deal of time to develop and systematize the Lie. The cunningness of the Lie is not easily detected unless one is aware of Satan's

devices and of GOD'S TRUTH as found only in His Word.

Nimrod was rebellious against the Lord. The City of Babylon partook of Nimrod's character, as being the great antagonist of God's Truth and God's People. From Genesis 10 till now, the Babylonian influence can be detected to some extent even in the most orthodox circles of Christendom. (For a fully developed and detailed study on this may we recommend our tape studies "Background of the New Testament.")

The Babylonian influence was detected to some degree in the Pharisees' traditional teachings. Keep in mind that the Jews were in Babylon for 70 years and this "rubbed off" on them to some extent. Babylon was the seat of the Zoroastrian religion. It is pointed out in J. B. Lightfoot's article on the Essenes that Cyrus, the King of Persia, was probably Zoroastrian, even though he allowed the captives, Ezra and Nehemiah, to return to Jerusalem along with others to rebuild the wall and the Temple. When the Jews returned they brought varying degrees of Babylonianism with them. This corruption permeated the doctrines of the Priesthood, the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes. The or sect which appears to have been affected the most was the Essenes.

Some writers seem to think that Jesus Christ had a closer affinity to the Essenes than the Pharisees and the Saducees. The writers state that since Jesus Christ did not attack the Essenes or their doctrines He was probably sympathetic to them. To this I strongly disagree. The Essenes doctrine was too corrupt for Jesus Christ to be sympathetic to it. Not only that, the Essenes did not control the people as did the Pharisees. The Lord denounced those in control because they were closer to the truth than the Essenes, yet they "leavened" the Word of God which caused it to be rendered of "none effect."

This seems to indicate the Lord's displeasure with those who claim to believe God's Word but when confronted with THE TRUTH, which does not coincide with their traditional interpretation, they then blaspheme (i.e. contradict) the Truth. This is exactly what the majority of the Pharisees did; they contradicted the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ because it did not fit into their traditional theology. Christ and the Kingdom was at hand; the Pharisees taught it was to be sometime in the far distant future. Thus, they blasphemed. Because of their blasphemy, Jesus Christ denounced them as "blind

guides," a "generation of vipers," "children of the Devil" and "hypocrites."

In our study on the Pharisees it was pointed out that the Lord Jesus Christ said..."Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. Making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition..." (Mark 7:9, 13). The Pharisees did not profess to reject the Word of God but by keeping their tradition, which was not after Moses, they rendered the Work of God of none effect. This was the net result of not adhering strictly to the written Word. I would refer to it as the Pharisaic spirit; claiming to believe the Scriptures but by their traditional interpretation they in fact rejected the Scriptures.

The Pharisees were called hypocrites. That is, they acted the part as being godly; they played a role as being ministers of God. The only way to detect the fact that they were hypocrites was to expose them to the Truth which the Lord did. The Pharisees rejected it violently. They exposed themselves for what they really were, pretenders! They set about to have the Herald of Truth murdered.

The Pharisees, while acting devout and godly, denied the "power of godliness," This godly power is derived from the Word of God which they rejected.

"The Word of God is quick and powerful."

"The sword of the spirit, is the Word of God."

In plainer words, the Pharisees had a "form of godliness" while denying the power thereof. They were actors.

This Pharisaic spirit plagued the Apostle Paul as Judaizers attempted to subvert his converts in Corinth and Galatia. He says of them,

"For such are FALSE APOSTLES,
deceitful workers, TRANSFORMING
THEMSELVES into apostles of Christ."

(2 Corinthians 11:13).

Notice, they transformed themselves. The Word of God did not transform them. They pretended they were apostles of Christ. In the words of Christ they were "hypocrites." We should not be surprised if many

"ministers of righteousness" are in reality "deceitful workers."

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is NO GREAT

THING if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works"

(2 Corinthians 11: 14-15) .

COULD THIS BE THE CASE TODAY?

Over the years I have met "ministers of righteousness" who were gracious, sweet, scholarly, and manifesting "the love of Christ" (sic!), but when exposed to truth of the Mystery these attributes vanished immediately. Exposure to truth unmasked them for what they were-- HYPOCRITES! Professing to know God, but by their works (i.e. rejecting present truth) they denied Him (Titus 1: 16).

"And no marvel...it is no great thing" that many of the "ministers of righteousness" today have transformed themselves. It is no great thing to realize that God never transformed them. In fact, those who transformed themselves are reckoned Scripturally as ministers of Satan. I know these are "hard words." Who can receive them?

The Pharisees had a form of godliness, but no substance. The Judaizers had the form of apostles and ministers of righteousness, but no substance. Their reaction to the Truth revealed they were of their father the Devil. What about this Dispensation?

"This know also, that in the last
days perilous times shall come. For
men shall be lovers of their own
selves, covetous, boasters, proud,
blasphemers, disobedient to parents,
unthankful, unholy, without natural
affection, trucebreakers, false
accusers, incontinent, fierce,

despisers of those that are good,
traitors, heady, high-minded,
lovers of pleasures more than lovers
of God: Having a form of godliness,
but denying the power thereof: from
such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Notice there will be those who have "a form of godliness." They deny the power of godliness, which is the Word of God. As the Pharisees of old, they profess to believe the Bible but by their tradition they deny the Word of God. This makes it of none effect.

The Word which has been rendered of none effect has no power to transform lives, therefore they transform themselves. They only have a form of godliness, not the substance. Without the substance they are very careful to maintain the form. This is done by playing the role of minister of righteousness. They go undetected by the mass of Christendom, passing off as godly. Why can't they be detected by their constituency? Simple, the constituency is " Ever learning, AND NEVER ABLE TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH."(2 Timothy 3:7).

The only way to come to the knowledge of the Truth is to "turn away" from those who have only a form of godliness and turn to the Word of God as a sincere seeker of Truth. Tragically, so many are ensnared that they will never come to the knowledge of the Truth.

