

Watch

Vol. X, No. 4
April/May, 1995

[Nature in Convulsion! Floods, Earthquakes, Volcanic Eruptions---What is Going On?](#)

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Why? Is it all only cyclical, a temporary phase which will soon pass?

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The Bible exhorts Christians to "contend for the faith once delivered" to the saints. What was that faith, when was it delivered, and who delivered it?

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Nature in Convulsion!

Floods, Earthquakes, Volcanic Eruptions---What is Going On?

Within the past few years, massive earthquakes, major volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, record-breaking floods, violent storms, tornados, and fires ravaged the entire planet. Why? Is it all only cyclical, a temporary phase which will soon pass? Jesus Christ said various "natural" calamities would accompany a time of "wars and rumors of wars," when "nation would rise against nation" and "kingdom against kingdom," which would lead the world into a time of "Great Tribulation." Are we about to enter that time?

by Garner Ted Armstrong
and William H. Ellis

What is going on? Only a few years ago, a massive hurricane devastated a major part of south Florida, destroying an Air Force base, wiping out thousands of homes and businesses, sending the cost of lumber shipped from Oregon and Washington through the roof, and causing billions of dollars of losses.

The Homestead, Florida hurricane is still being felt by those who suffered through it, though it has long since faded from the front pages of our news. It caused a staggering loss to the government, to the State of Florida, to insurance companies, to private business, and to countless thousands of private citizens.

Then, the following spring, massive flooding of the central United States occurred, breaking records of many decades, inundating dozens of cities and towns, shutting down a major state capitol, Des Moines, Iowa, virtually cutting the U.S. in half, interrupting trucking and barge shipments, and drowning millions of acres of productive farmland. Again, the staggering costs to state and federal budgets, insurance companies, businesses, and private citizens is virtually impossible to calculate.

Shortly thereafter, during the summer, hundreds of raging forest fires scorched many West Coast and Rocky Mountain states. Fires in California, some deliberately set, others caused by lightning or accident, denuded extensive portions of mountain ranges and hillsides above Los Angeles and its suburbs. Hundreds of expensive homes were lost.

Officials knew, with the valuable watershed gone, ensuing rains would bring erosion, flooding, and mudslides.

Then came a massive Los Angeles earthquake, which was billed as "the costliest disaster in U.S. history." Even as President Clinton and his party exited a helicopter to inspect a section of collapsed freeway overpasses, a strong aftershock struck the area, causing the group to scurry about, seeking protection. Thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed or heavily damaged. Once more, shudders were sent through the national and state economies, as thousands lined up for aid, low-interest rate loans, and other assistance.

The impact upon insurance companies remains impossible to calculate.

And again, the rains came and more mudslides, shutting off major roadways, the mudslides, winding like slothful serpents down the once pristine streets of high-cost residential districts, muck filling houses, burying cars, ruining everything in their paths.

In the winter of 1994 and 1995, California, Oregon, and Washington came under a seeming endless onslaught of one Pacific (poorly named) storm after another, dumping record-breaking amounts of rain, up to seven, eight, or nine inches in a 24-hour period, causing creeks and rivers to become mud-choked, raging avalanches of turgid water that carried everything before it. Dozens of cities and towns were flooded. As I write, more

rain is pounding California, and late-season storms are dumping feet of snow in the Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains.

As reported in these pages three months ago, it was one year to the day after the devastating Los Angeles quake that a 7.2 giant temblor smashed Kobe, Japan, taking a tremendous toll of life, toppling buildings, collapsing apartments on helpless victims, buckling and collapsing freeways.

The Kobe quake sent shock waves through global financial markets as well, as the Japanese government, insurance companies, and private investors sought to deal with the massive destruction and begin the process of rebuilding. To this day, the diversion of billions of yen into Kobe sends shudders through financial markets.

Is there any pattern to all this?

Two unrelated, significant events have affected the entire world's weather in recent years. Neither of these could in any way be construed to have been caused by man's intervention in Earth's environment! Yet, both demonstrate how much prolonged natural disasters can affect the lives of every person on this planet. First, the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines in June 1991 caused a general decrease in the world's temperature of a degree or more for two years.

Second, during this same time, the two-year cycle of the Pacific Ocean phenomena of El Nino began an ocean warming trend which extended itself continuing until the present (more than four years later) and is thought to have disrupted weather patterns all over the world.

God Almighty has the power to dramatically intervene in human affairs. And He has promised to do so--BEFORE the return of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we should be watching world events in the light of Bible prophecy.

To help you watch, here is a potpourri of news about this world's "natural" disasters of recent date, gleaned from sources not normally presented over your evening TV news, or in your daily newspapers:

"The June 1991 eruption of Mt. Pinatubo still appeared to affect global temperatures, as satellite measurements showed 1993 was mostly cooler than the 10-year mean...however, suggested impact of the Mt. Pinatubo eruption was waning. Some climatologists believe a global warming trend will resume as soon as the effects of Mt. Pinatubo dissipate."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994, Douglas Le Comte

"During December 1992, the signs pointed toward a resurgence of the mature warm-phase conditions that have the strongest effects on winters in the United States and elsewhere in both the Northern and Southern Hemi-spheres. Only twice before had back-

to-back warm-phases of the El Nino been recorded. The resurgent El Nino, which persisted into Spring 1993, caught forecasters somewhat by surprise."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994, A. James Wagner

"The El Nino ocean-warming phenomenon has strengthened further in the tropical Pacific Ocean, causing more widespread climatic disruptions around the world. The rise in ocean surface temperature, centered this time from Samoa to the Solomon Islands, is blamed for the recent floods in California as well as the droughts in southern Africa, New Zealand and Australia. It is probably responsible for the current flooding and stormy period in Europe, and in the Moroccan drought as well."

Earth Week, January 27, 1995, Steve Newman

"The Weather Service's Climate Analysis Center concluded that a long-lived El Niño, which began in 1992, probably contributed to the [Midwest] flooding...But El Nino isn't the whole story. Scientists will be busy for years working on the causes of the 1993 floods and trying to discover whether greenhouse warming or the 1991 eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines was involved."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994, Jack Williams

"A sprawling pine tree recently examined on a rain-soaked mountain in Tasmania...perhaps the world's oldest living organism...according to Ed Cook, a Columbia University tree-dating specialist...tree-ring samples bored out of the pine revealed that the last 30 years have been the warmest in 2,000 years. 'In the past 3,800 years there has only been one other 30-year period that has been warmer than the current episode of global warming,' said Cook."

Earth Week, February 3, 1995, Steve Newman

1995

"The fever is back. Two years after Mt. Pinatubo's 1991 eruption cooled it down, Earth's temperature has once again soared....Something within the tropical ocean belt, especially the Pacific, has caused a warming of the entire globe during the last 2 decades... There is no doubt the unrelenting grip of El Nino has caused the tropical Pacific to take a turn for the warm recently...El Nino knock normal weather patterns askew, and this one must shoulder much of the blame for California's tremendous storms."

Science News, March 11, 1995, Richard Monastersky

"Some of the heaviest rainfall on record in the Middle East triggered flash floods from southern Egypt to the Persian Gulf States, killing at least nine people."

Earth Week, March 24, 1995, Steve Newman

"The fringes of Botswana's Kalahari Desert were hit with flash floods that drowned at least 20 people, following a prolonged drought that has plagued southern Africa."

Earth Week, March 3, 1995, Steve Newman

"A week of storms across California left at least 12 people dead and caused an estimated \$2 billion in damage."

Earth Week, March 17, 1995, Steve Newman

"This winter's second devastating storm in California, said by hydrologists to be the worst for 50 years, has already claimed 14 lives, destroyed hundreds of homes and led to the evacuation of more than 10,000 people... More than two-thirds of the state has now been declared a disaster area...farm losses will exceed \$300 million...the total cost of the storm so far is about \$2 billion. This comes on top of the \$1.3 billion already lost to floods and landslides in January...Yet nature has not finished. California's aquifers are now almost full. In the high Sierras the water content of the snow pack is 147% higher than normal."

The Economist, March 18, 1995

"California may be getting the floods, but the rest of the country will soon take a bath at the grocery store. 'America's salad bowl' state grows 55 percent of the country's produce. Experts say prices will rise as early as this week for the hardest-hit crops."

Newsweek, March 27, 1995, citing California Dept. of Food and Agriculture statistics.

"Areas of Australia parched just weeks ago by one of the worst droughts in memory were drenched by the second and third tropical cyclones to strike the country so far this month."

Earth Week, March 10, 1995, Steve Newman

"Even while flood waters steadily receded in rivers across northern Europe, a worsening drought in Spain wilted crops and caused water reserves to dwindle to dangerous levels. The drought has spread relentlessly over the Iberian Peninsula since the early 1990s...Across the Strait of Gibraltar, in Morocco, officials announced they plan to import huge amounts of grain to make up for crop failures due to drought."

Earth Week, February 10, 1995, Steve Newman

"The Egyptian Mediterranean seaport of Alexandria was hit by a snow storm that covered its streets and buildings in white for the first time in living memory. [Editor's Note: Egypt's recorded history goes all the way back to the dispersion of peoples from the site of the Tower of Babel!] Egypt's Middle East News Agency said the storm was unprecedented and accompanied by gale-force winds"

Earth Week, February 10, 1995, Steve Newman

"Entire towns in the Netherlands were evacuated as the worst flooding since 1953 inundated vast tracts of the country and threatened to breach parts of the nation's strategic system of dikes...More than 250,000 people were forced to leave their homes as the flooding neared its crest...Upstream on the Rhine River the worst flooding of this century submerged several German cities, including Cologne and Bonn. Severe floods also occurred in France, Belgium and Luxembourg."

Earth Week, February 3, 1995, Steve Newman

"Northern Europe was lashed by a series of blustery and wet storms that moved ashore from the North Atlantic...The worst flooding in 150 years swamped Brittany, along France's western shores, and the German government issued a red alert for floods throughout the Rhine Valley. Officials there fear a reoccurrence of 1993's 'Flood of the Century,' which inundated Cologne and Bonn."

Earth Week, January 27, 1995, Steve Newman

1994

"Heavy rains caused flooding and numerous fatalities in southern China and India. Severe drought associated with a resurrected El Nino damaged crops in Australia and Indonesia.

"A parade of Atlantic storms kept northwest Europe wet...Parts of France endured more than a month's rainfall in a single day...This storm was blamed for eight deaths, including five in Germany.

"Dry weather during the year's first quarter damaged crops and reduced food supplies in East Africa, including Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda.

"From late February to April, drought slashed grain production in Algeria and Tunisia.

"In Pakistan, the mercury reached an almost unbelievable 122 degrees Fahrenheit...hundreds died from the heat, including more than 200 in northern India.

"In July alone, more than 600 people reportedly died in flooding in India.

"Typhoon Fred added to China's troubles...the storm's 105 mph wind struck during high tide, with devastating flooding killing an estimated 1000 people and affecting millions more.

"In early November Tropical Storm Gordon caused floods in Central America and floods and landslides in Jamaica, Haiti, and Cuba. Several people were killed in Jamaica and Cuba, but the greatest toll was in southern Haiti, where more than 800 reportedly died [later reports put the death toll at over 1100].

"Persistent high pressure over northern Australia for much of the year (consistent with an evolving El Nino) produced severe drought...in December, searing heat worsened the drought in Australia."

Weatherwise, February/March 1995, Douglas Le Comte

1993

"Storms and floods dominated weather headlines across much of the world in 1993. "In South America, a rejuvenated El Nino likely contributed not only to drought in northeastern Brazil but also to heavy rain and flooding in southern Brazil, as well as Argentina, Ecuador, and Peru...The Brazilian drought, reportedly the worst in 60 years, severely reduced crop yields. In Argentina's Buenos Aires province, flooding over nearly 10 million acres--nearly the same area as summer flooding in the U.S.--damaged corn, soybean and sunflower crops.

"It is difficult to prove that the monster storm that tore up the East Coast [U.S.] on Saturday, March 13, was truly the 'Storm of the Century'...but it is certainly a prime candidate...The effects were felt from Canada to Cuba, with a (three-nation) death toll of 243...It was the first time a single snowstorm had closed each major airport on the East Coast."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994, Douglas Le Comte

"No one can really say when the Great Flood of 1993 began...An average of 16.13 inches of rain was falling on stations in the upper Mississippi Valley from April through June. This made those three months the wettest such period since records began in 1895...Then the skies opened up from Saturday, June 19, through Monday June 21...That weekend brought the first of the summer's estimated 1,100 levee or floodwall failures--70 percent of the levees along affected rivers... Before the summer was over, residents and volunteers from around the country and overseas had shoveled more 927 million pounds of fill into 26 million sandbags...flood waters washed over an estimated 10 million acres in the Mississippi River Basin, destroying or seriously damaging more than 40,000 buildings...By mid-July, the Weather Service said 100 rivers were out of their banks with 14 at the highest levels ever recorded."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994, Jack Williams

"The genesis of the Midwest flooding was a wet year dating back to the summer of 1992...The resulting saturated soils and high steamflow levels made the region susceptible to flooding by early spring, and Mother Nature refused to let up...The Mississippi River swelled to as much as seven miles wide, and the Missouri to 20 miles. In July, the two great rivers met 20 miles upstream of their normal confluence. The flooding caused some 48 deaths and more than \$12 billion damage... many tons of valuable topsoil were washed away into the Gulf of Mexico. In all, 10-15 million acres were inundated--more than twice the area of the State of Massachusetts."

The European Union:

A New and Improved "Holy Roman Empire"?

by **Renee Dennis**

As Charles knelt before the altar, he was truly thankful for the victory he had gained over his enemies. After he finished his prayer and began to rise, the man in front of him on the altar turned around and placed a crown on Charles' head. "Long life to Charles Augustus, crowned by God, great and peace-giving Emperor of the Romans!" the man declared.

Before he knew what was happening, Charles (also known as Charles the Great, or Charlemagne) had been crowned as emperor of what was to become one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen--the Holy Roman Empire.

Not that receiving the crown was disagreeable to Charles, but since it was at the hands of Pope Leo III, he did not like the appearance that Leo had such authority. Nevertheless, on December 25, A.D. 800, the stage was set for the powerful ecclesiastical influence that was to shape the western leg of the Roman Empire for centuries to come.

History Tells the Story

As various emperors have swept through Europe attempting to create the ultimate empire, they have historically relied on the church as a unifying force, knowing it would add the spiritual cement necessary to achieve cohesion among the various peoples.

One may argue the reason Constantine (ruled A.D. 306-337) was so anxious to quell the Arian controversy and establish the same dating for Easter, and the reason Theodosius (ruled A.D. 379-395) made Christianity the only official religion of the Roman Empire, labeling as heretical any religious practice not "orthodox," was simply out of a selfish desire to keep the empire together.

This union of church and state, however detrimental to the true faith once delivered, was a mutually beneficial one. While the state defended the church militarily and enforced

religious uniformity through political means, the church kept the people together through a common religious system.

What the New European Empire Lacks

Such a need for close association is still evident within the Europe of today. In the European search for a common political, economic, and social union, the policy making bodies have their hands full with establishing stable political and economic systems. Inevitably, the social and cultural dimension of unification will fall into the hands of the churches, just as they did so many centuries ago.

In the years since the 1957 signing of the Treaty of Rome (which created the European Economic Community) Christian thought has actually been behind much of the community's development. This makes sense when one recognizes, as Pope John Paul II did during a visit to Prague, that "Christianity is at the very roots of European culture" (White, 1990, p. 475).

Churches Gaining Influence

Further evidence of the growing affiliation between Christian ideology and the European Community can be found in three specific areas: the Maastricht Treaty, the European Social Charter, and the concept of Subsidiarity.

The Maastricht Treaty, which amended the Treaty of Rome, states that the aims of the treaty include "the raising of the standard and quality of living and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among member states."

Jacques Gaillot, a Catholic bishop, has said that solidarity and social planning are the first steps the church can take in the fight against the scourges which destroy human life (Greinacher, 1992, p. 76). Additionally, the concept of solidarity became a driving force behind political reform in Poland and was warmly embraced by Pope John Paul II.

The Social Charter of the European Union was the result of a declaration proposed in 1989 by the European Commission with the goal of addressing such items as human rights regulations and proper working conditions for EU citizens. Both the Maastricht Treaty and the European Social Charter reflect the teachings of Christian leaders throughout contemporary history ("A Christian Approach to the Social Charter of the European Community," p. 4).

Subsidiarity, the principle that a central authority should perform only those tasks which cannot be carried out effectively at a local level, has been adopted by the European Union as a means of dealing with the difficult task of distributing power. The concept of subsidiarity is rooted in Christian thought, specifically Roman Catholicism (Beck, 1993, p. 16).

Papacy Supports European Unity

The influence of the Roman Catholic Church within the European Community is not surprising given that the papacy has been supportive of the Union since the idea was conceived late in World War II. Although Pope Pius XII qualified his approval by suggesting that a lasting community would depend on the "inner health" of the nations involved, and such could only be gained through strong religious forces, he gave the proposal his blessing. In March of 1957, after the Treaty of Rome was signed, he said: "The statesmen are preparing to call a united Europe into being. This is a major task and we have repeatedly indicated how much we welcome every step in this direction" (Blei, 1992, p. 27).

In November of 1957, Pius addressed the European Coal and Steel Community (the precursor to the European Economic Community) and emphasized the economic, political, and social benefits he believed would be obtained through the Union.

Pope John Paul II has continued in this vein, making it clear from the beginning of his pontifical reign that he saw no room for division in the future of Europe. Even as early as 1979, during a sermon he gave in Poland, John Paul suggested that perhaps it was the role of a Polish, Slavic pope to make the spiritual unity of Christian Europe a reality.

Nearly a decade later, after the changes in Eastern Europe, President Gorbachev stated that it wouldn't have taken place without John Paul.

Insofar as Poland was the keystone to the liberation of Eastern Europe, Pope John Paul II surely played a pivotal role. In many ways he was the strength of the people's resistance to communism, and it is hardly coincidental that the Solidarity movement was born just two short years into his pontificate.

Since the monumental event in Eastern Europe, Pope John Paul II has repeatedly called for a society whose unity is not just political and economic, but also moral and spiritual, based on a "unity in the cross and resurrection of Christ and a common Christian foundation" (Blei, 1992, p. 20).

It is evident that this common, spiritual foundation to which he refers is ultimately the Roman Catholic Church. He illustrated this point in a 1979 speech at the Benedictine Mother House with the following words: "When we consider the contemporary search for greater unity among the peoples of Europe, we hope it brings with it a deeper awareness of spiritual and Christian roots. For if people want to build a common home, they must also lay deeper foundations....Let us therefore pray that the search for a united Europe may rest on the spiritual foundation of the Benedictine, Christian, Catholic, and therefore universal tradition" (Blei, 1992, p. 25).

Churches Cooperate on European Unification

Although he obviously sees Catholicism as the true inheritor of the Christian ideal, Pope John Paul II seems content to cooperate with Protestant denominations in hopes of greater unity. In a preparatory document for the Roman Synod of 1991, to which representatives of several denominations were invited, he stated: "The freedom born of Christ's cross conquers every separation and unites people in ever-larger communities" (Blei, 1993, p. 22).

Since the Roman Catholic Church views any division in Europe as a division in the universal church, and therefore in the Body of Christ, it is likely to be more concerned with unification than other confessions. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant churches exist in the plural and are organized mainly on a national basis. This means that they are more strongly rooted in their own context and character, in the culture of a certain nation. As a result, Protestant church leadership has historically had a less clearly defined position on European integration. In the last decade, however, this trend has changed.

Today there are at least eight European ecumenical organizations concerned specifically with European integration. Particularly active are the EECCS, the CES, and the CCEE.

The EECCS (European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society) serves to liaise with the European Community institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg on behalf of its member churches. It provides research, information, and comment on current events in the EU.

The CES (Conference of European Churches) is the Geneva-based regional ecumenical body charged with fulfilling the church's aim for mission and service across Europe. It has a membership of 120 churches in twenty-six countries of the European continent. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member, but there exists a close working relationship between the CEC and the Catholic CCEE.

The CCEE (Council of European Episcopal Conferences) is the Roman Catholic equivalent to the CEC. This organization engages in various ecumenical encounters with the CEC and is concerned primarily with mission and service within Europe.

Several conferences, ecumenical committees, and interdenominational discussions have resulted from these organizations. Here is a sampling of some of those meetings.

1978--The first CEC/CCEE ecumenical encounter. For the first time since the Reformation, representatives from almost all European churches, Protestant and Roman Catholic, met together. The theme was: "One--That the World May Believe."

1984--The third CEC/CCEE ecumenical encounter. Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant all came together and declared the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed to be their common confession and recited it. 1989--European Ecumenical Assembly on "Peace With Justice" held in Basel, Switzerland. The CEC and CCEE declared together: "We plead: Let this process of transformation be also a process of reconciliation." 1990--CEC

organized a meeting in Geneva at which 150 European church representatives discussed developments in Europe.

1990--The Dutch Multidisciplinary Centre for Church and Society held its annual consultation. The theme was: "Has Culture in Europe Been Forgotten?"

1990--The Dutch Council of Churches held a conference on "The Churches and Europe '92."

1990--The Interchurch Peace Council, the Roman Catholic Peace Movement Pax Christi, and the Dutch Council of Churches, in combination with the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European (Roman Catholic) Bishops, held a conference which resulted in the book, *Unity in Diversity*.

1991--The Humanist Society, the Trade Union Movement, and the Dutch Council of Churches sponsored a joint conference on the theme, "What Kind of Europe Do We Want?"

1991--The pope called a Special European Synod to clarify the mission of the church in the emergent Europe. A preparatory document stated: "In the Catholic view, the effort required for a new evangelization of Europe is not possible without the concurrence of all the churches" The Synod was attended by 130 European bishops, the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate from Constantinople, and representatives from Anglican and Protestant traditions.

1991--The Fifth European Ecumenical Encounter was held at Santiago de Compostela, Spain. The theme was: "At Your Word--Mission and Evangelism in Europe Today." In attendance were representatives from both Catholic and Protestant traditions, under the auspices of the CEC and CCEE. According to the CCEE, three main goals of the conference were to "deepen the exchange of experiences; identify the requirements of evangelization in Europe; and see the emergence of fuller ecumenical cooperation."

1992--The CEC held its tenth assembly in Prague. The theme was: "God Unites--In Christ a New Creation" 1993--The Interreligious Round Table organized by the CEC was held in Hungary. The topic for discussion was the former Yugoslavia.

Though this is by no means a comprehensive list, it serves to illustrate a point. Simply, the leadership of almost all the churches of Europe are, to one degree or another, focusing their energies on the task of European unification.

Speaking With One Voice

One might easily forget that less than fifty years ago these different entities were barely on speaking terms with each other. Not only are they discussing issues now, but they are also coming to agreements on common goals, particularly in relation to the state of affairs in Europe.

Jean Fischer, the CEC general secretary at the time of its tenth assembly, said: "The immediate task is to create the machinery that will permit all the churches of Europe to dialogue with the centers of power as a community and to do so, if possible, with one voice" (Fischer, 1992, p. 967).

Fischer has also noted the importance of the ecumenical movement's progression beyond merely respectful coexistence. "We must now give signs that this is not the ultimate degree of communion and that we can go much further" (Fischer, 1992, p. 671).

How much further would the European Union itself like to see the churches go? During his term as EU president in 1992, Jacques Delors declared: "If in the next decade we fail to give Europe a soul, a spirituality, a meaning, we shall have lost the game" (Fischer, 1992, p. 966).

It is easy to see why those working to eliminate political and economic borders in Europe would be overjoyed to find the churches forming a common spiritual identity, thus lifting the spiritual borders as well. As a result of events in Eastern and Central Europe, the churches have recovered the freedom to be "fully the church" as Fischer phrased it. To him this means "being involved not only in worship life, but also in Christian education, in social ministries, and in dialogues with political powers and secular intellectuals" (Fischer, 1992, p. 969).

To what extent this involvement opens the door for them to contribute to actual policy making within the public remains to be seen. However, the simple fact that the various denominations are making such a unified effort to speak with one voice enhances their capability to have an influence, not only on the policy makers but also on the citizens of Europe, particularly in areas such as education and various social programs.

Despite the fact surveys indicate that Europeans have little interest in the churches and their declarations, once the church leadership has blazed a path to ecclesiastical and spiritual unification, it will be easier, at least ideologically so, for Europeans, and for the European Union as a policy making body, to follow accordingly.

To learn about the prophetic significance of the church's influence on the European Union, please request your free copies of *Who, What is the Beast of Revelation?* and *Can You Understand Bible Prophecy?*

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The Faith Once Delivered

**The Bible exhorts Christians to "contend for the faith once delivered" to the saints.
 What was that faith, when was it delivered, and who delivered it?**

by James McBride

Do you agree with some Christians that the teachings expressed by the founder of their church are unchangeable? The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ("Mormons"), for example, faced this challenge many years ago. So, too, did the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Right now, indeed, the Church of England is torn by a similar challenge. And

even within the Roman Church there are still rumblings from the changes instigated by Vatican II!

However, simple analysis surely dispels this notion.

Why, for example, so many denominations? Were all these leaders "inspired" in widely different doctrinal directions by the same Holy Spirit? And if they claim inspiration *why do they sometimes admit error*--evidenced by a doctrinal change? Isn't it just possible, therefore, that the "great teacher" simply got it wrong--or only partially right? Was he (or she) infallible? He may have claimed divine inspiration. But could his view perhaps be colored by background, by prejudice, by limited scholarship or simple lack of access to all the facts? Could he even have *deliberately set out to deceive*?

Few Christians would quarrel with Jude's exhortation to "carry on a vigorous defense of the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's people" (Jude 3, Williams translation). It is surely a praiseworthy goal to which all of us should aspire. But we must be quite clear on what it means!

We are exhorted in Scripture to grow in knowledge. Doesn't this imply that we may have *imperfect knowledge* of "truth"? That perhaps truth garnered in one generation can be buried through persecution, martyrdom, deception--and lost to the next generation? And later be rediscovered?

No church can remain as some kind of doctrinal fossil!

In fact, my original questions as to *what* was that faith, *when* was it delivered, and *who* delivered it are at the heart of the matter. Let's consider them.

Who Is Right?

What specific "doctrines" the Bible teaches is largely irrelevant in this study. The central fact is: There is a single, specific body of belief, of teaching (doctrine), that is Christianity. A study of the twentieth century's two thousand-plus Christian denominations might appear to give the lie to this! Can the Holy Spirit be guiding both Pope John Paul and his implacable foe Dr. Ian Paisley? The Church of England *and* the Brethren Church *and* the Mormons *and* the Jehovah's Witnesses --and the Church of God, International?

And guiding them into different and opposing teachings?

Do the Scriptures--which are "given by inspiration of God" (II Timothy 3:16)--teach one group to baptize infants, and another to immerse only adults? One to insist on salvation by faith alone while another demands "works" also? One to venerate images or the crucifix, another to abhor them? One to speak in tongues, another to regard this as demonic? One to celebrate the mass and another to consider it pagan?

Notice these examples are of mainstream Christianity. Include other groups claiming to be Christian and we could also contrast those who observe Sunday with those who consider the seventh day as the Sabbath (many millions of Christians, in fact!); those who keep Christmas and Easter with those who consider these festivals pagan; trinitarians with non-trinitarians; the immortal soul concept with "soul sleep"--almost *ad infinitum!*

With such variation--who is right? Is anyone? And if all represent "the truth" (and do any proclaim themselves to be *teaching error?*) where does that place the Holy Spirit? Is the Spirit perhaps confused? Clearly not. There is only one expression of the truth, of the mind of God. Wrote the apostle Paul, "There is...*one* Spirit, *one* faith..." (Ephesians 4:5).

The challenge, surely, is for the Church of God to extract the nuggets of truth from the Scriptures! *That* is where truth lies. Not from added traditions, not from the ravings of some prophet or prophetess, not from long-hidden plates dug from a mountain-side, nor from hoary traditions of "the Fathers."

Sanity and stability can return only when we recognize that we dare not add to--nor detract from--the Word of God as expressed in the Old and New Testaments! *There* lies "the faith once delivered"!

The Holy Scriptures

First, let's look at the writings of our "Old Testament."

Few Christians would challenge the idea that these writings represent the foundation of New Testament teachings. For example, there are in the New Testament over six hundred direct quotations and references to the Old Testament. And there's little teaching in the New Testament that is not rooted in the "Holy Scriptures"--that is, the thirty-nine books into which modern versions of the Old Testament are divided. Even such an "advanced" and Christian teaching as "love your neighbor as yourself" found expression by the pen of Moses--Leviticus 19:18--some fifteen hundred years before Jesus quoted it!

Indeed, the apostle Paul wrote to his "pupil" Timothy that these same Holy Scriptures (that we call the Old Testament) are "inspired by God, and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in doing what is right" (II Timothy 3:16). The first Christians initially had no other writings from which to learn the truth! At Thessalonica they were commended by Paul for "carrying on a daily study of the Scriptures [i.e., the Old Testament]" to see if Paul's message were true (Acts 17:11). This is hardly the view of most twentieth century Christians!

Jesus Himself identified these Scriptures as "the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44-45). In the language of those times, He thus described the entirety of what Protestants today call the "Old Testament" and which Judaism terms the "Holy Scriptures."

The Old Testament, then, is certainly a reliable source for discovering "the faith once delivered to the saints." Without it the writings of the New Testament would be largely gobbledygook—'incomprehensible! Yet most Christians all but ignore it, relegate it to history's dustbin.

Inspired New Testament

The primitive Church of God relied on the Old Testament writings, but supplemented by the words--through letters and sermons--of the apostles and prophets. At that time God was directly inspiring these men to lay the foundation of Christianity. Wrote Paul to the Ephesian Christians: "for you are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20). Indeed Paul claims that the words he spoke were "in words taught by the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 2:13).

All this was, of course, predicted by Jesus Himself.

In His final counsel to the disciples prior to His death, Jesus told them, "when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into the whole truth" (John 16:13). He also told them, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (14:26). This enabled them to preach and teach--and later to have written down--the whole counsel of God. They were inspired to perfectly recall all Jesus taught them during their three and a half years in His company before His death--and also that burning instruction He imparted to them in the nearly six weeks following His resurrection (Luke 24:32, Acts 1:3). Indeed throughout their lives the Holy Spirit guided them into all truth.

It was therefore to these men and by these means and at that time that the entire structure of Christian belief was laid! Paul urged the young evangelist Timothy to entrust to reliable men *the same teachings* Paul had imparted (II Timothy 2:2). There was no room for variety of belief in the fundamentals of the faith!

Do you want to know what Jesus taught? Look to these Scriptures! Ought you to accept a "new" teaching? Only if it is perfectly in harmony with the writings of the Old and New Testaments! And should you abandon a traditional teaching or doctrine of your church? Only when the change is clearly proven *without shadow of doubt* from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

No Infallible Teachers

In our day we need both the Old Testament *and* the New Testament.

There are no living witnesses to the life and words of Jesus. Not since the death of the apostle John at the end of the first Christian century have there been living apostles whose words are directly inspired by God. The leadership of the churches of God are "inspired" in their words and teachings only as they reflect the written Word of God--

though God gives His church insights in regard to the application of His Word for our times. There are, today, *no infallible teachers!* Sadly, though, there are many who assume such a role. And many thousands who willingly and gullibly are deceived by their claims!

Too often Christians will flit to a new but powerfully presented doctrine without thorough examination of the Bible texts! Paul urged, "Prove all things. Hold fast to what is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21). Elsewhere he said: "For a time is coming when men will not tolerate wholesome instruction, but, wanting to have their ears tickled, they will find a multitude of teachers to satisfy their own fancies, and will close their ears to the truth and will turn away to fables" (I Timothy 4:3). Quite an indictment!

Could You Believe a Lie?

The apostle Paul gave a solemn warning that's of special application today. Writing to the church at Thessalonica about the crisis at the close of this age--our day--he warned of a coming time of worldwide deception perpetrated by a "lawless man." This wretched being "is produced by the spirit of evil and armed with all the force, wonders and signs that falsehood can devise. To those involved in this dying world he will come with evil's undiluted power to deceive, *for they* have refused to love the truth which could have saved them" (II Thessalonians 2:9,10).

I need but remind you that Jesus said "*Your Word is truth*" (John 17:17)!

If we fail to measure our beliefs against the yardstick of the divinely inspired *Word of the Living God* then we could be in deep trouble. For the apostle Paul went on to tell the Thessalonian Christians that for those who *don't* love the truth "God sends upon them, therefore, the full force of evil's delusion so that they put their faith in an utter fraud"!

A fearful warning indeed. Failure to love God's Word leads to a fatal creeping spiritual dementia in which we end up believing downright lies.

Do you "love the truth"? Are you willing to compare your beliefs with the inspired Word of God? When you hear "new doctrine"--from whatever source--are you, like the Bereans (Acts 17:11), eager to "search the Scriptures [for the Bereans this meant the Old Testament!] to see if these things were so"? Or do you simply accept your church's teachings without question?

In the Scriptures, God has given us all we need to know about Himself, about the way of salvation, about how we ought to behave. Admittedly there are areas where the fine details are cause for legitimate debate. But the broad brushstrokes of vital truth are clear for all who have the spiritual eye to see. It is there for us to prove--personally!

Yet virtually the whole of Christianity feeds off traditional teachings that are pure pagan belief gift-wrapped in Christian clothing. Both Old and New Testaments are relegated to the dustbin!

Where do you get your beliefs? How do they compare with the Scriptures? Are you certain your view of Christian doctrine isn't just a veneer of Bible-sounding words that hide ancient lies? Let all of us who claim to be Christ's fine-tune our love for the truth, and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the church in the Holy Scriptures!

And if you are not yet committed to Jesus Christ and to His teachings, you are invited to investigate further. True faith is built on the foundation of sound Bible knowledge. Without this knowledge you could "believe"--but be deceived! The Church of God, International publishes a wide range of titles (on tape and in booklets) which highlight the core teachings of Scripture as free from faulty human tradition as we know how! Write now for our list of free publications. And also request a copy of the Church of God, International's Statement of Beliefs.

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Vol. X, No. 4
April/May, 1995

[Nature in Convulsion! Floods, Earthquakes, Volcanic Eruptions---What is Going On?](#)

Within the past few years, massive earthquakes, major volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, record-breaking floods, violent storms, tornados, and fires ravaged the entire planet.

Why? Is it all only cyclical, a temporary phase which will soon pass?

Jesus Christ said various "natural" calamities would accompany a time of "wars and rumors of wars," when "nation would rise against nation" and "kingdom against kingdom," which would lead the world into a time of "Great Tribulation." Are we about to enter that time?

[The Faith Once Delivered](#)

The Bible exhorts Christians to "contend for the faith once delivered" to the saints. What was that faith, when was it delivered, and who delivered it?

[The European Union: A New and Improved "Holy Roman Empire"?](#)

[Knowing God: Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit](#)

Continuing in this issue, we present a new way of studying your Bible. Using this magazine, your own Bible, a cassette tape recorder, and a notebook, you can dramatically increase your knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Read on to see how it works.



[What I say to, I say to everyone: Watch! \(Mark 13:37\)](#)

[Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?](#)

The vast majority of professing Christianity believes Sunday is the day for Christian worship. But the Seventh-Day Adventists, Seventh-Day Baptists, Church of God (7th Day), and the Church of God, International, plus many other groups insist that the Sabbath is our "Saturday," and that Christians should abstain from working from our Friday sunset until Saturday sunset. Is there any Bible proof for Sunday observance?

[WORLD WATCH](#)

A monthly review of current events from the perspective of biblical prophecy.

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Nature in Convulsion!

Floods, Earthquakes, Volcanic Eruptions---What is Going On?

Within the past few years, massive earthquakes, major volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, record-breaking floods, violent storms, tornados, and fires ravaged the entire planet. Why? Is it all only cyclical, a temporary phase which will soon pass? Jesus Christ said various "natural" calamities would accompany a time of "wars and rumors of wars," when "nation would rise against nation" and "kingdom against kingdom," which would lead the world into a time of "Great Tribulation." Are we about to enter that time?

by Garner Ted Armstrong
and William H. Ellis

What is going on? Only a few years ago, a massive hurricane devastated a major part of south Florida, destroying an Air Force base, wiping out thousands of homes and businesses, sending the cost of lumber shipped from Oregon and Washington through the roof, and causing billions of dollars of losses.

The Homestead, Florida hurricane is still being felt by those who suffered through it, though it has long since faded from the front pages of our news. It caused a staggering loss to the government, to the State of Florida, to insurance companies, to private business, and to countless thousands of private citizens.

Then, the following spring, massive flooding of the central United States occurred, breaking records of many decades, inundating dozens of cities and towns, shutting down a major state capitol, Des Moines, Iowa, virtually cutting the U.S. in half, interrupting trucking and barge shipments, and drowning millions of acres of productive farmland. Again, the staggering costs to state and federal budgets, insurance companies, businesses, and private citizens is virtually impossible to calculate.

Shortly thereafter, during the summer, hundreds of raging forest fires scorched many West Coast and Rocky Mountain states. Fires in California, some deliberately set, others caused by lightning or accident, denuded extensive portions of mountain ranges and hillsides above Los Angeles and its suburbs. Hundreds of expensive homes were lost.

Officials knew, with the valuable watershed gone, ensuing rains would bring erosion, flooding, and mudslides.

Then came a massive Los Angeles earthquake, which was billed as "the costliest disaster in U.S. history." Even as President Clinton and his party exited a helicopter to inspect a section of collapsed freeway overpasses, a strong aftershock struck the area, causing the group to scurry about, seeking protection. Thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed or heavily damaged. Once more, shudders were sent through the national and state economies, as thousands lined up for aid, low-interest rate loans, and other assistance.

The impact upon insurance companies remains impossible to calculate.

And again, the rains came and more mudslides, shutting off major roadways, the mudslides, winding like slothful serpents down the once pristine streets of high-cost residential districts, muck filling houses, burying cars, ruining everything in their paths.

In the winter of 1994 and 1995, California, Oregon, and Washington came under a seeming endless onslaught of one Pacific (poorly named) storm after another, dumping record-breaking amounts of rain, up to seven, eight, or nine inches in a 24-hour period, causing creeks and rivers to become mud-choked, raging avalanches of turgid water that carried everything before it. Dozens of cities and towns were flooded. As I write, more rain is pounding California, and late-season storms are dumping feet of snow in the Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains.

As reported in these pages three months ago, it was one year to the day after the devastating Los Angeles quake that a 7.2 giant temblor smashed Kobe, Japan, taking a tremendous toll of life, toppling buildings, collapsing apartments on helpless victims, buckling and collapsing freeways.

The Kobe quake sent shock waves through global financial markets as well, as the Japanese government, insurance companies, and private investors sought to deal with the massive destruction and begin the process of rebuilding. To this day, the diversion of billions of yen into Kobe sends shudders through financial markets.

Is there any pattern to all this?

Two unrelated, significant events have affected the entire world's weather in recent years. Neither of these could in any way be construed to have been caused by man's intervention in Earth's environment! Yet, both demonstrate how much prolonged natural disasters can affect the lives of every person on this planet. First, the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines in June 1991 caused a general decrease in the world's temperature of a degree or more for two years.

Second, during this same time, the two-year cycle of the Pacific Ocean phenomena of El Nino began an ocean warming trend which extended itself continuing until the present (more than four years later) and is thought to have disrupted weather patterns all over the world.

God Almighty has the power to dramatically intervene in human affairs. And He has promised to do so--BEFORE the return of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we should be watching world events in the light of Bible prophecy.

To help you watch, here is a potpourri of news about this world's "natural" disasters of recent date, gleaned from sources not normally presented over your evening TV news, or in your daily newspapers:

"The June 1991 eruption of Mt. Pinatubo still appeared to affect global temperatures, as satellite measurements showed 1993 was mostly cooler than the 10-year mean...however, suggested impact of the Mt. Pinatubo eruption was waning. Some climatologists believe a global warming trend will resume as soon as the effects of Mt. Pinatubo dissipate."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994, Douglas Le Comte

"During December 1992, the signs pointed toward a resurgence of the mature warm-phase conditions that have the strongest effects on winters in the United States and elsewhere in both the Northern and Southern Hemi-spheres. Only twice before had back-to-back warm-phases of the El Nino been recorded. The resurgent El Nino, which persisted into Spring 1993, caught forecasters somewhat by surprise."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994, A. James Wagner

"The El Nino ocean-warming phenomenon has strengthened further in the tropical Pacific Ocean, causing more widespread climatic disruptions around the world. The rise in ocean surface temperature, centered this time from Samoa to the Solomon Islands, is blamed for the recent floods in California as well as the droughts in southern Africa, New Zealand and Australia. It is probably responsible for the current flooding and stormy period in Europe, and in the Moroccan drought as well."

Earth Week, January 27, 1995, Steve Newman

"The Weather Service's Climate Analysis Center concluded that a long-lived El Niño, which began in 1992, probably contributed to the [Midwest] flooding...But El Niño isn't the whole story. Scientists will be busy for years working on the causes of the 1993 floods and trying to discover whether greenhouse warming or the 1991 eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines was involved."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994, Jack Williams

"A sprawling pine tree recently examined on a rain-soaked mountain in Tasmania...perhaps the world's oldest living organism...according to Ed Cook, a Columbia University tree-dating specialist...tree-ring samples bored out of the pine revealed that the last 30 years have been the warmest in 2,000 years. 'In the past 3,800 years there has only been one other 30-year period that has been warmer than the current episode of global warming,' said Cook."

Earth Week, February 3, 1995, Steve Newman

1995

"The fever is back. Two years after Mt. Pinatubo's 1991 eruption cooled it down, Earth's temperature has once again soared....Something within the tropical ocean belt, especially the Pacific, has caused a warming of the entire globe during the last 2 decades... There is no doubt the unrelenting grip of El Niño has caused the tropical Pacific to take a turn for the warm recently...El Niño knock normal weather patterns askew, and this one must shoulder much of the blame for California's tremendous storms."

Science News, March 11, 1995, Richard Monastersky

"Some of the heaviest rainfall on record in the Middle East triggered flash floods from southern Egypt to the Persian Gulf States, killing at least nine people."

Earth Week, March 24, 1995, Steve Newman

"The fringes of Botswana's Kalahari Desert were hit with flash floods that drowned at least 20 people, following a prolonged drought that has plagued southern Africa."

Earth Week, March 3, 1995, Steve Newman

"A week of storms across California left at least 12 people dead and caused an estimated \$2 billion in damage."

Earth Week, March 17, 1995, Steve Newman

"This winter's second devastating storm in California, said by hydrologists to be the worst for 50 years, has already claimed 14 lives, destroyed hundreds of homes and led to the evacuation of more than 10,000 people... More than two-thirds of the state has now been

declared a disaster area...farm losses will exceed \$300 million...the total cost of the storm so far is about \$2 billion. This comes on top of the \$1.3 billion already lost to floods and landslides in January...Yet nature has not finished. California's aquifers are now almost full. In the high Sierras the water content of the snow pack is 147% higher than normal."

The Economist, March 18, 1995

"California may be getting the floods, but the rest of the country will soon take a bath at the grocery store. 'America's salad bowl' state grows 55 percent of the country's produce. Experts say prices will rise as early as this week for the hardest-hit crops."

Newsweek, March 27, 1995, citing California Dept. of Food and Agriculture statistics.

"Areas of Australia parched just weeks ago by one of the worst droughts in memory were drenched by the second and third tropical cyclones to strike the country so far this month."

Earth Week, March 10, 1995, Steve Newman

"Even while flood waters steadily receded in rivers across northern Europe, a worsening drought in Spain wilted crops and caused water reserves to dwindle to dangerous levels. The drought has spread relentlessly over the Iberian Peninsula since the early 1990s...Across the Strait of Gibraltar, in Morocco, officials announced they plan to import huge amounts of grain to make up for crop failures due to drought."

Earth Week, February 10, 1995, Steve Newman

"The Egyptian Mediterranean seaport of Alexandria was hit by a snow storm that covered its streets and buildings in white for the first time in living memory. [Editor's Note: Egypt's recorded history goes all the way back to the dispersion of peoples from the site of the Tower of Babel!] Egypt's Middle East News Agency said the storm was unprecedented and accompanied by gale-force winds"

Earth Week, February 10, 1995, Steve Newman

"Entire towns in the Netherlands were evacuated as the worst flooding since 1953 inundated vast tracts of the country and threatened to breach parts of the nation's strategic system of dikes...More than 250,000 people were forced to leave their homes as the flooding neared its crest...Upstream on the Rhine River the worst flooding of this century submerged several German cities, including Cologne and Bonn. Severe floods also occurred in France, Belgium and Luxembourg."

Earth Week, February 3, 1995, Steve Newman

"Northern Europe was lashed by a series of blustery and wet storms that moved ashore from the North Atlantic...The worst flooding in 150 years swamped Brittany, along

France's western shores, and the German government issued a red alert for floods throughout the Rhine Valley. Officials there fear a reoccurrence of 1993's 'Flood of the Century,' which inundated Cologne and Bonn."

Earth Week, January 27, 1995, Steve Newman

1994

"Heavy rains caused flooding and numerous fatalities in southern China and India. Severe drought associated with a resurrected El Nino damaged crops in Australia and Indonesia.

"A parade of Atlantic storms kept northwest Europe wet...Parts of France endured more than a month's rainfall in a single day...This storm was blamed for eight deaths, including five in Germany.

"Dry weather during the year's first quarter damaged crops and reduced food supplies in East Africa, including Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda.

"From late February to April, drought slashed grain production in Algeria and Tunisia.

"In Pakistan, the mercury reached an almost unbelievable 122 degrees Fahrenheit...hundreds died from the heat, including more than 200 in northern India.

"In July alone, more than 600 people reportedly died in flooding in India.

"Typhoon Fred added to China's troubles...the storm's 105 mph wind struck during high tide, with devastating flooding killing an estimated 1000 people and affecting millions more.

"In early November Tropical Storm Gordon caused floods in Central America and floods and landslides in Jamaica, Haiti, and Cuba. Several people were killed in Jamaica and Cuba, but the greatest toll was in southern Haiti, where more than 800 reportedly died [later reports put the death toll at over 1100].

"Persistent high pressure over northern Australia for much of the year (consistent with an evolving El Nino) produced severe drought...in December, searing heat worsened the drought in Australia."

Weatherwise, February/March 1995, Douglas Le Comte

1993

"Storms and floods dominated weather headlines across much of the world in 1993. "In South America, a rejuvenated El Nino likely contributed not only to drought in northeastern Brazil but also to heavy rain and flooding in southern Brazil, as well as

Argentina, Ecuador, and Peru...The Brazilian drought, reportedly the worst in 60 years, severely reduced crop yields. In Argentina's Buenos Aires province, flooding over nearly 10 million acres--nearly the same area as summer flooding in the U.S.--damaged corn, soybean and sunflower crops.

"It is difficult to prove that the monster storm that tore up the East Coast [U.S.] on Saturday, March 13, was truly the 'Storm of the Century'...but it is certainly a prime candidate...The effects were felt from Canada to Cuba, with a (three-nation) death toll of 243...It was the first time a single snowstorm had closed each major airport on the East Coast."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994, Douglas Le Comte

"No one can really say when the Great Flood of 1993 began...An average of 16.13 inches of rain was falling on stations in the upper Mississippi Valley from April through June. This made those three months the wettest such period since records began in 1895...Then the skies opened up from Saturday, June 19, through Monday June 21...That weekend brought the first of the summer's estimated 1,100 levee or floodwall failures--70 percent of the levees along affected rivers... Before the summer was over, residents and volunteers from around the country and overseas had shoveled more 927 million pounds of fill into 26 million sandbags...flood waters washed over an estimated 10 million acres in the Mississippi River Basin, destroying or seriously damaging more than 40,000 buildings...By mid-July, the Weather Service said 100 rivers were out of their banks with 14 at the highest levels ever recorded."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994, Jack Williams

"The genesis of the Midwest flooding was a wet year dating back to the summer of 1992...The resulting saturated soils and high streamflow levels made the region susceptible to flooding by early spring, and Mother Nature refused to let up...The Mississippi River swelled to as much as seven miles wide, and the Missouri to 20 miles. In July, the two great rivers met 20 miles upstream of their normal confluence. The flooding caused some 48 deaths and more than \$12 billion damage... many tons of valuable topsoil were washed away into the Gulf of Mexico. In all, 10-15 million acres were inundated--more than twice the area of the State of Massachusetts."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994

"'Rain makes the grain'...But 1993 broke the rules. Heavy rain sometimes delays spring planting, but the weather eventually turns warmer and drier, allowing farmers to plant most crops. In 1993, however, the western Corn Belt was rainy through the entire planting season and into late summer. Many fields were not planted and many of those planted were washed away or drowned. For all major crops, 9.8 million acres (an area bigger than Maryland) could not be planted or were lost in the ground due to heavy rain or flooding...The heaviest rains soaked some of the most productive cropland in the world..."

"This magnitude of losses from flooding and heavy rain is unprecedented, but of course, crops in many states suffered from too little rain rather than too much...A drought centered in South Carolina reduced crop yields from Georgia to Virginia...The Southeast ended up with the driest summer this century."

Weatherwise, February/March 1994

Additional important news developments which relate to the prophecies of your Bible concerning the events leading to the "end of this age" are reported in regular columns by *Twentieth Century WATCH* writers. Be sure to read each carefully to keep up with the signs of the times:

- VISION/News Trends
by Mark Armstrong
 - [WATCH: JERUSALEM](#),
by Grover B. Proctor, Jr.
 - [WORLD WATCH](#),
by William H. Ellis.

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The European Union:

A New and Improved "Holy Roman Empire"?

by Renee Dennis

As Charles knelt before the altar, he was truly thankful for the victory he had gained over his enemies. After he finished his prayer and began to rise, the man in front of him on the altar turned around and placed a crown on Charles' head. "Long life to Charles Augustus, crowned by God, great and peace-giving Emperor of the Romans!" the man declared.

Before he knew what was happening, Charles (also known as Charles the Great, or Charlemagne) had been crowned as emperor of what was to become one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen--the Holy Roman Empire.

Not that receiving the crown was disagreeable to Charles, but since it was at the hands of Pope Leo III, he did not like the appearance that Leo had such authority. Nevertheless, on December 25, A.D. 800, the stage was set for the powerful ecclesiastical influence that was to shape the western leg of the Roman Empire for centuries to come.

History Tells the Story

As various emperors have swept through Europe attempting to create the ultimate empire, they have historically relied on the church as a unifying force, knowing it would add the spiritual cement necessary to achieve cohesion among the various peoples.

One may argue the reason Constantine (ruled A.D. 306-337) was so anxious to quell the Arian controversy and establish the same dating for Easter, and the reason Theodosius (ruled A.D. 379-395) made Christianity the only official religion of the Roman Empire, labeling as heretical any religious practice not "orthodox," was simply out of a selfish desire to keep the empire together.

This union of church and state, however detrimental to the true faith once delivered, was a mutually beneficial one. While the state defended the church militarily and enforced religious uniformity through political means, the church kept the people together through a common religious system.

What the New European Empire Lacks

Such a need for close association is still evident within the Europe of today. In the European search for a common political, economic, and social union, the policy making bodies have their hands full with establishing stable political and economic systems.

Inevitably, the social and cultural dimension of unification will fall into the hands of the churches, just as they did so many centuries ago.

In the years since the 1957 signing of the Treaty of Rome (which created the European Economic Community) Christian thought has actually been behind much of the community's development. This makes sense when one recognizes, as Pope John Paul II did during a visit to Prague, that "Christianity is at the very roots of European culture" (White, 1990, p. 475).

Churches Gaining Influence

Further evidence of the growing affiliation between Christian ideology and the European Community can be found in three specific areas: the Maastricht Treaty, the European Social Charter, and the concept of Subsidiarity.

The Maastricht Treaty, which amended the Treaty of Rome, states that the aims of the treaty include "the raising of the standard and quality of living and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among member states."

Jacques Gaillot, a Catholic bishop, has said that solidarity and social planning are the first steps the church can take in the fight against the scourges which destroy human life (Greinacher, 1992, p. 76). Additionally, the concept of solidarity became a driving force behind political reform in Poland and was warmly embraced by Pope John Paul II.

The Social Charter of the European Union was the result of a declaration proposed in 1989 by the European Commission with the goal of addressing such items as human rights regulations and proper working conditions for EU citizens. Both the Maastricht Treaty and the European Social Charter reflect the teachings of Christian leaders throughout contemporary history ("A Christian Approach to the Social Charter of the European Community," p. 4).

Subsidiarity, the principle that a central authority should perform only those tasks which cannot be carried out effectively at a local level, has been adopted by the European Union as a means of dealing with the difficult task of distributing power. The concept of subsidiarity is rooted in Christian thought, specifically Roman Catholicism (Beck, 1993, p. 16).

Papacy Supports European Unity

The influence of the Roman Catholic Church within the European Community is not surprising given that the papacy has been supportive of the Union since the idea was conceived late in World War II. Although Pope Pius XII qualified his approval by suggesting that a lasting community would depend on the "inner health" of the nations involved, and such could only be gained through strong religious forces, he gave the proposal his blessing. In March of 1957, after the Treaty of Rome was signed, he said:

"The statesmen are preparing to call a united Europe into being. This is a major task and we have repeatedly indicated how much we welcome every step in this direction" (Blei, 1992, p. 27).

In November of 1957, Pius addressed the European Coal and Steel Community (the precursor to the European Economic Community) and emphasized the economic, political, and social benefits he believed would be obtained through the Union.

Pope John Paul II has continued in this vein, making it clear from the beginning of his pontifical reign that he saw no room for division in the future of Europe. Even as early as 1979, during a sermon he gave in Poland, John Paul suggested that perhaps it was the role of a Polish, Slavic pope to make the spiritual unity of Christian Europe a reality.

Nearly a decade later, after the changes in Eastern Europe, President Gorbachev stated that it wouldn't have taken place without John Paul.

Insofar as Poland was the keystone to the liberation of Eastern Europe, Pope John Paul II surely played a pivotal role. In many ways he was the strength of the people's resistance to communism, and it is hardly coincidental that the Solidarity movement was born just two short years into his pontificate.

Since the monumental event in Eastern Europe, Pope John Paul II has repeatedly called for a society whose unity is not just political and economic, but also moral and spiritual, based on a "unity in the cross and resurrection of Christ and a common Christian foundation" (Blei, 1992, p. 20).

It is evident that this common, spiritual foundation to which he refers is ultimately the Roman Catholic Church. He illustrated this point in a 1979 speech at the Benedictine Mother House with the following words: "When we consider the contemporary search for greater unity among the peoples of Europe, we hope it brings with it a deeper awareness of spiritual and Christian roots. For if people want to build a common home, they must also lay deeper foundations....Let us therefore pray that the search for a united Europe may rest on the spiritual foundation of the Benedictine, Christian, Catholic, and therefore universal tradition" (Blei, 1992, p. 25).

Churches Cooperate on European Unification

Although he obviously sees Catholicism as the true inheritor of the Christian ideal, Pope John Paul II seems content to cooperate with Protestant denominations in hopes of greater unity. In a preparatory document for the Roman Synod of 1991, to which representatives of several denominations were invited, he stated: "The freedom born of Christ's cross conquers every separation and unites people in ever-larger communities" (Blei, 1993, p. 22).

Since the Roman Catholic Church views any division in Europe as a division in the universal church, and therefore in the Body of Christ, it is likely to be more concerned

with unification than other confessions. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant churches exist in the plural and are organized mainly on a national basis. This means that they are more strongly rooted in their own context and character, in the culture of a certain nation. As a result, Protestant church leadership has historically had a less clearly defined position on European integration. In the last decade, however, this trend has changed.

Today there are at least eight European ecumenical organizations concerned specifically with European integration. Particularly active are the EECCS, the CES, and the CCEE.

The EECCS (European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society) serves to liaise with the European Community institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg on behalf of its member churches. It provides research, information, and comment on current events in the EU.

The CES (Conference of European Churches) is the Geneva-based regional ecumenical body charged with fulfilling the church's aim for mission and service across Europe. It has a membership of 120 churches in twenty-six countries of the European continent. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member, but there exists a close working relationship between the CEC and the Catholic CCEE.

The CCEE (Council of European Episcopal Conferences) is the Roman Catholic equivalent to the CEC. This organization engages in various ecumenical encounters with the CEC and is concerned primarily with mission and service within Europe.

Several conferences, ecumenical committees, and interdenominational discussions have resulted from these organizations. Here is a sampling of some of those meetings.

1978--The first CEC/CCEE ecumenical encounter. For the first time since the Reformation, representatives from almost all European churches, Protestant and Roman Catholic, met together. The theme was: "One--That the World May Believe."

1984--The third CEC/CCEE ecumenical encounter. Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant all came together and declared the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed to be their common confession and recited it. 1989--European Ecumenical Assembly on "Peace With Justice" held in Basel, Switzerland. The CEC and CCEE declared together: "We plead: Let this process of transformation be also a process of reconciliation." 1990--CEC organized a meeting in Geneva at which 150 European church representatives discussed developments in Europe.

1990--The Dutch Multidisciplinary Centre for Church and Society held its annual consultation. The theme was: "Has Culture in Europe Been Forgotten?"

1990--The Dutch Council of Churches held a conference on "The Churches and Europe '92."

1990--The Interchurch Peace Council, the Roman Catholic Peace Movement Pax Christi, and the Dutch Council of Churches, in combination with the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European (Roman Catholic) Bishops, held a conference which resulted in the book, *Unity in Diversity*.

1991--The Humanist Society, the Trade Union Movement, and the Dutch Council of Churches sponsored a joint conference on the theme, "What Kind of Europe Do We Want?"

1991--The pope called a Special European Synod to clarify the mission of the church in the emergent Europe. A preparatory document stated: "In the Catholic view, the effort required for a new evangelization of Europe is not possible without the concurrence of all the churches" The Synod was attended by 130 European bishops, the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate from Constantinople, and representatives from Anglican and Protestant traditions.

1991--The Fifth European Ecumenical Encounter was held at Santiago de Compostela, Spain. The theme was: "At Your Word--Mission and Evangelism in Europe Today." In attendance were representatives from both Catholic and Protestant traditions, under the auspices of the CEC and CCEE. According to the CCEE, three main goals of the conference were to "deepen the exchange of experiences; identify the requirements of evangelization in Europe; and see the emergence of fuller ecumenical cooperation."

1992--The CEC held its tenth assembly in Prague. The theme was: "God Unites--In Christ a New Creation" 1993--The Interreligious Round Table organized by the CEC was held in Hungary. The topic for discussion was the former Yugoslavia.

Though this is by no means a comprehensive list, it serves to illustrate a point. Simply, the leadership of almost all the churches of Europe are, to one degree or another, focusing their energies on the task of European unification.

Speaking With One Voice

One might easily forget that less than fifty years ago these different entities were barely on speaking terms with each other. Not only are they discussing issues now, but they are also coming to agreements on common goals, particularly in relation to the state of affairs in Europe.

Jean Fischer, the CEC general secretary at the time of its tenth assembly, said: "The immediate task is to create the machinery that will permit all the churches of Europe to dialogue with the centers of power as a community and to do so, if possible, with one voice" (Fischer, 1992, p. 967).

Fischer has also noted the importance of the ecumenical movement's progression beyond merely respectful coexistence. "We must now give signs that this is not the ultimate degree of communion and that we can go much further" (Fischer, 1992, p. 671).

How much further would the European Union itself like to see the churches go? During his term as EU president in 1992, Jacques Delors declared: "If in the next decade we fail to give Europe a soul, a spirituality, a meaning, we shall have lost the game" (Fischer, 1992, p. 966).

It is easy to see why those working to eliminate political and economic borders in Europe would be overjoyed to find the churches forming a common spiritual identity, thus lifting the spiritual borders as well. As a result of events in Eastern and Central Europe, the churches have recovered the freedom to be "fully the church" as Fischer phrased it. To him this means "being involved not only in worship life, but also in Christian education, in social ministries, and in dialogues with political powers and secular intellectuals" (Fischer, 1992, p. 969).

To what extent this involvement opens the door for them to contribute to actual policy making within the public remains to be seen. However, the simple fact that the various denominations are making such a unified effort to speak with one voice enhances their capability to have an influence, not only on the policy makers but also on the citizens of Europe, particularly in areas such as education and various social programs.

Despite the fact surveys indicate that Europeans have little interest in the churches and their declarations, once the church leadership has blazed a path to ecclesiastical and spiritual unification, it will be easier, at least ideologically so, for Europeans, and for the European Union as a policy making body, to follow accordingly.

To learn about the prophetic significance of the church's influence on the European Union, please request your free copies of *Who, What is the Beast of Revelation?* and *Can You Understand Bible Prophecy?*

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The Faith Once Delivered

The Bible exhorts Christians to "contend for the faith once delivered" to the saints. What was that faith, when was it delivered, and who delivered it?

by James McBride

Do you agree with some Christians that the teachings expressed by the founder of their church are unchangeable? The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ("Mormons"), for example, faced this challenge many years ago. So, too, did the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Right now, indeed, the Church of England is torn by a similar challenge. And even within the Roman Church there are still rumblings from the changes instigated by Vatican II!

However, simple analysis surely dispels this notion.

Why, for example, so many denominations? Were all these leaders "inspired" in widely different doctrinal directions by the same Holy Spirit? And if they claim inspiration *why do they sometimes admit error*--evidenced by a doctrinal change? Isn't it just possible, therefore, that the "great teacher" simply got it wrong--or only partially right? Was he (or

she) infallible? He may have claimed divine inspiration. But could his view perhaps be colored by background, by prejudice, by limited scholarship or simple lack of access to all the facts? Could he even have *deliberately set out to deceive*?

Few Christians would quarrel with Jude's exhortation to "carry on a vigorous defense of the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's people" (Jude 3, Williams translation). It is surely a praiseworthy goal to which all of us should aspire. But we must be quite clear on what it means!

We are exhorted in Scripture to grow in knowledge. Doesn't this imply that we may have *imperfect knowledge* of "truth"? That perhaps truth garnered in one generation can be buried through persecution, martyrdom, deception—and lost to the next generation? And later be rediscovered?

No church can remain as some kind of doctrinal fossil!

In fact, my original questions as to *what* was that faith, *when* was it delivered, and *who* delivered it are at the heart of the matter. Let's consider them.

Who Is Right?

What specific "doctrines" the Bible teaches is largely irrelevant in this study. The central fact is: There is a single, specific body of belief, of teaching (doctrine), that is Christianity. A study of the twentieth century's two thousand-plus Christian denominations might appear to give the lie to this! Can the Holy Spirit be guiding both Pope John Paul and his implacable foe Dr. Ian Paisley? The Church of England *and* the Brethren Church *and* the Mormons *and* the Jehovah's Witnesses --and the Church of God, International?

And guiding them into different and opposing teachings?

Do the Scriptures--which are "given by inspiration of God" (II Timothy 3:16)--teach one group to baptize infants, and another to immerse only adults? One to insist on salvation by faith alone while another demands "works" also? One to venerate images or the crucifix, another to abhor them? One to speak in tongues, another to regard this as demonic? One to celebrate the mass and another to consider it pagan?

Notice these examples are of mainstream Christianity. Include other groups claiming to be Christian and we could also contrast those who observe Sunday with those who consider the seventh day as the Sabbath (many millions of Christians, in fact!); those who keep Christmas and Easter with those who consider these festivals pagan; trinitarians with non-trinitarians; the immortal soul concept with "soul sleep"--almost *ad infinitum!*

With such variation--who is right? Is anyone? And if all represent "the truth" (and do any proclaim themselves to be *teaching error*?) where does that place the Holy Spirit? Is the

Spirit perhaps confused? Clearly not. There is only one expression of the truth, of the mind of God. Wrote the apostle Paul, "There is...*one* Spirit, *one* faith..." (Ephesians 4:5).

The challenge, surely, is for the Church of God to extract the nuggets of truth from the Scriptures! *That* is where truth lies. Not from added traditions, not from the ravings of some prophet or prophetess, not from long-hidden plates dug from a mountain-side, nor from hoary traditions of "the Fathers."

Sanity and stability can return only when we recognize that we dare not add to--nor detract from--the Word of God as expressed in the Old and New Testaments! *There* lies "the faith once delivered"!

The Holy Scriptures

First, let's look at the writings of our "Old Testament."

Few Christians would challenge the idea that these writings represent the foundation of New Testament teachings. For example, there are in the New Testament over six hundred direct quotations and references to the Old Testament. And there's little teaching in the New Testament that is not rooted in the "Holy Scriptures"--that is, the thirty-nine books into which modern versions of the Old Testament are divided. Even such an "advanced" and Christian teaching as "love your neighbor as yourself" found expression by the pen of Moses--Leviticus 19:18--some fifteen hundred years before Jesus quoted it!

Indeed, the apostle Paul wrote to his "pupil" Timothy that these same Holy Scriptures (that we call the Old Testament) are "inspired by God, and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in doing what is right" (II Timothy 3:16). The first Christians initially had no other writings from which to learn the truth! At Thessalonica they were commended by Paul for "carrying on a daily study of the Scriptures [i.e., the Old Testament]" to see if Paul's message were true (Acts 17:11). This is hardly the view of most twentieth century Christians!

Jesus Himself identified these Scriptures as "the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44-45). In the language of those times, He thus described the entirety of what Protestants today call the "Old Testament" and which Judaism terms the "Holy Scriptures."

The Old Testament, then, is certainly a reliable source for discovering "the faith once delivered to the saints." Without it the writings of the New Testament would be largely gobbledygook--incomprehensible! Yet most Christians all but ignore it, relegate it to history's dustbin.

Inspired New Testament

The primitive Church of God relied on the Old Testament writings, but supplemented by the words--through letters and sermons--of the apostles and prophets. At that time God was directly inspiring these men to lay the foundation of Christianity. Wrote Paul to the Ephesian Christians: "for you are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20). Indeed Paul claims that the words he spoke were "in words taught by the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 2:13).

All this was, of course, predicted by Jesus Himself.

In His final counsel to the disciples prior to His death, Jesus told them, "when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into the whole truth" (John 16:13). He also told them, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (14:26). This enabled them to preach and teach--and later to have written down--the whole counsel of God. They were inspired to perfectly recall all Jesus taught them during their three and a half years in His company before His death--and also that burning instruction He imparted to them in the nearly six weeks following His resurrection (Luke 24:32, Acts 1:3). Indeed throughout their lives the Holy Spirit guided them into all truth.

It was therefore to these men and by these means and at that time that the entire structure of Christian belief was laid! Paul urged the young evangelist Timothy to entrust to reliable men *the same teachings* Paul had imparted (II Timothy 2:2). There was no room for variety of belief in the fundamentals of the faith!

Do you want to know what Jesus taught? Look to these Scriptures! Ought you to accept a "new" teaching? Only if it is perfectly in harmony with the writings of the Old and New Testaments! And should you abandon a traditional teaching or doctrine of your church? Only when the change is clearly proven *without shadow of doubt* from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

No Infallible Teachers

In our day we need both the Old Testament *and* the New Testament.

There are no living witnesses to the life and words of Jesus. Not since the death of the apostle John at the end of the first Christian century have there been living apostles whose words are directly inspired by God. The leadership of the churches of God are "inspired" in their words and teachings only as they reflect the written Word of God--though God gives His church insights in regard to the application of His Word for our times. There are, today, *no infallible teachers!* Sadly, though, there are many who assume such a role. And many thousands who willingly and gullibly are deceived by their claims!

Too often Christians will flit to a new but powerfully presented doctrine without thorough examination of the Bible texts! Paul urged, "Prove all things. Hold fast to what is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21). Elsewhere he said: "For a time is coming when men will not tolerate wholesome instruction, but, wanting to have their ears tickled, they will find

a multitude of teachers to satisfy their own fancies, and will close their ears to the truth and will turn away to fables" (I Timothy 4:3). Quite an indictment!

Could You Believe a Lie?

The apostle Paul gave a solemn warning that's of special application today. Writing to the church at Thessalonica about the crisis at the close of this age--our day--he warned of a coming time of worldwide deception perpetrated by a "lawless man." This wretched being "is produced by the spirit of evil and armed with all the force, wonders and signs that falsehood can devise. To those involved in this dying world he will come with evil's undiluted power to deceive, *for they* have refused to love the truth which could have saved them" (II Thessalonians 2:9,10).

I need but remind you that Jesus said "*Your Word* is truth" (John 17:17)!

If we fail to measure our beliefs against the yardstick of the divinely inspired *Word of the Living God* then we could be in deep trouble. For the apostle Paul went on to tell the Thessalonian Christians that for those who *don't* love the truth "God sends upon them, therefore, the full force of evil's delusion so that they put their faith in an utter fraud"!

A fearful warning indeed. Failure to love God's Word leads to a fatal creeping spiritual dementia in which we end up believing downright lies.

Do you "love the truth"? Are you willing to compare your beliefs with the inspired Word of God? When you hear "new doctrine"--from whatever source--are you, like the Bereans (Acts 17:11), eager to "search the Scriptures [for the Bereans this meant the Old Testament!] to see if these things were so"? Or do you simply accept your church's teachings without question?

In the Scriptures, God has given us all we need to know about Himself, about the way of salvation, about how we ought to behave. Admittedly there are areas where the fine details are cause for legitimate debate. But the broad brushstrokes of vital truth are clear for all who have the spiritual eye to see. It is there for us to prove--personally!

Yet virtually the whole of Christianity feeds off traditional teachings that are pure pagan belief gift-wrapped in Christian clothing. Both Old and New Testaments are relegated to the dustbin!

Where do you get your beliefs? How do they compare with the Scriptures? Are you certain your view of Christian doctrine isn't just a veneer of Bible-sounding words that hide ancient lies? Let all of us who claim to be Christ's fine-tune our love for the truth, and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the church in the Holy Scriptures!

And if you are not yet committed to Jesus Christ and to His teachings, you are invited to investigate further. True faith is built on the foundation of sound Bible knowledge. Without this knowledge you could "believe"--but be deceived! The Church of God,

International publishes a wide range of titles (on tape and in booklets) which highlight the core teachings of Scripture as free from faulty human tradition as we know how! Write now for our list of free publications. And also request a copy of the Church of God, International's Statement of Beliefs.

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