



# THE WORLD AS IT IS

**Defining  
The Christian World View  
In A Complex World**

*Biblical Research Library*

Roger E. Dickson

---

## CONTENTS

- Introduction – 3**
- 1 – *A World View Without A World* – 5**
- 2 – *The Right Place For Now* – 7**
- 3 – *We Are Here For There* – 10**
- 4 – *We Would Prognosticate* – 14**
- 5 – *The Nonstop God* – 17**
- 6 – *God Purposefully Works* – 19**
- 7 – *A Road Map Of God’s Work* – 21**
- 8 – *World Views In Conflict* – 27**
- 9 – *A Freedom-Based Society* – 33**
- 10 – *Early Beginnings Of Islam* – 40**
- 11 – *History Welcomes A New Ideology* – 45**
- 12 – *The World Of Islam* – 52**
- 13 – *The Perpetual Conflict* – 62**
- 14 – *A Blueprint For Order* – 70**
- 15 – *Qur’an Concepts* – 73**
- 16 – *The Rise Of A New World* – 85**



Copyright 2014<sup>©</sup>  
Roger E. Dickson  
rdickson@mweb.co.za  
www.africainternational.org  
Cape Town, South Africa

(CoverTheme: *HOPE* (Downtown Monrovia, Liberia – R.E.D.))

# THE WORLD AS IT IS

**Our world view determines how we view the world in which we live. Our world view is that mentally deep-seated thinking which is our subliminal view of all things. Our world view determines our values and our behavior. Our world view is developed through our social experiences from childhood and our education. If our experiences and education are dysfunctional in our relationship with our Creator, then we will view our lives, and the world in which we live, from a distorted point of view. Our values and behavior will follow. This is a particular problem with those who do not have God and His word in the formation of their world view. But for those who do, it is still often difficult to look beyond the twisted morals, philosophies and theologies within society in order to see the world as it is in God's eternal purpose to bring inhabitants of this world into His eternal presence. In order to correctly form our world view, it is essential to saturate ourselves with God's word. The more knowledge we have of His communication to us through His word, and the more we implement that word in our lives. And the more we live His word the better we will understand the world that He created for us. The better we understand our world, the more patient and steadfast we will be as His children until this world has fulfilled its purpose, and is gone.**

## INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard the saying, "Don't worry. It will get worse before it gets better"? We live in a world that seems to have all gone wrong with no hope of anything getting better. When we factor in the consequences of sin, it is not hard to believe this. In fact, if we were to ask those Christians to whom the letter of Revelation was written, they would agree with the forecast that it is going to be a gloomy future. It would get worse for them before it got better. What was coming was not good. John's

literary picture of the future for the Christians of that age was that things were definitely going to get worse before they got better. That is why the Holy Spirit lifted John's hand to write the prophecy of the letter. No matter how bad it got, the Holy Spirit wanted Christians to know that they would come out on top.

Though there was gloom and doom in the future, the message of Revelation was one of hope. In the midst of a future that seemed to be only gloom, the Spirit's message to those early Christians and us

through John will always be, *“These will make war with the Lamb and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings. And those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful”* (Rv 17:14). We must never forget this. Though news reporters would continually flood our minds with pictures and reports of sin ravaging the world in which we live, there is an undeniable hope for those who believe. There is always hope for those who side themselves with the King and Lord of all things. The “better” may not be of this world, but it will certainly be in the new heavens and earth to come. So hang in there.

We would now sit back for a moment and take another look at some of those forces that seem “to make war with the Lamb.” As Christians, we see the futility of the efforts of those who would steal away peace from our world. Those social anarchists who would presumptuously walk contrary to the word of God are viewed through the eyes of the Lamb as futile enemies of truth. The angel of Revelation would proclaim their efforts to be futile if they would set themselves against those who are more than conquerors through the One who loved us. Their efforts are futile in reference to that which we yearn, eternal life. They are futile because of the statement, *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Rm 8:31).

Though we might come to the conclusion that all that is happening can only

come to a gloomy end, we must remember that the final outcome of all things will be victory for those who are in Christ. We are not one of those prognosticators who would instill fear in hearts concerning the “signs of the times” in order to generate repentance and fill church houses and coffers. We are of the assembly of the victorious who remain faithful because of the cross of grace that was revealed outside Jerusalem over two thousand years ago. Our faith is built on what He did for us, not on what we can do for Him in response to fear of present and impending dangers, either imagined or real. We will continue to believe that *“in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us”* (Rm 8:37).

As we work through the concepts that follow, we must focus on the God-defined purpose of this world. God is working. He has headed us toward heaven. Though our world may seem somewhat chaotic at times, we must always remember that out of chaos will come better things. We must never be tempted, as the Hebrew Christians, to turn back from Jesus as a result of present tribulation. We must make a bold statement as the Hebrew writer made after reviewing a series of better things we have in Christ: *“But we are not of those who draw back to destruction, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul”* (Hb 10:39).

## Chapter 1

# A WORLD VIEW WITHOUT A WORLD

Unlike animals, man is an inquisitive being. And being inquisitive we wonder. Since we are moral beings in a world that is corrupted with moral chaos, we wonder why “in the world” are we here?

If we could answer the question as to why the world exists, and why we are here, then we can understand our purpose (mission) as children of God. And when we understand our purpose, then the world begins to make a great deal of sense, even to our finite minds. Since we are all wondering about who we are and why we are here, then it is incumbent upon all of us to ponder a few concepts that will help us to be more content with the state of things as they exist in this world.

### A. The necessity of creation:

We would begin our quest to understand our existence by answering questions concerning the existence of a world that seems to have gone morally wrong. It is a world full of the most heinous violence that man can conceive against man. Genocide is a word that is found only in the dictionary of man, for no animal behaves in such a hideous manner. But we wonder why such behavior is uniquely characteristic with man.

These ponderings are all answered in one statement of Scripture: “*God is love*” (1 Jn 4:8). This, ironically, explains

everything. We say “ironically” because we wonder how a world filled with hate could have originated from an eternal source of love. But the answer is simple. Love must have an object upon which to pour out love. And since God is love, then there must be those upon whom He can pour out His love. So here we are with all our moral warts, unconditionally loved by a loving Creator who seeks that we be with Him for eternity. In order to create creatures of love, God needed an environment in which His created beings could love. He had to create an individual who could make decisions of good and evil within this environment. Does this make any sense?

In order to be lovable, there must always be a response to love. In other words, when one says, “I love you,” the answer that is desired by the one who makes this statement is, “I love you, too.” In order that the statement “I love you, too” be sincere, there are conditions. The one upon whom God would shower His love must be truly free to say, “I love you, too.” If there is no freedom, then the responding statement to love would only be robotic. So we must be created truly free in order to make a sincere statement of love. Add to this the necessity that we must be in an environment wherein freedom to make such a statement is neither hindered nor programmed. This means that we must be truly free-moral individuals with the ability and freedom to make

our own statements that are based on our own choices. The fact that we must be truly free to make choices must be true since it would be difficult for God to love a pre-programmed robot.

### B. The curse of fallibility:

God knew that His free-moral creation would go wrong. Our free-moral freedom comes with this risk. This risk is based on the fact that truly free-moral people must be fallible. We are indeed human because we are fallible. And because it is not possible that a free-moral being could ever live without going wrong, then there had to be a plan in place before creation to reconcile the fallible to his infallible Creator. And so after the first sin of His first two free-moral and fallible beings, God said in Genesis 3:15 to the tempter of our fallibility, *“And I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed. He will bruise your head, and you will bruise His heel”* (Gn 3:15).

This is the first announcement for the purpose of the existence of the world and its inhabitants. It is ironic that the first statement in the Bible concerning man’s redemption from his fallibility was made to Satan, who, through temptation, led man from his innocence.

Love demanded creation. Creation demanded freedom. Freedom comes with the risk of sin. And sin demands redemption. If there was the need for redemption—and there was—then we would ask, “Redeemed for what?” All this is in the statement of Genesis 3:15. It was a plan

conceived before the creation, but enacted only when the fullness of time came on a wooden cross outside the city limits of Jerusalem of Palestine. Sin first came, then the Son, and then, the salvation. But again, salvation from what and for what?

### C. Signpost to our destination:

The concept of redemption for salvation means little to most people of the world. But it means something incredible to those who stand at the grave of a departed believer. What salvation means was revealed only a short time after the Creator confronted the first two fallible sinners in a garden of paradise. Their deportation from that garden, which was meant to be an eternal dwelling, reveals the original purpose for which creation was enacted. The eternal triune God said among themselves, *“Behold, the man has become as one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, he must not be allowed to put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever”* (Gn 3:22). And therein is revealed the meaning of “salvation.”

**Saved from sin without the promise of living forever is meaningless.** In order to restore eternity to the created, there must be an answer for that which separates the created from the presence of the One who only has the gift of eternity. Therefore, in order for God to be a just God in the creation of man, then He had to provide the means by which the sin, which He knew would occur, could be rectified. The answer to the problem of fallibility had to be a suffi-

cient means by which the fallible sinner could once again be restored to that which brings eternal life, that is, his walk with God. This is the salvation for which all of us yearn. We are told little when this drama was played out in the garden of

Eden. But enough was revealed that all believers from that time were looking for a “crushing blow” that would rectify what was given up by two fallible people who resigned themselves to their own flaw of fallibility.

## Chapter 2

### **THE RIGHT PLACE FOR NOW**

God is love, and our existence is evidence of this fact. So in creating us, He has said, “I love you.” If our response, “I love You, too,” that we would make to our Creator is to be sincere, then we must have the freedom **not** to make the statement. We must be able to rebel, to sin, to morally corrupt ourselves to the lowest level of sinful degradation. If we are truly free-moral beings, then we must have the option to turn our backs on our Creator; to live and to die in eternal extinction. Unfortunately, it is the choice of most people to turn their backs on the God of love. Though sad, the option for eternal doom is inherent in our being truly free-moral individuals. It is not that we inherently sin. It is that within inherently free-will people there is the possibility of making sinful decisions. And we all make such decisions. And when the norm of society chooses to make bad decisions, then we end up with the condition of society that is explained in Genesis 6:5.

But you might ask, “If God is love, and thus had to created a truly free moral individual who could go wrong, then why would He even create us in the first place?” The answer is that He had to. It

is simply the nature of love. Love must love something, else it is not love. A loving God cannot exist alone in eternity with a simple proclamation that He is love. Love is meaningless without action. And since love had to create, then love also had to provide a means by which the loved could perpetually exist in the presence of a loving God. This too was a loving act on the part of our God of love.

This brings us to questions concerning the environment in which God placed us, an environment wherein we can go wrong. We can become unloving. So here we are, in the best of all possible environments for the existence of a truly free-moral individual with all the possibilities to love as our Creator, but with the possibility to go incredibly wrong.

Ours is an environment where choices can be made between good and evil. It is an environment in which we can be held accountable for our moral fallibility. It is even an environment where we pay the consequences for violating both moral and physical laws. And yet in all the evil and suffering of this environment, we can think of no better environment for the existence of a truly free

moral person to make choices of either good or evil.

We must keep in mind that we are not alone in this environment. We must never forget that in this environment there are other individuals who also have the right to choose. And some of those in our environment, as we, also make bad choices. For example, it is often the desire of a free moral being to exalt himself above or against his fellow man. He seeks to rule over his fellow man. All these desires define the nature of a free-moral person. These desires also answer the question as to why evil and suffering exist in the best of all possible environments in which a truly free-moral being must exist.

In all our consideration of these matters, we must not make the mistake of blaming the physical environment for the bad moral choices we make. When we say the “best of all possible environments,” we mean that this must be an environment wherein a physical being can function with the opportunity to go morally wrong. And for this created physical being to exist, there must be physical laws that govern its existence. And if these laws are violated, then there are consequences that are usually immediate. If one jumped from a ten-story building, he would immediately discover the consequences of his violation of the law of gravity upon his arrival at the foundation of the first story. The problem comes when others suffer when one violates a physical law of this best of all possible environments. A speeding vehicle can kill other people than the irresponsible driver

of the speeding vehicle.

### A. Freedom and destruction:

Now we come to a true understanding of the historical statement of Genesis 6:5. God created man and placed him in the best of all possible environments to make moral decisions. Because it is not in man to create his own moral codes that are constant and universal, God delivered to man eternal standards of moral conduct by which he must walk in order to prevent moral chaos (See Hb 1:1). But as the centuries went by after creation, evil prevailed over good as man as a whole sought to walk after his own moral standards. It came to the following moral law that is stated in Genesis 6:5: “*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Gn 6:5). And if you know the rest of the story, only Noah and his family made it out alive from this moral self-destruction. Movies are made with this theme.

It is imperative for the biblical historian to understand the purpose of the flood of Noah’s day in order to understand God’s work with man throughout history. So many questions are answered. Particularly, we ask concerning the existence of the nation of Israel, and then, the existence of the church. The existence of both are related to one another in reference to what Genesis 6:5 explains concerning the nature of free-moral individuals who choose to live outside the will of their Creator.

In all the mess of sin, the cross of the Son of God reveals that it was not fiendish of God to create man. It does so by His offer of a plan of escape to free-moral individuals He knew would go wrong in sin. The cross also explains the purpose for which God created man in the first place. Only in the cross do we have answers concerning why we are here and where we are going. And only in the cross do we discover that this world was created for a specific purpose. If we miss this purpose, then we will live with a host of unanswered questions, if not a life of despair. We will also be faced with the accusations of atheists as to why we would believe in a God who would create that which He would eventually have to condemn to an unfortunate end. (See *Biblical Research Library*, Book 25, chapter 5.)

## **B. Preservation through a nation:**

If it is not possible for those of society to save themselves and escape moral degradation that comes by living outside the moral bounds of God's law—and it is not—then God will work through those who walk by faith in Him in order to accomplish His eternal purpose for all that now exists. Though societies go wrong, individuals can go right. And right living individuals can exist in the midst of societies that have gone wrong. Noah did it. God chose to work through the fathers of faith that began with Noah, extended through Jacob, and then through the descendants of Jacob in the children of Israel. God continues to work through in-

dividual heroes of faith in order to accomplish His plan for His creation.

Israel was chosen out of the people of the world in order to preserve a segment of society, and a moral environment for individual heroes of faith until the cross of the incarnate Son of God. Israel was chosen to fulfill promises to Abraham, our father of faith, until the Blessing that would come through him could redeem those who walk by faith (See Gn 12:1-4). The nation of Israel was chosen through Abraham even before its existence. God made this choice through Abraham in order to create a “spiritual Israel” after fleshly Israel that as a nation was dissolved into the One who would be the Messiah for all people who walked by faith. Therefore, Israel, as a social environment for the remnant of the faithful, was only a means to an end. When the end came—Christ—then the means was termination, which termination included the special covenant relationship that God had with the nation of Israel. The faithful have since the cross moved again into a worldwide moral environment as it was from creation to national Israel. God is still focusing on individuals of faith who now make up the remnant of His people in this worldwide environment. (Do not forget this point for later discussions.)

It might be said that God chose Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to continue His purpose for the creation of the world, but ended up with Israel, a stiffnecked nation of people. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were men of great faith in a world environment that had morally gone wrong.

The cultural environment of Israel was as God identified them to Moses: *“I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiffnecked people”* (Ex 32:9; 33:3-5). Even Moses confessed to God, *“... go among us, for this is a stiffnecked people ...”* (Ex 34:9). And in reference to God giving Israel the land of Palestine, Moses stated to the Israelites, *“Do not say in your heart ..., ‘Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land ....’ Not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart, do you go to possess their land ... for you are a stiffnecked people”* (Dt 9:4-6). But God used their “stiffnecked culture” to preserve a segment of humanity in order to bring His Redeemer into the world. If He could get a stiffnecked people headed in the right direction, then at least a remnant of faithfuls would survive until the fullness of time and the revelation of the

Redeemer.

God used Israel to drive out the morally wicked who possessed the land *“in order that He might accomplish,”* as Moses said, *“the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”* (Dt 9:5). As we said, God chose the fathers of faith, but ended up with a stiffnecked people in order to bring the Savior of the world to those who have chosen to walk by faith. Israel was used as a vehicle through whom God accomplished His purpose for the creation of the world. We learn something in God’s use of Israel that identifies how He works today. He can use the worst case scenario of this world in order to accomplish His mission. **We must not think for a moment that the wickedness of man can in any way detour the plans of God for the purpose of this world and the destiny of His children.**

### Chapter 3

## **WE ARE HERE FOR THERE**

We were created for eternity. We are blessed with a spirit from God that is conditionally eternal only in the presence of our eternal Father (2 Th 1:6-9). We are the result of an Eternal Love, and thus, we are headed for an eternal presence with this Love. In order that our transition from here to there happen, God had to guard His justice by offering instructions on how to find the Way (At 9:2). This offer was made for those of His creation who would chose to follow His directions into His eternal presence. In or-

der that God’s justice be true and unaccused, an opportunity to transition from the confines of this material world for the eternal presence of God was made possible through the sacrificial offering of God Himself. The totality of His intervention among men, therefore, is based on the promise that God is working to get us from here to there. For this reason, we must view all that transpires in the present world as God’s efforts to get as many people as possible into His eternal presence. We are thus not confused by

the chaos that prevails in many places of the world. We are not confused or discouraged because we know that our God is at work to deliver us from this testing environment.

We seek answers to the question, "Why was the world created?" and "Why Israel?" The answers can be found only in the statement that will be made by Jesus at the end of the world, "*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation [creation] of the world*" (Mt 25:34).

**The world was created by a loving Father who seeks to bring His loving children, whom He now claims as His own, into His eternal presence, in which presence, their eternal existence is guaranteed.** Now we must consider this for a moment. Since the creation was never meant to be an end within itself, then there must be a reason for its existence, and ours. Its existence was to produce an environment for those who will exist beyond its termination. There is no Bible teaching that says that the world will continue as it is without end. If one were to adhere to the philosophy of evolution, then he might come to the conclusion that matter (the earth) is eternal. But if one believes the Bible, then there is an end to the heavens and earth that we now experience (Compare 2 Pt 3). The world as we know it will come to an end, but not those children of faith whom God has prepared for His presence in a new heavens and earth (See 2 Pt 3:13). They are His children in this present world, but they are not of this world. The fact that this world is temporary, therefore, estab-

lishes the conclusion that the world was created for an eternal purpose that will exist beyond the termination of the world itself.

**We are here in order to prepare for being somewhere else.** Christians are only "*sojourners and pilgrims*" on their journey through the existence of this world (Hb 11:13). This world is simply not their home. It is a place of transition to the eternal presence of the Father of their spirits (Hb 12:9). Since this world is a place of transitioning sojourners and pilgrims, then when there are few sojourners and pilgrims to transition the world will no longer be useful for the purpose for which it was created.

**If there is a finality to this world, then this world exists for the purpose of those who will exist beyond this world.** Those who will exist beyond this world are those who are of the faith of Abraham. By Jesus "*all things were created .... All things were created through Him and for Him*" (Cl 1:16). All things were created for Jesus, including all humanity. All was created for a purpose, that purpose being "*for Him.*" Jesus would have no need of an eternal earth as it now is, since the eternal existence of the faithful who now inhabit the world are not dependent on the existence of the world. But as one with the loving God, the Son of God has an eternal dwelling for us that is not dependent on the world as we know it. He will thus discard the created world in order to preserve that which does not depend on the material for its existence.

So what would be His purpose in

creating a temporary environment for us? If this environment is coming to a close, then those who walk by faith will exist beyond the end of this world. As we move closer to the end of all things, we must conclude that His allowance of the continuation of this present world is simply **for the purpose of giving birth to more sons of faith who will dwell with Him in eternity.** Since this world is coming to an end, then we would conclude that there is some reason why God would bring this world to an end. And since we would conclude that there is no limit to the population of heaven, then we must also conclude that this world will exist until it has fulfilled its purpose.

Now Paul revealed that there would be living Christians around at the time when Jesus would appear for a second time (See 1 Th 4:13-18). We would correctly assume, therefore, that God has planned a specific time for the termination of this present world. We will never know that time until we hear the final trumpet. It will be the remaining faithful “Noahs” who will hear the trumpet. At the sound of that trumpet, the resurrected and changed saints, we will together enter with the living and changed saints, enter into an eternal existence in the presence of God. Whatever God does with the present world is not our concern. We only know that we will be restored to eternity, which thing Adam and Eve gave up in the beginning (See Gn 3:22-24).

**If the purpose of this world is to populate that which is to come, then this world is useful for this purpose as**

**long as citizens are produced for eternal dwelling.** But when this world is no longer conducive to the population of that which is beyond this world, then this world is no longer useful for the purpose for which it was created. This brings us back to the teleology (the end purpose) that was expressed in Genesis 6:5-7. In the flood, **God terminated the population of the world because the world produced no more sons of faith.** When this world no longer produces that for which it was created, then it is gone, in a moment, at the voice of an archangel, at the sound of the last trumpet (1 Th 4:15,16).

**If the world is here, therefore, for the purpose of populating heaven, then our business is God’s business to get people into eternal glory with Jesus.** Since the Christian is no longer his own, but has been bought with a price (1 Co 6:20), then it is simply senseless for him to consume upon himself that which is temporary. It is his primary mission to bring glory to God by focusing on the mission of God and the purpose for which this world was created. Terms and phrases as “materialistic,” “worldly minded” and “carnal” define those who are caught up and confined to this temporary existence. But terms as “evangelism,” “mission minded” and “hope” define other-world minded people. These terms find the centrality of their biblical definition in the purpose for which God created all things, and then gave a mission to those who are of faith.

**The closer one gets to the heart of God, the closer he gets to the mission**

**of God that is inherent in the creation of this world.** Evangelistic minded Christians are in touch with God. They are in touch with the mission of God and His purpose for the creation of this world. Their world view is centered around the purpose of taking as many people as possible into eternal glory. It is the love response of their hearts to follow after their loving Creator, whose mission it is to have loving beings in His presence for all eternity.

In order for the loving to be with the eternal Lover, God came in the likeness of the created (Ph 2:5-11). He was incarnate in the flesh of man (Jn 1:14). However, after His resurrection, His body of flesh was changed into that which we will also be changed after our resurrection (See 1 Co 15:35-58). We do not now know the nature of His resurrected and changed body. But we know that when He comes again, we will be changed to be like Him. John wrote, *“Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed **what we will be.** But we know that when He appears, we will **be like Him, for we will see Him as He is**”* (1 Jn 3:2).

When we consider this one statement of the Holy Writ, we are held in awe at the sacrifice that the Son of God made for us. The Son will “appear” a second time. In order for Him to appear, there would have to be substance to His presence. We will “see Him.” In order to be seen, there must be a body that would reflect His glory. His will be a bodily

appearance. John says that we will be like this body of His. Ours will be a changed body (1 Co 15:50-54). But we will see Him as He is, in His permanently incarnate, but changed body. John is saying that the Son of God permanently incarnated in the flesh of man on our behalf (Jn 1:14). Though He was changed in His resurrected body, there was something permanent about Him giving up the form of God (See Ph 2:5-11). He did this for us. We are driven to our knees by the intensity and extent of His love for us. The permanency of His eternal sacrifice wonderfully manifests His abiding love for us throughout eternity. What words are there in any human language that would explain this love, this sacrifice?

### **He did this for us!**

If Jesus, the loving Creator of all things, created us for an eternal existence with Himself (Cl 1:16), then this is love beyond what any man can experience on this earth. We are driven to be in the presence of this eternally incarnated loving Creator. We cannot help ourselves. And we cannot but seek to take everyone we know with us into this awesome realm of love and freedom from the sufferings of this present world that has gone wrong in so many ways. We cannot help but cry out as John when he was so emotionally overcome with the awesome visions of Revelation, *“**Come, Lord Jesus**”* (Rv 22:20). We realize that we were created not for here, but for there with our Lord Jesus.

## Chapter 4

# WE WOULD PROGNOSTICATE

Many of us have spent our lives in daily Bible study, taking moments to breathe in order to survey the world around us. We are as the prophets of old who *“inquired and searched diligently ... searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify ...”* (1 Pt 1:10,11).

What a Bible-saturated mind invariably does is start on a journey of viewing the world around us through the eyes of God and recorded Bible history. So many principles of history have been revealed throughout the Bible that the Bible student cannot but view all history through a biased understanding of how God has worked in the affairs of this world, which past works and affairs are recorded in the Bible. When we come to a certain saturation point of Bible history, one begins to perceive some incredible works of God in the past, which perception molds our world view of how God now works. We begin to understand that God is still working to bring about His purpose for all things, especially for the good of His people. We then begin to fully appreciate what God promised in Romans 8:28: *“And we [Christians] know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”*

And this is our quest in our obsession with recorded Bible history. We seek to know **His purpose** in a world that often seems like it is out of control. And in

a world that seems to be out of control, we begin to understand through a knowledge of His word and work that actually everything is under control. He is upholding everything with the power of His word, and thus, we trust His work (Hb 1:3). We conclude:

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore **we will not fear**, though the earth is removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling”* (Ps 46:1-3).

If there are those who would think that our world view of history is prejudiced by too much Bible, then they are right. We offer no apologies. We would believe that the Bible was laid in our hands as a gift of God, and thus, a gift that would be our road map to make our way through this twisted world in which we live. We are thus tainted with the impressions of inspiration of the Holy Writ. Our philosophy of history is anchored in what has been recorded through the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit as He took writer after writer throughout history through His inspirational influence to map out how God has worked in the past in order that we have faith in His work in the present and in the future.

If we would affirm that *“whatever things were written before were written*

for our learning” (Rm 15:4), then we have learned well. If there is nothing new under heaven, as Solomon eventually learned (Ec 1:9-14), then our understanding of the present, and our prognostications of the future, are seated in the words the inspired history Book. This is the encouragement that the inspired word of history offers.

In one’s mental saturation with inspired history, he of necessity comes to only one conclusion: “... all things work together for good to those who love God.” We must never forget this. This biblical world view of history is especially important to remember if we are in the depths of despair in a situation wherein there seems to be no hope. We are sure that Job eventually remembered this throughout his trials. We too must remember the promises of God: “Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Ps 55:22). “He will not suffer your foot to be moved. He who preserves you will not slumber” (Ps 121:3).

As driven students of Bible history, we must be incurably optimistic when faced with the despair that the world dictates. If one’s world view is based on the reports of the nightly news, or the daily newspaper, then he will conclude that everything has gone and is going horribly wrong. We often lead ourselves to believe that there is no hope. And truly, we are often lost in a world of misfortune and failure. We often cry out in complaint as Gideon: “Oh my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this befallen

us?” (Jg 6:13). Even Job had his moment of complaint.

*My soul is weary of my life. I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, “Do not condemn me. Show me where You contend with me. Is it good to You that You should oppress, that You should despise the work of Your hands and shine on the counsel of the wicked?”* (Jb 10:1-3)

We must not forget that the nightly news and the daily newspapers are in business to make money off the misery of our lives. They economically thrive on those who thirst after seeing and reading about doom and gloom. Christians who are led by a fickle desire to allow their environment to form their mental state of mind, must turn off the news and stop reading the newspapers.

We must repent of our culture of complaint that has developed out of a Facebook circulation of immoral junk and jokes. We must turn our attention to reading from the Word that says “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rm 8:37). If we watch the news and read our newspapers more than we study our Bibles, then we are in trouble. If we spend countless hours every day reading circulated junk about which to complain and gripe, then we need to repent. We need to start studying our Bibles again. Satan is not dumb. After all, he has more Christians spending more time on Facebook and YouTube than in the study of their Bibles.

We would thus look past the circulated news of doom and reports of despair. We are “other-world minded,” and thus, our philosophy of history is not based on a glamorization of broadcasted sin. It is based on a Divine theme, a salvational plan that is being played out in the best of all possible environments that was created for the purpose of bringing free-moral individuals into an eternal dwelling with their Creator.

We would believe that there is infinite Divine control in a world that we too often and finitely assume to be out of control. We often allow ourselves to believe that it is all wrong when it seems that all things have gone wrong. We sometimes erroneously conclude as Habakkuk questioned, “*Why do You look on those who deal treacherously and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours the one who is more righteous than he?*” (Hk 1:13). We choose not to be thus minded. We so choose because we believe that God is in control. We choose to believe that the wrong will eventually be righted by the One who upholds all things by the power of His command (Hb 1:3).

So we cannot help ourselves from being incurably optimistic. If the “Bible tells me so,” then we have no other option but to conclude that the One who upholds all things by the word of His power will eventually bring about that for which He created all things. His “plan of salvation” is not yet complete. The cross has taken place. But the crown is yet to come.

When the Malaysian MH 350 flight was lost from the radar of humanity, there

was great mourning on the part of the families of everyone who was on board the fateful flight. A placard stand was erected in the airport at Beijing. On it one could write a brief statement in reference to the rescuers’ efforts to find the lost plane. As we noticed the brief statements of the placards that were hung upon the display stand, there seemed to be two categories. There were those notes from the family members who had no world view that included God. These notes simply read, “Have hope.” And then there were the other notes that were placed there by those who had God in their world view. These notes read, “Hope and pray.”

Hope by itself may give one a sense of peace of mind, but hope without the possibilities of Divine intervention leaves one with only the abilities of the rescuers. The Christian has hope, but his hope has a foundation of faith in a God who is working all things together for good. It is this hope that we would have, not simply a fatalistic optimism that everything will somehow work itself out by chance.

And herein is the wonderful gift of having in our hands an inspired record of how God worked all things together in the past for the good of those who loved Him. We would thus walk by faith as those faithful ancients about whom the Hebrew writer inscribed the words, “***These all died in faith, not having received the promises. But having seen them afar off were assured of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were foreigners and pilgrims on the earth***” (Hb 11:13). We want to be so assured of what God is now doing in order

to work us toward the crown, that we will confess that we too are only foreigners in this world.

In our study of Divine history, therefore, we have hope for the future because of the evidence of how our God worked in the past. Someone rightly stated it: *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not*

*seen”* (Hb 11:1). **Our God has given us evidence of how He has worked in the past in order to give us hope of how He is working now and will continue to work in the future.** This is how the ancients of old functioned in their daily walk of life, and this is how we will do the same in our lives today (Hb 11:2).

## Chapter 5

### THE NONSTOP GOD

When the Son of God stood with His incarnate feet on Palestine soil, He said, *“My Father is working until now ...”* (Jn 5:17). And we conclude that He is still working today.

If we conclude from Scripture that God knows the future, then we must conclude that He knows what He is doing by working all things *“together for good to those who love”* Him in the present. If we come to this conclusion, then we may be somewhat frustrated with our own lack of ability to understand what He is doing in the present in order to bring about that which is good for His children. But most important, we might struggle with our faith that He is able to bring about the finality of His eternal purpose for this world.

We assume that God is presently working. But our difficulty is perception. We have a difficult time perceiving His present work in the affairs of this world, and specifically, in our lives. This is particularly difficult for “inactive Christians,” if there is such a thing. Those who

have their lives programmed with a rigid schedule are at a loss to determine that God is working in their lives. Those who are so consumed with the affairs of this world, have a difficult time perceiving the work of God. This is the sadness about those who are doing nothing in the realm of walking by faith. If our faith takes us only to a non-relational assembly with others who are also “dead in the water,” then no one is perceiving, or experiencing the work of God in their lives. Unless one is launching by faith out into the deep waters of work for Jesus, then he has no realm in which to perceive God’s work in his life. It is easy to have faith while standing in the boat. But it takes faith to jump in deep waters and walk. If we do not walk by faith, we will have little faith in the One who is able to reach down and answer our cries for help. Just ask Peter.

We need to take this quest for the abundant life beyond our personal lives. We must enter into the realm of God’s work in the world of affairs around us.

In order to do this, we go to our source book by first examining the faith of the saints in the Old Testament who walked in the comfort of God's directing hand. **The faith of these giants of faith is revealed through their steadfastness while living through the apostasy of Israel, and often not perceiving that God was even working through their sin.** Their faith was revealed throughout Israel's history in the wilderness wanderings, during the time of the constant torment of the Canaanites whom Israel did not flush out of the promised land, as well as their eventual going into Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. They simply, or magnificently, trusted that **God was working.**

It is always challenging to understand that God is working throughout the worst of circumstances. But if we conclude that He is working all things together for good for His people, then we must hold to this conclusion, regardless of the doom and despair that we might be enduring in our present lives.

We have found that some have difficulty believing in a God who is working things out for the good of those who are enduring the sufferings of this world. But the God in whom the Christian believes is not impotent in reference to the affairs of man. We are not deist, that is, believing that God created the world and then walked away. We believe in a God who *"is not far from every one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being"* (At 17:27,28).

God's work in the affairs of man did not begin two thousand years ago. It has

been His business since the beginning to be involved in His creation. Jesus reminded the Jews, *"My Father is working until now ..."* (Jn 5:17). And so, this is the conclusion we take away from Galatians 4:4. *"But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son ...."* God was working from the beginning to bring Jesus into the world. The beginning of what eventually concluded in the "fullness of time," reached back to the very beginning of time, before the Garden of Eden, before the first "Let-there-be" statement was made and the earth sprang into existence (See 1 Pt 1:19,20). We believe in the working plan wherein our Savior was crucified before the creation of this world (See Mt 13:35; Ep 1:4; 1 Pt 1:20). We believe in an involved God who worked from the very beginning of that which exists to the "fullness of time" that climaxed in the cross. But we also do not believe that God went on vacation at the cross.

God's involvement in the affairs of the world since the beginning of time assumes that there is purpose to this world, and that purpose is Divine. The "fullness of time" marked only one milestone of His work in time. One milestone was accomplished at the cross. This was a salvational milestone that was measured by the "fullness of time." But since the cross, we have entered into another time zone, of which it too will come to a fullness. This fullness of time will end in the crown. And because we have not yet reached this milestone, **we conclude that God is still working in the affairs of mankind in order to bring about His**

### eternal plan for us.

Our foreknowing God has worked throughout history in order to bring into His eternal glory and presence those who will make a free-moral choice to serve Him. He is the God in whom “*we live and move and have our being.*” He is a God who cannot keep His hands off His creation. And because He cannot keep His hands off, He is “*upholding all things by the word of His power*” (Hb 1:3) in order to get us to our crown at the end of all things.

In order to increase our faith in this God in whom we believe, we must go back in history to an era where we might conclude that things got out of control. At least those who were experiencing the calamity of those times might think that God had vacated His creation and forsaken His people. We go back to the history of Israel in order to be reminded that our God is in the midst of His work right now, as He was with Israel, in order to bring about the intervention of His Son again into the affairs of man.

Our case that our God is transcen-

dent—He intervenes in the affairs of this world—is proved by the Bible record of His work among His people, which work will not conclude until we hear the sound of a last trumpet. This is a thrilling story of God working all things together for the good of all those who walk by faith. We know that it is often difficult to perceive His work during times of struggle. But we must keep in mind the crowd of Old Testament witnesses who remained faithful in their struggles, while they too found it difficult to look around to find tangible evidence of His presence (Read Hb 11). But in reading of their faith there is such an exciting story. It is one from which we cannot walk away without believing that the one true and living God is the one “in whom we live and have our being.” He is a God whose presence is not defined by our words concerning distance, but a God who is simply here and there at the same time. He is not confined to the definition of our words, nor to the hands on our clocks. His being and work are not limited to the definition of the words in our dictionary.

## Chapter 6

# GOD PURPOSEFULLY WORKS

We would conclude that God has worked in the affairs of this world and in the lives of His people. He so worked in order to bring about the purpose for which He created this world. But we must understand why He had to work in our affairs. Since He created us to be free-moral individuals with the ability to choose, and placed us in the best of all possible envi-

ronments in order that we be able to make choices, He knew that we would make choices that would lead to our harm. He knew that when the collective of humanity would make the same bad choices, humanity would end up in moral degradation.

So we start with all humanity that went all wrong. A principle of humanity

is brought out by the wickedness of man before the flood of Noah's day. Of that generation of mankind, God pronounced, "... *that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Gn 6:5). Herein is revealed a principle that we must not forget when studying the history of humanity. **Societies become worse, not better, when they are left to walk after their own moral codes.** This is not being pessimistic about life and this world. We know this is true because the Bible says that it is simply **not in man who walks to direct his own path** (Jr 10:23). And since man cannot be left alone to establish his own moral codes of behavior, then there must be direction from above. But even when Divine direction is given from above, the majority of mankind can still go wrong. But those faithfuls as Noah who walked by faith, can survive even in the midst of total moral degradation.

So in view of the fact that we morally go wrong, even with the written directions of God in our hands, God transcends history in order to do His will regardless of our evil inventions. God never left man with the responsibility of carrying out His eternal plan of redemption. He could not do this because all sin (Rm 3:23). In view of what happened to all humanity before the flood of Noah's day, the moral planning of man could never be the foundation upon which redemption could take place. God must personally work in history in order to bring about His purpose for which He created this world. **And the purpose for this world**

**is to bring created beings into eternal dwelling in His presence.** If we are to make any sense out of this world, then we must accept this reason for the purpose of the world and our existence in it.

So the fact that man morally digresses to the point "*that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart*" are only evil, God uses the efforts of Satan, who seeks to destroy man, to bring about His plan for those He created. He illustrated this providential work with His chosen people Israel. He recorded His workings with Israel, and thus, from this record He expects us to read and learn how He continues to work with His spiritual Israel today (Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11).

Israel was chosen out of the nations of the world for a specific purpose. **That purpose was to reveal in time the faithfulness of God in preserving a segment of society for the revelation of the Redeemer of all those who would walk by faith.**

The Jews were not chosen because they were more righteous than other nations. They were not chosen because they were more obedient. They were a stiff-necked people. But this stiff-necked nature would aid in their preservation. In order to pave the way for the coming Redeemer, God needed a people who was tuff-skinned and determined, even though in their hardheaded nature most of them would eventually rebel against His moral standards. Nevertheless, after they would pass through the fire of their Assyrian and Babylonian bondage punishment, the remnant of Israel that would emerge from captivity would never again go after idols

and flirt with immorality. Their captivity would purify them in anticipation of the Savior who would come in the fullness of time of national Israel and the fulfillment of all prophecy concerning the Christ (Lk 24:44).

God worked everything for good through Israel. If we step back and take a look at Israel's rebellion and captivity, we can see how God took that which was a national calamity in order to bring about the salvation of millions of people throughout the world.

As students of Bible history, we must never forget the reason why God chose Israel from the nations of the world. Knowing this reason helps us understand why He wanted all the Canaanites vacated from the land of Palestine. And if they would not vacate, He instructed Israel to eradicate their evil culture. If Israel did not morally cleanse the land of promise in which God intended to preserve a segment of society, then there would be the danger that God's people would go the way of all humanity as in the days before

the ark of Noah was lifted from the face of the earth.

It seems that in God's efforts to use Israel for His purpose, He struggled with their history of rebellion, repentance and renewal. When it seemed that the Israelites were on the verge of destruction, God came to their rescue. This repetitive story of rebellion, repentance and renewal started when they were only three months out of Egyptian captivity. But Moses pled for Israel and God relented to let them survive His fury against their rebellion (See Nm 14:11-20). When they came into the land of promise, they did not drive out the evil culture of the Canaanites. We know the rest of that story. Throughout their independence in Palestine, the cycle of rebellion, repentance and renewal continued until there was no cure but eradication from the land. And thus they went into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. But in all this social turmoil we must not forget that God was writing a history book from which we today could find our way to Him in eternity.

## Chapter 7

# A ROAD MAP OF GOD'S WORK

The Old Testament history books are a literary road map of the work of God in the affairs of this world. God has recorded this history for the sake of His people. When Paul reminded both the disciples in Rome and Achaia of this recorded history, he surely wanted them to remember the fact that God was still working in the lives of His people at the

time he wrote both Romans and the two Corinthian letters (See Rm 15:4: 1 Co 10:11). We too would give heed to his exhortation in order to do the same. Old Testament history was not simply recorded to give us a historical narrative of Israel, but to give us sign posts of the work of God in the affairs of this world. He thus expects us to conclude that since He

worked in such a manner in times of old, **then He is doing the same in these times.**

From the day the Israelites were baptized unto Moses in the Red Sea (1 Co 10:2), to the time when about 3,000 were baptized into Christ for the remission of sins 1,445 years after the Red Sea baptism (At 2:41), God worked among His people in order to bring about the cross of redemption and the phenomenon of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30 (At 2:1-4).

Israel was purified through the wilderness wanderings. After they were purified of their rebellious spirit and bondage mentality, they were placed in the land of promise. All went well until the people began to fall under the influence of the Canaanites they failed to eradicate from the land. They were then consigned to suffering their deportation into all the world. In being scattered throughout the land of their captors, they were again purified. After the captivity, the remnant was spiritually prepared to again participate in the eternal plan of God to preach the gospel to the world.

### **A. The scattering:**

Because of their rebellion against God, Israel was taken into the wilderness of Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. But we must not forget that God was working in their struggles of captivity in order to turn their rebellion into repentance and to accomplish His plan to bring the Savior into the world. He was work-

ing in order to lay the foundation to take the message of the Savior into all the world.

The foundation for world evangelism was first laid when the northern ten tribes of Israel were carried away into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. Nineveh was the old capital of the Assyrian Empire. As biblical historians, we often make the mistake of viewing the expanse of the empire of Assyria to be from Nineveh to the west, since this is the only history we have of the Empire in the Bible. But we must view the empire to have also expanded far to the east. We do not know how far east the Assyrians extended their empire, but we can make some guesses. It surely extended as far east as it did west, and thus the territory of the Empire could have extended to the eastern part of modern-day Iran, and possibly into Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the context of the vastness of the Assyrian Empire, we wonder concerning the extent to which the Jewish captives were carried away when the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C. We wonder because we must understand that God was setting the world stage for something awesome that would come centuries later in the history of Israel. So when we read historical statements as the following, we must see God at work for the salvation of man:

*For the children of Israel [the northern kingdom] walked in all the sins of Jeroboam that he did. They did not depart from them until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight as He had said by all His*

*servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day* (2 Kg 17:22,23).

This deportation of Israelites also affected other peoples over which Assyria reigned, for other peoples were brought into the land of Canaan.

*And the kingdom of Assyria brought people from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Ava and from Hamath and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel* (2 Kg 17:24).

Now keep in mind that in all this movement of peoples, God was establishing a foundation upon which world evangelism would later take place over seven hundred years after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel.

In order to continue the laying of the foundation for world evangelism, a little over 130 years after the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel, the same process of deportation started with the southern kingdom of Israel, Judah. By the time of this deportation, the Babylonian Empire had conquered the Assyrian Empire. In reference to Judah, it was the same story of taking Jewish captives and spreading them throughout an empire. These captives were being planted in order to bring forth fruit centuries later.

*“Now the rest of the people [of Jerusalem] that were left in the city, and the fugitives who fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude,*

*Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away”* (2 Kg 25:11).

Jeremiah prophesied during the last days of the southern kingdom. In his prophecies, God promised through Jeremiah that He would scatter His people throughout the nations of the world. At least one thing is certain when we read these prophecies of Jeremiah. In reference to the scattering of the southern kingdom as a result of their sin, God was using Israel's rebellion as the foundation upon which He would universally crush Satan. Jeremiah recorded that the Lord said, *“And I will cause them to be moved into all kingdoms of the earth ...”* (Jr 15:4; see Jr 9:7). This global movement of Israelites was presupposing that God would centuries later commission the disciples to “go into all the world” where He had scattered His people (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15). They would go into all these lands to which Jews were scattered in order to preach the gospel of deliverance from the bondage of sin.

Babylon, the capital of the Babylonian Empire, was south and further east of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. We would presume, therefore, that the captives of the Babylonian captivity were carried further east than the captives of the Assyrian deportation. These captives may have been deported as far east as the region called “India” in those days.

The Babylonian Empire was eventually conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire, whose borders extended from India to Ethiopia. This was a massive

empire, an empire throughout which Jews had been deported by the previous empires of Assyria and Babylonia, which kingdoms had been conquered by the Medes and Persians. During the reign of Ahasuerus, one of the kings of the Medo-Persian Empire, Esther 1:1 states that King Ahasuerus “*reigned over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia.*” When a letter of deliverance was sent throughout the kingdom that the Jews be allowed to deliver themselves from the wicked plan of Haman, this letter went to scattered Jews **who were living from India to Ethiopia** (Et 8:9). We would conclude, therefore, that by the time of Esther, there were Jews living as far east as India and as far south in Africa as Ethiopia.

## B. The prophecy of the plan:

Now that we have taken a brief tour of Jewish deportation throughout the world, we must consider what this meant in reference to world evangelism and God's eternal work to take the gospel into all the world. A very significant prophecy of Isaiah lays the foundation upon which the world would be evangelized through the scattering of the Jews throughout the ancient world. This prophecy was made at the time the northern ten tribes of Israel were initially taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. It was made by Isaiah who prophesied from about 740 to 700 B.C.

With the carrying away of the first Jews into world captivity, God wanted these Jews to know that something would happen in their future that would turn

their captivity into a blessing for all the world. He wanted them to know that He was still working in Israel regardless of their captivity and deportation throughout the world. Isaiah wrote the following historical prophecy:

*And it will come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house will be established on top of the mountains, and will be exalted above the hills. And all nations will flow to it. And many people will go and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. And He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths," For out of Zion will go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem* (Is 2:3,4).

The Passover/Pentecost feast was a time when the Israelites came before the Lord to celebrate their independence from Egyptian captivity. It was an annual event where as many Israelites as possible would be assembled before the Lord. When we combine this annual event with the prophecy of Isaiah 2:2,3, something wonderful was to happen in the future. From the time Isaiah made the prophecy, the thought of his message was in the minds of the Jews for centuries. However, Isaiah had stated something that they could not possibly have understood. It could not be understood until after it was fulfilled. And it would not be fulfilled until **over 700 years after Isaiah made the prophecy.**

During this 700 years, God was laying the groundwork for world evangelism

through the captivities of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. He was scattering His people throughout the world and permanently planting many of the Israelites in the economic culture of the nations to which they were taken as captives. Throughout the centuries, the Jews embedded themselves in the culture and economic structures in whatever nation they lived from Ethiopia to India, and beyond. They were building synagogues as religious/cultural centers in order to maintain their identity in the lands where they lived and prospered for over seven centuries. **God did not want them to lose their identity as Israelites, for when the prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled, God wanted the world to know that He had kept His promises to His people.** God knew what He was doing.

The Israelites surely had no idea that God was working through them as displaced captives. We can come to this conclusion because we have the opportunity of reading the recorded history in the Old Testament, and the final outcome in the New Testament. But when Israel was struggling through the captivities and living the history, they were certainly puzzled as to how God would turn their calamity into their good, but particularly into the good of the world. It is certain that they had no idea that all the scattering of the captives was connected with the mystery of God. Even the prophets could not understand this mystery when they recorded their inspired prophecies concerning what was to come. The prophets knew something was up, but

they had no idea of the mystery that God had in His mind for all the world. The predicament of the Old Testament prophets was clearly stated by Peter in 1 Peter 1:10-12:

*Of this salvation the [Old Testament] prophets have inquired and search diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when He testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow. To them it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to you they ministered the things that are now reported to you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven, which things angels desire to look into.*

### C. The fullness of the times:

***“But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son ...”*** (Gl 4:4). On the Passover/Pentecost feast of A.D. 30, God had a surprise for those traveling Jews who came to Jerusalem from Italy, north Africa and the Far East. **Acts 2 is a record of the beginning of the fulfillment of Isaiah 2:2,3.**

During His ministry, Jesus attended at least three Passover/Pentecost feasts. During the last feast, He was crucified, and the fulfillment of Isaiah 2:2,3 began. Of the three thousand who were obedient to the message of the apostles on the A.D. 30 Passover/Pentecost, some were from the far corners of the Roman Em-

pire, which Empire now encompassed all the preceding world empires of Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia and Greece (See At 2:8-11).

The travelling Jews who experienced the message of the apostles of the A.D. 30 Passover/Pentecost, returned to their homes in far off lands. They went home with a tremendous message on their hearts of what they had heard and seen, and experienced in obedience to the gospel (At 2:38,41). But we must not forget that there was another Passover/Pentecost a year later in A.D. 31. When this Passover/Pentecost came, those who were at the A.D. 30 feast a year before said to their fellow Jews who were not in Jerusalem the year before, "*Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord ...*" (Is 2:2,3).

And they went, year after year to the annual Passover/Pentecost feasts. It was in Jerusalem where the apostles stayed and preached the gospel to the world through those who came. The sojourners came and heard the message of the gospel. They saw the miracles of the apostles. They heard and obeyed the gospel. They then returned home with a message on their hearts. The change of the paradigm of faith was so great that the early Christians turned the world upside down as the message of the gospel went from synagogue to synagogue, and nation to nation as returning Jews from the Passover/Pentecost feasts in Jerusalem returned to their homeland nations throughout the world (See At 13:5,14; 14:1; 17:1,10,17; 18:4,19; 19:8). The system of evangelism was so effective that Paul

could write in A.D. 61,62 that the gospel "*was preached to every creature that is under heaven*" (Cl 1:23). God's system of world evangelism through the deportation of His people throughout the world centuries earlier had worked.

#### **D. Initial fulfillment of the plan:**

So what would we conclude from this planned system that God worked out over seven centuries? There is certainly at least one important conclusion we must make. **God is always working things together for good to bring about His eternal purposes.** We are sure that the Jews who suffered during the seven centuries of social turmoil did not understand God's redemption plan, for it was a mystery to everyone. The system by which God would evangelize the world was a mystery. The redemption through His Son was a mystery. Though the Jews experienced the captivities, they did not understand what God was doing in allowing them to be scattered among the nations of the world in order to get His redemption plan preached. We must not forget this point.

In order to reestablish the identity of Israel, a remnant of Israel eventually returned to Palestine after the captivities. This return of the remnant was in fulfillment of the promises that were made to the fathers. But the majority of the Jews had to remain scattered throughout the world. God was planning to use their settlement in the lands of their former captors as a means to take the gospel into all the world. **God works, and His work**

**in these global matters is often never detected by those who must live through them by faith.**

We must conclude that He is working even today through national calamity in order to bring about good for His people and the finalization of His eternal plan. He is simply not finished with His eternal plan for our existence. Our speculations concerning His work can only be based on the assumption that as He worked in the past He will work in the present and future. Since those things that were written before were written for our learning (Rm 15:4), then we conclude that we must learn from those recorded workings in the past in order to determine how He is working in history today. However, we would be cautious about adding details to His mysterious workings that He is now working out in the affairs of the world. We serve a mysterious God, one whose ways are past figuring out. *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out”* (Rm 11:33). We would never assume that we understand

His “unsearchable judgments” as some modern-day prognosticators would, and subsequently make millions of profit at the expense of the ignorant and curious.

We believe in a God who knows the future. Since He knows the future, then even before He delivered Israel from Egyptian captivity, He knew that the Jews would eventually rebel and go into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. His eternal purpose was always to use Israel as the medium through which He would preach the gospel of Jesus to the world.

As Israel, we are free to make our own moral decisions. But in our freedom to make bad decisions, God can use our failures for His purpose. He did this with the nation of Israel. He can do the same today with us. Though we would be tempted to despair because of the wickedness of the world in which we live, we must continually remind ourselves that God is working everything together for the good of His people. As we stated before, God did not stop working in the affairs of the world at the cross. There is yet the crown that will complete His eternal plan for the creation of this world.

## Chapter 8

# WORLD VIEWS IN CONFLICT

As we venture through the comparison of the opposing world views of Christianity and Islam, we must caution ourselves concerning definitions. We can only be generic in our identity of Islam because of the vast interpretation and application of Qur’anic law. Our identity of true Islam, therefore, will be illu-

sive. The same is true of our definition of “Christianity.” Islam is denominated into so many different expressions of belief and behavior that it is quite difficult to use any one sect of Muslims as the definition of the religion. Those non-Christian faiths who are looking from outside of Christianity would say the same about

trying to identify who is truly a Christian. Even those within the realm of what is called Christendom have a difficult time identifying what determines one to be a true Christian. The Muslim has the same difficulty in determining from within those who are truly Muslim. Within the present conflicts within Islam throughout the world, it is not uncommon to hear one Muslim saying concerning another Muslim that he is not a Muslim. We confess that we are also guilty as Christians.

In defense of generic definitions, we admit that we are responding from within a social quagmire of religion. Nevertheless, in our efforts to make some sense out of this world in which we live, we are forced to use generic definitions, guarding ourselves as much as possible from creating stereotypes. So we will use the term "West" to refer primarily to the non-Islamic Americas and Europe. We will be careful and fair to our Islamic friends not to lump our definition of their faith with the atrocities committed by those whom we would generically refer to as radicals, or to use the present-day politically correct term, Islamists. We would appreciate the same consideration from our Muslim friends in their definition of Christianity.

Regardless of our inability to stereotype religious faiths, there is certainly a general conflict going on in the world today within the ranks of the Muslim world, as well as the Muslim world against Christianity. It is a conflict between religious faiths that move people against one another. It is a conflict of ideologies that are expressed through re-

ligion, or non-religion. We seek, therefore, in our own inadequate way to give some meaning of the struggles between faiths and ideologies that prevail throughout the world today. We would do this because the atheists of our day are having field day concerning why anyone would ever want to believe in a God that would cause so much violence in the human race.

We would begin our discourse concerning with a present generation of young people in the West under the age of thirty who are somewhat challenged concerning history and world events. They are less knowledgeable of historical world events than previous generations. It is not that they are less informed about the world in which we live, but their view of the world is different from previous generations. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (an educational research organization in America), reported that 12<sup>th</sup> graders in America scored lower in testing in the subject of history than in any other subject of their schools.

The Millennial Generation has grown up in a society of taking for granted the privileges they have received in a materialistic society of entitlement. They take their freedom for granted. Their culture seems to move the participants away from the real world of oppressive world governments to an unrealistic dream world where everyone will somehow get along at a distance from one another in texting (SMS). This lack of understanding of oppressive ideologies and governments was clearly revealed in the percent-

ages of young people of America who thought that Israel was recently wrong in defending itself from a neighboring state—*Hamas* in the *Gaza Strip*—that seeks to annihilate the nation of Israel from the face of the earth. The fathers of this historically naive generation of the West, however, represent a different point of view concerning the conflict between Israel and *Hamas* that took place in 2014. Because their fathers better understood the real world in which we live, the greater percentage of the fathers who were fifty and older supported Israel's right to defend itself against those who are seeking its annihilation. They understood why Israel bombed the invasion tunnels into their land by a religious group (*Hamas*) who considered it an honor, according to their faith, to cause the death of women and children by provoking retaliatory strikes from Israel to defend itself.

One of the critics of the younger generation of America wondered why Israel did not engage in dialog with *Hamas*. A CNN news reporter interviewed Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, and asked, "You have been criticized for not engaging in peace talks with *Hamas*. Why do you not do this?" Netanyahu simply responded, "How can you negotiate with someone who wants you dead? Must we negotiate our suicide?" (We would caution the West that the day is coming when the stance of present-day Israel against *Hamas* will be a prophetic message of their own survival against the onslaught of Islam.)

Answers to international questions

may have simple answers in a young Western cocooned generation who think that people are entitled to their freedom without any cost. But we feel that such a generation must have a reality check. Those who take their freedom for granted need to remember the cost that their forefathers paid to gain and retain the unique freedom they have been handed on a silver platter. And second, they need to be thankful to God that the name of a free nation is written in the "place of birth" on their birth certificates.

We must never forget that freedom is not something that inherently happens within society or religion, but is something for which society and religious leaders fight, and then vigilantly work to preserve. We see a young entitlement generation in the West that has not learned this vital principle of history.

It was the young entitlement generation in America that put Barak Obama into power a few years ago as President of the United States. However, it was the same generation that deprived Obama of a majority in the Senate in 2014 because they did not show up again at the voting booth. As we predicted with Obama, and consequently the entitlement generation that put him in office, he, as well as they, had to learn that there is a real world out here of some who truly hate America. And like the citizens of Israel, they would like to see the "great satan" (America) dead.

It is difficult to negotiate with a terrorist at Starbucks when he has a loaded gun under the table directed straight at you. Terrorists did not grow up in a

Starbucks culture of entitlement where differences are worked out over a cappuccino. They are representatives of a fanatical religious world view that seeks to take populations back in history to oppressive regime management. Theirs is not a future world view of prosperity, but a backward advance into the Dark Ages of survival existence.

When it comes to the righteous saints of God, the matter becomes even more complicated and dangerous. Where particular societies of our present world have digressed to the moral degradation explained in Genesis 6:5, the righteous are subdued at all costs. Such places of moral degradation exist in our world today. And it is from some of these places that dates as 9-11 will live on in infamy. This is the world as it is.

What most people of the West, young and old, do not fully appreciate is that true Islam is a religious/political system that is very different from the Western world view. It is a theocratic governance of the people with the Qur'an being the "constitution" of the state. The West must not be deceived by the moderate Muslim who has ignored this Islamic mandate of theocratic government, and thus watered down some teachings of the Qur'an in order to reside within democratic structures of states that are governed by secular constitutions, which constitutions guarantee a separation between church (religion/faith) and state. In the constitution of Islam (the Qur'an), there is no separation between faith (church) and state. State is the religion, and thus, in order for the state to properly function,

the constitution of the religion must become the law of the state.

All this is right out of the theocratic system of government of the Old Testament. The Israelites were fortunate in the fact that God wrote the constitution (the Law), though the Muslim would claim the same for the Qur'an. The Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) was the law of the Israelite state. Since some in Israel today seek to be an Israelite state according to the Old Testament law, they too have the same problem as the true Muslim who would seek to establish a true Islamic state according to the Qur'an. Fortunately, the majority of present-day Israelites have modernized. They have ignored the mandates of a true Israelite state by separating secular state and the ballot box. However, there are those conservative Jews who would again reinstitute the Torah as the constitution of a theocratic state.

In reference to the theocratic law of Islam, we can thank Turkey and other democratic/Islamic states for doing the same in reference to Islam. The vast majority of the population of Turkey are Muslims, but they are Muslims who have modernized by ignoring the theocratic mandates of the Qur'an. Iran would be similar, though Iran struggles between giving absolute power to an elected president or to the Ayatollah (high priest) of Islam.

But the true conservative Muslim has a theological problem that the Christian does not have in reference to theocratic statehood. Christian Jews understand that in order to prevent what hap-

pened to the world's population before the flood (Gn 6:5), God had to build a nation that was founded upon faith in one God. God thus started with Abraham to build this nation. He then promised that from Abraham's seed a great nation would spring forth as the stars of heaven (Gn 12:1-4). This great nation would preserve faith for humanity until the promised Blessing would come who would redeem all those who lived by faith.

When the Redeemer came, it was the fullness of times, which meant the consummation (end) of the state of Israel and the beginning of the spiritual kingdom of King Jesus (Jn 18:36). A national/religious paradigm shift was made at the cross. The Bible teaches that the old world order (Israel) and her law (the Torah) were consummated at the cross (Cl 2:14). And by consummation, God meant termination. In the eyes of God, Israel as a state no longer existed after the cross. National Israel was dissolved in Christ, and thus national Israel became the spiritual Israel, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither bondservant nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Gl 3:27-29).*

Unfortunately, Islam does not have this conclusion to its theocratic system of law. Muslims are bound by the Qur'an

to establish sharia law (the law of the Qur'an) as the constitution of an Islamic state. Those Muslims who live in democratic states, therefore, must compromise the teachings of the Qur'an every time they go to a ballot box and cast a vote. Everyone else must always remember, therefore, that once the majority of the democratic state becomes Muslim, then the ballot box, according to strict Islam must disappear if true sharia law is to be established as the constitution of the state.

Every person within a democratic state in which there are also Muslims, must never forget that the teleology of the conservative Muslim is that Islam must eventually become the religion of the world. Once in the majority in every nation, then they must, according to the Qur'an, bring in sharia law in order to produce a true Islamic order of governance.

For the radical Islamist, it is only a matter of time before the whole world becomes an Islamic state. It is then that the radical Islamist believes there will be true peace. But as manifested by the present bloodletting between the Muslim Shi'ites and Sunnis, we know that such peace will never exist, even if all of us become some brand of Islam.

Westerners must not forget that radical Islamists do not see the world as they do. Their world view is different. In their world view, Islamists want to see the world as they want to see the world. For example, they view the world as the goal for world domination. What has fueled their convictions to accomplish this goal are some very significant conflicts that

have transpired on the world stage in the last half century. For one example, the Islamists see this generation of Israelites to be quite soft. They also see the present generation of Americans in the same way. And they are probably right. When they hear the phrase “no boots on the ground,” they are encouraged to believe that the West is afraid to engage in conflict concerning their own beliefs. The radical Islamists thus establish their world view on the basis that the West is timid, and thus impotent in reference to mortal conflict.

In 1967, the whole Middle East Arab world launched a combined attack against the state of Israel. But in only six days the army of the state of Israel that represented Israel’s culture at that time, obliterated the attacking armies of the united Arab states. In another Middle East conflict in 1973, Israel almost took Cairo, Egypt and Damascus, Syria, capitals of two surrounding nations. But at the same time they could not defeat the small underground army of Hezbollah radicals who held out in Lebanon next door to Palestine. So the Islamist’s conclusion to Israel’s failure to eliminate radical groups as Hezbollah and Hamas is evidence that the state of Israel is weakening. The present radical Islamic world believes that the present generation of Israel has become weak, and thus, will eventually fall to Islam rule.

Now add to this the last decade of war when the West bungled the social structure in Iraq. And we must also not forget the continued existence of the Taliban of Afghanistan and northern Pa-

kistan, and the growing Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al Shabaab in Somalia. If the West could not with all its military power annihilate the Taliban and Al Qaeda, then all Islamists throughout the world conclude that they will never be defeated. In their world view, they believe that they will eventually defeat the West. As Western nations continue to forsake spiritual ideology in order to trust in bombs and tanks, the radical Islamist has convinced himself that his ideology (Islam) will eventually prevail over the carnally armed defenses of a nonreligious West that is afraid to engage his enemy with boots on the ground.

Recent failures of the West against theocratic Islam have convinced the radical Islamist that he will eventually prevail worldwide. Islamists now view the West to be on the defensive, and thus, they are on the offensive. As the softened West cringes from “boots on the ground,” groups as ISIS simply draw radical Muslims from all the world to participate in their worldwide mission to establish their definition of a true Islamic state in the Middle East that will eventually grow into all the world.

You cannot win with timid, or half-hearted measures when in conflict with one who is willing to die for his faith. And it will truly be difficult for secular states to win a war against a theocracy that teaches its children in Madrass schools throughout the world to be martyred for Allah in their conflict with the infidels.

It is truly the purpose of the Christian to evangelize the world (Mt 28:19,20;

Mk 16:15,16). However, it is not the purpose of the Christian, as the misguided Roman Catholic Church of the Dark Ages, to “Christianize” the world through political and military Crusades in order to make the Pope the supreme world leader. On the contrary, Christians preach a message that calls for an individual and voluntary surrender to Christ. No swords or guns are ever involved. In order to continue the preaching of their message, Christians seek that secular governments exist in order that they might lead a peaceful and quiet life (Rm 13:1-7; 1 Tm 2:1,2). Christians never forget that secular government functions as a ministry of God for the sake of His people, for government is ordained by God to retain the authority of the sword among the people. No Christian ever wants the church to have this authority. The New Testament is not a constitution for state law, as the

Muslim so regards the Qur’an. The New Testament is a moral guide by which individuals behave themselves within the structure of any state that guarantees their freedom. The New Testament does not teach that the church has the authority of the “sword” by which the members can behead and deliver stripes to disobedient members. But such is the teaching of the Qur’an.

We must remind ourselves of the concepts that were brought out by Winston Churchill in a brief speech he made in 1899.

Individual Muslims may show splendid qualities, but the influence of the religion paralyses the social development of those who follow it. No stronger retrograde force exists in the world (*The River War*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., vol. II, pp. 248-250).

## Chapter 9

# A FREEDOM-BASED SOCIETY

It is the nature of Christianity to bring freedom to all men. In the historical context of Jesus’ statement, “*And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free*” (Jn 8:32), Jesus was not referring only to spiritual matters, but freedom to walk the way of God that would deliver people from the bondage of the Jew’s religious/political way of life (Judaism). It was a way of walking in sin, for the system separated people from the commandments of God (See Mk 7:1-9). Paul elaborated more on this walk of

freedom in Christ in his letter to the Galatians: “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty [freedom] by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage*” (Gl 5:1). The word “entangled” assumes a behavior of life that brings bondage. Reference was to more than “committed sin,” but to a religious/political way of life and ideology that separated the adherents of such from the freedom that Jesus offers. Jesus brought (1) freedom from the confines of sin, (2) freedom from the bondage of

man-made religious/political systems as Judaism, and thus, (3) freedom to think free in Christ. It is in this realm of freedom that Christians have the opportunity to be the best they can be without being intimidated into bondage by the religious/political powers that may prevail. When Christians are guaranteed their freedom through submission to God, they can be the best they can be in a society that guarantees both religious and political freedom. And when we are personally the best we can be, society as a whole prospers. Herein is the secret to establishing a prosperous nation. As someone once said, "Just as freedom from sin for the individual can be found only in Christ, even so, can the freedom of a nation be found only in Him."

What the religious leaders of Judaism did not realize at the time when Jesus made the statements of John 8 was that He was bringing the people freedom from the bondage of their religious/political system. In Galatians 1:14, Paul also had this freedom in the background of his thinking when he reflected on the bondage he promoted as part of the Jew's religion. "*And I advanced in **Judaism** above many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral **traditions***" (Gl 1:14).

When the religious traditions of the fathers is connected with the politic of the people, then there is a theocratic political party that is advanced by zealots as Saul (Paul). The people at the time of Jesus were in bondage to this man-made theocratic political system that was upheld by military men as Saul, and reli-

gious leaders as the scribes and Pharisees (See Mk 7:1-9). It was this political system that Jesus confronted. It was a theocratic system that was far removed from what God originally instituted through the giving of the law to Israel on Mount Sinai.

The Judaism of Jesus' time, as Islam today, was a political/religious ideology that included faith and state. The weapons of the Christian against such ideologies are spiritual (Ep 6:10-20), but the weapons of those who seek to maintain such political/religious ideologies are carnal. It is for this reason that many African countries will not allow an Islamic Party, as the Muslim Brotherhood, to exist in the political system of the country. They realize that such political parties will seek to use the "sword" of the state to advance the religion of the party. And such tried the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt when they were briefly in power in Egypt in 2014.

As in our relationship with God, so in our relationship with one another under the rule of law. **If one seeks true freedom, he must always bring himself under the rule of law.** But for a country to be united, everyone must come to an agreement that there will be a separation between religious law and state law. This is necessary lest we establish a theocratic government, and then one particular religion seeks to bring all the citizens of the state into their religion by using the laws of the state. And if any citizen does not "convert," then he must be exterminated.

There is a reason why the American civilization flourished from its early be-

ginnings. The freedom of America was based on the fact that oppressed people from all over the world could find freedom of religious thought that was guaranteed by the new and unique constitution that separated religion and state, and thus gave the individual citizen the right to be truly free without the intimidation of some other person's religious faith. By the thousands, oppressed people from around the world fled to this constitutional society of freedom. They continue to do so today.

Illegal immigrants are found in truly free nations, not in nations that are governed by despots or religious authorities who keep the people in bondage. It is interesting that people still flee to the religiously free West in order to escape the religious oppression of the countries from which they have fled. We thought it interesting that the March 1, 2013 *Time Magazine* reported that many Roman Catholics become evangelicals when they arrive in America. It is true that we can often find free nations by the direction in which immigrants are fleeing.

With the right to be free in a free society, there is the opportunity to think freely. And when men and women think freely, they come up with all sorts of ideas and inventions. Societies that do not allow free thought will always be those societies with companies that violate copyrights and patents in order to copy the inventions of a free market society. America can thank God for the culture of freedom that was first revealed through Jesus Christ, and written within the pages of the New Testament for posterity. The

New Testament principles of freedom, not laws, actually made their way into the American constitution, and then established a freethinking culture, and thus an industry based on invention.

God knew that people would prosper if they were only given the right to think freely. What made America great was this spirit of freedom that was renewed through Jesus Christ. It was the central goal of the writers of the American constitution to guard freedom of thought and movement. The result of this document is what we now witness today as the "American way of life."

The constitution guaranteed the freedom, and free men prospered on the moral foundation of the word of God. This does not make the New Testament the constitution of the state. It only reveals the moral foundation of freedom upon which a freethinking constitution was written. Upon the foundation of such constitutions, every person of society has the opportunity to prosper upon the basis of the principles of being free to prosper. Therefore, we must always keep in mind that when the statement "rule by constitutional law" is used, what is meant is that "rule of law" guarantees the freedom of the people to be fruitful.

Several nations of the world have failed to prosper because they have been submitted to the bondage of traditionalism, or struggle under the dominance of oppressive and corrupt dictators, regimes and religions. When there is no freedom, it is usually not the fault of the people, but some social figure or institution who seeks to keep the people in bondage.

When societies enforce the traditional thinking of the fathers on the people, then there is little room for free thinking and new ideas. Change for the better in these societies is often accomplished through social chaos which no one likes, and thus, everyone shuns. In Africa, tradition (“this is our culture,” as it is commonly stated) has crippled the development of the continent for centuries. But this is rapidly changing. Europeans first revealed to people some idea of what freedom can produce. But when the colonials left with either funds for roads, schools and hospitals, what came next was oppressive and corrupt dictators who would not allow the people to think and act freely for themselves. A humble civil worker was not allowed to make a decision on his own unless he checked with some higher authority. And for this reason, the business dealings of such cultures ground to a crawl as one authority on top of another was consulted until a final decision was eventually made for a business to function. “Red tape” is simply another way of saying, “We are in control.”

In South Africa we have always had fun with real estate agents who struggle with an archaic system of transferring house ownership. In South Africa it takes about 7-8 **weeks** of red tape to transfer the ownership of a house to a new owner. In America it takes from 3-4 **days**. Now spread this snail-pace business culture that is stuck in a quagmire of red tape throughout most of the business dealings of the economy of Africa and you can understand why African countries will never

compete with truly free-market economies. Then consider the fact that South Africa is one of the most efficient economies of Africa. But on the optimistic side, throughout Africa this “red tape” control culture is slowly vanishing away as a new and educated generation immerses. The best is yet to be in Africa.

Strong traditionalism, both in cultural interaction and business dealings, is a manifestation of apprehension, if not fear. It is apprehension about change. It is apprehension about making mistakes. It is a fear of losing the identity of our heritage in order to accept and adopt something new and better that brings greater prosperity for the future. And now we know why a world view with deeply embedded Bible principles releases nations from fear in order to prosper in an environment of freedom.

When faith replaces fear, then God can do great things in taking entire populations out of the archives of the past and poverty in order to set them on their way for a better future. This is the world as God would have it. God said to Adam, “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it*” (Gn 1:28). God meant that Adam lead humanity into prosperity through that which was created. Religions that bind people to poverty in caves are not from the God who created us with the ability to be fruitful.

There has always been too much concern about China taking the economic lead of the world away from America. It is certain that this will eventually happen, but please keep in mind that presently there are 1.4 billion people in China

competing in this race against only 230 million people in America. Because China is new on the world economic scene in reference to being a free-market economy, it still takes over a billion people to compete with a few million in order to win the economic race. But just watch China. A new nation is slowly being born. Christian faith is growing at light speed within the country. We cannot but conclude that the same spirit of freedom that grew America will grow China. Freedom will eventually change the culture as the Christian youth assume the direction of the country in the decades to come. Just watch what God does with this nation as millions are moved by faith in His Son in order to discover freedom to work and think. China will become a great and noble nation far beyond what we see today. The transformation has already started. President Xi of China is tackling corruption, and the youth of the nation are tackling Satan with Christ. China is on its way.

Oppressive government is never sustainable. It is not sustainable because God created within man the desire to be free. Islamic government that is reflected in theocratic systems as ISIS and the Taliban, seek to take people back to the Dark Ages. Such political ideologies exist only because of the leaders' power over the people who are held in bondage by fear, just as it was during the ministry of Jesus and the early Christians. It is simply not natural for men to be in the bondage of fear, and thus, the citizens who are captivated by the bondage of such ideologies always seek to think

freely. If they cannot within their own societies, then they become a refugee in one wherein they can think freely.

Regardless of oppressive governments, people still seek to be free. We recently listened to the CNN interview of a 30-year old man who was born in a North Korean prison camp. From the day of his birth, he lived 24 years in the prison until he escaped. Before his escape, all he knew was prison camp life. But if prison life was all he knew, then why did he have the urge to escape, which he did at the age of twenty-four? From where did this inner urge to be free originate? It came from God, for God created us to be free and to think freely, and through free thinking we would develop a better life for ourselves. For this reason, God wants to free people in order that they enjoy the abundant life. Maybe this will help us better understand what Jesus meant in the following statement: *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly"* (Jn 10:10).

Jesus not only took care of our sin problem that was introduced into the world through Adam, He also restored a way of life that Adam sacrificed because of his sin. Adam was driven from the Garden of Eden so that by the sweat of his brow he would have to toil the ground in order to survive. But in Christ, we continue to toil the ground, but we do so in appreciation for all that God did for us at the cross. The only motivation Adam had to toil the ground was the hope of eating the fruits of his labors. The Christian farms the ground in appreciation for the

fruit that will eventually come from the cross.

Freedom of thinking and movement is a precious thing. We must never forget that it is always Satan's goal to destroy the freedom of men in order to bring them into the bondage of religious/political systems the lead us away from God. With freedom, therefore, comes the responsibility to always seek truth. Paul explained in Ephesians 4:11,12 the ministries of teaching the truth. The reason these ministries were instituted among God's people was explained by Paul in Ephesians 4:13,14:

*... until we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of teaching, by the trickery of men in the cleverness to the deceitfulness of error.*

Crafty men who seek power will always seek to steal away the freedom of those over whom they seek to be dominant. Does this help us understand why truly Islamic states do not want the young girls to be educated? When ISIS or the Taliban take over a city or region, the first thing that must go is education, especially education of the women. Freedom must be contained in order that men might be dominant over women.

**An ignorant people can never be a free people.** And thus, an ignorant woman can never be free. Dominant hus-

bands have forgotten, or never learned, that in cherishing their wives, it is their job as the head of the wife to lead the wife to be the best she can be. And in order to lead one's wife to be the best she can be, a husband must lead his wife by love, not dominating his wife through fear. But this social scenario can never happen in a truly Islamic state.

A society that is built upon the nature of God, is a society that is humanitarian. It is a society in which the inhabitants care for the poor and unfortunate. It is a society wherein one loves his neighbor as himself. And since God is defined as love, then we understand that the roots of a truly humanitarian society can be traced back to the peoples' concept of a Higher Power who was lovingly benevolent to them. If the citizens of any nation find the one true and living God, then they will develop a humanitarian society.

Societies that are built on false gods that are created after the imagination of greedy, power hungry megalomaniacs are controlled by fear, not love. These created gods are oppressive since their inventors have sought to create and maintain power over the people. The adherents of such false gods become intolerant of any "apostates" (dissidents). Thus the creator of these gods kill those who oppose them, or those who disagree with their religious faith. They behead the apostates in order to purify their religious state.

The theocracy of Israel under Old Testament constitutional law was to prevent what transpired and led to the necessity of the flood of Noah's day (See

Gn 6:5). By the time of Noah, all humanity had become useless for that which it was created, that is, to populate heaven. With Israel, God ushered in a theocracy wherein the state, with Him as the only King, was to preserve faith. The Old Testament guarded Israel against the idolatrous nations that surrounded Israel and were predominant in the world.

We must keep in mind, however, that Israel was only one nation, one state, a segment of the world populations through whom God would bring the Redeemer into the world. It was not the purpose of Israel to make all nations theocratic states as Israel. Israel was to be unique among the nations. The Old Testament law that was given specifically to Israel, was meant to keep Israel separated from the nations. Jonah did not go to Nineveh in order to make an Israelite state out of the Assyrians.

But now, radical Muslims seek to make the world of nations, one nation/state that is governed by sharia law. By doing this, they seek to use the “sword” of the state to threaten citizens into the one-world theocratic state of Islam. God never did this with Israel. All the theocratic laws of the Old Testament were meant to preserve, not propagate the state of Israel. Muhammad forgot this point because of his little understanding of the purpose of the Old Testament, and his military ambitions.

We need not wonder what the goal is of people as Omar Ahmad, the founder of the Council on American-Islamic Relations:

Islam isn't in America to be equal to any other faith, but to become dominant. The Qur'an should be the highest authority in America (*San Ramon Valley Herald*, July 1998).

And his fellow operative, Ibrahim Hopper, the director of the above organization, stated,

I wouldn't want to create the impression that I wouldn't like the government of the United States to be Islamic sometime in the future (*Minneapolis Star Tribute*, April 1993).

The same God who created the theocratic nation of Israel was the same God who so loved His creation that He gave His only Son (Jn 3:16). This is the God who commissioned that the gospel be preached to all the world (Mt 28:19,20). He did not commission the apostles to preach a catechism of law by which all secular nations would become one theocratic nation. The one nation that is created by the preaching of the gospel is spiritual. It is not of this world (Jn 18:36). Through the preaching of the gospel, the Christian seeks to bring all men into Christ wherein all are one man in a spiritual kingdom (Gl 3:26-29). For this reason, those who come into Christ do not have to burn their national passports. Every Christian can have dual citizenship, one in the earthly state in which he lives, and one in heaven to where he is going.

The God of love is not promoted by terrorists who seek to “denationalize” the

world in favor of a universal citizenship of one Islamic state. God only will eventually be the terrorist of those who reject Him by the creation of their own gods. And since God is defined by love, then His love sets us free to love. We thus love because He loved us first (1 Jn 4:19). If we are citizens of God's heavenly kingdom, therefore, there is no terror in love (1 Jn 4:18). And we know that we are not truly free until we love, even our own enemies. Oh, how wonderful is the one true God of heaven. No imagination of the most intellectual and moral person of earth could have ever created Him with human reasoning. It is for this reason that we know that He is the true and living God.

## Chapter 10

# EARLY BEGINNINGS OF ISLAM

Any study of the world in which we now live must include a study of the Islamic faith. Our international news media almost daily reports on events in reference to Islamic countries, usually wars and bombings that are associated with some radical group of Islam. In all the conflicts, there is a great deal of misunderstanding between the Western world and the world of Islam. The misunderstandings are almost always based on the fact that neither side of the conflict understands the other. The West cannot sift through all the radical groups of Islam and clearly understand the core nature of the Muslim who is trying to bring his faith into modern times. On the part of the West this misunderstanding is particularly difficult. Western thinking is almost totally biased toward the separation of "church" and state. But the true Islamic world is theocratic. There is no such thing as a separation between one's faith and the law of the state.

The Muslim often views all Christians to be in a theological box wherein

he judges all Christians from the twisted perspective of medieval crusaders. This maligned judgment of the West is so critical that the Muslim cringes at even the mention of the word "crusade." And thus, accusations are thrown back and forth between the two world views in order to increase the conviction of the adherents of either group to cling to their perspective faith.

What we would say to our Muslim friends is that they are not too objective in viewing everyone of the world of Christendom to be Christian simply because one believes in Christ. In this context of discussion, we would use the word "true" Christianity in order to identify in Christendom those who have obeyed the gospel and do the will of their Father in heaven (See Mt 7:15-23). Christians are not religionists who invent for themselves all sorts of man-made religious beliefs and practices, and then claim to be Christian simply because they shout "Jesus, Jesus" on Sunday morning.

The Crusades of the Middle Ages

were certainly not the work of true Christians. The Crusades were political efforts on the part of apostate religionists who masqueraded themselves as Christians in order to prop up their religious/political power in Europe. And simply because the Crusaders, and those in this modern times, either carve a cross on their shields or wear one around their necks, does not mean that they are true Christians according to the definition of a Christian that is given in the New Testament.

The true Christianity of the New Testament focuses on the humble devotion of disciples who seek to be servants of others in a society in which order is maintained by a secular government. Simple Christians do not seek to usher in a new system of government. They are simply willing to pray for those in power in order that all citizens might lead a quiet and peaceful life of serving others (See 1 Tm 2:1,2). Muslims must understand that true Christianity has been hijacked by religionists just as they claim that Islam has been hijacked by radical Islamic murderers. So we say to the moderate Muslim, let us all live in peace wherein we can be friends, and then, disagree concerning our faiths in the context of healthy discussions. However, all of us must be allowed to confront one another's beliefs under a government that allows separation of faith and state. If a Muslim does not allow this—and true Islam cannot—then the true nature of Islam is revealed. In other words, this environment of freedom of speech cannot exist in a truly Islamic state.

Christians must also be fair and ob-

jective in their search to understand true Islam. They must not make their judgments based on what they see on the news media, which is often twisted. As Christians are embarrassed by the twisted portrayal of Christianity to the Muslim world, so moderate Muslims are embarrassed by the behavior of those Islamic sects of Islam who have emphasized the aggressive statements of the Qur'an in order to advance their efforts to gain power and oil wealth.

Though there is definitely a difference between the Bible and the Qur'an, Christians must keep in mind that neither simple Christians nor moderate Muslims seek carnal war with one another. It is only when the radicals of Islam start obsessing over the aggressive statements of the Qur'an that we have trouble. So in order to help those of the West, particularly Christians, to better understand Islam, it might be good to review the birth of the Islamic faith. Its birth and conquest of the Middle Eastern empires will provide some definition of Islamic beliefs, and the "holy book" that originated out of the struggles that prevailed in the century of its birth.

### **A. The birth of a religion:**

Islam was born out of a conflict that one Arab person, Muhammad Idn Abdullah, had with his fellow pagan Arabs, unbelieving Jews, and those who were actually apostate Christians. At the time, the seat of authority of "Christianity" had moved from Jerusalem to Rome and Constantinople. A division had occurred in Christendom by the seventh

century that had established the another seat of authority in Constantinople (the Greek, or Eastern Orthodox Church).

After its initial birth, Islam was accepted by millions and spread throughout the Middle East in the seventh century. It spread like wild fire because of the apostate “Christianity” of the day. We would learn much today by reflecting on the reasons that led up to the birth and early growth of Islam in the Middle East. Some of these lessons may be difficult to accept by Christians today. Nevertheless, history is a good teacher in order that we not repeat the mistakes of the past.

## **B. Growth out of conflict:**

The historian Tertullian (160-220) stated, “The blood of the Christians is the seed of the kingdom.” What he meant was that when the kingdom of God was persecuted in its early beginnings, it grew. It grew because Christians responded to persecution with love. And it was the Christians’ love of Christ and one another that drew people to Christ. It was love at the core of the gospel message that caused the growth. The early Christians lived the pronouncement of Peter:

*But sanctify Christ as Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear (1 Pt 3:15).*

The persecutors of the early Christians were intrigued by the commitment of Christians to their Savior who gave

them hope by so loving them (Jn 13:34,35). They had to wonder why the Christians would so willingly die for their Savior who loved them so much.

Christianity was first the object of persecution by the Jewish religious/political system, and then came the persecution of the Roman state. Since Rome had developed its own state religion, beginning with Nero, the Romans saw Christians as insurrectionists against the state because they would not proclaim Caesar as lord. The state/religious persecution of Rome ended under Emperor Constantine only when Christianity was eventually made the state religion of the Roman Empire. Once this happened, Christianity began to apostatize into what we know today as the Roman Catholic Church. It is inevitable that once a faith becomes connected with the power of a state, it becomes the persecutor of all those who do not conform to its man-made mandates. The designated religionist of the state use the state to enforce their mandates upon those with whom they disagree, and thus, consider enemies of the state. When this happens, we can know that the religion is from man and not God. Constantine, therefore, became the demise of true Christianity. By the time of Muhammad, it was not Christianity that Muhammad encountered, but an apostate state religion.

Roman Catholicism corrupted for centuries those states that it controlled, even as late as the 1950s and 1960s. In Italy, as in many other countries where Catholicism was dominant, it was very difficult for one to get a job if he was not

a Catholic. This socio/economic intimidation also prevailed throughout Latin American countries. Catholicism was not the state religion, but everyone who was in power in the state and business were Catholics. In Latin America, it was not until the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism in the 1960s that the religious stranglehold of Catholicism on society was broken. The growth of Pentecostalism was actually a social revolution against a religion that was too connected with the state. In South Africa today we too still live with the legacy of churches that aligned themselves in the past too close to politics in the struggle against apartheid. Many of the religious leaders of these churches now consider their churches as small political parties that might somehow fuel their personal ambitions to be somehow voted into a seat in parliament.

The past history of Catholic control of states illustrates the problem of Islam, and should caution all would-be political pastors. Muslims have a difficult time separating the beliefs and behavior of Islam from the laws and function of the state, since the Qur'an teaches that there is no division between faith and state. The Crusades of the Middle Ages were a result of an apostate Christianity being aligned with the sword of the state, and thus, the Roman Catholic Church of the times used that sword to maintain and propagate its authority throughout the territory the state controlled. And in order to increase allegiance to the state (the church), bands of "believers" were organized (crusaders) to go fight against the

unbelievers (Muslims). In order to recruit and build an army of Crusaders, a holy cause had to be given to the recruits. The recruits were thus told that they must free "the land of our Lord," which they would call, "the holy land."

(Actually, there was nothing holy about it. It was only a segment of dirt on earth where our Lord determined to set His foot in fulfillment of His promises that were made to the fathers. Once He had accomplished His mission, and His foot left earth at the ascension, the Bible nowhere teaches that He would ever set foot on earth again.)

After Christianity was adopted by the Roman state as the state religion, those who assumed that they were Christian began to ride on the shoulders of the Roman state. It was then that Christianity began to go into apostasy. While unity prevailed among Christians during the early centuries of struggle and persecution, disunity began to prevail across those lands where the name of Christ had gone through the efforts of the early evangelists. The moral and doctrinal norms that produced unity in the first century began to be influenced by the false philosophies of men by the fifth and sixth centuries. Because the greater number of those who professed to be Christian aligned themselves with the power of the state, these began to persecute non-Christian faiths, even those who were of a minority of Christianity who refused to compromise their faith by aligning themselves with the state.

The Christianity that prevailed over the unbelieving world during the first

three centuries of the existence of the church, began to be changed into a religious-state monster that unleashed persecution on all other faiths after A.D. 325.

The transformation of “Christianity” to a state religion continued for the next three centuries after A.D. 325. But in A.D. 610, a new world order in religion was born, which order we deal with today as 1.4 billion Muslims populate the world. During the seventh and eighth centuries, the “Christianity” that was represented from Rome, and then also from Constantinople, was morally destitute and doctrinally corrupt. It was not the Christianity we read about in the New Testament. As a result of its divided nature and institutional appearance that was upheld by the state, those of the Arab world began to look for something else. The Arab world perceived that Christianity must work through the power of the state in order to be successful, for this was all that they knew of the Christianity of the day. This is what they witnessed in both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. They also perceived that Judaism worked through the efforts of the Jews to reestablish their state in Palestine.

Both Judaism and “Christianity” claimed to be from one God. But the Arabs concluded that God would certainly not be so divided. The Arab world concluded that if God works, then certainly He must work outside and apart from secular and pagan states that existed at the time. Religion, therefore, must become the state in order to banish wars between states, and subsequently bring

peace to the world.

Islam had its small beginnings with a militant Arabian name Muhammad. Muhammad was born around 570. He grew up into being a religiously zealous young man, and subsequently, began preaching in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in 610. Though he initially believed in the inspiration of both the Old and New Testaments, his preaching generated great opposition from the “unbelieving” (idolaters) Arabs, as well as the Jews and Christians of his time. He initially instructed his disciples to pray facing Jerusalem, but later in his life after he moved away from the influence of the faith of the Jews and Christians, he called on his followers to pray facing Mecca. The Jews were dedicated to Jerusalem. The Christians were focused on what he perceived was the center of their faiths, Rome or Constantinople. So in order to refocus the Arabs, he needed a city. That city was his hometown, Mecca.

Because of the great persecution that he first faced in Mecca, he eventually fled to Medina north of Mecca. It was in Medina that his following grew. Their number grew to the point that there was relentless persecution of himself and his followers by pagan Arabs, Jews and Christians, even in Medina. But it was in 630 that Muhammad and his followers militarily overcame their opposition in Medina, and then they marched to and conquered Mecca, which he subsequently made the sacred city of Islam.

Muhammad died in 632, and over the next one hundred years, his followers militarily and economically spread Is-

Islam throughout the Middle East to as far east as India. Islam essentially wiped Christianity off North Africa, and then spread up through Spain, Portugal, and was about to advance into France. Now consider this. By the end of the seventh century, almost eighty percent of the Mediterranean world had been “Christianized.” However, within one hundred years after the beginning of Muhammad’s work, Christianity was almost eradicated throughout all the territories that were conquered by Muslims.

This rapid growth of the Islamic faith would have continued on into Europe if it were not for one battle in his-

tory. In 732 a historical battle was fought in the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain. It was in this year that Charles Martel stopped the advance of Islam into western Europe at the Battle of the Tours. If Martel had not won this battle, Islam would have inevitably advanced into all of Europe, possibly into England, and then made its way eventually to the New World through those who migrated to America, if indeed they as Muslims would have desired to go to the “new world.” But we will never know the significance of the 732 victory in the Pyrenees Mountains. The future of the world was changed by this battle.

## Chapter 11

# HISTORY WELCOMES A NEW IDEOLOGY

One wonders why Islam made such a rapid advance across the Middle East and North Africa in only one hundred years after its beginning. Though Charles Martel stopped the advance of Islam into Europe at the Battle of the Tours, its advance continued to the east and northeast of Arabia into the territories of the Byzantine and Persian Empires. Even to the middle of the tenth century there were great numbers of “Christians” converting to Islam. In fact, it is estimated that over one million Christians had converted to Islam by the end of the tenth century. The answer to this conquest over Christianity reveals some interesting lessons for Christians today, some lessons that might be appropriate for to learn something from history.

### A. Dysfunctional religious and political leadership:

By the middle of the fifth century, the Roman Empire had lost its influence over the Mediterranean Sea basin. Rome itself fell in 476. The western territories of the Empire had waned before the fall of Rome. At this time in history, the Persian and Byzantine Empires became the dominant powers of the eastern parts of the former Roman Empire. For two centuries, these two empires conquered one another back and forth, during which time one or the other was the major controlling empire of the Middle East.

In 614, the Persians, under the rulership of Chosroes II, besieged and took control of the city of Jerusalem. He

did this with the help of the Jews, and subsequently, many church buildings in the city of Jerusalem were destroyed and the Jews were allowed to take control of the city. But in 629, the Byzantines retook the city, and the Jews were banished. Nine years later, Jerusalem was again besieged and finally fell to the Islamic Caliph Omar. What Christians were left in the city were allowed to stay, and the remaining Jews were assigned to what became known as the “Jewish Quarter.”

From the seventh century until the middle of the twentieth century, Muslims controlled the city of Jerusalem, with the exception of those brief periods when the Crusaders conquered and occupied the city.

By the middle and end of the seventh century, the Byzantine and Persian Empires had consumed themselves in so much war with one another that they exhausted their efforts to maintain control over the territories they had formerly conquered. The “Christianity” of the time had removed itself from focussing primarily on the central and western part of the now dysfunctional Roman Empire. The center of the Eastern Orthodox Church established its seat in the city of Constantinople. By this time in history, we must keep in mind that Christianity was no longer identified as the true Christianity of the New Testament. It was a divided religion that had institutional power structures seated in both Rome and Constantinople. As a result of this turn in the focus of Christianity from the lives of the people to power struggles within the institution, both political and religious

confusion prevailed among Christians throughout the Middle East.

The groundwork was thus laid for the birth and expansion of a new ideology that appealed to the people. The collapse of the Byzantine and Persian Empires opened up the opportunity for a religion that encapsulated both political and religious ambitions. Since the Christianity of the era was more political than practical, Muhammad was presented with the opportunity to give birth to a simple faith that met the needs of the Arab people, which faith would consolidate his military force in order to conquer the western areas of Arabia. The Roman and Orthodox churches had both failed the people in that organized churches became consumed with power struggles from within. Muhammad simply presented a faith to the Arab people that was for the people and by the people. In order to do this, of course, he had to proclaim himself as a prophet, and thus become the center of focus to unite the people. Self-proclaimed prophets are always narcissistic in that they think the world revolves around them.

## **B. Allegiance to one God:**

Muhammad was very successful in his attack against the polytheism of the nomadic Arabian tribes. He saw in Judaism and Christianity the power of the concept of one God to bring people together into one family of believers. Since the roots of his religiosity were initially established through a shallow contact with Judaism and Christianity, he knew

enough about both religions at the time to bring the simple concept of the one God into the Arabian tribal groups who were divided among themselves because of beliefs in many gods. The commitment of his followers to the concept of the one God was very appealing, and thus, it became a strong political force to subdue and unite a divided Arabian people. The theology of the one God, who in Arabic was called Allah, was a rallying deity around whom the Arab people were brought together as one religious/political movement.

### **C. Substituting complexity for simplicity:**

The simple Christianity of the New Testament had by the seventh century become a conglomerate religion of man-made creeds that had evolved out of the marriage between Christianity and state powers. Judaism was a confused assortment of the traditions of the fathers. Both faiths were thus complex and confusing to the simple Arabian tribes who were basically uneducated and rural in their culture. When faith becomes complex through an assortment of doctrines and traditions, it removes itself from the daily needs of the common people.

The manner by which Muhammad claimed his words to be the word of God compared closely with the revelation and ministry of Jesus. Jesus is mentioned twenty-five times in the Qur'an, with a similar description of His life and ministry as that revealed in the Bible. According to the Qur'an, Jesus was born into

this world through Mary. He was a prophet of God. He was the revelation of the "word" to man. He was the sinless man of God who would again return to bring judgment upon all men. Muhammad simply cloned this story of Jesus. However, he would claim to be the last of God's prophets to man, and his writings, the last "word" from God to those who would submit. He and his teachings thus appealed to those who were confused with the complexity of what was called Christianity and Judaism.

Muhammad presented to his followers a simple legal means by which every man could assume that he was legally right with Allah. If one repeated the creed of Islam, observed the Ramadan Fast every year, gave alms to the poor, prayed five times a day, and made a pilgrimage to Mecca at least one time in his life, then he was a good Muslim. Islam, as a simple faith, appealed to the uneducated.

### **D. Integration of faith with all aspects of life:**

It seems that Muhammad gleaned his theology from the theocratic system of the Old Testament law. He successfully brought together the everyday life of the individual with the civil laws of an Islamic state, thus making Islam a theocratic system of power. When one became Muslim, his or her entire life was centered around Islam. There was no dichotomy of faith and state, secular life and religious life, work for gain and worship. When one was Muslim, all life was given duty to live one's faith. This made

Islam a very powerful military incentive that was able to spread rapidly to defeat empires that needed the allegiance of the subjects to be faithful to a state that did not necessarily represent the wishes of the people. With Islam, the people are the state. Any attack against an Islamic state, therefore, was an attack against Islam.

War to the Muslim is always religious. Victory in war by the Muslim, therefore, is not simply the overthrow of a dictator or monarch or king of a secular state. It is an advancement of Islam to bring the totality of the function of one's life under the umbrella of being Muslim. Muhammad was able to weld together the patriotism that citizens manifested toward a secular state with the devotion of a subject to his god. The combination of the two gave the individual Muslim a most valiant cause for which to fight.

Victory to the Muslim in war was not the simple conquest of an enemy. It was the conquest of the Islamic faith over an infidel state. When Muslims go to war, therefore, they do not simply fight and die for a state, but for their faith. Even war between Muslim sects is a jihad to maintain one's allegiance to his particular sect of Islam.

The secular citizen who is devoted to a state alone will never understand this thinking. But when one fights for the survival of his theocratic state, he is fighting for the existence of his faith and God. This is the reason why the Israelites dominated their enemies when they conquered the land of promise. Israel went to war against the "infidel" nations within the land of promise in order to introduce God

and His law into the land. If one of the "infidels" wanted to stay in the land, then he had to become a proselyte, that is, a convert to the God and law of Israel. As stated before, Muhammad gleaned his theocratic theology right out of the Old Testament. If one would seek to understand the theology of Islam, a good study of God's laws for Israel when they entered into the land of promise would help.

### **E. Economic benefits of common religiosity:**

One of the prevalent economic practices of the Arab world at the time of Muhammad was the slave trade, which trade is still sanctioned by the Qur'an. This practice existed for centuries among Arabs who captured people out of Africa, and then sold them across the Middle East as slaves. One can only imagine how willing many Africans were converted to Islam simply because they were less likely to be sold as slaves.

Add to this the sociological fact that Islam permeated the totality of one's life. If one lived within an Islamic society, he would convert to Islam in order to be a part of a community that was comprised primarily of Muslims. One had to be a Muslim in order to fit in with the community. If at all possible, all business dealings of Muslims were done with fellow Muslims. For this reason, there was a great conversion of many to Islam simply for the purpose of economics. When Islam became the majority faith in any society, those who were not Muslim were simply boycotted out of business if they

did not convert to Islam. Those who worked for a Muslim as an employee eventually had to convert to Islam if they wanted to keep their jobs. Muslims today still use this means to convert people of any society. For this reason, Islam grows easily among the poor, or those who feel that they have been disenfranchised from the economics of society.

### F. Offer of a simple faith:

By the seventh century, the religious leaders of Rome and Constantinople had turned Christianity into a corrupt religion that was identified as a regional state faith with many catechisms, rather than a daily way of life that met the spiritual needs of the people. The hierarchal leadership of religion in Rome and Constantinople had so distanced itself from the needs of the common people, that there was a deep spiritual void of spiritual leadership in faith among the people. This unconcern on the part of the “Christian” religious leaders among the people of the time was so great that no need was felt to translate the gospel records of the New Testament into Arabic until the middle of the tenth century. As a result, that for which God had intended the written Scriptures to be among His people was vacant in the lives of the Arabian people for over nine centuries.

Luke wrote the gospel record of Jesus to Theophilus to correct word-of-mouth misunderstandings concerning the life and ministry of Jesus (Read Lk 1:1-4). If these misunderstandings of Jesus started to be circulated **less than forty years** after the personal ministry of Jesus,

then just imagine what misunderstandings concerning Jesus prevailed among the Arabs by the time of Muhammad. If within forty years word-of-mouth communication concerning Jesus corrupted who He was and what He taught, then how corrupted would word-of-mouth information concerning Jesus be after over nine hundred years? Christians of the West will never understand this because they have taken for granted printed Bibles at a bookstore or online at the touch of a keyboard. Because the West is quickly turning away from printing Bibles for the world, they are laying the foundation for a biblically ignorant world to arise that is fertile soil for the spread of Islam.

Add to this the fact that the Christianity of the era of Muhammad was burdened with controversies over traditions and catechisms because of ignorance of the word of God. The authority of the word of God had long left the “Christianity” of the day. Christianity was subsequently viewed by the Arab people to be a foreign faith with foreign doctrines and traditions that were void of spiritual strength in the lives of the individual Arab. This inevitably led to the following reason why Muhammad’s teaching became so appealing to the Arabs, and many other cultures who suffered from the same spiritual void.

### G. Muhammad’s teaching was Arabian:

According to the thinking of the Arabian people, by the beginning of the seventh century Christianity was a “reli-

gion” that was centered in foreign countries. To the Berbers of North Africa, for example, Christianity was never a faith that was adopted within the culture of those who believed, because the leadership of “the church” was somewhere else. Doctrine, tradition and dictates were handed down from some foreign city in another country. And because there were no copies of the Bible in the hands of the common people, the people were subject to the dictates of “church authorities” of either Rome or Constantinople. Religious authority was in the authorities of the church in a foreign land, not in the Scriptures in local hands. In reference to Judaism, all traditions came from the Jews and were sent out from Jerusalem for the Jewish world to obey. At every annual Pentecost/Passover Feast these traditions were renewed in the minds of the faithful who made their trip to Jerusalem and returned to their homes throughout the Middle East. With both Judaism and Christianity, the institutionalized church leadership of each perspective faith stole the authority of the Scriptures from the faith of the people. The faith of the people was based on either pope or priest, depending on who was in power at that time over the church.

We see this same apostasy today when people place their faith in the local pastor who has graduated with a degree from the “University of Jerusalem.” The people have forsaken their personal knowledge of the Bible and handed their brains over to the pastors. The result of this has led to the rise of “miracle churches” that have grown throughout the

world as favorite pastors proclaim their miracles to gullible audiences who have little knowledge of the Bible.

But for the humble Arab Bedouin, Muhammad was their prophet. His teaching was their faith since they accepted his claim that he was a prophet. Islam supposedly originated from their land, though this is highly debated among historians (more later). Arabic was their religious language. And Islam would always have its capital in Arab territory. And by word of mouth, Muhammad gave to the people what he claimed to be their own message from Allah. The appeal of these aspects of Islam was so strong to Arabians that the Islamic faith swept across Middle East and across every society of people who felt disenfranchised by the institutionalized “Christianity” and Judaism of the day.

The tragedy of Christianity during these centuries of the spread of Islam was the fact that Christianity had turned from being a rewarding personal relationship of the disciple to Jesus to being a religion that was hijacked by church authorities in a foreign land. And because the structure of popes and bishops and priests had become the identity of the institutional religion, the common person felt detached from the God he was to serve on a daily basis.

As a result of this apostasy from true Christianity, the evangelistic spirit of the individual disciple simply vanished. There was no mission spirit in the church simply because “church” was a hierarchy of religious authorities in another land, not an expression of personal faith in

one's daily life. Such should be a tremendous lesson for every Christian today. When "church" is identified by "church authorities," then we know that we are in trouble.

We must never forget that Christianity is about relationships, first with our Lord, and then with one another. We must never allow "church" to become an institutional organization of hierarchial authorities who separate themselves from the people. The church is the people. So what happened with the beginning of the preaching of Muhammad was that he came at the right time in history to the Arabs when meaningful Christian faith had vanished from the individual lives of the people, especially the Arabian people.

#### **H. Right message for the right time:**

We must not think that the rapid acceptance and growth of Islam is evidence of divine origin. Such rapid acceptance of Muhammad as a self-proclaimed prophet is assumed by Muslims to be proof of his supposedly divine calling. Likewise, the phenomenal spread of Islam in a century throughout a vast territory of Middle East could be assumed to be evidence of divine intervention, but it is not.

Muhammad's message to his followers was simply the right message at the right time. The Qur'an is not a book of great literary genius or prolific prose. Its literary style is actually quite awkward and disorganized as a catechism for a legalistic faith. Nevertheless, Muhammad was accepted by millions to be the final

prophet of Allah, and his "word" as the final word from Allah to man. So why such a phenomenal acceptance and growth of Islam across the Middle East, across North Africa, up into Europe, and on to the borders of China?

The time was simply right for a paradigm shift in religion in a world where Christianity ceased to be Christianity. The personal faith of Christianity had degenerated to an organization of church authorities who handed down dictates from a foreign land. In the Arab world, Muhammad came at the time when what was known as Christianity no longer appealed to the people of Arabia. The result was a paradigm shift of faith that has changed the world from the day Muhammad died.

Before Muhammad there were great spiritual leaders, even some greater than he. These wrote with great literary excellence, certainly better than the awkward literary style of the Qur'an. There have been great literary works of religion published and distributed since. But from the first century, none of these great men and their masterpieces of religious literature affected the religious world as much as Muhammad and his teachings. It was simply that the Middle East was religiously in a void of personal faith, and thus, ripe for the introduction of a new faith that would appeal to the common man, with "scripture" that was in the language of the common man. And since Muhammad became a great military leader to unite the Arabs, what he said gained great acceptance among his followers.

The same paradigm shift of Chris-

tian faith happened in Europe during the Reformation Movement of the sixteenth century. It happened because the same religious cultural conditions were in place. When the Bible was eventually translated into the language of the people, and great men of faith stood up to the institutional authorities of the Catholic Church, change was in the air. The people were subsequently led from the bondage of institutional religiosity to a faith that was based on Scripture, not institutional

churchianity. Unfortunately, many of these initial Reformation churches have become that from which they fled. They too are now led by church authorities who seek to maintain the heritage (traditions) and identity of their particular denomination. Muhammad was most successful in his appeal to the people because he was of the people and for the people. What is necessary today is another restoration in order to get people back to the authority of the word of God.

## Chapter 12

# THE WORLD OF ISLAM

The story of Muhammad Idn Abdullah—and indeed it is a story—began with a zealous leader of Arabia. He was a trader from Mecca, Saudi Arabia. When he was twenty-five years old, he married a woman who was fifteen years older. When he was eventually expelled from his hometown of Mecca because of his teaching, one of his followers brought him his six-year-old daughter to marry, which marriage was not consummated until the child was nine-years-old. Muhammad eventually added more wives as he grew older. So what would we think a religious leader would do to justify such multiple wives? You guessed it, write some scriptures that justify one's behavior. aS Surah 33:50,51 of the Qur'an, Muhammad wrote,

O Prophet! We [Allah and his messenger] have permitted to you your wives to whom you have given their dowries, and

those you already have, as granted to you by Allah .... .. if the Prophet desires to marry her, exclusively for you, and not for the believers. We know what We have ordained for them regarding their wives and those their right-hands possess. This is to spare you any difficulty. You may defer any of them you wish, and receive any of them you wish. Should you desire any of those you had deferred, there is no blame on you.

The story is told that when Muhammad was forty, he was praying in a cave on Mount Hira, and subsequently had a surreal emotional experience. While in prayer, the angel Gabriel supposedly appeared to him and said that he was now the messenger of God. He was commanded by Gabriel to write, but Muhammad refused. It is said that Gabriel squeezed him to the point that Muhammad thought he would die. Muhammad

then began to recite the first verses of what is now called the Qur'an. Since it is believed that Muhammad could not read or write, he dictated words to a scribe who in turn transcribed his words on any writing material that could be found. Muslims affirm that because Muhammad could not read or write that this is evidence that his words were directly dictated to him by Allah.

The beginnings of Islam thirteen centuries ago was among the Arab tribal groups, who were at that time mostly polytheists. The Arabs worshipped tribal gods and had no sacred history as the Jews and Christians. They also did not have a sacred text of Scripture. Neither did they have a supposedly common sacred language. The Jews had Hebrew into which their sacred text came to them from God. The Christians had Koine Greek into which their sacred text was transcribed. But the Arabs had none of those things that Muhammad considered to be necessary to start and maintain a new faith, and thus be the identifying characteristics of one's religious faith.

The Jews and Christians believed in one God. The Jews had holy prophets, and the Christians had holy apostles. But the Arabs had neither one God, a sacred text of Scripture that was written in a specific language, nor a holy city as Jerusalem, Rome and Constantinople. What Muhammad did was bring to the Arabs all that the Jews and Christians had that he believed gave identity to their faith.

Until his death in 632, Muhammad sought to bring to the scattered Arabs a faith they could claim as their own. He

was so successful in this quest that he and his followers united under his teaching, and subsequently, became a strong military force. In one hundred years after his death, so many people and civilizations united under his teaching that at the height of Islamic influence, Islam stretched from north Africa to southern Europe in the west, and to the countries of India and western China in the east. At its zenith, the great Islamic Ottoman Empire was formed in 1258, which extended throughout all the Middle East. The Ottoman Empire lasted until World War I when it was eventually broken up by the victorious Allied powers after the war. Segments of the Empire were subsequently signed over to be governed by prominent Arab leaders.

One of the significant nations that eventually came from the Ottoman Empire was Saudi Arabia. What is unique about this sparsely populated desert nation is its Islamic influence throughout the world today. In the eighteenth century, a Muslim scholar by the name of Wahhab sought to teach a pure form of Islam to the Arabian tribal groups of the Arabian peninsula, which is today modern Saudi Arabia. In the 1930s, the al-Saud family took control of the area, and thus it is called Saudi Arabia today. This nation became the birth place of Wahhabism.

Wahhabism is taught throughout Saudi Arabia, which nation also promotes the building of mosques throughout the world where the same teaching is propagated, especially in America. Those Muslims who promote Wahhabism, there-

fore, would be considered very strict in their implementation of Qur'anic teaching. They would be pure or orthodox Muslims, or those who are true to the legal dictates of the Qur'an. Subsequently, no other religious faith may be practiced in Saudi Arabia. This form of Islam is very aggressive in establishing mosques and Islamic schools throughout the West today.

### **A. Roots of an Islamic world view:**

We often hear of Muslims being called to jihad (holy war). Jihad is defined as "holy war." By most Muslims today this is a principle of warfare by which the Islamic faith is to be extended throughout non-Islamic peoples. Some moderate Muslims will often define jihad as one's personal inner struggle for spiritual growth. But in the historical context of the origin of the word, this definition is far from the thinking of Muslims, especially those in the Middle East. In the Middle East today, jihad is always defined as it was during the military struggles of Islam in the seventh century. It is warfare against the unbelieving nations of the world until the world is totally Islam. Western residents must not forget this point, and subsequently be deceived into thinking that jihad is something personal with the Muslim. It is personal only in the sense that individual Muslims seek to unite together in order to take the world for Islam.

We witness on the news media constant conflicts in the Middle East, conflicts that are usually generated by some

brand of Islamic radicals who zealously promote their Islamic denomination. In the last few decades, "terrorism" has been a primary weapon of Islamists who seek to impose either judgment on the "infidels." They have also terrorized those they assume to be Muslim apostates. But to be fair and clear, not all Muslims are terrorists. But it seems that all terrorists in the world today are Muslims seeking to impose judgment on the "unbelieving" world of infidels. What all civilizations considered absurd years ago (the suicide bomber) has become a common "weapon" of Islamists in their jihad against the infidels of the world.

For the Islamist, the killing of innocent people justifies the end result of jihad against the infidel. In November 2014, a German reporter made his way into the ranks of the ISIS movement in Syria. He interviewed the ISIS fighters in order to determine the basis of their world view. In a BCC interview with the German reporter, he stated that one jihadist ISIS soldier responded to his questioning, "We will kill as many people as possible in order to accomplish our goal. Whether we kill thousands, tens of thousands, or hundreds of millions, five hundred million, we will do so to accomplish our goal."

People wonder if the root of this radicalism is seated in the pages of the Qur'an. We often make judgments concerning the Islamic faith by the conflict that is constantly portrayed on the news. But we would urge viewers to be cautious about making such judgments concerning a particular faith that is based on the

radical beliefs and practices of adherents who have hijacked a faith for their own political and economic agendas. Such happened in the history of Christianity during the ages of the Crusades, which political maneuvers by the Catholic Church were used to judge and condemn people who were not Christians according to their definition of Christianity. We would correct ourselves not to do the same in our judgments concerning another faith. Hijackers of faiths must never be consulted in order to determine the true beliefs of any faith.

There are certainly sprinkled throughout the Qur'an verses that incite violence against the unbelievers, as one surah states, "Fight them [unbelievers] so that Allah may punish them at your hands, and put them to shame." However, peace is promised for societies that conform to the teachings of the Qur'an. The preceding surah of the Qur'an certainly does not say that a Muslim has a right during times of peace to take the initiative to generate a fight with unbelievers. However, it is unfortunate that the radical Islamist feeds on the calls for violent aggression (jihad) regardless of the passive nature of the unbelievers among whom he lives.

But we must not forget that when the Qur'an uses the word "peace," a different world view is defined for the Muslim than what the Christian would understand the word to mean. The Qur'an would define the word "peace" to mean that when the world becomes Muslim, then there will be peace. All will live under because in obedience to sharia law.

The Qur'an is a book that focuses

on prayer and good deeds. There are rules for acceptable prayer and religious rituals to be followed whereby the adherents may focus on a spiritual life. The Qur'an establishes rules for married life, divorce, community relationships, and how to raise children. There is a great deal of wisdom in the Qur'an for daily living since the Qur'an is meant to be the absolute law for an Islamic state.

The common denominator between Christianity, Judaism and Islam is that all three faiths trace their roots back to Abraham. Abraham was not a Jew, but a Gentile, and thus his identity was not determined by race, but by faith. As both Christians and Jews, Muslims also go beyond Abraham to Adam in their spiritual lineage. Both the Bible and the Qur'an call for faith in one God who is the creator and sustainer of the world. And in reference to salvation, both the Bible and the Qur'an call for repentance on the part of the sinner in view of an impending punishment of the disobedient in a fiery hell, but a reward for the righteous in Paradise or Heaven.

But when reading the text of both the Bible and the Qur'an, there is a vast difference between the world view that is explained in both documents. The Qur'an is like driving onto a California freeway. While driving down this freeway one will often come across an exit to a command of God, and then an exit to an outburst in prayer, then some theological pronouncement, or a story of some early prophet. Throughout the 114 surahs (chapters) of the Qur'an there are descriptions of judgment and punishment. There

is no single focus on a theme in any surah.

When Muhammad supposedly recited the contents of the surahs, his words were transcribed on various writing materials at different times, and then eventually, over one hundred years later, brought together into one book from the longest surah to the shortest. There is no chronological order of either the surahs or statements as they were transcribed over a period of time, and eventually collected together as the book of the Qur'an. Since this collection of the surahs took place over one hundred years after Muhammad died, it can be understood why the Qur'an gives the presentation of a collection of sayings, instead of a document that was specifically written to for people to understand clearly. (More later.)

## B. Bible and Qur'an differences:

In reference to messages from God, the Christian and Muslim view their holy books from different perspectives. The Christian views the Bible from the perspective of what Peter wrote: "*For the prophecy did not come in old time by the will of man, but holy men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Pt 1:21). God allowed the writers of Scripture to use their own vocabulary and writing styles, as the Hebrew and Greek texts clearly reveal. But He inspired through the Holy Spirit that which was to be communicated and written down. As a result, the Bible is a collection of the writings of about forty men over 1,500 years of history. As the

Qur'an, Bible literature was collected together into one book as we have it today. But throughout this "collection" there remains one central world view of the Bible, that is, the salvation of men through the cross of the Son of God.

Muslims regard the Qur'an after the meaning of its name, "The Recitation." Muslims believe that their scripture came as a direct dictation from Allah to Muhammad. Muhammad then recited the "word" to a scribe who wrote down the exact words that came from Allah. Muhammad was only a medium through whom Allah communicated his words to man. Since Muhammad was a self-proclaimed messenger of God, it would only be natural for him to make such a claim in order to guard against others adding to his "scriptures."

For the above reason, the Muslim considers the actual book of the Qur'an sacred in and of itself. It must not be desecrated in any manner. Christians, on the other hand, seek to know the message of Jesus and the God who is beyond the words of the inspired book. One can burn Bibles, but he can never destroy the message that is revealed through the Bible. The actual book of the Bible is not an idol to the Christian. But if the Qur'an would be burned, then it is a desecration to the religion, not just the book.

Muslims do not consider any translation of the Arabic to be regarded greater than the actual Arabic script, the language that Allah ordained to be the language to communicate his dictates to man. Translations of the Qur'an, therefore, are only interpretations. They are not to be con-

sidered God's original words. When Muhammad gave his supposed divine words to be inscribed in Arabic, he forgot that God had used Hebrew words two thousand years before to do the same for the Jews, and six hundred years before in His use of Greek for the Christians. And when Jesus quoted from the Old Testament during His ministry, as well as when the Holy Spirit quoted from the Old Testament in writing the New Testament, both quoted from the Greek Septuagint, which was a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Translation is accepted by God, and thus, there is no holiness in the "words," but in the message the words convey. Christians are concerned about accuracy in translation of the biblical text. However, they accept the art of translation of the Hebrew and Greek texts into any local language as sufficient to convey the message of salvation that is the theme of the Bible. This cannot be said of the Muslim's view of any translation of the Qur'an.

What Muhammad's claim does reveal is the fact that the Qur'an was culturally seated in the era of his own Arabic time capsule. By focusing on the Arabic language, the Muslim is trying to keep the Qur'an where it originated, in Arabia. As stated in a previous chapter, this actually added to the acceptance of the Qur'an by the Arab people, and continues to do so today. However, it continues to be a stumbling block for the propagation of Islam to the rest of the world. If one would be an accepted scholar of Qur'anic teaching, he must be able to study the Qur'an in Arabic.

The claim that the words of the Qur'an are the exact words of God is often confusing to Christians. But compare this to what actually happened when God transcribed directly on stone the ten commandments for Moses to give to Israel. The actual words were written in Hebrew by the "finger" of God. The writing, therefore, was the oral words that God dictated to Moses who gave them to Israel on tablets of stone. Israel considered the words so sacred that they preserved the two tablets in the ark of the covenant.

If we would compare this to New Testament teaching, it would be somewhat similar to Christ being the revealed "word" that came to man. Christ was the word that was revealed (Jn 1:1-14). After His death and ascension, He is revealed to us today through ink and paper (Jn 1:1-14). He is only revealed to us with words that describe who He was and is as the revealed word of God. But the book of the Qur'an was the revelation of Allah through the Arabic words. In comparison to the two tablets of stone, the Qur'an is sacred. It is the book of recorded words that are the revelation of Allah himself. Muhammad was only the medium through whom the words of the book (Allah) were communicated.

This somewhat explains the beautiful Arabic art of Islamic countries. Because Muslims abhor any form of idolatry, they used the written words of the Arabic language to portray the revelation of Allah through Arabic art. The art depicts episodes in the life of Muhammad. Because Arabic words from the Qur'an

depict the presence of Allah, through the use of such words Allah is portrayed through art in order to reveal his presence. Arabic art is the ever present revelation of Allah, for the artistic words are Allah in definition.

The rest of the religious world perceives an inconsistency by Muslims in reference to their vehement teaching against idolatry. Every definition that is used in any dictionary to define idolatry could be used to explain the Muslim's reverence toward the book of the Qur'an. They idolize the Qur'an, while at the same time condemn idolatry. The same can be said of the Muslim's idol reverence for the Kabah of Mecca, to which each Muslim must make at least one Hajj (pilgrimage) in his lifetime in order to march around this stone monument (idol). The black stone cube of the Kabah is supposedly where the pantheon of past tribal gods of the Arabs is confined. If this is not idolatry, then we will have to come up with a different definition of idolatry for our dictionaries. Many in Africa clearly understand this thinking, for many came out of animistic beliefs that spirits dwelt in stones and trees. But when they became Christians, they realized that such inanimate works of creation are not the dwelling place of the spirit world.

In comparison to simple Christianity, the true disciple of Jesus is far less of an idolater than the Muslim. We must not confuse this with the Catholics' use of the cross as an idol, for the New Testament places absolutely no emphasis on using material things or clothing as symbols of faith.

## **B. The “people of the Book”:**

The Qur'an distinguishes “the people of the book” from nonbelievers. Both Jews and Christians are acknowledged as “people of the book.” However, the phrase “the book” is not a direct reference to the Bible, but to a heavenly text of Scripture that was written by God, of which, the Qur'an is called the only final and perfect revelation of this word. Throughout history, God revealed Himself as “the book” to His prophets in order to reveal His will to man. The Qur'an also claims that the revelation of “the book” of Allah were revealed to other religious people who are not mentioned in the Bible. In other words, Allah revealed himself to other people as he revealed himself to Adam, Abraham and Israel.

The Qur'an affirms that the revelations of “the book” were corrupted by the Jews and Christians, or at least the revelations were greatly misinterpreted. They could not, therefore, gain a clear understanding of Allah through the Bible. The Qur'an, however, supposedly corrected all these misinterpretations, and thus, only the Qur'an can be trusted as the true revelation of Allah to man.

## **C. Source of authority:**

Muslims have always had an unresolved conflict for establishing authority between secular state and religion. The problem is not in the Qur'an, but in how it is interpreted and applied to civil society. Muhammad envisioned a society

wherein everyone was Muslim, and thus, in submission to Qur'anic (sharia) law. In this way, the Qur'an would be the authority for the governance of the state and faith of the people. But throughout history, Muslims have never been able to resolve the conflict between religious authority through the Qur'an and the authority of an Islamic government with democratic principles of function.

When Islamic religion spread throughout the ancient world, it enveloped many peoples of different civilizations. However, it had great difficulty in bringing all these civilizations under the governance of a common system of Islamic law. As a result, there arose scholars of the Qur'an who in many of the conquered states settled disputes through *fatwas* (opinions) that were handed down to the people from the religious leaders. But in the Islamic democratic states today, the fatwas of the religious leaders do not have much authority. The result of this lack of Qur'anic authority taught by the imams through fatwas has left the door of interpretation wide open for the speculative interpretations of every Islamic leader who would assert himself to restore obedience to true Qur'anic teaching. The most radical Islamists would lead radicalized groups to establish a supposedly true Islamic state, and by doing such, seek to behead all other Muslims who would not conform to the prominent spiritual leader's interpretations of the Qur'an. Only in this way could true peace be established among the people.

Radical Muslims (Islamists) do not consider those Muslims who have mod-

ernized interpretations of the Qur'an to be true Muslims. And the modern Muslim would be the first to condemn radical interpreters of the Qur'an as Osama bin Laden and the present ISIS movement in the Middle East. The fact is that under the umbrella of Islam there are all sorts of groups of Muslims, from the most modernized to the most radical Islamist. This assortment of sects that reside under the umbrella of the Qur'an is so vast that it is simply impossible today to define what is true Islam. The problem is that among all these groups, the spiritual leaders have their own unique way of interpreting the Qur'an.

We must not forget that moderate interpreters of the Qur'an have voiced their condemnation of those who would interpret the Qur'an to support their own selfish agendas to gain political dominance and commit genocide. Moderate Muslims condemn terrorist activities and suicide bombers. They condemn the murder of innocent victims by indiscriminate bombing. Muslim scholars of the West have experienced the benefits of democracy, free speech, and human rights since the first Muslims came to America as slaves, and then were freed. They, as South African Muslims, never wanting to go back to any form of bondage or apartheid. The majority of the Islamic scholars who have grown up in free societies believe that the Qur'an is open for interpretation in reference to a pluralistic society of different religious faiths. Even on the subject of women's rights, the modern Muslim movement seeks to promote the legalization of women's rights

in the environment of democratic governments. The Malay Muslims of South Africa fought so long during the time of struggle against the oppressive apartheid government, that they never want to return to any oppressive form of government of the people.

In many areas of faith, both the Bible and the Qur'an have some common ground. Both teach that there is one God. Both teach the dignity of the human individual who must submit to the revelation that God has given to man. And both teach that the spirit of the humble life is the key to one's cohabitation with other people that God created to be culturally different. The problem often comes from radicals in the Islamic camp to seek to establish their radical interpretations of the Qur'an. And it is the radicals with hidden political agendas who lead themselves to believe that violence is justified as a means to an end to promote one's faith. Any means to accomplish the end is justified in the minds of the radical Islamist, and for this reason, the true Islamist is validated by the Qur'an to deceive the infidel in order to accomplish conquest over the infidel.

There have always been radical "Christians" throughout history. However, there is a vast difference between radical Christians who become cults and radical Muslims who become murderers. Radicals as Jim Jones and David Koresh sought to isolate their followers from society. Radical Muslims as Osama bin Laden seek to conquer and control society through violent means. The radicals of both Christianity and Islam manifest

the nature of what either group considers divine authority. We would certainly conclude that the radical Islamist to commit murder leads us to believe that his source of authority is from man and not God.

Our plea to the moderate Muslim is that he reconsider the Christians' source of authority. What we would urge is that Muslims must not judge someone to be "Christian" if he simply calls on Jesus as the Son of God, but behaves after his own agenda. Christians would call such a person a religionist, but not a Christian. Such were the people of the Crusades and the religion that was promoted by the Crusaders. It was a religion of man, not of God, and thus, not Christian.

And we would call on all Christians not to assume that one is following Qur'anic teachings when he straps on a bomb vest in order to murder innocent people. Any religious faith can be hijacked by radicals in order to gain a following for political or personal purposes, and subsequently, cause pain and suffering in the lives of the innocent. This is exactly what Muhammad did with the invention of his religion. But supposed Christians are not innocent. The supposedly "Christian" liberation theologians of the 60s and 70s carried guns to overthrow Central American governments. Such a theology made its way into South Africa during the days of apartheid struggle. But these were not Christians, even though they carved the name Jesus Christ on their guns. They were religionists with a political agenda who sought to hijack Christianity for their own political means. There are Islamists who do the same to-

day with Islam. But because they have promoted misinterpretations of their holy book does not mean that they are interpreting in their lives the spirit of the Qur'an. In times of peace, the preacher, as well as the Islamic imam, will find it hard to declare "holy war" on the basis of teachings of either the Bible or the Qur'an.

#### **D. Influence of Hadith interpretations:**

Other than the Qur'an, Muslims also have another source from which they derive information for teaching and interpretation of the Qur'an. After a century of the Islamic faith, the first dynasty of caliphs in Damascus (661–750) sought to draw allegiance to their ranks in the early conflicts between Muslims, as well as conflicts between Muslims and the opposition of Jewish/Christian forces. But primarily because the Islamic leaders sought to acquire as much information as possible of the deeds and sayings of Muhammad, a search was made to collect as much of the oral information as possible concerning Muhammad who lived over one hundred years before. This collection of oral sayings and traditions was collected together into what became known as the Hadith, or "prophetic traditions."

In the collection of the material, it seemed that there were no scruples about falsifying information concerning the life and teachings of Muhammad. Those who gathered the material did what many "miracle working" preachers do today.

They go about digging up any rumor of a miracle or mysterious event, write a book, and then hope to draw the gullible to their ranks in order to fill church coffers. So from Damascus, "pseudo-researchers" went from village to village in order to find information about the deeds and teachings of Muhammad. Now keep in mind that this search took place over one hundred years after Muhammad died. By this time in history, the only information that Muslims had of Muhammad came from word-of-mouth stories that were more often fantasy than truth. In fact, the Hadith, according to some Muslim scholars, contains contradictions, some absurd traditions, and according to some, outright blasphemous traditions.

Because the Hadith was used to write commentaries on the Qur'an, and determine interpretations, the Shi'ites and Sunnis accept two different bodies of Hadith. The largest sects of Islam (Sunni, Shi'ite and Ibadi), rely on their compilation of Hadith to determine sharia law, Qur'anic interpretations, and the early history of Muhammad and Islam.

The zeal of the early composers of the Hadith moved them to search beyond the facts concerning the early beginnings of Islam. They were actually too far removed from the early beginnings of Islam to gather many facts, and thus had to rely on oral traditions. The writings that were brought together were often copies of copies of their original autographs. The facts had already been corrupted through word-of-mouth communication for over a century.

What these eighth and ninth century

redactors did do was construct a picture of the past as they believed it should be. They wanted to present the ideal of what they believed Islam would produce if one were obedient to the mandates of the Qur'an.

This search turned into a business as fanciful stories of Muhammad's sayings and deeds were collected and sold. And as the gullible person in search of a miracle laps up hearsay concerning some wonder that was worked in some far off country, so gullible Muslims eagerly received any tale about Muhammad and his sayings. As the demands increased for these tales of teachings and deeds of Muhammad, the accumulation of the material of the Hadiths increased.

The early history of the Islamic faith is based in the material of the Hadiths, depending on what sect of Islam one is studying. But as the faith of the "miracle research" of some religionists is based on supposed wonders that were not personally witnessed, so the faith of some Muslims is based on the fanciful stories of the Hadith. Depending on how serious a particular Muslim scholar considers the authority of the Hadith, will determine the foundation for his interpretation of the

Qur'an. In recent years, however, there has been a general rejection of the authority of the Hadith in reference to Qur'anic interpretation. In fact, many recent Muslim scholars have rejected any authority of the Hadith, relying only on the authority of the Qur'an itself.

As with the Damascus caliphs who sought for fanciful stories to gain allegiance to their cause, so it is today with some Muslims who seek justification for unrighteous ways. We would caution Christians at this point not to underestimate the true nature of even the moderate Muslim who finds justification for barbaric practices in the pages of the Qur'an through the medium of interpretation by the Hadith. We must not forget that the Hadith justifies that Muslim women are subject to polygamist marriages, the right of husbands to beat their wives, female circumcision through genital mutilation, and the justification for "honor killing" (murder) of a daughter who would date a Christian. These are the realities of even "moderate" Muslims within democratic societies. All these moral injustices find their validation in the Hadith.

## Chapter 13

# THE PERPETUAL CONFLICT

Muslims have difficulty reconciling the two major groups (Sunnis and Shi'ites) that fall under the Islamic faith today. There is a prevailing conflict between these two major sects that is embedded within Islam because of history

and interpretation of the Qur'an. Overall, Islam consists of about 90% Sunnis and 10% Shi'ites, with minor groups as the Ahmadiyya and Ibadi scattered throughout the faith. The conflict between the two major groups has existed

for centuries. The present ISIS movement in the Middle East is composed primarily of Sunnis. The atrocities of this movement have embarrassed most Muslims to the point that where we live in Africa, Muslims do not even want to talk about the matter. They do not because they have for so long assumed that if the whole world were Islamic, then there would be peace on earth among all men. But the reality is that embedded within Islam is conflict between the different sects that will never be resolved. The Muslim's argument that there will be peace once the whole world becomes Islam is simply a fantasy in view of the present conflicts between Islamic sects within those nations that are primarily Islam. If peace cannot be realized from within primarily Islamic nations today, then certainly Muslims must not think that the rest of the world would have peace if the whole world was Islam.

Add to this that there is a continued conflict within Islamic societies between moderate Muslims and fundamentalist radicals. In the Islamic conflicts of the Middle East, by far more deaths result from Muslim against Muslim than Muslim against those of other faiths. Boko Haram of northeastern Nigeria, after the example of their radical brothers in the Middle East, attack other Muslims. In this carnage, men, women and children are ruthlessly murdered or kidnapped in the name of Allah. In fact, the BCC reported that in 2014 an average of 5,000 people were murdered every month throughout the world by Islamic radicals. Most of those who were killed were Mus-

lims. As long as there are Muslims who seek to modernize their interpretation of the Qur'an according to the reality of a developed world, then there will always be mortal conflict between the moderate Muslim and the fundamental Islamic radical. And since the radical Islamist in underdeveloped countries is intimidated by the developed secular world, he will always use his religion as an excuse to lash out at the rich infidel in order to justify his poverty.

This conflict will never be resolved because in those Middle Eastern countries where everyone is Muslim, there is a deadly war going on between the Shi'ite and Sunni differences of implementation of Qur'an interpretations. The result of the differences between the radicals of both groups will always be power struggles to determine who will be in control. The radicals of the two groups have little tolerance for one another when it comes to determining who is going to be in control of the state, and subsequently, the riches of the society, or poverty, depending on whose interpretation of sharia law will be practiced. This contention between the two sects began soon after the death of Muhammad, and will continue indefinitely into the future.

Muhammad was born around 570. He grew up in Mecca of western Arabia. In 622 he revealed his beliefs, assuming that he had received "word" as divine revelation from Allah. He asserted this claim to those of his Arab tribal group, who eventually accepted him as a prophet of God. All went well during his lifetime in presenting a united front to his believers.

But when he died, things changed. Division within the ranks of the followers began ten years after his death in 632 and continue unto this day.

The problem was that Muhammad did not name a successor as the leader of the new Islamic ideology. Subsequently, one group of followers believed that the role of the caliph (the viceroy of Allah), should come from the bloodline of Muhammad. This bloodline should extend through the lineage of Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, who was named Ali ibn Bi Talib. But the majority of his followers believed that Muhammad's religious heritage and leadership should be passed down through the lineage of his friend and father-in-law, Abu Bakr, who had no bloodline connection to Muhammad.

Shortly after the death of Muhammad, Bakr became caliph, though Ali would eventually become the fourth caliph before he was murdered in 661. Upon the death of Ali, the successor of Muhammad was again debated among Muslims. This dispute eventually led to a formal division between Muslims that exists to this day. The majority of the division backed Mu'awiyah, the governor of Syria, and his son, Yazid. This group is today known as the Sunnis.

The minority group followed the succession of Ali through his son, Hussein. This group was collectively known as Shi'at Ali, meaning those who are aligned with Ali. This group is known today as the Shi'ites, or Shia. When these two divisions of Islam eventually met on a battlefield near Karbala on October 10,

680, Hussein was killed and decapitated.

Through the Sunnis' conquest of the Shi'ites at Karbala, the Sunnis sought to terminate the "apostate" Shi'ites. But the contrary happened. The murder of Hussein gave the Shi'ites a martyr, and thus, upon the martyrdom of Hussein, the followers of Hussein eventually consolidated Shia Muslims as a distinctive sect of Islam. The death of Hussein eventually became the most celebrated annual occasion of the Shi'ites because he was revered as one who stood up against the oppression of the Sunni sect.

The Sunnis continued their loyalty to Mu'awiyah and his successors. They eventually became the majority sect of all Muslims and were known for their oppression of all other sects of Islam. The word "Sunni" means those who follow Sunnah, or the Way of the prophet. The Sunnis assumed the belief and practice that the caliph was to be a political leader, as well as the religious leader of the people. This belief eventually made the Sunnis the dominant sect among all Muslims, comprising the greater percentage of all Muslims today.

But in opposition to Sunni beliefs and practices, Shi'ite teaching appeals to those Muslims who always feel the oppression of the Sunnis. Their religious leaders are the imams who seek to be the spiritual descendants of Muhammad. Through the leadership of their spiritual leaders, Shi'ites seek to maintain the spirit of Islam, and at the same time, the imams seek to lead Muslims to refuse the oppression of the Sunnis.

The 12<sup>th</sup> imam of the Shi'ites, Mu-

hammad al-Mahdi, supposedly disappeared in the ninth century at the Samarra Shrine in Iraq. Most Shi'ites believe that Muhammad al-Mahdi was mysteriously hidden until a time when he will be revealed at an undetermined date. When he does reappear, it is assumed that he will restore a reign of justice throughout the world by promoting the beliefs and dominance of the Shi'ites.

Though the Sunnis and Shi'ites had minor conflicts with one another for centuries, it seems that in the unstable political atmosphere of the Middle East today, their differences have been accentuated and clearly revealed to the rest of the world. Their former tolerance of one another involved intermarriage and business. However, intervention by the West to deliver the Islamic countries from either Sunni or Shi'ite dictators who purported to have weapons of mass destruction, ignited old differences between the two sects. The opportunity was presented for struggle as to who was going to dominate the government of the supposedly liberated state and claim the riches of oil money. And because there seems to be no deep spirit of compromise among fundamental Islamists on either side of the conflict, too many fathers, mothers, sons and daughters have been and will be murdered by opposing sects. There seems to be no light at the end of this quagmire of religious strife to allow a restoration of peace in those Arabic nations where there is competition for power and oil riches by Sunnis and Shi'ites. However, we are optimistic that some peace will come to the Middle East, but it will not be negoti-

ated by Western powers. This is something that must be worked out strictly by those of the Middle East.

There is thus a perpetual Middle East conflict within Islam that will continue in the years to come. The conflict is not for a religious victory of either sect, but for the right to govern those Middle East nations that are predominately Muslim. Sunnis and Shi'ites disagree over some matters of interpretation of the Qur'an, but they agree on the fundamentals. They agree on the requirements of faith and prayer, the infallibility of the Qur'an, and the veneration of the prophet Muhammad. And where we have witnessed great conflicts between Sunnis and Shi'ites, there is no evidence that one group is trying to convert the other to their particular historical lineage of spiritual leaders or brand of Qur'anic interpretations. They are simply in competition with one another in order to determine who will be victorious in any conflict.

The rise of Islamist movements as ISIS is different. The ISIS movement illustrates a conflict within Islam to restore a radical interpretation of the Qur'an in order to create a true Islamic state. All opposition to such movements as ISIS are given three options: (1) convert to the mandates of radical Islam and join in the restoration of a true Islamic state, (2) flee the territory that is claimed by the radicals, or (3) die. Because of these mandates by the ISIS movement, all forms of Christianity in ISIS controlled territory is now being eradicated. Many church buildings and synagogues that have been in existence for centuries in Middle East-

ern countries are being emptied as those of Christian/Jewish faith flee ISIS controlled territory. All Muslims who would disagree and not convert to the ISIS definition of true Islam are killed.

What is so glaringly hypocritical about the ISIS movement—and all similar Islamic movements with a similar ideology—is that the money to continue their movement would disappear if they were eventually victorious in their final goal. Revenue from the sale of oil to the imperialistic and infidel enemies is needed to pay their soldiers and to run their vehicles to fight their battles. But if they succeed in their victory over the infidel, all this would disappear with the disappearance of the infidels. If they would by chance win the war against the infidel, then there would be no one to buy their oil in order to run their state. There would be no more infidel banks to rob and no rich infidel people to kidnap for ransom. The money would be gone and the people would be returned to camels and the sands of the Arabian desert. It would be like the horror of a Mad Max movie.

We wonder if radical Islamists think about these things while they are hidden off in some cave? The truth still stands that any oppressive government regime is impossible to continue over any length of time, especially those radical Islamic movements whose leadership has deceived the people into believing that there is freedom and peace through bondage and oppression.

The best way for the protestant world to understand the division that exists among the many sects of Islam is to

compare Islam with the protestant world of denominationalism. There are numerous denominations (sects) that fall under the label “protestant.” All differ, having different names and being identified by various interpretations of the Bible in reference to their teaching. Islam is in like manner divided from within itself. As the protestant from a particular denomination of the protestant world would say that he is a “Christian,” the Muslim would say he is a Muslim in reference to his allegiance to a particular sect of Islam. A Muslim still regards himself to be a Muslim, regardless of the particular denomination of Islam with which he is aligned.

The competition between differing sects of Islam is about political dominance of one group over another, particularly with the two major groups of the Sunnis and Shi’ites. The division is accentuated by a particular groups’ interpretation and application of the Qur’an. Both Sunnis and Shi’ites seek political domination over the people in those nations where Islam is the dominant faith. However, what binds all sects of Islam together is not necessarily the fact that they all claim to be Muslims, but the fact that both groups have a common historical background (heritage) and religious authority, the Qur’an.

Generally, the Shi’ites consider themselves to be the oppressed and the Sunnis are considered by the Shi’ites to be the oppressors. In this conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors, these two sects are drawn together into a mutual conflict whenever one particular group is in the majority. If a particular

sect enjoys the majority, then there seems to be peace as long as the minority group is allowed to maintain their particular religious heritage, and yet submit to the governance of the dominant sect. But in those countries of the Middle East where there is national upheaval, then the two groups are in competition with one another as to who will eventually rule the country.

The irony is in the fact that the conflict between the two groups is what draws them together. When either group feels that they are under the threat of being “christianized,” then both are united as Muslims against the threat. When one group eventually succeeds in becoming the dominant group in a Middle Eastern country, then the losers of the conflict must submit, and thus, relinquish to the authority of the majority group, or at least to the sect that controls the military muscle. If they do not submit, as in the case of Shi’ites in the ISIS controlled areas that are primarily Sunni, then they must be eradicated.

The countries that form the majority of Shi’ites today would be Iraq, Iran, Bahrain and Azerbaijan. However, scattered throughout these countries are also Muslims of other sects. There are also a number of Shi’ites in the minority in countries as Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Pakistan that are predominately Sunni. But historically, the Sunnis have had the upper hand in political power, even in those countries where Shi’ites have had the numerical advantage.

Syria is primarily Sunni, but has been ruled by a Shi’ite minority known

as the Alawites. The minority Shi’ites have maintained their power in Syria by marginalizing the majority Sunnis of the country in the military and government. Assad, the present president of Syria, is Alawite. The rebels of the country are primarily Sunni. The present problem is that the Sunnis feel that it is now their time in history that they should rule the country. And since the West has backed some of the Sunni rebels, the Shi’ites, who are backed by Iranian Shi’ites, now view the West to be on the side of the Sunnis. Now you can understand why the Iranians are somewhat suspicious of the West in their negotiations with Iran over nuclear power. And one can better understand why the Shi’ite majority of Iran seek nuclear power in order to intimidate the oppressing Sunnis that they not even think about asserting power over a Shi’ite Iran.

To western thinking, the conflict embedded within Islam is often confusing. We must simply keep in mind that in the Middle East, the sectarian conflict is more than a conflict over different religious beliefs among Muslims. It is a struggle for state control by radical Islamists in order to gain riches through oil, bank robbery, extortion and the sale of opium. It is about who controls the government and all the wealth of the country. And since both Sunnis and Shi’ites have been inherently competitive (hostile) toward one another for centuries, depending on who was in control of the state, the present upheaval in the Arab world has heightened their hostilities toward one another. This conflict between

these two sects of Islam, therefore, will continue indefinitely in the Islamic nations of the Middle East since the two groups will always exist within any particular Middle East nation. Nevertheless, we would caution ourselves not to judge the entire Islamic faith by what happens among Muslims in the Middle East. It is unfortunate that the news media is obsessed with Middle Eastern conflicts, but we would never allow their reports to determine our understanding of Islam. Most moderate Muslims throughout the world are simply embarrassed by what is usually happening in the conflicts of the Middle East.

All this conflict can actually be blamed on the leaders of radical Islamists. Muhammad established Islam as a religion of faith and state, and thus, when it comes to competition between sects within the Islamic faith, it turns into confrontation (war) as to who is going to rule the state. This did not exist during the lifetime of Muhammad. The historical irony is in the fact that what Muhammad established to bring unity among Arabs has actually condemned them to perpetual conflict and division. As outsiders looking on, we see in this conflict evidence that such a faith cannot be from one God who would promote unity. Man-made religions always promote division because they always reflect in their faith a distorted understanding of who their god is. As Christianity in its early beginnings, there is often division within a faith over loyalty to particular leaders when men seek to follow men rather than Christ (See 1 Co 1:12).

We can never become a brotherhood of believers until we all agree upon a common “dictionary” that we will use to define God. It is for this reason that there will never be a common understanding of God by Christians and Muslims. Each group has its own “dictionary.” And, each group claims that their dictionary has been given to them directly from God. Therefore, when in discussions with Muslims concerning faith, quoting scriptures out of the Bible is often to no avail. What converts Muslims is the love of the God in whom Christians believe and who was manifested in the world through Jesus. When the love of the one true and living God is manifested in the lives of His followers, then God is defined. Jesus said something about this in John 13:34,35.

Please keep in mind that the former colonial powers of the Middle East region are also partly to be blamed for present conflicts. After World War I, the Ottoman Empire was divided up by the European victors of the war and portions assigned to different sheiks. There was little consideration given to the portions where either Sunnis or Shi’ites were in the majority. The colonial powers in Europe simply sat down at a table with a map of the region, and then started drawing lines—as they did with Africa—concerning which areas of the area would be considered a nation. They then declared the divided segments to be independent “nations,” which concept was somewhat foreign to the nomadic and bedouin people of Arabia.

The present conflicts are an embar-

rassment to those Muslims who live outside the Arab world, and who, to a great extent, have conformed to democratic political principles of secular states and a life of peace and prosperity under democratic systems of governance. It is for this reason that Christians should never judge Islam by what is happening in the Middle East. Though the ideal of the Muslim will always be that the entire world become Islamic, the non-Arab Muslim focuses on those passages of the Qur'an that promote peace among those of differing faiths. As long as Muslims within democratic states submit to the constitutional law of a secular state, then there will be peace. But we must never forget that the ultimate goal of the Muslim that is supported by Qur'anic teaching is that the whole world be Islam. We would have to make the same claim as Christians.

This does not mean that when Muslims are in the majority that they will always seek to implement the sharia law of the Qur'an. However, true Islam would call for the institution of sharia law as the ultimate goal of the Islamic struggle against the infidel. Christianity, on the other hand, does not have a concept of civil law embedded within the teachings of the New Testament that must be implemented in society in order for one to be a Christian. The Qur'an does. Therefore, when Christians are in the majority, there is freedom of religion. The same cannot be said of those nations as Saudi Arabia where sharia law is the law of the state.

We must not forget that some of those nations that have historically been

governed by either Sunnis or Shi'ites have not allowed "Christians" to function within their borders. Saudi Arabia is one of those countries. Christian faith has existed for centuries in countries as Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Pakistan, but it is against the law for a Christian to function within the borders of Saudi Arabia. It has only been since the ISIS movement in the countries where Christians have lived for centuries that they have been driven out of ISIS controlled territory. The Sunni Ottoman Empire encompassed those of the Christian faith throughout the Empire during the centuries of its existence. As long as the Sunni Ottoman caliphs had control of government, then peace was maintained between all religious groups of the Empire, including Sunnis and Shi'ites. But when there is a radical interpretation of the Qur'an by radical Islamists, then everyone, including moderate Muslims, are in trouble, for moderate Muslims are always considered to be apostates by Islamists. And so this is the world as it is among the 1.4 billion Muslims that are scattered among the populations of the world, but particularly in the Middle Eastern countries.

Islam is the fastest growing religious faith in the world today. Some have often wondered why this is so. The West has a very difficult time understanding why Muslims would be so much in conflict with one another and willing to be a martyr for their particular sect of Islam, or Islam in general. But what the Muslim cannot understand about the West is the willingness of the Western resident to die willingly for his country, but not

for his faith. What is confusing to the Muslim, for example, would be an area of the world where there is possible conflict, and yet, the churches that have sent out missionaries to those areas of possible conflict will immediately call their missionaries home upon the sound of the first gun shot. Muslims cannot understand in their wildest imagination why a Western individual would die for his state, but not for his faith. To the Muslim, to simply die for one's secular state is absurd, since no state will endure human history. Only faith continues long after every state flag has fallen and turned to dust. And so, we understand why Islam is the fastest growing faith of the world.

The fact that the Western citizen is willing to die only for his state and not his faith has empowered radical Islamists. As the West becomes more antago-

nistic to faith (nonreligious), the Islamist has convinced himself that he most certainly will prevail over a people who have no religious convictions. As the basically nonreligious Millennial Generation that is 80 million strong in America establishes the culture of the West in the coming decades, the Islamist is probably right. How can one who fights only for the privilege of a Starbucks' cappuccino win against one who is willing to die for his god.

In the conflict with ISIS in northern Syria, the ISIS soldiers would walk in front of their tanks in order to take the hit of the missile that was launched against the tank by opposing forces. They sought to protect the tank with their bodies, and thus in martyrdom, be guaranteed heaven. Their victory in the battle was more important to their faith than their lives.

## Chapter 14

# A BLUEPRINT FOR ORDER

The way of the natural world is order because all life was created by a God of order. Natural laws were created to guarantee that our world would not come apart, but would function orderly even at the microscopic level of neutrons. When looking at the smallest particles of the organic world, there is order. There is order in our galaxy and order in the organic environment in which we live. Order is simply the physics of all created things, whether material or organic or social.

Now this brings us to mankind. Among the inhabitants of this world, order is the norm. In times of social chaos,

we must never forget this. Whenever we witness societies in chaos, social physics is struggling on the stage life to give birth to a new social order. Chaos may prevail for decades, but we must be assured that order will eventually prevail over social chaos. Just ask the historians of Germany or Japan. Decades of chaos resulted in order that has taken both societies past world wars to a new order of society that never wants to return to the decades of social chaos.

We see social chaos in the Middle East. But we would never base our judgments for the future of the Middle East

on the social chaos that presently prevails. We will not because we understand that social chaos is not permanent. It is society groaning through the chaos of turmoil in order to give birth to a new order. Eventually, social chaos finds order. In our lifetime, social chaos may not find social order in the Middle East, but order will eventually prevail. We have hope that the present turmoil in the Middle East will eventually find some social order. And thus, we see a glimmer of hope in what is called the movement of the Rojava in the Middle East. Herein is a small movement of people who are bringing together into order all the parties that have historically caused the chaos of the past. We acknowledge this group here for the sake of the West that seems to think that the entire Middle East is about to get out of control. But we must be careful not to stereotype people by what we see on the news media of the West. Please keep in mind that the news media is trying to make a profit by focusing our attention on chaos, not order. There are not to many news reports made of peaceful societies. So for the sake of those who are obsessed with Middle East chaos, we would present a few facts here about what is happening among the Rojava.

The Rojava is a small enclave of primarily Kurdish people of all religious faiths within the borders of Syria, Turkey, and northern Iraq. The Kurds are the largest ethnic group in the Middle East who do not have their own homeland. They have struggled for decades to have such, but have been denied the right by the Turks, Iraqis and Syrians.

In 1916, when the English and French behind closed doors, drew lines on a map to form the Sykes-Picot agreement to divide the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds were left off the map, and thus, they were not given their own homeland. The English and French simply gave the Middle East to lords who eventually established authoritarian regimes by slaughtering leftist thinking people and intellectuals of the region during the 70s and 80s. As a result, the social dynamics of the Middle East was changed to what became dictatorial regimes who have now suffered the vengeance of the Arab Spring. It was the imperialistic West who propped up the authoritarian regimes for the sake of oil. Every time a citizen of the West fueled up his vehicle in the freedom of his own land, he added fuel to the fire that has now broken out across the Middle East. Therefore, before all of us of the West point fingers at those of the Middle East, we might think on these realities.

During the period before the Arab Spring, those of leftist organizations, trade unions, and student movements were either killed or imprisoned, especially in countries as Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Because of this oppression, particularly of those who were Shi'ite Muslims, jihadist movements began to arise in opposition. The opposition was not only against those within the region, but against those imperialists who propped up those to whom they had assigned power over the people and oil as a result of the Sykes-Ricot agreement. It was for this reason that the Rojava (meaning, "west," the western Kurdish region

of Syria) were labeled terrorists by oppressing regimes, including Turkey, Syria and Iraq. They were labelled terrorists because they simply began to fight for their freedom in order that they too might have their own homeland and the right and freedom for self-determination.

The recent conflicts in the Middle East have brought the Rojava a long way in accomplishing their goal of having their own autonomous homeland. In preparation for such, they have written their own constitution. They have also divided themselves into autonomous cantons (states, provinces) in order to guarantee the freedom of everyone within each canton. They have refused to establish their statehood on the basis of any ethnic demands or interests. They have witnessed in the past one hundred years that nationhood that is built on ethnicity or religion will never bring peace among citizens. So in order to establish a society that is not based on a reaction to another oppressive government that is based on either ethnicity or religion, they have refused to become a part of the civil war in Syria, though many dwell within the borders of Syria. In order to guarantee self-determination among the people, they have established autonomous cantons that make decisions according to the assembly of all the people and faiths within the region of each canton.

The Rojava seek gender equality and to empower women at all levels of society. They seek both political and religious freedom. They are anti-authoritarian, anti-imperialist, and seek to respect life and all living creatures. Their con-

stitution is the most democratic of all the constitutions of the Middle East. Because of the recent conflicts that are raging in the Middle East, we thought it necessary here to give a translated quote from the first statements of the Rojava constitution in order to give the free world an idea of a blueprint for civil society that the Rojava are trying to write for the future of themselves as part of the Middle East.

[We] the peoples of the democratic self-administration areas; Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians (Assyrian Chaldeans, Arameans), Turkmen, Armenians, and Chechens, by our free will, announce this to ensure justice, freedom, democracy, and the rights of women and children in accordance with the principles of ecological balance, freedom of religions and beliefs, and equality without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, creed, doctrine or gender, to achieve the political and moral fabric of a democratic society in order to function with mutual understanding and coexistence within diversity and respect for the principle of self-determination and self-defense of the peoples.

The autonomous areas of the democratic self-administration do not recognize the concept of nation state and the state based on the grounds of military power, religion, and centralism.

It is quite interesting that a document as this would arise out of a broken part of the world where a movement as ISIS is seeking to annihilate this society of people while nations as Turkey stand on

the sidelines and watch smoke rise from the Kurdish city of Kobane just a couple miles south of the border with Turkey. There are over 7,500 women in the military of Rojava, fighting beside the men. You have probably seen these brave young women on CNN and BBC, standing with their long black hair blowing in the Arabian winds while firing their guns against a barbaric Islamists aggression of society who believe they are implementing the true Islamic state. Some of the ISIS fighters think that if they are killed by a woman, they will go straight to hell. So we can only imagine that these brave young Rojava women soldiers, some of them "Christian," get up in the morning, clean and load their guns, and then encourage one another as to how many ISIS men they are going to send to hell during the day.

The next time you see on the news the historic battle that is taking place for Kobane, just remember that there are

these brave Rojava women in there who are engaged in street battles from house to house, being led by a woman commander, trying to protect this Kurdish city from falling to a modern-day "Nazi" barbarianism. And then think for a moment when you are trying to get your children to some soccer game on time, that some of your Christian sisters just scurried their children to a bomb shelter after the fall of the first mortar attack.

A CNN reporter interviewed one of these Rojava women soldiers on the frontline only a short distance from the gunfire of ISIS soldiers. She said,

One of my friends was wounded. She said to me before her death, "Let my blood bring freedom to the people." As ISIS soldiers crowded around her wounded body, she blew herself up and killed many of them.

This is the world as it is in northern Syria.

## Chapter 15

# QUR'AN CONCEPTS

Though we have sought through these words to be as objective as possible in reference to true Islam, we would not have the reader misunderstand us. The fact is that Islam is a political/religious system of government that was born out of an era of conflict. It was given birth by one who was seeking to usher in among his Arab people peace among conflicting nomadic Arab tribes who were polytheistic and politically divided. Muhammad and his close friends were mili-

tary people. As the leader of his movement, had his thoughts transcribed, and then his followers, who were often in conflict, fed upon them as political/religious dictates that must be implemented in every society that conquered. The result was that they inspired themselves to be victorious over unbelievers in their political/religious system of government in order to live in peace and unity among themselves.

Muhammad was one of the great

spiritual and social leaders of his time. The fact that he is given credit for producing religious and social oracles is evidence of the fact that he was a leader who wanted to bring to his people under a creed that would encourage peace and unity.

Any reading of the Qur'an gives the impression that Muhammad sought to bring to the lives of simple nomadic people a life-style of social order in the chaotic manner by which nomadic tribes did that which was right in the eyes of each chieftain. In order to produce this order, he did what most religionists do in order to marshal the behavior of the adherents into conformity and uniformity. He produced laws that were eventually collected together over one hundred years after his death into what is now referred to as the Qur'an. This was a legal document of precepts and codes similar in nature to what God gave to Israel through the Torah. Israel needed "precept upon precept" in order to maintain order among scattered tribal farmers throughout the land of promise. Likewise, the uneducated bedouins needed simple directions on how to live the spiritual life and maintain a government of unity. And in reference to this need, Muhammad delivered.

It is often the desire of those who seek a following to do the same with the New Testament. Some leaders have interpreted from the New Testament a legal system of Christianity that is simple and legal: Five steps of salvation and five acts of worship. As long as one had obeyed these simple dictates, then he was fine with God, regardless of his behavior

and thinking. The early uneducated rural farmers of America—and now the rest of the developing world—could easily understand this system of legal requirements. They could thus implement such a legal system of law in their lives in order to legally claim their salvation before God, and then judge others "unfaithful" if they did not conform to the code. Even "worship" was legalized in order to give attendees at assembly a sense of self-satisfaction that they had worshiped God according to law.

Muhammad, with different and more complex rules, did the same for the Arabs. Of course each system of religiosity is legal. And because the systems are legal it places the responsibility for salvation on the shoulders of the adherent to live perfectly in compliance with the laws before one can self-confidently claim salvation on the merit of his own obedience. But when the submissive adherent confesses to his inability to keep the laws perfectly, he is continually racked with guilt for not performing perfectly the codes of his legal religiosity. But the systematic theology of Muhammad appealed to the people. He was successful in that he gave people a legal system of behavior by which to conduct their lives in all aspects of human relationships, and by doing such, live in peace with Allah.

Because of the era in which Muhammad lived, we would assume that there would be many concepts in the Qur'an that are contrary to the Bible. When religions are invented by men, they inevitably reflect the times in which the men live.

Such was the case with the birth of the Qur'an. When religious "scripture" is born out of the contemporary times of the writers, the mandates of the "scriptures" of these "holy books" reflect precepts and concepts that are eventually dated with the death of the authors and the changing of the times. And because man-made "scriptures" are dated, they are inevitably in conflict with the unchanging word of God, which word finds its uniqueness in the fact that it is valid and relevant for all cultures until the end of time. Moderate Muslims are such because they seek to bring Islam into a modern age of the developed world. We must certainly commend them for this effort, though we do not cease to point out those problems that they have in doing this by ignoring some precepts of the Qur'an that are dated.

Now in reference to the Qur'an that Muslims have today, there is a very dubious history. Muhammad died in 632. However, the earliest material that Muslims have today in reference to the life and teachings of Muhammad were written by Ibn Ishaq in 750. It takes little math to figure out that this is about 120 years after Muhammad died. Now this story becomes even more interesting when one realizes that Muslims do not even have any of the original autographs of the work of Ibn Ishaq. What is available are only some copies of the revisions and amendments of Ishaq that were produced by Ibn Hisham, who died in 834. Again, if we do the math, this is about 200 years after Muhammad died.

Now add to the intrigue of this story the work of Uthman Ibn Affan (644-656),

the third caliph after Muhammad. This was an era when the Muslims needed a sacred book in order to consolidate the Muslims under his caliphate. So in order to marshal the people together under his rule, his scribes, with the help of the Samaritans, began to build a character model of Muhammad after the leadership of Moses. The Qur'an that Muslims use today was based on the material that was gathered by Uthman to produce a Qur'anic text. This is the Qur'anic text that is generally accepted by all Muslims today. However, this unfortunately means that the Qur'an that Muslims use today did not originate from Arab scribes. Muslims today assume that the Qur'an in their hands dates back to some original autograph of Muhammad at the time he died. But this is simply not true. There is absolutely no historical evidence that the Qur'an that exists today dates back to the time of Muhammad, or even immediately after his death. This history of the Qur'anic text is one of those embarrassing historical facts with which most Muslims are uncomfortable in discussing.

Now when we speak of the documents of the New Testament text, there is a similar history of collecting copies that were made from copies of the original autographs. However, there is a significant difference between how Christians view the New Testament text they have today and how Muslims view the Qur'anic text. Christians follow the message of the documents, and this message is clearly, and without any contradictions, revealed through the more than five thousand manuscripts that we have today of

the New Testament. However, Muslims are always in a frantic search to verify the exact words of Muhammad because the Qur'an is the very revelation of Allah to man. Any corruption of the text of the Qur'an, therefore, would be a corruption of the revelation of Allah for Muslims today.

Now in contrast to Bible teaching, the following are a few example teachings of the Qur'an that might be interesting to the Bible student in order to determine some basic differences between teachings of the Qur'an and the Bible:

#### **A. Mercy, forgiveness and forbearing:**

In view of the present conflicts that prevail throughout the Arab Islamic world, we find the following statements of Muhammad quite interesting, if not a paradox to the militant Islamist:

Allah is forgiving and merciful (Surah 2:218).

And know that Allah is forgiving and forbearing (Surah 2:235).

Allah is embracing and knowing (Surah 2:247).

Allah is gracious toward mankind (Surah 2:251)

These statements are scattered throughout the Qur'an. All moderate Muslims of the world focus on these statements in reference to defining their Islamic faith to the Christian world. However, when we see the conflicts that are presently happening in the Middle East, we are led to

believe that the conflicts are not the result of pious spiritual leaders who are trying to implement Islam. What radical Islamist seem to be doing is enriching themselves on the wealth of oil that is sold to the infidel. And in order to do this, power must be claimed. And in order to claim the power, Islamists must ignore the forgiving, merciful and forbearing teachings of Muhammad concerning his understanding of the nature of Allah.

#### **B. Deceive for Allah:**

Now Muslims would lead the world to believe that the basic nature of Islam is "mercy, forgiveness and forbearing." But the vast majority of Muslims throughout the world know that this is not always the case. The teaching of Taqiyya is a doctrine of the Qur'an. It is a principle that gives the right to the Muslim to proclaim one's beliefs in a deceptive manner in order to escape persecution or harm. When in negotiations with the West, the Islamic nation would feel that it is their right to deceive the Western negotiators for the sake of promoting the Islamic cause. Surah 16:106 reads,

Anyone who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters unbelief, except under compulsion, theirs will be a dreadful chastisement.

What the surah is saying is that a Muslim has the right to utter falsehoods in order to escape persecution. The same principle of deception and denial is taught in reference to breaking oaths, promises and

other contracts with the infidel, if such is down for the benefit of the Muslim (See surah 2:225; 8:54; 9:3; 11:106; 40:28; 66:2). Would an Islamic nation that is governed by sharia law sign a treaty with the West, and then later recant on the conditions of the treaty? The Qur'an would certainly justify such.

### C. Aggression:

We do not forget that within the pages of Muhammad's teaching that there are clear statements that encourage aggression. Surah 9:29 states:

Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the Last Day, nor forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor abide by the religion of truth—from among those who received the Scripture—until they pay the due tax, willingly or unwillingly.

In contrast to this aggression that is taught in the Qur'an, note Surah 5:87:

O you who believe! Do not prohibit the good things Allah has permitted for you, and do not commit aggression. Allah does not love the aggressors.

And fight them until there is no oppression, and worship becomes devoted to Allah alone. But if they cease, then let there be no hostility except against the oppressors (Surah 2:193).

In reference to this aggressive spirit that is taught in the Qur'an, which was military aggression, the West must not

forget that the radical Islamist obsesses over these statements in order to launch jihad against the free world. The West would certainly use military force to resist any formalized Islamic army that would endanger nationhood and the Western citizen's way of life. But such a military conflict with jihadist will not happen. Islamic jihad is covert. The aggression of the Islamist today is carried out through the infiltration of society under the umbrella of the "freedom of religion" embedded in the laws of the free world. Islamists in the West are using the freedom of democracy as the means to continue the Islamic war against the unbelievers.

This does not mean, however, that when Muslims have the majority vote that they will implement sharia law. There are countries as Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Malaysia that by far are Muslim in majority with Islam as the state law, but do not seek to oppress other faiths by a strict application of sharia law. We must keep in mind that the vast majority of Muslims throughout the world are moderate and want to continue on with peace in their lives as any citizen in the freedom of a democratic society. But we must never forget that deep inside, Muslims know that the world must become Islam. This is the thinking of the vast majority of Muslims, though the moderate Muslim would use more subtle means than outright military conflict.

It is certainly the goal of the Christian to make all the world Christian. His evangelistic outreach is through the proclamation of the gospel, to which people

can voluntarily and individually respond. No one is forced to become a Christian. Those who would impose their faith on others, will eventually have others retaliate by imposing their faith on them. There is the vast difference between using terrorism as a means to impose one's faith on others.

If the Christian would succeed in his evangelistic efforts to reach the world, then he does not have in his back pocket a religious state constitution that he would impose on those who would volunteer to be Christian. Almost all modern Muslims in democratic states feel the same in reference to Islam and the Qur'an. However, we must keep in mind that movements as the Taliban, Boko Haram, ISIS, Al Sahabaab and Al Qaeda have copies of the Qur'an ready to impose on the people as a state constitution.

We are often horrified at the horrendous atrocities that are being carried out by Islamic groups in different parts of the world. There is a reason for this. The radical Islamist accuses the non-Islamic world of attacking Islam. They are right, but not as they think. The attack is with the gospel, not with guns. In the early 1960s there was a book that was published annually entitled, *Unreached People*. In the early 1960s it was stated that about one billion people in the world had never heard the name "Jesus." But since then, this has all changed. The name of Jesus has been preached throughout the last fifty years to people all over the world. Few people in the world today have never heard of the name Jesus.

Now we wonder why Islamists feel

that they are under attack? The truth is that Muslims are converting to Christianity throughout the world. And what would we expect when the kingdom of darkness is under attack? Islamists know that the message of love that Christians bring through the preaching of the gospel will overcome the power of any religious system that is of this world.

Christians recall in their history when the same scenario of oppression of their faith happened at the beginning of the first century until the first of the fourth century. The Jews first persecuted Christianity, and then state persecution began with Nero and extended until Rome finally relented under Constantine and made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. Hate and military aggression of the great Roman Empire succumbed to love.

When one has an inferiority complex about his faith, his only recourse is terroristic aggression. When one knows that he is losing the battle for the hearts of men, then he will often lash out with fierce aggression. A once "unreached people" of the world are now being reached with the message of love from the cross that was expressed through grace and was poured out on the cross of Calvary. There is no power whatsoever that can stand against the power of the love and grace that was revealed on a cross a short distance from Jerusalem. Someone once asked us how to convert Muslims. There is really only one answer that would begin the conversion process. Jesus gave the "method":

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (Jn 13:34,35).*

#### **D. Islam only:**

Surah 9:33 states that Islam is the only true religion.

It is He who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, in order to make it prevail over all religions, even though the idolaters dislike it.

The religion before Allah is Islam (Surah 3:19; see 3:85).

This statement would also reflect the goal of Christians in reference to Christianity. What the constitution of a democratic state accomplishes is to offer both the Christian and Muslim, as well as all religious faiths within a nation, the social environment in which differences in faith can be freely discussed. If either side of the discussion would seek to impose the laws of their faith as the laws of the state, then we can know that that faith is simply the invention of man. If one needs the law of state to convert the people, then we can be assured that the law of one's faith is simply from man and not God. Those who lack confidence in their "system of faith" will always seek some way to impose their faith on others by using the law of the state.

But the doctrine of "Islam only" is totally contrary to the teaching that Jesus

is the only way, truth and life (Jn 14:6). He is the only way into the realm of the eternal Father (At 4:12). Islam cannot be the only way, if the only way is through Jesus. The teaching that Islam is the only religion forces every Muslim to accept the following teaching of the Qur'an:

#### **E. Denial of the cross:**

Surah 4:157 states:

And for their [Jews] saying, "We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah." In fact, they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them as if they did. Indeed, those who differ about him are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it, except the following of assumptions. Certainly, they did not kill him.

This is one point of teaching of the Qur'an that will always separate Christianity from Islam. There will never be a compromise between the two faiths, as some have attempted with the theology of "Christlam." Such teaching is a mockery of the Son of God and the cross upon which He poured Himself out for the salvation of all men.

Muhammad denied the very foundation upon which God labored for centuries throughout human history to accomplish. The cross is the centrality of the work of the one true and living God. And it is by the denial of this salvational event of history that proves that Islam is simply a religion of man. Because of this

denial on the part of Muhammad, he will always be considered a false prophet by all Christians.

Muhammad's denial of this central reason for Christian faith speaks volumes concerning the digressed state of "Christianity" that he encountered. He placed no salvational emphasis on the cross, indicating that the supposed Christianity of the era had long forgotten that the Christian life is centered around the cross. What Muhammad encountered was a religion that was defined by organized religious people who based their faith in a religious institution. There was no preaching of the gospel of Jesus and the cross at this time in history. There was only preaching of the church. If the gospel had been preached and lived throughout the Arabian areas of the world, then certainly Muhammad would have mentioned message of the gospel that "Christians" were supposed to be preaching. If "Christians" were preaching the gospel of the cross, Muhammad would have attacked the message of the cross and not simply what he considered to be the fraudulent claim of the death of Jesus.

Will this be the demise of the church in the years to come? Will we too stop preaching the gospel of the cross and the necessity of obeying the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus in the waters of baptism for the forgiveness of sins? Will preaching of an institutional churchianity overshadow the cross? It seems that the digression has already started with those who obsess over "faith only" salvation to the neglect of obedience to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus

(See 1 Co 15:1-4; Rm 6:3-6; 2 Th 1:6-9). The central message of some in these days is a message of church, and not Christ. It is often a message of preserving one's religious heritage, and not preaching of our inheritance through the cross.

When prophets start preaching that people are individually predestined to either heaven or hell, then there is no need to proclaim the cross to which all men must have an opportunity to respond. When prophets rise up, and with sweet voices, proclaim that a simple faith only is all that is needed to be saved, then there is no need to preach the incarnate blood of Jesus Christ dripping from the cross of Calvary. When the obsession of our preaching is a catechism to define our church heritage, then the foundation of our faith moves from Christ to church.

We would assume that Christendom has moved closer to the era of Muhammad by promoting a churchianity that is sterile of the cross, but organize according to the laws of heritage. If one does not believe this, then he should take note of all the "miracle meetings" that are conducted throughout the misguided religious world of Christendom. People are drawn to the "miracle meetings" in hope of healing. Churches are thus filled with narcissistic attendees who come weekly and weakly for some "healing." They are "me churches" that seek something for self. They are not drawn into assembly because of what Jesus did for us through the cross. This certainly seems to be contrary to what Jesus said would draw people unto Him. *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to*

me” (Jn 12:32). It is the cross that draws true repentant believers to Jesus, not miracles.

Please keep in mind that the digression from the preaching of the gospel and simple Christianity to an institutional churchianity identified by its organization took less than five centuries to developfully. This is the “christianity” that Muhammad encountered and rejected. In the middle of the first century, Paul started everything right during his three-year ministry in Arabia (Gl 17,18). Though Christianity was started right, it ended up wrong when people left the direction of the word of God. Digression from the gospel message is slow, but it eventually comes. Our task is to determine at what stage we are presently in concerning the digression of Christianity to being just another religion.

To think that Christianity without the Bible is static and uninfluenced and unchanging everywhere in the world, is certainly being naive as a historian. It is the duty of every disciple to check his Bible, and then look around and determine the state of the religious world in which he lives. Most of the time all one must do is simply look at those who are sitting beside him on Sunday morning. He should thus first check himself lest he become a part of that institutional religiosity which Muhammad encountered, and rejected. The “Christianity” of his day was so false that even he admonished the “Christians” to follow the teachings of Jesus (See Surah 3:161-166). We know that we have strayed a long way from Jesus when it takes an unbeliever to call

us hypocrites in reference to the faith that we profess.

## F. God is not three, but one:

Surah 4:171 states:

O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion, and do not say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, is the Messenger of Allah, and His Word that He conveyed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and do not say, “Three.” Refrain—it is better for you. Allah is only one.

Muhammad did not consider Jesus to be the manifestation of God on earth, and thus, not the Son of God. Jesus was simply a prophet/messenger from God. He was a prophet just as Muhammad claimed to be. When Jesus said, “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (Jn 14:9), He stated a teaching that was totally contrary to the concept that Muhammad had of Jesus.

## G. Jesus not God, nor Son of God:

Muhammad denied the sonship of Jesus. To him, Jesus was, as he, only a messenger from Allah. In fact, Jesus was created by Allah, and thus could not be as Allah himself (Surah 3:59).

In blasphemy are those that say that Allah is Christ the son of Mary (Surah 5:17; see 5:72)

Christ the son of Mary was no more than

a Messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him (Surah 5:75).

Muhammad taught that since Jesus was a created being, and thus not one with God, as the Bible teaches, then it would be wrong for one to believe and teach that Jesus was the Son of God (Surah 9:31). On this basis, he denied the deity of the Son of God. Of the twenty-five times that reference is made to Jesus in the Qur'an, twenty-three times reference is made to Him as only the "son of Mary."

Under no circumstances did Muhammad want people to think of Jesus as the Son of God. If such were believed, then the teachings of Jesus would be elevated above the teachings of Muhammad. Jesus would thus not have been just another prophet of God, as Muhammad so claimed He was. If in any way Jesus was accepted to be more than a prophet, then Muhammad's teachings would not have been accepted as teachings in a succession of prophets, of which Muhammad claimed to be the last.

## H. Legal salvation by works:

Surah 23:101-103 state:

When the Horn is blown, no relations between them will exist on that Day, and they will not ask after one another. Those whose scales are heavy— those are the successful. But those whose scales are light— those are they who have lost their souls; in Hell they will dwell forever. (Also see surah 34:3-5).

One's salvation, according to Muham-

mad, depends on the number of good works he has accumulated for the day of judgment. Now because the Qur'an taught this legal system of salvation, there was no guaranteed way that one would go to heaven, for one would never know if his works were sufficient to give him a pass into the presence of the many virgins that awaited him. Even if one did make it into heaven, there was no guarantee that he would stay there. So Muhammad came up with an ingenious way of encouraging his recruits for war, and at the same time, give them peace of mind that they would enter into the presence of all these virgins, and stay there. If one died a martyr for Allah, he was guaranteed heaven. The suicide bomber, therefore, is guaranteed entrance into the presence of the virgins if he commits his murderous act of suicide. If one would commandeer an airplane and fly it into a skyscraper, killing hundreds of infidels, then he would go straight to heaven.

## I. Polygamy:

Surah 4:3 states:

If you fear you cannot act fairly towards the orphans—then marry the women you like—two, or three, or four ....

Muhammad's teaching on polygamy rose out of an era of wars when fathers were killed in battle. The returning men from battle were given the responsibility of caring for the wives and children of those husbands and fathers who were killed in battle.

**J. Believe in Jesus:**

Surah 3:79 state:

No person to whom Allah has given the Scripture, and wisdom, and prophethood would ever say to the people, "Be my worshipers rather than Allah's." Rather, "Be people of the Lord, according to the Scripture you [Christians] teach, and the teachings you learn."

In a mandate to his followers, Muhammad wrote in Surah 4:161-166:

We have inspired you, as We had inspired Noah and the prophets after him. And We inspired Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Patriarchs, and Jesus, and Job, and Jonah, and Aaron, and Solomon. ... Some messengers We have already told you about, while some messengers We have not told you about. ... Messengers delivering good news, and bringing warnings; so that people may have no excuse before Allah after the coming of the messengers. ... But Allah bears witness to what He revealed to you. He revealed it with His knowledge. And the angels bear witness. Though Allah is a sufficient witness.

And then in a contradictory statement, Muhammad wrote in Surah 3:17:

Verily, the true religion in Allah's sight is Islam.

In other words, the Christian is to believe in Jesus Christ, and thus be Christian. But then Muhammad affirms that there is only

one religion, Islam. Then consider the fact that the Bible teaches that God does not deliver to man "religion," but principles by which His people conduct themselves in the world and with one another. If one must follow Jesus in his "religion," then how can Islam be the only religion in the sight of God?

**K. Disrespect for women:**

Muhammad viewed women as property and a means to satisfy sexual urges and pleasures. This thinking is brought out in Surah 33:51:

You may defer any of them [women] you wish, and receive any of them you wish. Should you desire any of those you had deferred, there is no blame on you.

**L. Hope of a carnal heaven:**

In the statements of Surah 56:10-35, Muhammad described his concept of the reward of obedient Muslim men. We do not presume that Muhammad was speaking metaphorically when he gave this description of hope for his followers. Since he surely did not, then the hope of heaven that is presented by the Qur'an is certainly carnal.

And the forerunners, the forerunners. Those are the nearest. In the Gardens of Bliss. A throng from the ancients. And a small band from the latecomers. On luxurious furnishings. Reclining on them, facing one another. Serving them will be immortalized youth. With cups,

pitchers, and sparkling drinks. Causing them neither headache, nor intoxication. And fruits of their choice. And meat of birds that they may desire. And lovely companions. The likenesses of treasured pearls. As a reward for what they used to do. Therein they will hear no nonsense, and no accusations. But only the greeting: "Peace, peace." And those on the Right— what of those on the Right? In lush orchards. And sweet-smelling plants. And extended shade. And outpouring water. And abundant fruit. Neither withheld, nor forbidden. And uplifted mattresses. We have created them of special creation. (See also Surah 3:11; 4:60).

While he was still alive and attacking caravans across the desert, Muhammad made some very carnal promises to his men in order to guarantee their loyalty and die for his cause. If they would fight with him, he promised that they could have the women they captured in order to satisfy their sexual desires. And then some of his men began questioning that if they were killed in battle, then they would have no women. So another revelation was squeezed out of Muhammad that said there would be virgins waiting for them in heaven (See surah 56:34-36).

There are many legal mandates and exhortations imposed on Muslims by the Qur'an. The religion is based on a legalistic system of behavior and salvation, and thus, emphasis for salvation is based on one's performance of those laws that Muhammad enjoined on his followers. It is a system of religiosity wherein there

can be little grace, for grace cannot be the focus of a religious system that is based on legal perfection in obedience to law by those who teach the system.

Though there are many good principles that are taught in the Qur'an, the confusion it leaves with the reader would suggest that moderate Muslims probably spend little time in studying its text because of the nature of its legal system for salvation. The same could be said of many of those who profess to be Christian concerning their knowledge and study of the Bible. But at least by reading the Bible and the Qur'an, one would be encouraged to read the Bible simply because there is a literary flow of the text without all the rambling thoughts that seem to be characteristic with some parts of the text of the Qur'an.

We would encourage every Christian to be very familiar with the teachings of the Qur'an, especially those teachings where the Qur'an makes God a liar and a deity who has changed His mind from what He first said in the Bible. The Qur'an is filled with justification for lying, deception, slavery, women as property, the right to selfishly kill for the reward of heaven, military dominance of all nations, and a host of other teachings that are contrary to Bible teaching. If the Qur'an is from God, then God sure changed His mind on a great deal of moral issues that He revealed in both the Old and New Testaments.

We are certain that most moderate Muslims today are entirely unaware of many teachings of the Qur'an that are contrary to Bible teaching, and in many

cases, contrary to the constitutional law of secular states. It is for this reason that Christians should be familiar with the teachings of the Qur'an in order to teach Muslims. This is being done by many Christians in Africa, and as a result thousands of African Muslims are being converted to Jesus. The day may come when

we in Africa will need to send African evangelists to America in order to teach American Christians how to convert Muslims. Just keep in mind that the moderate Muslim's ignorance of his own source of authority is an open door to bring moral truth to those who are walking in ignorance.

## Chapter 16

# THE RISE OF A NEW WORLD

As you read through the following material, you will discover why we have added it to a book on this subject. What will be discussed is becoming a generation throughout the world that is being cultured with a world view that is in many ways opposed to the Christian's world view, but at the same time, produces an opportunity for the spread of Islam. Not only is the world view of Islam contrary to that which we see in the Bible, the new immersing generation that is arising in the developed world is in many ways also in conflict with Christianity. The selfless example that we see nailed to the cross of Calvary runs contrary to a narcissistic non-religious generation that has itself at heart and the world as its final destination. It is a generation that has forgotten that all we are is a clod of dirt invested with a spirit from God. The concept expressed in the words, "*I have been crucified with Christ*" (Gl 2:20), is on the other end of the spiritual continuum of a vast majority of this generation. It is imperative, therefore, that leaders of God's people understand this new generation in order to influence its direction by the

message of sacrifice that comes from the cross. Therefore, do not read lightly over this material. It is by no means complete, but it will give you some idea of how this immersing world generation can easily lead to the fall of Christianity, and thus open the door for every religious invention possible to man, and possibly move the world closer to the Genesis 6:5 scenario. This religious scenario happened with the world prior to Noah. It happened with the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim (Gn 11:19; 13). It happened with the nation of Israel (Hs 4:6). And it can happen today to any society that claims to be "Christian."

We include these thoughts primarily for our audience outside America who have a romantic view of the West that is rapidly passing away. As the faith of European nations vanished, who first went into all the world with the gospel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so it is the case today with twenty-first century America. The "Christian nation" is rapidly becoming a faithless nation with little desire for anything that is religious.

Some of the recent statistics on this

matter are shocking. They are shocking to the extent that it is time now that the rest of the world must take ownership of the future evangelization of the world, for the Western church is fast pulling out of world missions. As the American church brings its soldiers home from foreign nations, so the rest of us in the world must assume the responsibility of engaging Satan in our own backyards. We see the work of God throughout the world in all this cultural transformation. God is simply turning the work of Satan against himself. God removes the influence of foreign mission sources in order that local disciples take ownership of the evangelization of their own countries. Therefore, as fellow world citizens, we must get on with that which we are supposed to be doing without focusing on the financial crutch and leadership of the West. We must assume our responsibility to take Jesus into all the world. In order to do this, we must listen to what this new immerging generation is saying.

#### A. “We are changing.”

All societies go through generational changes. Though traditions and customs may minimize these changes from one generation to another, there are still changes that take place as the next generation wants to do things differently, and often better. Such changes continually take place in every culture of the world. It significant, however, that there seems to be a most dynamic worldwide change going on at this time that is affecting worldwide cultures in the same

way. It is not a sociological change that is unique with one particular world culture. Though this change is significant in the Western societies of America and Europe, we bear witness that the new **Millennial Generation** is not unique with the West only. It is worldwide.

We have traveled to many places of the world where we have witnessed the core nature of this new generation that is growing stronger on the world scene. It is a generation that has changed the Arab world through what was called the “Arab Spring.” The rapidity of this generational change will answer some questions as to why some Muslims feel that Islam is under attack. It is this worldwide generation that seeks to be educated and informed as the rest of the world. No youth of the world wants to be left out, for young people know enough in the most remote places of Pakistan or Afghanistan that if they are left out of this new world citizenship they are doomed to live among the relics of the past and under the control of uneducated leaders or authoritarian clerics. The Muslim youth of this generation, therefore, no longer want to be uneducated recluses in caves, jungles or deserts, and subdued by ignorant leaders who find self-esteem by oppressing others into the subjection to self-imposed legal religious codes. Young girls throughout the Muslim world want to be freed through education, something that Islamists as the Taliban, ISIS, Boko Haram and Al Shabaab simply cannot allow among the people over which they seek to dominate. The youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, Malala Yousafzai (17

years old), who recovered from a gun shot to the head by the Taliban, once said, "They only shot a body but they cannot shoot a dream." These are brave young Muslim girls who want to be educated, and also show the world that Islam is not the twisted religiosity that is often reported on the nightly news.

For the Islamists, the Muslim youth of the world made the mistake of buying a smart phone. These youth then discovered themselves joining in with the Millennials worldwide who seek to take this world into a new and better world order for themselves. They have discovered, however, that ignorance among clerical leaders has a hard time giving way to a better way, a life of freedom to think.

It is unfortunate that the Millennials who are culturally formed to work as a team find it difficult to produce the type of leaders who are necessary to take an Arab Spring into a truly democratic government. The young Google employee who inspired the Egyptian Spring simply said after all the changes that were made in Egypt, he wanted nothing to do with leading the country as a politician. The team culture of the Millennials is so strong that it has a difficult time producing the type of leadership that is necessary to stand alone and lead the way for the masses.

No book on a subject of world views would be complete without some thoughts on the rise and affect of the Millennial Generation on the world as it is and is to come. More books have been written on this generation than any other

generation of civilization. Sociologists know that the Millennial Generation will change the world as it is. And for this reason, studies have been made and numerous books written in order to prepare the world for some interesting surprises that are coming.

In the context of our ministry of the word of God, it is important that church leaders understand some of the basic principles of the Millennial Generation in order that the gospel can be communicated effectively to those of this culture. Simply standing back and begrudging changes that one does not understand and cannot control is not an option for a church leader. He must understand and engage those to whom he is to preach the gospel.

The Millennial Generation is composed of those who were generally born between 1980 and 2000. In America, this generation is **80 million strong**. It is a generation that will eventually change America forever as it moves into being the leadership of the nation. Therefore, we write these words in order to prepare all of us who reside outside the continental United States and Europe to understand the nature of a changing West.

Every country of the world has its Millennials. Because of globalization and communication, no country of the world that has come online can escape the affects of this generation. Because Western cultures have been exported worldwide, the Millennials in countries throughout the world have more in common with one another than any previous generation of history. The Millennials

have moved us from a world of national citizenship, to a borderless world of global citizens. There are no borders on the Internet, and thus, the Millennial Generation electronically travels freely throughout the world for information and relationships. If one were an imam in a cave in northern Afghanistan, then certainly he should be on guard against his adherents acquiring smart phones that would connect them to a worldwide citizenship. Once cave dwellers are connected, they realize how backward and underdeveloped they are. We can understand why the North Korean government is terrified about allowing the citizens of the country to have access to the Internet.

The 14<sup>th</sup> wealthiest man in the world, Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, has made it his goal to bring the world online through Internet connections. Facebook presently (2014) has 1.35 billion user connected, and it is his goal to connect the entire world. The present world population of the world is about 7.2 billion. Of this number, 2.9 billion people are using the Internet (*Time Magazine*, Dec. 25, 2014). This means that there are about 4.3 billion people who are not online. It is Zuckerberg's goal to get these people online and connected to the information that is available on the Internet. Education brings freedom, and thus Zuckerberg is a "digital pioneer" who will lead the world to be better by being connected. The world will thus continue to change rapidly in the decades to come. This change has already started and will accelerate as more people connect to information highway of the Internet.

A few years ago one of our brethren in South Africa said, "Brother Dickson, they are different." (He was speaking of Millennials who had visited South Africa.) The brother continued, "You can see it in their eyes!" So this was our impetus several years ago to do some research to see what the folks in Africa saw in the eyes of this new and different Millennial Generation that was going to reshape the sociological structure of world society. We have since learned some good things, and some not-so-good things in reference to spiritual orientation of this generation. Therefore, these words are written to our older generation who seem somewhat unsettled about these new digital thinkers who have come onto the world stage of sociological drama.

In speaking to an older generation that does not know the difference between megabytes and bug bites, we thought it necessary to aid somewhat in understanding this generation to whom we are to take the gospel. Instead of scaring Millennials away with our archaic ways, we need to separate Bible from tradition in approaching a generation that is educated and moving on into the future. If a church leader does not do as Paul said below, then he will be left in his empty cave (pew), complaining that the world has all gone wrong:

*I have made myself a bondservant to all, so that I might gain the more. So to the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win the Jews. To those who are under law I became as one under law (though I myself am not under law), so that I might*

*win those who are under law. To those who are without law, as without law, though not being without God's law but under Christ's law, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became as weak so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the sake of the gospel so that I might be a partaker of it (1 Co 9:19-23).*

Get the point?

### **B. “We are digitally connected.”**

In reference to what we have seen throughout the world, one common thread runs through this generation that will redefine the new world culture of the future. President George W. Bush once said many years ago that we were moving into “a new world order.” He said this in reference to the change of the guard of several governments. But he may have miscalculated what the new world would actually be. Certainly, governments change, for they are the reflection of the people, whether a dictatorship or democracy, depending on what government the people first placed in control. But the new world order in reference to government is yet to arise to reflect the worldwide phenomena of the digital generation.

We would name this new generation after that which gave it birth and binds its citizenship together. It is the “Digital Generation.” Digital communication gave birth to this generation through communication devices. They have ex-

changed person communication for worldwide connection. Cellphones, smart phones, Ipads, notebooks and an assortment of computers and electronic gadgets have opened the door for a worldwide connection with information and other people. This generation would not continue to exist without these digital devices. In fact, none of us would now be able to function in the developed world without some digital device. Wherever we have traveled in the world, this digital generation exists, whether on the off beaten roads of Africa or main street Beijing. It is a generation that is obsessed with their communication devices. It is a generation of which the digital communication devices are the very center of its culture.

Digital communication devices have changed the way the people of this generation relate to one another. If there were no digital or virtual communication devices, then this generation would culturally collapse. It would collapse because the relational part of the culture of this generation depends on the communication devices, not personal contact with others in communication. The devices are its heartbeat, because through the communication devices, the citizens of this generation stay in contact with one another. Instant worldwide communication now defines the world as it is. And we presume that this communication mania will intensify in the world to come. We cannot think that it is a bad thing for the world to become smaller through digital communication relationships.

### C. “Everything is about us.”

The letter “I” is worn off the computer keyboard of the Millennial Generation. If he had a computer, this would be the case with the narcissistic Diotrephes about whom John wrote, “... *but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not receive us*” (3 Jn 9).

A narcissist is one who is focused on himself. He seeks to be noticed, to be first, to have no competition, and the “winner” in all things. Narcissism is a personality disorder with which one is not born, but is trained to be from childhood. The present Millennial Generation is three times more narcissistic than the generation that is 65 and older in America. In fact, according to the National Institute of Health, among college students, 58% of those in their twenties scored higher on the narcissism scale than the same age group of college students in 1982.

This is a generation of people who are obsessed with themselves. They have grown up in a society where there are no losers and everyone is “the man.” Some sports games of schools in America no longer keep score because they do not want the children to feel like they can lose. Every player on the field is “a winner” because he simply played in the game. Everybody is trained to be a winner, and a “good job” statement is made after every activity in which one involves himself.

Unfortunately, when this generation encounters the real world where there are losers, suicide is high, and riots on the

street are easy when all these “winners” confront a police force that tells them that there are limits to what they can do in society. Since this generation is convinced of their own greatness, their social development is stunted, and thus, they simply have a hard time “growing up.”

When one has obsessed over his or her self with countless “selfies” (self-taken pictures), both by parents and one’s self in the developing years, what would we expect? When one’s personal room is filled with countless trophies and award ribbons as to what a winner is, then we can understand why such communication mediums as “I”phones, and “You”tube (broadcast yourself), and “I”pads have been so financially successful. Tweeter is based on the social norm that one supposes that everyone is interested in one’s every moment of life. Millennials broadcast their daily activities on FitBit, their whereabouts on PlaceMe, and everything else on 23 and Me. This is narcissism refined.

Many single people in Sweden do not seek to be married. In fact, 26% of the people of Sweden do not intend to marry. The same is true in America, for 26% of the Millennial Generation in America also do not intend to marry. Someone once asked why this is. The answer is simple. It is just too difficult to take two “I’s” and make a “we” relationship. When one has lived a life of 25 years or so focusing on one’s self, it is certainly difficult to change course to focus on someone else first.

The West trained their children to be this way because they were paranoid

about rearing up losers, and in reference to family, those who would end in divorce. Parents wanted their children to have great self-esteem, for in having such they could find good jobs. Unfortunately, being obsessed with one's self may help to get the job, but not keep the job. Sean Lyons, coeditor of *Managing the New Workforce: International Perspectives on the Millennial Generation*, wrote,

This generation has the highest likelihood of having unmet expectations with respect to their careers and the lowest levels of satisfaction with their careers at the state that they're at.

Instilling self-esteem within our youth is great. But we must keep in mind that self-esteem is only one step away from the mental disorder of narcissism. Only a fine mental line separates the two. It is as the psychologist Jean Twenge said,

When they're little it seems cute to tell them they're special or a princess or a rock star or whatever their T-shirt says. When they're 14 it's no longer cute.

Twenge's advice was, "Just tell your kids you love them. It's a better message" (See Twenge's books, *Generation Me* and *The Narcissism Epidemic*). We believe the Bible says something similar.

But do not conclude that narcissism is a plague that is sweeping across the Western world only. We have experienced the same overconfident and self-obsessed Millennials everywhere we have traveled in the world. This is not a

social problem for the rich and famous of the West. There are "poor" Millennials throughout the world who have been self-glamorized by the communication of themselves and desire for a materialistic way of life. Their focus on themselves has often been their escape from poverty.

However, the West has been particularly fruitful in producing the self-oriented generation of the Millennials. After all, it was the Baby Boomer parent generation of the West that was "me" oriented, and thus gave birth to and reared a generation of children who were obsessively focused on themselves. The "Me" Generation produced the "Me, Me, Me" Generation. For those of you who live outside the American society, consider the fact that you have in your house a picture of your wedding, and maybe a few other pictures of yourself. Now compare this with the average American Millennial who has surrounded himself with an average of 85 pictures of himself throughout his house (*Time Magazine*, May 20, 2013). They are both the stars and audience of their lives.

#### **D. "We are entitled."**

A personality characteristic that is contrary to the spirit of Christianity is entitlement. This is the attitude that "I" have a right to a piece of the pie, to enjoy the pleasures of the things that this world has to offer because one believes he deserves to consume all things upon his own lusts. This is an attitude that is basically worldly, since the very drive of the individual who has been stricken with this

earthly mentality is focused on those things that are of this world. The Holy Spirit dealt with this thinking in Colossians 3:1,2:

*If you then were raised with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

Any thinking that moves the Christian's mind from the heavenly to the earthly is simply worldly. This is the spirit of entitlement. Since those of the Millennial Generation are self-oriented, then they think they are entitled to that which surrounds them. They climb the mountain in order to have others see them, not in order to see the world. In order to be seen successful by their peers, they must give the presentation of being successful. This is not a generation that has grown up with worn shoes, or walked to school in knee-deep snow, up hill both ways. It is not a generation that had to put together a bicycle out of junk parts from a junkyard. They simply bypassed the new bicycle generation of their fathers and went straight for the new cars in their teens. It is a generation where parents have lavished the material world upon them, and now, they believe they are the center of their world, and thus entitled to everything that this world has to offer. It is a generation that finds it very difficult to follow the One who said, *"The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head"* (Mt 8:20).

The character of the Millennial Generation has never traveled through life with a lack of this world's goods. It is a generation whose thinking was developed by having everything, and thus having everything is their way of life. They know no other way to live. In fact, they believe that their materialistic way of life is what defines life. This is the "American dream," the "American way of life." Everyone in the world who does not live this way is "underdeveloped."

It is the goal of the West, therefore, to "develop" the rest of the world. The Western definition of the "developed world" is that the rest of the world must surround themselves with possession in which they too can consume upon their own desires (lusts). If a nation has not "developed" to where every citizen can walk into a Walmart shopping center for a tube of toothpaste and come out with a trolley full of consumer goods, then they are living in a "developing" nation. The apostle Paul wrote, *"If we have food and clothing, with these let us be content"* (1 Tm 6:8). We have always considered that if Paul walked into Walmart for a tub of toothpaste, he would walk out with only a tub of toothpaste.

What has developed the psychological problem among those of this "developed" generation is also the digital means of communication by which one can embellish himself with all sorts of media to broadcast his personal social status to his friends. When one starts broadcasting himself on Youtube, Facebook and Twitter, the "likes" and "followers" start inflating one's ego to the point of believing

that he is some type of celebrity. When others start “liking” our broadcasted parties, pictures, vacations, and job promotions, then we start to believe that we are in the middle of a micro-universe where we are entitled to be popular.

Such digital means of broadcasting one’s life becomes an obsession. Everything and every event in our celebrity lives is thus “posted” in order to retain our personal cheerleading “friends.” We are obsessed with how many “likes” we receive when we post a picture of ourselves involved in some sort of activity. But when this means of self-glamorization goes wrong for young people, worlds collapse and suicide happens. When the self-glamorized are electronically bullied, it is just too much. When one who thinks he or she is always a winner, it is a traumatic experience when others digitally communicate that he or she is a loser.

But before we are too hard on the Millennials for being a self-oriented and entitled generation, it may be that they have simply adapted better to their environment. In the West, they have grown up in a very affluent economic environment. It is an environment in which every need has been satisfied with abundant options. Food markets do not have just one or two choices of breakfast cereal, but one or two isles of options from which to make selections. Their’s is a consumer society in which every citizen is inundated with choices.

Millennials unconsciously feel that they are entitled to a host of choices simply because they have lived no other way. They are like the young Millennial who

came with a group on a “vacationary” mission to an African country. This young group of vacationaries were teamed up with the locals to go out into the surrounding community. With one team, a local young Christian was horrified when his Millennial partner from the West threw in the trash a US\$150 pair of Nike tennis shoes. The Millennial was just disgusted with the shoes because they had worn blisters on his feet.

### E. “We are not religious.”

In his release in the *Time Magazine* of his study of the Millennial Generation, Joel Klein wrote of this generation,

[The Millennials are] not into going to church, even though they believe in God, because they don’t identify with big institutions; one-third of adults under 30, the highest percentage ever [of America], are religiously unaffiliated (*Time Magazine*, May 20, 2013).

This brings us to the major “threat” that this generation throughout the world would pose to Christianity. In their book, *The Millennials*, Thom and Jess Rainer reported on their comprehensive survey of this generation, one of the first surveys that was conducted concerning the Millennial Generation. They reported initially in their book, “In many ways this generation is the most diverse generation in American’s history” (*The Millennials*, p. 1). It is diverse in that it reflects a great deal about the multiplicity of influences that led to its creation, and thus, the vari-

ous identities the generation offers to produce a new world culture. This is particularly true in reference to the “spiritual” nature of the Millennials. Rainer & Rainer wrote,

**The shocking reality for us is that only 13 percent of the Millennials considered any type of spirituality to be important in their lives.... Most of the Millennials don’t think about religious matters at all** (Emphasis mine, R.E.D., *Ibid.*, p. 22).

“This generation is not just agnostic to God as revealed in Jesus Christ. They are agnostic toward all matters religious” (*Ibid.*, p. 23). Now here is something interesting that Rainer & Rainer discovered in their survey of over 1,200 Millennials.

**Millennials are the least religious of any generation in modern American history.** Millennials are still spiritual. **Three out of four Millennials say that they are spiritual but not religious.** If you state you are spiritual, most people will take that at face value. If you state that you are religious, you will have to define what you believe. **Most Millennials are unable to define their beliefs** (Emphasis mine, R.E.D., *ibid.*, p. 47).

Rainer & Rainer found that most Millennials “are no longer choosing to identify themselves with religion” (*Ibid.*, p. 47). The percentages speak volumes concerning the spiritual nature of this generation. For example, only 6% of the

13% who claimed to be “spiritual,” stated that they were “evangelical,” or “Christian.” Of this 6%, only 18% of these stated that their religion was of any importance to them. This is definitely not a religious-oriented generation. And it is 80 million strong in America and is growing up to shape the future of America. America is not only becoming non-Christian, it is becoming “nonspiritual” with no religious affiliation. Keep in mind that America is only 20-30 years away from this identity as a nonreligious culture.

One might say that the future for faith in the West is going to be greatly challenged by the onslaught of unbelief that is characteristic of the Millennial Generation. This is revealed in the thinking concerning where Millennials seek to find authority for their religious faith. One Millennial stated, “I really don’t think we can say that any one person or any book is a real authority. You really have to examine what people say and then decide. You could find some truth in the Bible and maybe the Koran (sp)” (*Ibid.*, pp. 228,229). Now consider this statement in the context of a non-committed “Christian” (religionists) who is living in the same society with a very committed Muslim. If the non-committed Christian has little regard for the authority of his faith, then certainly he will be overcome by the Muslim who has a firm conviction in the Qur’an which is the foundation of his faith. Does this give you any idea of where America could be headed?

Some of the Western Millennials, who still have some faith, are now establishing authority for their faith as many

in Africa have done for centuries. Some in Africa have taken beliefs from past and present pagan religious beliefs, and brought them together into a syncretistic faith that they claim to be “Christian.” It is not a Bible-defined faith, but one that is defined by the culture in which the African lives. It is as bad as what some Catholic priests did when they first went to Brazil in the footsteps of the conquistadors three centuries ago. In order to keep the money coming from Rome, they simply put Catholic names on the spiritualistic practices and ideas of the local pagan rituals of the tribal groups.

One of the amazing discoveries that Rainer & Rainer found in their survey of the American Millennial Generation was that in the top ten priorities of the lives of the Millennials, **faith or religion was not mentioned** (See *ibid.*, p. 229). As previously stated, this is the most nonreligious generation that America has produced in its history. The institutional church failed this generation, since **70% of this generation feel that church is irrelevant to their needs**. The “faithful” 6% who still cling to some of their Christian roots, have also presented to the church their “me” culture. The Millennials are more concerned about their needs at home, than they are about the nations of the world. This generation will vote a president into office who promises “to bring our troops home,” and then make him promise that there will be “no boots on the ground” of a foreign nation in the future.

This thinking of the Millennials has spilled over into the mission efforts of

many churches of the West. And for this reason, the mission ministries of many churches throughout the West have been greatly diminished in the last two decades. We assume worldwide missions and missionaries from the West will continue to diminish and be a thing of the past once the “withdrawn” remnant of the religious Millennials grows into the leadership of the Western church. We do not know of one missionary on the field who has not been affected by the Millennial mentality in the mission departments of supporting churches.

But in all the negative doom and gloom that we have thus written, there is indeed some great things that the Millennial Generation will produce in the future. Many of the 6% remnant are very committed. It may be that we have to go back to Jerusalem to an upper room wherein are again gathered only 120 faithful “Millennials” in the midst of an unbelieving world of the first century. But what those 120 did two thousand years ago in their lifetimes was truly phenomenal. They turned the world upside down. We believe the present faithful Millennials can do the same.

We see in the faithful of the Millennials today those of this fanatical conviction. One of these “fanaticals” visited us a few years ago. He said, “There is in our generation those who claim to be Christians, and those who are Christians. Some of us [Millennials] do not take our faith seriously, **but those of us who do will die for Jesus!**” And he was serious. We have friends who are Millennials who are men and women of

tremendous conviction. They are truly those who will give their lives for Jesus. Maybe we have been uniquely blessed by some of these who have passed our way, but we can truly give our testimony that there are some “Timothys” out there among the Millennials who will take that remaining 120 faithfuls of this generation from an upper room into a revival of spirit and preaching of the gospel to the world. We pray for these truly committed and convicted Millennial faithfuls. It is truly an inspiration to be around them. Rainer and Rainer made their optimistic conclusion of this generation known in the following statement at the end of their book:

Some churches in America will likely continue to decline and weaken because their leaders and members refuse to get out of their comfort zones. These churches will continue to have mediocre Bible study groups and anemic preaching. Not only will these churches fail to attract the non-Christian Millennials; they will forfeit the opportunity to reach Millennial Christians. **Christians who are members of America’s largest generation will not embrace churches where the Bible is not taught and preached with depth and convictions** (Emphasis mine, R.E.D., *ibid.*, p. 264).