

Interpretation of Prophecy: The Restoration and Futurist Views Compared

Bob Moore

Many Christians expect the future rise of an Antichrist. They believe he will unite all civil and ecclesiastical powers into a single global government that will control every aspect of society. Those opposing his reign will be eliminated. Since Satan will give him his power, he will use his position to stamp out every vestige of the true religion. If he succeeds, Christianity will be completely erased from human memory.

The ascent of an Antichrist has scriptural foundations. John's revelation describes a beast that blasphemes God and wars against the saints (Revelation 13:5-7). Daniel also saw the rise of this king. His prophecy says, "He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws" (Daniel 7:25). Paul explained that this individual would pretend to be God and rule over his house. He warned, "That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that the man of sin may be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

While most Christians today believe these prophecies describe a future despot, previous generations did not. They interpreted the Bible differently. Examining how Christians in different ages understood Biblical prophecy can broaden our view of the prophecies themselves and uncover the source of our modern interpretation.

Early Christian Views

As the apostles and their companions spread the gospel of Jesus Christ, they encountered an increasingly hostile public. The Jews were the first persecutors, but, because their intolerance of theological differences was well known, the Roman government gave them little attention. Gallio simply ignored the complaints that the Jews made against Paul (Acts 18:12-16). Roman citizens, on the other hand, possessed easier access to their leaders. Craftsmen who made their money making idols were quick to oppose Christian missionaries whose teachings invited their customers to worship an unseen God. Pagan priests feared a loss of influence in communities where the apostles formed churches. Eventually, the Emperor, who claimed that his position made him a god, heard about the new sect and realized the threat it made on his power.

In 64 AD the emperor, Nero, blamed Christians for the ills perplexing the Empire. Under his direction the government pursued and oppressed them. Many lost their jobs and property. Some were imprisoned and tortured. His severe tyranny caused the deaths of several thousand faithful saints. Some were thrown to wild beasts who devoured them. Others were burned. Nero crucified Peter and beheaded Paul. The persecution he directed seemed to fulfill the apostles' prophecies. Peter had foretold a fiery trial that would befall the Church. Paul had predicted the revelation of the man of sin. John had described a war against the saints. Even the Savior had foretold manifold persecutions. Christians associated Nero's tyranny with the future Antichrist. After all, that emperor denounced the Savior and fought the saints. More importantly, the number of Nero's name in both Hebrew and Greek is 666.

Nero died in 68 AD, and the war against the church subsided. Later emperors directed their own persecutions designed to stamp out the new religion. Christians did not regard them as tyrannical acts of Antichrist, but the reactions of a pagan government. For them, Rome was

the power that kept the prophesied despot from reigning. Apostle Paul revealed that "the man of sin" (2Thes 2:3) was being temporarily restrained by another power. He wrote, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed" (2Thes 2:7-8 KJ) Tertullian explained the passage this way: "What obstacle is there but the Roman state, the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms shall introduce Antichrist upon (its own ruins)?"⁽¹⁾ Lactantius made a similar observation a century later. He wrote, "The cause of this desolation and confusion will be this: because the Roman name, by the world is now ruled, will be taken away from the earth."⁽²⁾ Since early Christians believed that the Antichrist could not come until after the Roman Empire ended, they prayed for its continuation.

The Christians believed that the Roman Empire would end with its division into ten kingdoms. They based their conclusion on both Daniel's and John's revelations. Daniel saw a series of four beasts (Daniel 7:2-27), which represented successive empires, the last of which had seven heads and ten crowns. Since the revelation itself revealed that the first kingdom was Babylon (Daniel 7:17), history told them that the second was Persia, the third, Greece, and the fourth, Rome. This meant that Rome would be succeeded by ten kingdoms and the reign of Antichrist. Tertullian laid out "the order of these times," urging patience "that the city of fornication may receive from the ten kings its deserved doom, and the beast Antichrist with his false prophet may wage war on the Church of God."⁽³⁾ "In his commentary on Daniel, Hippolytus wrote, "Now we ought to look for the ten horns which are to spring from it [Rome], when the time of the beast shall be fulfilled, and the little horn, which is Antichrist, shall appear suddenly in their midst, and righteousness be banished from the earth, and the whole world shall reach its consummation."⁽⁴⁾

In John's Revelation the seven-headed beast is replaced by another -- a lamb with two horns. According to the prophecy, this latter beast has a name whose number is 666. Irenaeus observed, "Lateinos has the number six hundred and sixty-six; and it is a very probable [solution], this being the name of the last kingdom [of the four seen by Daniel]. For the Latins are they who at present bear rule."⁽⁵⁾ Hippolytus elaborated: "It is manifest to all that those who at present still hold the power are Latins. If, then, we take the name as the name of a single man, it becomes Latinus."⁽⁶⁾ *Latinus* or *Lateinus*, a Greek word, means *Latin Man*. Its number is 666. Several early Christian writers taught that a Latin, who was also a descendant of Dan, would reign as Antichrist after the Roman Empire was divided, thereby plunging the world into darkness and tribulation.

As pagan Rome became Christian, the oppression waned. By the time it stopped, Rome had waged ten different periods of persecution against the faithful. This is the same quantity as the number of kings prophecy predicted would come out of Rome, as well as the number of plagues Moses brought upon Egypt. Some later Christians concluded that these persecutions were predicted in the ten horns, and, with Rome now Christianized, the period of tribulation was over. They believed that the victory of Christ over Babylon was accomplished when the church triumphed over idolatry. Augustine argued that the Millennial Reign promised in the Apocalypse had already begun. He reasoned that Jesus returned as the Holy Ghost and filled the earth as the church converted its inhabitants. The only future antichrists were people who acted contrary to Christ. He wrote, "There you have the Antichrist -- every one that denies Christ by his works."⁽⁷⁾ Eventually, Christians stopped expecting a future Antichrist or a coming period of tribulation. Some people today still maintain that the Biblical prophecies concerning the Antichrist were fulfilled by the ten Roman Emperors who persecuted the church.

The Historical Record

History records that many original Christian teachings were altered. The apostles predicted this development. Peter told the church, "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them" (1 Peter 2:1). Paul warned, "After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). Heresies entered the early church. Paul told the Corinthians, "There must also be heresies among you" (1 Corinthians 11:19). The Bible discloses that heretics began invading the church during the lives of the apostles. Paul told the Galatians the cause of one dispute confronting that congregation: "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage" (Gal 2:4). John revealed, "Many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 J 4:1). These heretics, whom the latter apostle called "antichrists", had already taught falsehoods in the church during his days, leading many believers from the truth. John wrote, "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists. They went out from us, but they were not of us" (1 J 2:18).

The first heretic was Simon, mentioned in Acts (Acts 8:18-24). He was followed by a multitude of deceitful professors. Their false, even devilish, teachings, which constantly bombarded the church, were merely pagan philosophies disguised with Christian symbols and terminology. Meanwhile, some Gentile converts retained their previous doctrines after they joined the Church. Gradually, many concepts and observances popular in idolatry found acceptance among Christians. The following pagan practices appeared at the specified date:

140 AD, Titian, a heretic, condemned marriage;

180 AD, Montanus, a heretic, introduced asceticism;

195 AD, The church called second marriages spurious;

200 AD, Christians started praying to the dead;

251 AD, Paul became the first hermit;

305 AD, Christians prayed for cures at tombs of the martyrs;

325 AD, Celibacy of the clergy was recommended;

359 AD, Skeletons of martyrs were entombed in churches;

382 AD, Relics of martyrs believed to do miracles;

431 AD, Mary revered as the Mother of God;

487 AD, Sprinkling of ashes at Lent began

500 AD, Priests began wearing distinctive dress;

506 AD, Stone altars were enjoined;

547 AD, Lenten fast extended to forty days.

As the church gradually yielded to pagan practices, the bishop at Rome began consolidating control. His rise as head of the church was as gradual as the Christian acceptance of false teachings. Originally, each congregation was an independent entity, directed by the Holy Ghost, respecting priesthood authorized by Christ, and governed by its bishop, whom it regarded as "president of the brethren." At that time, James was head of the church and its missionaries and leaders were expected to comply with his counsel. Peter told Clement, "Shun apostle or teacher or prophet who does not first accurately compare his preaching with that of James, who was called the brother of my Lord, and to whom was entrusted to administer the church of the Hebrews in Jerusalem."⁽⁸⁾ A Syriac document spoke of "James, who was ruler and guide in the church of the apostles which was built in Zion."⁽⁹⁾ Members of the Savior's family presided in Jerusalem until about 100 A.D. Afterwards, with no apparent leader to supervise the church, local churches met together in conferences to coordinate activities, govern affairs, and refute heresies. Normally, the bishop of the church from the most prominent city represented presided over their gatherings. Rome, as the capitol of the empire, was the foremost city in all Christendom. Its bishops began to consider themselves not only the proper leader of church conferences, but the rightful head of the church. As late as 318, descendants of the holy family, who believed that members of their family should preside over the church from Jerusalem, petitioned the Roman bishop Silvester for help.⁽¹⁰⁾ Their request was denied. As the following events show, the bishop of Roman gradually captured the leadership of the church.

208 AD, Victor called himself "Bishop of Bishops";

251 AD, The Roman Bishop renewed use of "Bishop of Bishops";

378 AD, The Emperor makes the Pope Prefector of Latin Empire;

384 AD, The Roman bishop began making church-wide decrees;

445 AD, Emperor Valentinian demanded total obedience to pope;

533 AD, Emperor Justinian decreed pope is head of all churches;

607 AD, Emperor Phocas reiterated pope as head of the church.

Pope Gregory, whom Emperor Phocas decreed was head of the church throughout the Western part of the Roman Empire, solidified his position by the force of his personality. He was a successful administrator who consolidated control over all unsubmitive churches. He was also renowned for miracles wrought by the bones, or other relics, of the martyrs. He became so popular with the people because of his marvelous cures that none refused his authority. Made the head of the church by decree, he kept it through respect. After him, all Christendom in Western Civilization regarded the pope as its supreme leader.

Not only did the early Christian Church depart from the Savior's teachings and corrupt its heaven-imposed government, but Rome was invaded by a series of barbaric nations and its

empire divided into ten kingdoms. Afterwards, the pope, who had achieved sole ecclesiastical control, rescued Western Civilization by assuming authority over those princes who governed the divided empire. His civil control was achieved when those kings received baptism and vowed obedience to the church and its head, the Papacy. The early Christian prediction, which was acquired from the Bible, proved accurate. Rome fell. It was succeeded by ten kingdoms, all of which came under the jurisdiction of a single government whose leader taught false teachings and observed pagan practices. As a result, Western Civilization fell into ignorance, superstition, and feudalism, while the light of the gospel fled from earth.

The Reformation Interpretation

By the twelfth century, Europe was emerging from the illiteracy and superstition that followed the fall of Rome. A growing middle class financed various educational endeavors, including the translation of the Bible into local vernaculars. Before then, the Bible was available in only Latin. Upon reading the translations, some people, particularly those in southern France, concluded that the clergy were less like the disciples of Jesus and more like the Pharisees of the Jews; that the Pope was more like the Antichrist of Revelation than the apostles of Acts. Part of the descendants of the holy family lived in the Languedoc and, claiming to be the posterity of James the brother of Jesus, considered themselves heirs to the throne of Zion. The Catholic church declared a crusade against the Albigenses, the seat of this Catharian heresy. In 1209, thirty thousand troops descended on Southern France ravaging the entire country. The towns of Beziers, Perignan, Narbonne, Carcassonne, Toulouse, and Albi all fell during the forty year war. In Bezier alone, "at least fifteen thousand men, women, and children were slaughtered wholesale -- many of them in the sanctuary of the church itself."⁽¹¹⁾ Meanwhile, among the Waldenses, a nearby sect, thousands of those heretics were burned at the stake.⁽¹²⁾ Afterwards, Bibles were chained to church pulpits and non-clergy forbidden to possess or read them.

While the Papacy crushed the Cathari, it could not hide its nature. Its excess became increasingly apparent and its power inevitably impotent. Finally, the Reformation broke out across Northwestern Europe. The first reformers taught that the Antichrist was the Roman Papacy. John Calvin said, "Daniel and Paul foretold that Antichrist would sit in the temple of God (Daniel. ix. 27; 2 Thess. ii. 4); we regard the Roman Pontiff as the leader and standard-bearer of that wicked and abominable kingdom."⁽¹³⁾ Luther took a more militant stance. He wrote, "The true Antichrist is sitting in the temple of God and is reigning in Rome--that empurpled Babylon.... Why do we not much more attack in arms these masters of perdition, these cardinals, these popes, and all this sink of the Roman Sodom which has without end corrupted the Church of God, and wash our hands in their blood?"⁽¹⁴⁾ Even the conciliatory reformer, Erasmus, who refused to sever ties with the Catholic church wrote, "I perceive that the monarchy of the Roman high priest (as that see now is) is the plague of Christendom."⁽¹⁵⁾ Protestantism maintained that the Catholic Church was so corrupt that it needed reformation and its leader so despotic that it needed elimination.

The errors of the Catholic Church were obvious to early Protestants. Luther's initial complaint cited ninety-five of them. Zwingli listed sixty-seven. Throughout its millennial reign the Roman Church had changed the ordinances and altered the doctrine. Equally important, if not more to the point, the Papacy had achieved absolute control over people. Not only did it imprison, exile, or execute those it disfavored, but it claimed the power to banish or release souls from everlasting punishments. After all, Jesus had given the keys of the kingdom to Peter, saying, "whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mat 16:19) About 250 A.D., the Roman bishop, who said that the church at Rome was originally

organized by Peter, claimed to be in receipt of those keys through a lineal succession of previous office holders in that city. As a result, the Papacy maintained that it could force its will in both earth and heaven. One pope said, "I do make holy and unholy; I do justify the wicked; I do forgive sins; I open and no man shutteth. All the world is my diocese, and I am the ordinary of all men, having the authority of the King of kings upon subjects. I am in and above all.... If these things that I do be said to be done not of man, but of God, what do you make me but God?... I, being above all prelates, seem by this reason to be above all gods; whereupon no marvel if it be in my power to change times and abrogate laws, to dispense with all things, yea, the precepts of Christ."⁽¹⁶⁾

This quotation shows how meticulously, although unintentionally, the Papacy fulfilled the Biblical prophecies about the Antichrist. Paul had predicted that "there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Note how the above mentioned pope said, "I am in and above all." He even claimed to be God when he said, "If these things that I do be said to be done not of man, but of God, what do you make me but God?" Daniel described the Antichrist with these words: "He shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws" (Daniel 7:25). The above pope fulfilled Daniel's prediction about changing change times and laws when he said, "Whereupon no marvel if it be in my power to change times and abrogate laws." John represented him: "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (Revelation 13:6). The pope satisfied John's prophecy about blaspheming God, when he said he could "dispense with all things, yea, the precepts of Christ." This quotation alone proves how well the Papacy fulfilled the predictions Daniel, John, and Paul made about the Antichrist's nature.

Daniel had predicted a succession of four nations to dominate God's people. Early Christian commentators and historians agree that Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome succeeded one another. In turn, Rome was divided by ten kings. Protestant commentators numerate those kingdoms, but their lists do not always agree. Isaac Newton cataloged them as follows: "1. The kingdom of the Vandals and Alans in Spain and Africa. 2. The kingdom of the Suevians in Spain. 3. The kingdom of the Visigoths. 4. The kingdom of the Alans in Gallia. 5. The kingdom of the Burgundians. 6. The kingdom of the Franks. 7. The kingdom of the Britains. 8. The kingdom of the Hunns. 9. The kingdom of the Lombards. 10. The kingdom of Ravenna."⁽¹⁷⁾ Daniel had predicted that after Rome was divided by ten kingdoms, the Antichrist, which he called a little horn, would appear and "subdue three kings" (Daniel 7:24). The Papacy fulfilled this prophecy when it gained jurisdiction over Ravenna, Lombardia, and Rome. Newton observed, "In the eighth century, by rooting up and subduing the Exarchate of Ravenna, the kingdom of the Lombards, and the Senate and Dukedom of Rome, he [the pope] acquired Peter's Patrimony out of their dominions; and thereby rose up as a temporal Prince or King, or horn of the fourth beast."⁽¹⁸⁾ Even modern historians note that the Lombards, the tenth kingdom to divide Rome, was broken by "the rock of the papacy."⁽¹⁹⁾

Once the Papacy gained dominion throughout Europe, it used its power to control what its subjects believed. John had prophesied this development, saying, "It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Revelation 13:7). Daniel predicted, "The same horn made war with the saints and prevailed against them" (Daniel 7:21), adding later, "and shall wear out the saints of the most High" (Daniel 7:25). Those unwilling to submit to Papal

power, obey Vatican decrees, or accept church interpretations faced torture and death. Nicholas I, pope from 858-867, told one prince, "We order you in the name of religion, to invade his states, burn his cities, and massacre his people."⁽²⁰⁾ The same pope encouraged the King of Bulgaria, when he converted to Catholicism, to force Rome's religion on his subjects. He wrote, "I glorify you for having maintained your authority by putting to death those wandering sheep who refuse to enter the fold;"⁽²¹⁾ adding, "A king need not fear to command massacres, when these will retain his subjects in obedience, or cause them to submit to the faith of Christ; and God will reward him in this world, and in eternal life for those murders."⁽²²⁾ At the time of the Reformation, the pope ordered the Dominicans to use inquisitions designed to force those embracing Reformation teachings back to Papal control. More people were tortured or executed in these inquisitions than during all the persecutions waged by the Roman Emperors against Christians before that empire fell.

John described the result of the Antichrist's rise. He said, "I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (Revelation 13:11-12). The first beast that John saw, the seven-headed dragon, was replaced by a lamb with two horns. After the papacy emerged from a fallen empire, a new kingdom appeared. The reformers interpreted the lamb with two horns to be the Vatican. Jesus is the lamb of God (John 1:29). The pope claims to be the Savior's representative on earth, but he also wields two powers: one is temporal and the other spiritual. The lamb with two horns, as far as the reformers were concerned, symbolized the pope with its civil and ecclesiastical crowns.

John continues by saying that this second beast would "cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (Revelation 13:15). The seven-headed beast represented Rome. After Rome's fall, the Vatican remained the only Latin sovereign in Western Civilization. Everything that was Roman was preserved within that government. The pope wore its regal dress, spoke its abandoned language, and sat in its Eternal City. The Catholic Church, which replaced Roman dominion, is a Latin institution. It retained Latin traditions and still uses the Latin language, although that tongue is no longer a language of any nation. The Comprehensive Commentary concludes, "The church of Rome is properly the Latin church, and they use the Latin language in everything." In this way, the Vatican fulfilled John's prophecy. Because it succeeded Rome, it was the second beast and required its subjects to worship the vestiges of Rome.

By preserving most aspects of the Roman Empire, the pope became Europe's only Latin Man after Roman's fall. In foretelling the rise of Antichrist, Hippolytus concluded that his name would be Latinus,⁽²³⁾ which means *Latin Man*. The number of the name of the second beast, according to John's testimony (Revelation 13:18), is 666. The number of Latinus is 666. The reformers noted this fact. Newton applied that name to the pope when he wrote, "All the rest being excommunicated by the Beast with two horns. His mark is + + + [three crosses], and his name is Lateinos."⁽²⁴⁾

John revealed that the second beast would require its subjects to wear a mark in their hands and foreheads. The ancient pagans, fearful of evil spirits that might invade their bodies by creeping through the holes in their garments, which they called *leg-holes*, *arm-holes*, and *neck-holes*, wore amulets and charms at those openings to ward off the evil spirits. Our modern necklaces and bracelets are a carryover of that practice. As pagans converted to Christ, they retained their fear, believing that the devil might gain possession of their bodies through the same openings. Since they were forbidden to wear jewelry, they

made the sign of the cross in those places. Tertullian wrote his wife, "Shall you escape notice when you sign your bed, [or] your body; when you blow away some impurity."⁽²⁵⁾ Elsewhere, he shows that the sign to which he referred was the sign of the cross. He said, "Now the Greek letter Tau and our own letter T is the very form of the cross, which he predicted would be the sign on our foreheads in the true Catholic Jerusalem."⁽²⁶⁾ During the Dark Ages, people revealed their Christian faith by making the sign of the cross over their foreheads. This remains a common practice today among Catholics today. Unable to mark themselves with the cross, those not Christians were not permitted to own property or trade anywhere in Christendom once the Papacy gained dominion. This fulfilled John's prophecy which described the power of the lamb with two horns in these words: "He causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark" (Revelation 13:16-17). The reformers believed that the mark of the beast is the sign of the cross and even quoted one Roman Emperor's criticism of the practice: "They adored the wood of the cross, making its images on their foreheads."⁽²⁷⁾

The pope claims the title *Vicar of Christ*. That title was first used by Constantine after he converted to Christianity. At the time, the bishop at Rome held the title *Bishop of Bishop*. When Constantine introduced the term, he meant *another Christ*. His conversion anointed him as Christianity's temporal Savior and his popularity elevated his title above all others. *Vicar of Christ* implied a savior of Christendom and became associated with God's earthly representative. After the Roman Emperors ceased, the popes took the title for themselves. *Vicar of Christ* in Latin is *Vicarius Christi*. The Greek equivalent to *vicarius* is *anti*. Thus, *Vicar of Christ* can be translated *Antichrist*. The very title claimed by the pope means Antichrist.

The predicted period of tribulation so accurately describes the history of the Dark Ages and the Papacy so completely fulfills the foretold Antichrist, that the reformers concluded that the Roman Church satisfied Bible prophecy. The Baptist Confession of Faith, written in 1689, said, "The Pope of Rome is that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God; whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." At the close of the 19th century, Charles Spurgeon, considered the last English Puritan, said, "It is the bounden duty of every Christian to pray against Anti-Christ, and as to what Anti-Christ is no sane man ought to raise a question. If it be not the Popery in the Church of Rome there is nothing in the world that can be called by that name ... because it wounds Christ, because it robs Christ of His glory, because it puts sacramental efficacy in the place of His atonement, and lifts a piece of bread in the place of the Savior, and a few drops of water in place of the Holy Ghost, and puts a fallible man like ourselves up as the Vicar of Christ on earth."⁽²⁸⁾

The Counter-Reformation

Initially, the Papacy met the Reformation with the same tactics it use against the Carthi. That strategy failed because Papal control over Northwestern Europe during the sixteenth century was less than in France and Spain during the thirteenth century. The Papacy had to discover another way to repress the Reformation. While maintaining the iron hand of inquisition in territories under its sway, it adopted an innovative and subversive machination. The instrument implementing that operation was and remains the Society of Jesus.

The Company of Jesus -- or Jesuits as the reformers nicknamed them -- was organized with nine members by Ignatius Loyola, a Spaniard born in 1491. Like priests, they took vows of

chastity and poverty, pledging to "serve the Roman Pontiff as God's vicar on earth"⁽²⁹⁾ and to propagate the faith. In 1540 Pope Paul III issued a bull entitled, *For the rule of the Church Militant*, in which he formally inducted the society as a priestly order of the Catholic Church. Their job was to promote their church with humanitarian efforts. They served as missionaries, educators, artisans, and physicians, all the while undermining Protestantism and democracy through infiltration and subversion. They helped the Council of Trent (1545-1563) employ these tactics when it met to consider a response to the Reformation. Two Jesuits named Laynez and Salmeron advised the synod. The first of their two-pronged strategy restated church theology and revised church procedures in ways that better appealed to the public affected by Reformation positions. This included meeting Protestant theology with its best intellectual arguments. The second was to dispatch Jesuits to infiltrate the new denominations and promote disunity within and between them.

Promoting a revised image for the Catholic Church required the Jesuits to interpret Biblical prophecy in ways that exonerated the pope. This was not an easy task, for the Reformation interpretation was supported by an abundance of historical fact. Instead of challenging the Protestant explanation on each point, they chose to offer an entirely different version. Their brilliant strategy proposed that since the Papacy was not the Antichrist, the prophecies must refer to a time either before or after the Vatican's reign. They advanced both in hopes that one would replace the Reformation interpretation. If not, at least their alternatives could confuse the issue and, in so doing, lessen the impact Protestant criticism caused the pope.

The Jesuit Alcarzar founded the Praeterist school in 1614. They initially proposed that the fall of Babylon as described in John's Revelation was fulfilled by either the fall of Jerusalem or the fall of pagan Rome. Its mature interpretation advocates that Nero was the Antichrist and the tribulation was the ten persecutions waged by Roman Emperors against the Christians. Alcarzar's explanation has attracted few adherents in the intervening centuries, primarily because it has no substance in the historical record. The early Christians did not even believe that possibility.

In contrast, the Jesuit Ribera from Salamanca Spain, proposed a future fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. In his *Apocalyptic Commentary*, published in 1585, Ribera asserted that the Antichrist was a future despot that would appear after some unknown empire was conquered by ten kings. This Antichrist would wage war on all Christians, including Catholics, and encounter destruction only when Christ returned. He used selected quotations from early Christian writers that supported his position. He also drew on some writings of ninth century monks who had speculated that the Antichrist would be an infidel born from the union of a demon and a Jewish woman. Ribera joined these selections with his own scriptural interpretations, concluding that at a future time, some government that had no connection to the Roman Empire would be divided into ten kingdoms. That division would indicate the approaching end of the world. The Antichrist, a superhuman descended from the tribe of Dan, would appear seven years before the consummation. He would be opposed by the two witnesses, Enoch and Elijah,⁽³⁰⁾ for three and one-half years, and, after killing them, rule unopposed during the remaining three and one-half years of his reign. His tyranny, especially over any believers not seduced by his falsehoods, would end at a final conflagration in which Jesus would descend and destroy the Antichrist with the brightness of his coming. His conclusion is now called the *Futurist Interpretation*. Its original purpose was to replace the *Historical Interpretation* that the reformers of his day taught by offering a viewpoint that appeared to be advocated by early church fathers and grounded in the Bible. If accepted, his explanation would relieve the Papacy from the terrible title of Antichrist that the Protestant interpretation had placed on that office.

The reason Ribera claimed that the tribulation's length was seven years was because of a passage in Daniel. It reads, "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Daniel 9:27). Assuming that the desolation predicted in this verse applied to the tribulation caused by the Antichrist and the cessation of the sacrifice referred to his false teachings, Ribera maintained that the week mentioned in this verse specified the length of his reign. Protestants at the time applied this part of Daniel's prophecy to Titus, the Roman prince who destroyed Jerusalem. Isaac Newton commented upon this verse with these words: "'And in half a week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease'; that is, by war of the Romans upon the Jews: which war, after some commotions, began in the 13th year of Nero, A.D. 67 in the spring, when Vespasian with an army invaded them; and ended in the second year of Vespasian, A.D. 70, in autumn, Sept. 7, when Titus took the city, having burnt the Temple 27 days before; so that it lasted three years and an half."⁽³¹⁾ Vespasian's siege of Jerusalem began during Passover week when many Jews had gathered to Jerusalem to observe the holy ceremonies. The early Christians did not miss the irony. Eusebius commented, "It was indeed proper that in the very week in which they had brought the Saviour and Benefactor of mankind, God's Christ, to His Passion, they should be shut up as if in a prison and suffer the destruction that came upon them by the judgment of God."⁽³²⁾ Shortly thereafter, the daily sacrifice at the temple stopped. Three and one-half years later the Romans destroyed the city and temple. Josephus records that about four years before the Roman attack, God sent divine messages warning the Jews of their eminent destruction and showing to the more observant that Jesus was the Messiah.⁽³³⁾ This history reveals a seven-year period, or one prophetic week, in which God confirmed his covenant with the Jews, first by urging them to repent before the attack and then by chastening them with a Roman siege. Because they refused the divine summons, God brought the Roman attack in the midst of the seven years, ending the daily sacrifice at the temple and pouring desolation upon the unbelievers during the next three and one-half years -- just as Daniel predicted.

While Ribera's futuristic view gave Catholics a better answer to Reformation charges that the Pope was the Antichrist than Alcarzar's proposal, it still had little effect on those who read the Bible and knew their history. The Protestant version remained the only viable interpretation of Biblical prophecy until after the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Development of the Futurist Interpretation

The futurist view was introduced into mainstream Christianity about 1830. Samuel R. Maitland, a clergyman of the church of England, began advocating the Jesuit explanation from his pulpit. He had been impressed by the writings of Lacunza, a Jesuit priest who was born in Chile in 1731 and died in Italy in 1801. English Christians knew about Lacunza's writings and confronted Maitland about the source of his doctrine. Maitland did not try to hide it. When accused of "proposing a scheme of interpretation in company with the whole host of Romish divines," Maitland replied, "Well, sir, as to the point in question, this is not far from the truth; and I see nothing in it to be ashamed of, though it may scare some inconsiderate reader."⁽³⁴⁾ Maitland confessed that the interpretation he was presenting within Protestantism originated with the Jesuits.

The Futurist interpretation had already found Protestant adherents in Scotland a few years before Maitland began teaching it in the Church of England. In 1825, Edward Irving, an eloquent minister of the Church of Scotland, advanced the belief that "the Church, far from being on the threshold of a new era of blessing, was about to enter a 'series of thick-coming

judgments and fearful perplexities' preparatory to Christ's advent and reign."⁽³⁵⁾ This was an entirely new idea to the Reformation. From its inception, the reformers believe that God would advance their work until the church in its purified condition reigned supreme throughout the earth and prepared to receive its Savior when he descended from above. To suppose that the reformed churches would suffer divine judgment before they completed that task was a brutal teaching that drew the ire of Irving's superiors. The Scottish minister subsequently launched a study of prophecy, perhaps to substantiate his position, and the next year discovered a work purportedly written by a converted Jew named Ben-Ezra. Irving translated it and added a lengthy commentary, publishing it in 1827 under the title *The Coming Messiah in Glory and Majesty*. The real author of the writing attributed to Ben-Ezra was Manuel De Lacunza,⁽³⁶⁾ the same South American Jesuit whose interpretation Maitland later introduced within the Church of England. Irving announced the Jesuit's authorship of the work in the original preface to his book. From 1826 to 1830, Irving held annual conferences on prophecy at the home of a Henry Drummond, a London Banker, during which time nineteen clergy from the Church of England participated.⁽³⁷⁾ This may be the way that Samuel Maitland obtained access to Ribera's interpretation.

Irving's interest of prophecy prompted a desire for the return of spiritual gifts to the church. If Christians were to accurately understand Biblical prophecies, he concluded that they must possess the same divine spirit that prompted their ancient utterance. "By 1829 he was convinced that the supernatural powers present in the first century should be possessed by the Church 'as surely and richly now as in the days of the Apostles'."⁽³⁸⁾ The desired gifts broke out in Port Glasgow, Scotland, in the spring of 1830. "A religious furore developed around the Macdonald family, who were said to have worked miracles of healing and to be both speaking in 'tongues' and interpreting 'tongues'."⁽³⁹⁾ One of the daughters, Margaret Macdonald, having already completed a self-directed study of prophecy, presented a new proposal at one of their meetings. The presence of the purported gifts seemed to authenticate her proposition. She advocated that before descending in clouds of glory, Jesus would first appear to the faithful; that while the church would suffer judgments, true Christians would be "raptured" before that period of tribulation; and that this event would happen when Jesus met his saints in a secretive appearance before and separate from his descent in clouds of glory. Whether the Macdonald family was already connected to Edward Irving is immaterial, for the Scottish minister quickly supported the Pentecostal group. They formed the nucleus around which he organized a church, called the Catholic Apostolic Church. Irving published Margaret's explanation of the rapture doctrine in his periodical, *The Morning Watch*, in September 1830.⁽⁴⁰⁾ He also elevated the women through whom prophetic messages readily flowed. The respect they received in their church even eclipsed Irving's. Evidently, the women ordered Irving to form his new church. Joseph Smith condemned the sect and announced that their spiritual manifestations were not of God. The Palmyra prophet wrote, "Those women would speak in the midst of a meeting and rebuke Mr. Irving, or any of the church; now the scripture positively says, 'thou shalt not rebuke an elder, but entreat him as a father; not only this but they frequently accused the brethren, thus placing themselves in the seat of satan who is emphatically called 'the accuser of the brethren'."⁽⁴¹⁾

Edward Irving died in 1834 and his church faded. Its interpretations of prophecy, however, were adopted by John Darby, the leader of the Brethren movement. By the middle part of the 1820's people dissatisfied with the spirituality of the Church of England began meeting for fellowship. Darby was attached to the Dublin group. Irving's writings interested these people, partly because, like Irving, they considered mainstream Protestant churches corrupt. One of Irving's disciples, Lady Powerscourt, hosted three annual conferences on prophecy at her estate, beginning in 1831. Darby was one of the four hundred participants in the 1831 conference.⁽⁴²⁾ As a result, all the potent points of Irving's commentary found

their way into Darby's teachings. During the succeeding years, Darby validated its points with scriptural texts and added to the developing interpretation the belief that the saints would be raptured at the beginning of Antichrist's reign of tribulation. Through Darby's voluminous writings, which included four books on prophecy, his pre-millennial viewpoint was disseminated to every English-speaking country around the globe. In America, D. L. Moody embraced his position and the Bible college that he founded became a seminary of ardent pre-millennial belief. Another American was Cyrus Scofield, who made his master's teaching on prophecy an integral part of his reference Bible, first published in 1909. Scofield did not make a new translation of the Bible, but provided a chain-reference and commentary for the King James Version that remains popular today. Called the Scofield Bible, it presents the scriptures in ways that supported the pre-millennial interpretation of prophecy.

Another American minister to take up the pre-millennial position was Joseph Seiss, a well-educated and renowned Lutheran minister. Since the 1850's he had presented discourses on prophecy throughout the United States, always teaching the Protestant explanation. At a series of lectures given in New York City in 1885, he changed his position. Previous commentators had assumed that the entire vision John saw took place on a Sunday. The text reads, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). Seiss proposed that John was transported in vision to the day of the Lord's return, in which he viewed the rise and fall of the "man of sin." This explanation provided a dispensational break between the events surrounding the church established by the apostles and the incidents effecting it at the end of the world. If true, the prophecy was not an unceasing revelation of events through time, but the disclosure of the beginning and end of the story with the middle part untold and of an unknown duration. The beast still represented Rome, but the ten kings were future leaders of a confederated entity descended from the old Roman Empire. The Antichrist would begin his tyrannical reign after those kings gained control. The period of tribulation would last seven years, ending when Jesus descended and destroyed the Antichrist. Seiss' explanation wedded parts of the Reformation interpretation with which he was most familiar with Darby's explanation. The futurist interpretation, having been enlarged by Irving, MacDonald, Darby, and now Seiss, appealed to mainstream Protestantism and became an acceptable explanation. It remained a minority opinion until 1970 when Hal Lindsey presented the view in his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Millions of its copies have been printed and read, so that almost every Bible-believing church now expects the emergence of a ten-region confederacy in Europe, a future Antichrist, the rapture of the saints, and a period of tribulation.

Dr. Seiss confessed that the reason he abandoned the Reformation position, which he taught for so many years, was that all the different dates predicting the Savior's return that had been associated with the interpretation had proved wrong. Both Daniel and John prophesied the length of the Antichrist's reign. Since those revelations tied the destruction of the Antichrist to the second coming of Jesus, commentators began calculating a date for the Savior's return. The more notable dates proposed were 1776, 1785, 1816, 1836, 1843, 1848, 1852, 1858, 1862, and 1864. As each deadline passed without incident, dissatisfaction with the reformers' interpretation of prophecy grew. Seiss had his faith shaken until he believed that the reason for the miscalculations was a fundamental misunderstanding of how to interpret the Book of Revelation.⁽⁴³⁾ His struggle reveals how the public reacted. They, too, were losing their faith as each proposed date failed. The futurist interpretation relieved their disappointment. It told them that their religion was not wrong, only their way of understanding prophecy.

A more fundamental motivator for the spread of the futurist view was a growing pessimism

about the future. The reformers envisioned a grand and glorious one as the church, freed from the shackles of popish corruption, grew in purity and domain. George Newton (1602-1681) said, "What blessed state and glorious posture she [the church] will be, when Christ shall have declared his Father's name to all the nations under heaven, when the Jews shall be converted, and when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. . . And this is not the least, that the people shall be brought in to the knowledge of the Lord out of all quarters of the world, and that by heaps and multitudes."⁽⁴⁴⁾ Starting with Edward Irving, the pre-millennialists foresaw fast-approaching and thick-coming judgments, not increasing light and prosperity. Instead of the church growing in righteousness, they believed it was withering in materialism. As the optimism of the Reformation gave way to the pessimism of the futurists, people wanted to know when these judgments would disrupt their lives. Just as Irving's announcement of a bleak future had motivated him to study prophecy, the spread of his pessimism enlarged interest in deciphering prophecy. People who were anxious about the future found greater comfort in the futurist interpretation. Its fulfillment and, therefore, potential disappointment, if found to be wrong, lies in the future. That is less threatening to a person's faith than the long list of failed dates for Christ's return that had been attached to the Reformation view.

The Futurist interpretation began with Ribera. Its only goal was to convince the world that the Papacy was not the Antichrist. Although the explanation evolved while being introduced and spread throughout Protestantism, it still achieved the Jesuit goal. A significant majority of Christians no longer regard the Papacy as the Antichrist. Neither do they foresee a glorious future for the church as it converts the world to Jesus in preparation for his return. The Reformation interpretation and the Puritan hope seem lost.

The Restoration Position

The Restoration broke forth on the Christian world with the powers of heaven. Angels appeared on earth and announced God's latter-day purpose: to gather the elect and make them into a holy nation. They bestowed the priesthood lost during the apostasy of the Dark Ages so that the church, restored to earth in its apostolic purity, could possess the means of making believers righteous. Armed with the fullness of the gospel, ministers had authority to wash away the sins of all repentant people in the waters of baptism and implant the Holy Ghost within them as an abiding Comforter. In this way, sinners could be transformed into new creatures, images of Christ. Like the early Reformation, the Restoration envisioned a bright future in which the church would grow to the pinnacle of righteousness and renown, the penitent from every continent would gather to build a holy kingdom on earth, and the Savior would descend to govern it during his millennial reign.

The basic position of the Restoration supposes an apostasy. Something cannot be restored that was not previously lost. The Restored Church taught that the church Jesus built was seduced and altered by the devil, driving the true church into the wilderness and replacing it with an abominable institution. The Book of Mormon explains it with these words: "After they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, thou seest the foundation of a great and abominable church above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord" (1 Nephi 3:176,168,170). The Book of Mormon adds that this church sought the goods and pleasures of this life, while oppressing the righteousness. It says, "[It] slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down" (1 Nephi 3:140), adding, "Behold the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine twined linen, and the precious clothing, and the harlots, are the desires of this great and abominable church" (1 Nephi

3:143). These descriptions repeat the complaints that Protestants had already made about the Roman Catholic Church. Latter-day Saint elders taught a preceding apostasy. Parley Pratt wrote, "In this way the kingdom of God was disorganized and lost from among men, and the doctrines and churches of men instituted in its place." ⁽⁴⁵⁾

Like the Reformation, the Restoration maintained that the apostate church persecuted the original church until it fled into the wilderness. John had prophesied, "When the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. Therefore, to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might flee into the wilderness" (Revelation 12:13-14). The Restored Church not only announced that the original church fled, but it proclaimed that it had returned. Joseph Smith brought these words from the Lord, "This church have I established and called forth out of the wilderness" (D&C 32:2a). If the original church was lost, then it cannot be purified. It must be found. If the corrupt church had forfeited divine authority, then its cleansing would neither renew its clergy's nor the reformers' commission. Priesthood authority had to be restored. Restoration elders a divine commission received from heaven-sent angels. Parley Pratt wrote, "Thus you see all who have no direct revelation from the king of heaven to themselves, neither by angels, nor the voice of God, nor by the spirit of prophecy, are acting under the authority which was given to others, who are dead, and their commission stolen, and their authority usurped." ⁽⁴⁶⁾

Restoration elders emphasize a second, more appropriate, image for the church. Daniel revealed the establishment of a righteous kingdom in the last days. He said, "A stone was cut without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them in pieces. And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:34-35). The ancient prophecy also provided the interpretation for the image of the stone. It said, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44). The Restoration taught that the little stone about which Daniel prophesied is the church. Latter-day revelation states, "The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto men on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:1b). In his letter to Queen Victoria Parley Pratt indicated that Daniel's vision revealed events whose fulfillment was soon. Referring to the ten kingdoms, which the vision represented with ten toes, he wrote, "The government of England is one of the toes of this image." ⁽⁴⁷⁾ The latter-day apostle explained that with the end of the world approaching and the governments of this world developing into the kingdoms represented by the ten toes, God was establishing his kingdom with sufficient power to grow and fill the earth. Pratt continued, "It appears that this new kingdom will be established over the whole earth, to the destruction of all other kingdoms, by nothing less than the personal advent of the Messiah." ⁽⁴⁸⁾

The Restored Church held an optimistic view of the future. It believed itself the restoration of God's kingdom on earth, destined to grow until it filled the entire world with righteousness. Pratt wrote, "The Church of the saints thus organized upon the ancient order and faith once delivered to the saints, must grow and flourish, and spread among all nations, and must increase in faith, and power, and might, and glory, until as a bride adorned for her husband, she is prepared for her coming Lord, and for the marriage supper of the Lamb." ⁽⁴⁹⁾ The only fast-approaching judgments that they envisioned were punishments to be poured on the ungodly. Latter-day revelation commanded, "Lift a warning voice unto the inhabitants of the earth; and declare both by word and by flight,

that desolation shall come upon the wicked" (D&C 63:9e). Richard Smyth summed up the message with these poetic words: "Come to Zion, ere his floods of anger flow."⁽⁵⁰⁾ An expectation of a glorious future in which the saints built up the holy city, Zion, and all of scattered Israel gathered to it in preparation for the Savior's return gave church members little concern about the coming judgments. Their participation in Zion's establishment insured their participation in its glory. It also promised that they would escape the punishments befalling the wicked. For them, the understanding of prophecy was for the advancement of Zion's cause, not for describing future tribulations effecting the saints.

The way the Restored Church explained Biblical prophecy shows that it taught the same conclusions made by the reformers. It taught that the Antichrist was the Papacy, saying, "Daniel while speaking of these kingdoms says, he saw a little horn, which no doubts allude to popery, that made war with the saints, and prevailed against them."⁽⁵¹⁾ It advocated that the seven-headed beast referred to Rome. After mentioning the seven heads on the beast described by John (Revelation 13:1), it said, "Perhaps this alludes to the various elevated parts upon which the city of Rome was built."⁽⁵²⁾ It supported the interpretation that the ten horns referred to the nations that divided the Roman Empire when it wrote, "The principle part of the modern kingdoms of Europe are the remains of those ten kingdoms of the Roman Empire."⁽⁵³⁾ However, the Restoration added to that interpretation. It considered all the reformed churches with the sects descending there from as offspring of the apostate church and it advocated that, while the period of tribulation was over for those obeying the restored gospel, punishments awaited those who refused it.

The Reorganization

After the reorganization of the restored church, a new generation of elders proclaimed the latter-day gospel. They emphasized its parts in different ways, primarily because their hearers were different. Many people had heard, while some had accepted, the pessimistic view of the future, making them more easily excited about interpreting prophecy. The Adventist movement was calculating and recalculating dates for the Savior's descent and multiplying disappointment as each one passed without fulfillment. The Reorganization eagerly met the occasion. Its message was that the Reformation explanation of prophecy was accurate as far as it went. The apostasy had driven the original church into the wilderness, but the church had emerged as predicted in 1830. The Papacy was the "man of sin" predicted by Paul, the "little horn" prophesied by Daniel, and "mouth speaking blasphemies" foreseen by John, but the period of tribulation was over. God had provided a place of safety and was inviting the world to enter into it before his wrath destroyed the great and abominable church and its confederated princes.

The Reorganized Church busily commissioned missionaries to gather the scattered saints and draw souls to Christ. They preached, taught, and debated wherever possible, using their interpretation of prophecy when it helped win converts to the gospel. Like the early Restoration, they repeated the Reformation's position, developing it with finer detail, so that the world could understand that the church was the ark of safety promised in the Bible's revelations. The following quotations, which were taken from Herald House publications, show the Restoration interpretation as taught by the Reorganization. The Seven-headed beast

"The seven heads and ten horns confirm our identification of the Roman Empire."⁽⁵⁴⁾

"The seven heads of the 'beast' are seven mountains on which the 'woman' sitteth. Rome,

the great centre of the Roman Catholic Church, is built upon seven hills."⁽⁵⁵⁾

"Pagan Rome, seated upon her seven hills and finally divided into ten kingdoms, was represented by the dragon."⁽⁵⁶⁾

The Ten Horns

"Unquestionably, then, the Lombardic kingdom stands forth as the tenth and last of the prophetic kingdoms effecting the division of the Roman Empire."⁽⁵⁷⁾

"The dismemberment of the Ancient Roman Empire, though gradual was sure; and all historians agree that it was complete with the invasion of the Lombards, A.D. 568."⁽⁵⁸⁾

Man of Sin

"It is generally conceded by all Protestant writers that 'the man of sin' alluded to is none other than the papacy."⁽⁵⁹⁾

"This prophecy [2Thes 2: 3-9] is indeed a masterly sketch of the Papal power"⁽⁶⁰⁾

Little Horn

"This is that Little Horn of which we have learned. It is the papacy."⁽⁶¹⁾

The Beast

"The beast to which they [the ten horns] gave their power and strength was the Papacy"⁽⁶²⁾

Mystery, Babylon

"In this light the term 'Babylon' can be fitly attached to the Roman Catholic Church."⁽⁶³⁾

Antichrist

"The Papacy is really the power of antichrist, robed in Christian symbols and masquerading as the representatives of the true church of Christ."⁽⁶⁴⁾

Mark of the Beast

"We showed that the Sign of the Cross had been put to such a use. We have shown that it was the distinguishing banner of antichrist throughout the Crusades, the inquisition and in every persecution of Christians under the Papacy. Also that it is used as the mark of papal authority in all the changed sacraments of that church. Further, it was the distinguishing banner of anti-christ long before Jesus came to earth."⁽⁶⁵⁾

Subdue Three Kings

"Thus the Pope came into possession of the State of Rome, the kingdom of Lombardy and the Exarchate of Ravenna, which, according to some, were three of the kingdoms into which ancient Rome was divided. Ever since, the Pope has worn a triple crown, called the *Tiara*, in

token of the sovereignty thus attained."⁽⁶⁶⁾

Wear out Saints

"The voice of Inspiration gives us to understand that the saints of God would be worn out and overcome. History presents us with the sad spectacle of a church ruled by the Papacy, decked with Christian symbols, but at heart intensely anti-Christian, . . . with flaming faggot, bloody sword and awful anathemas enforcing its unholy doctrines and winning its way to universal dominion."⁽⁶⁷⁾

"The Inquisition was a particularly terrible institution designed to implement the power of the papacy. Its purpose was to extirpate heretics."⁽⁶⁸⁾

Change times

"The foregoing Roman Catholic testimony proves that the Papacy has indeed arrogated to itself the right to 'change times and laws'."⁽⁶⁹⁾

1260 Days

"For 1260 long years the palsying power of the apostasy will blight by its withering touch all with whom it comes in contact."⁽⁷⁰⁾

"What period of time, then, is denoted by these 1260 days? The rule given in the Bible is that in symbolic prophecy each day is to be regarded as a year."⁽⁷¹⁾

"John the Revelator saw the true church taken away into the wilderness for a period of time indicated as twelve hundred and sixty days (prophetic years)."⁽⁷²⁾

Church From the Wilderness

"We pass them by, confirmed in the conclusion statistically, historically, and scripturally, that the only date marking the beginning of the 1260 years is 570, supported by the accessory dates of 588 and 607, from whence in solar, prophetic and lunar years, we are brought to an irresistible and united termination in 1830."⁽⁷³⁾

"Taking the year 568 A.D. as the date for the beginning of this period, we must look for its conclusion in 1828 A.D. At that time we may expect the true wife of Christ to be emerging from the 'wilderness'."⁽⁷⁴⁾

"The apostasy . . . seems to have centered around A.D. 570. Even approximating dates, the 1260 years would terminate in the early part of the nineteenth century in the period centering around 1830."⁽⁷⁵⁾

These brief quotations plainly show that the Reorganization interpreted prophecy like the reformers did, completing their understandings with explanations that testified to the divinity of the church. In a day when numerous Protestant ministers were abandoning the Reformation position and adopting the pre-millennialist view, the elders of the church stood firm and united. They knew that the Restoration was true and that, in time, it would flourish in its ultimate victory over falsehood, oppression, and immorality. They never considered a

reign of some future Antichrist or another period of tribulation.

The Past Generation

The Reorganization prospered under the direction of young Joseph, gathering the scattered saints and returning to the land of Zion. By the early part of the twentieth century, it was headquartered in Independence, raising branches in every state of the Union and providence of Canada, and supporting missions throughout Europe, the Mid-East, and the South Sea Islands. Its missionaries knew the Bible and relevant history so well that they could adequately present and defend the message of the church. In the midst of those accomplishments, the most significant event to date to effect the Reorganized Church interrupted the success. The culprit was the Great Depression. At its onset, the church was deeply in debt. Instead of seeking relief through bankruptcy, it conserved its resources until enough funds were raised to pay it off. From 1929 until 1946 the work of the church lay dormant underneath its fiscal burden.

The policy that repaid the church's debt also cut more than unnecessary costs. It eliminated most of the missionary staff. The church could no longer afford to send out the elders. The bulk of its evangelism was done by local priesthood whose primary obligation was supporting their respective families. In a time of limited employment opportunities and the pressing needs of the local branch, these priesthood men had little time to evangelize the communities in which they lived, let alone convert the world. When the Depression ended and the church again placed men in the mission field, it had few resources with which to prepare those it appointed. My own father was sent under appointment at the age of 20. He was a priest at the time. Because the demands were many and the resources few in those days, his only formal training was an afternoon of counsel from an apostle. The remaining recourse was to glean what he could from studying the writings or hearing the comments of predecessors who still retained part of the encyclopedic knowledge once shared among the eldership of the church. Each new appointee probably received about the same training, leaving the young and inexperienced missionaries to rediscover the many validations for the Reorganization's teachings on their own.

With the help of the Holy Spirit the new appointees adequately represented the church, showing its return from the wilderness, its similar organization to the church Jesus built, and the necessity of baptism. However, they rarely referred to the Restoration interpretation of prophecy. The public's attitude was becoming increasingly positive. Western Civilization, rising out of the difficulties of the Great Depression and the devastation of World War II, foresaw a bright future. Optimistic people are less interested in studying prophecy, particularly when it concerns fast-approaching plagues and desolations. By concentrating attention on other topics, the church began to lose contact with its well-developed interpretation of prophecy. To date, the last book on prophecy that the Herald House published was Elbert A Smith's *Restoration: A Study in Prophecy*. That work was printed in 1946. Since then, various church members have published their own works. The most notable is *Insights into the Book of Revelation* by George Njeim. It was printed in 1966 and presents the traditional Restoration interpretation sprinkled with some of the author's unique explanations. Some brethren, mostly in the Seventy, encouraged Brother Njeim to make the vast material he had gathered on the subject available to a generation that had grown up unacquainted with the Restoration position.

Meanwhile many church appointees, perhaps feeling embarrassed about their lack of training, turned to academia as a supplementary source of instruction and preparation. Higher education had already proved its competence, graduating doctors, engineers,

businessmen, scientists and economists that had improved society far beyond the expectations of past generations. Unfortunately, academia was infected with revisionism. The scientific method, by which modern advances had come, taught the supreme value of the senses. Little room was left for spiritual inspiration, let alone direct revelation from God. The idea that a divine voice or personage could give any person the exact words of God was dismissed by most professors. They taught that Biblical prophecy was not God's foretelling of history through divinely instructed prophets, but man's chronicle of past events mixed in with the future those events implied. For them, Isaiah could not have prophesied Cyrus's name, neither could Daniel have so accurately described Antiochus' defeat of Jerusalem. Their only acceptable conclusion was that those accounts must have been inserted into the record by scribes living in later times. In the above cases, they proposed that two or maybe three people, each living in different generations, compiled the book of Isaiah and that Daniel was really written in the second century before Christ. By teaching that every unfulfilled prediction in the Bible was merely a personal conception of the future, these scholars maintained that there was no real Biblical prophecy to interpret.

As church leaders sought academic instruction, they discovered its view of prophecy. Perhaps some, if not most, embraced it. More to the point, an increasing number in our society accepted that position. A literal interpretation of the Bible was becoming less popular both in and out of the church. As the Reorganization moved away from a fundamental view of Christianity, it moved away from any interpretation of prophecy. This development left the church unprepared for the drastic reversal of perception that had already begun by 1970. The optimism of the post-war era was giving way to the reality of life in Western Civilization. The American dream, with each successive generation better off, seemed invalid. Inequality, injustice, violence, promiscuity, and drug-addiction were threatening the future. Perhaps, thick-approaching judgments were really ready to befall the world. These conditions rekindled an interest in prophecy and its interpretation. With Protestantism now severed from its Puritan foundations, the futurist view spread among fundamental churches like wildfire, while more academicized denominations maintained their intellectual aloofness. Church members received little if any direction from their leaders and decided their individual view of the topic based on their personal orientation. Some echoed the futurist interpretation. Others maintained the Restoration explanation. Church leaders seemed to reflect the academic view. Some ignored the subject and the rest became confused.

Prophecy's Fulfillment

The basic premise of the Restoration view of prophecy stated that the church, which fled into the wilderness in 570 A.D. under the oppressive rule of the Papacy, emerged from that wilderness 1260 years later, being restored to earth by angels under the hand of Joseph Smith in 1830. It invited the world to join the church and, in so doing, become members of God's latter-day kingdom, a kingdom destined to increase until it filled the whole earth with truth and righteousness. Some believed and obeyed. Those refusing voluntarily placed themselves under the consequences of their decision. The Book of Mormon teaches, ""Blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend ear to my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth, I will give more; and from him that shall say, We have enough, shall be taken away even that which they have" (2 Nephi 12:37-38). When the world refused the latter-day gospel, it rejected God's counsel and followed a path toward spiritual darkness. Its rejection of the Reformation interpretation of prophecy, the best explanation possible until the Restoration, is just one example of the blindness overtaking them.

When the futurist interpretation replaced the Reformation explanation, it brought Protestantism closer to the Jesuit goal. Most denominations no longer accuse the Papacy of being the Antichrist prophesied by the prophets. Meanwhile, the Vatican adopted a more ecumenical posture. After Vatican II, Protestant and Catholic denominations began working more closely to solve pressing social issues. The Pope gained significant respect and popularity in nations where the Reformation had flourished. Both Great Britain and the United States finally recognized the Vatican as a sovereign nation, the latter doing so in 1984. Interestingly, the new ecumenical position of the Catholic Church coincided with an increased anti-Americanism at home and abroad. Jesuit priests began openly supporting Communist regimes in Central America. Justifying their support for the Nicaraguan revolution, Jesuit Carney, said, "To be a Christian is to be a revolutionary. We Christian-Marxists will have to fight side-by-side in Central America with the Marxists who do not believe in God, in order to form a new socialist society."⁽⁷⁶⁾ This tactic had already proved successful in Cuba where its communist rule had opposed American dominance since 1959. Its leader, Fidel Castro, is a Jesuit. The Roman Church, which had always opposed democracy and reformation, was gaining influence over an increasing number of Christians at the same time that subversive elements were destabilizing Western Civilization. Protestants, blinded by their refusal to obey the restored gospel, are returning under the influence of the Papacy.

The purpose of the Counter-Reformation, which has always been the reinstatement of Papal control over Christendom, appears close to its goal. One reason is that fewer people today realize the scope and intent of the Vatican. At the beginning of the Reformation, Jesuits infiltrated both church and state to end reform and democracy. For instance, in 1551, secret instructions, sent from the Council of Trent to Jesuits in Paris, were found on Thomas Heath. Heath was a Jesuit who professed the highest Puritan ideals. Those instructions commanded, "Ye are not to preach all after one method, but observe the place wherein you come. If Lutherism be prevalent, then preach Calvinism; if Calvinism, then Lutheranism; if in England then either of them, or John Huss's opinions, Anabaptism, or any that are contrary to the Holy See or of St. Peter, by which your function will not be suspected, and yet you may still act on the interest of Mother-Church; there being as the Council are agreed on, no better way to demolish that Church of heresy [the Reformation], but by mixture of doctrines, and by adding of ceremonies more than at present permitted."⁽⁷⁷⁾ Jesuits are still infiltrating Protestant denominations and sowing seeds of controversy and division. Alberto Rivera, a Jesuit priest who defected from the society in 1967, claimed to have infiltrated and destroyed over twenty churches. In describing the Jesuit success, he said, "The first Protestant groups they moved on were the Seventh-Day Adventists and the Full Gospel Businessmen; then into the Baptist, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, etc. until they were all infiltrated, including the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses."⁽⁷⁸⁾

Jesuit sabotage has not been limited to religious circles. They have infiltrated states and toppled governments. In February 1570, Pope Pius V pronounced Queen Elizabeth a heretic, deprived her of her kingdom, forbade her subjects to obey her, and excommunicated all who remained loyal to her. Under his leadership, the Roman Curia supported Mary Stuart and sent Jesuits to England in 1580 to sow sedition among Queen Elizabeth's subjects. The Papacy also executed an agreement with Spain in which Prince Philip promised to aid their attack on Protestant England. The conspiracy was discovered, Father Campion was hanged for treason, and Mary Stuart was executed in 1587. Afterwards, Spain launched its famous Armada in hopes of subduing British independence. Henry Garnet, the Superior of the Jesuits in England, acknowledged his leadership in another revolutionary plot against James I. His confession said, in part, "I, Henry Garnet, of the Society of Jesus, priest, do freely confess before God that I hold the later intention of the Powder action to have been altogether unlawful and most horrible; as well in respect of the injury and treason to his

Majesty, the Prince, and others that should have been sinfully murdered at that time; as also in respect of infinite other innocents which should have been present. . . I do acknowledge myself highly guilty, to have offended God, the King's Majesty and Estate."⁽⁷⁹⁾ Time has not seen a change in these tactics. Roman Church leaders have denounced freedom of religion and democracy during this present century. The Vatican said, "It is madness to think that the freedom of conscience and worship mere rights to every man."⁽⁸⁰⁾ Michael Schmaus, a Jesuit professor at the Faculty of Theology of Munich wrote in 1933, "Nothing is more contrary to Catholicism than democracy;" adding, "The mistrust of Liberty is founded on the Catholic doctrine of original sin."⁽⁸¹⁾ More recently, Jesuits have justified the insurrection of communist guerrillas in Central America and a few have even fought along side them. The effort to return Christian society to Papal control by any means is as active today as it was when first implemented.

The Book of Mormon predicts the present-day rise of the great and abominable church. After describing how the more righteous Gentiles, as it calls America's initial colonists, won freedom from tyranny and oppression, it adds: "I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather in multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God" (1 Nephi 3:229). According to the vision, the abominable church would exercise power in every Gentile nation sometime after America's establishment. That development is occurring today. Moroni describes the perilous result: "The Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you, that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of the secret combination which shall be among you. For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up, seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries" (Ether 3:98-99). With fundamental Christianity ridiculed by the modern media, Protestant denominations divided along liberal and conservative lines, and the Reorganization fragmented, the possibility that the Roman Church will regain control of all Christianity and overtake the cause of Zion is possible.

While most futurists foresee a different Antichrist, perhaps a Jew, some predict the Papacy's resurgence. Acquainted with the history of the Catholic Church and the way it meticulously fulfills prophecy, they envision a time when the pope regains power over all Christians and believe that he will use it to erase Reformation doctrines and liberties. Their perception contradicts the Bible. Daniel revealed that the power of the Antichrist to disperse the people of God ended at the conclusion of the 1260 years (Daniel 12:7). The Restoration maintains that the 1260 years ended in 1830 and the restoration of the church in that year marked the beginning for the latter-day gathering of Israel. One reason that Christians ignore Daniel's prophecy is that God has not destroyed the Papacy. From the beginning of the Reformation until the end of the nineteenth century, the Vatican lost respect and dominion. Believers maintained that the Papacy's destruction was near, even in the face of all the predicted but failed dates for Christ's return. Its renewal in popularity and influence has shattered the Reformation expectation of a steady demise for the Papal office.

The reason that God did not destroy the Papacy before it began regaining world-wide dominion is because of his promise to save all descendants of Jacob. When God restored his church in 1830, he said that the Gentiles were the first group to whom it should take the gospel (D&C 104:13b). In this way, many descendants of the northern Israelite nation, Ephraim, which the Bible reveals were sown among the Gentiles, (Hosea 8:8), were introduced to the latter-day message. Unfortunately, the Gentiles refused that invitation. Their rejection has allowed the Papacy to regain some of its power. Jesus foretold the Gentile rejection of the gospel, but promised that afterwards it would go to the Israelite inhabitants on this continent. He said that if the Gentiles "shall reject the fulness of the

gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them; and I will remember my covenant which I have unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel from among them" (3 Nephi 7: 35-36). The Papacy will remain, exerting its resources against Reformation and democratic liberties, while inviting participation in a new world order, until God sends the gospel in power to all scattered Israel, including the ten tribes of the North Country and the descendants of the Lamanites in America. Vatican influence over the Gentile nations is part of the divine judgment that consequently overtakes the disobedient.

While the Book of Mormon discloses that the Papacy will try to reestablish its dominion, it also reveals that God will intercede to defeat it. Nephi said, "For he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous. Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power. Even if it be so that the fulness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire" (1 Nephi 7:35-36). Although the Vatican's increasing world-wide influence is threatening our nation and church, and maintains a constant grip on many Lamanite descendants in Central America, God will not let it impede the gathering and cleansing of latter-day Israel. The Lord vowed, "Wherefore for this cause, that my covenants may be fulfilled, which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are in the flesh, I must needs destroy the secret works of darkness and of murders, and of abominations" (2 Nephi 7:22). God's ancient promise to save Israel will cause him to destroy the institution that binds his people in spiritual falsehood, economic hardship, and political corruption. The Book of Mormon explains, saying, "That great and abominable church, the whore of all the earth, must tumble to the earth; and great must be the fall of it" (2 Nephi 12:22). The recent rise of the Papacy is part of God's judgment on the Gentiles who rejected the Restoration gospel. Those remaining under its influence must endure the same plagues that consume the great and abominable church. The Book of Mormon adds, "The blood of that great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall turn upon their own heads; for they shall war among themselves, and the sword of their own hands shall fall upon their own heads, and they shall be drunken with their own blood. And they shall fall into the pit which they digged to ensnare the people of the Lord" (1 Nephi 7:26-27,29). Those judgments will not overtake repentant Gentiles. Nephi revealed, "Blessed are the Gentiles, they of whom the prophet has written: for behold, if it so be that they shall repent and fight not against Zion, and do not unite themselves to that great and abominable church, they shall be saved" (2 Nephi 5:30-31). After this destruction, all Israelites will gather to Zion, bringing with them many penitent Gentiles.

Although the Roman Catholic conspiracy to thwart the Reformation and return control of Western Civilization to the Papacy appears to be gaining momentum, it will not succeed. A future time of tribulation in which the saints of God are tortured or executed will not come. There is no future mark of the beast to regulate the economic affairs of mankind. Any plans now in development or execution by which a hoped-for global government could unite the human race under one supreme ruler will not achieve its goal. God will intervene and save his people. One day, perhaps soon, the power of the great and abominable church which threatens the elect and places the salvation of Israel in jeopardy, will end. When that happens, the same God who released his people from Egyptian bondage and preserved them in the wilderness will arm them in the latter-day. The Book of Mormon promises, "I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory" (1 Nephi 3:230-231). The demonstration of divine power among the Lord's people will repeal the forces of evil. Unable to stop the hostility that God's enemies instigated, they will fight among themselves until their intrigues and avenues of power are

destroyed. Afterwards, the saints will prosper under the banner of the Restoration gospel in its re-invigorated glory, gathering the rest of Israel and preparing for Christ's return.

The Restoration fulfills the Reformation hope. It is the culmination of the Biblical prophecies so adequately interpreted by the reformers. The fact that the latter-day work was not well received when it first burst on the world or was revised by those inheriting it in our day will not prevent its culminating success. The future is glorious for those who endure the present struggle for the kingdom. Zion will be and Christ will descend to it in glory. When that happens, those left will know from experience how false the futurist interpretation is and how accurately Restoration elders understood and taught prophecy.

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2. Lactantius; *The Divine Institutes*; Bk 7, Ch 15
3. Tertullian; *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*; Ch 25
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5. Irenaeus; *Irenaeus Against Heresies*; Bk 5, Ch 30
6. Hippolytus; *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*; Par 54
7. Augustine; *Homilies* 3:8
8. Clement; *The Clementine Homilies*; Hom 9, Ch 35
9. *The Teaching of the Apostles*; Ch 27
10. Laurence Gardner; *Bloodline of the Holy Grail*; p 158
11. Michael Baigent, et. al.; *Holy Blood, Holy War*; p 49
12. Will Durant; *The Age of Faith*; p 770
13. John Calvin; *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: Bk 4, Ch 2, Sec 12
14. Martin Luther; *Werke*; Bk 8
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56. Elbert A. Smith; *Restoration: A Study in Prophecy*; p 51
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