

NT 44: 1–3 John (apostasy and false teachers)

Monte F. Shelley, 4 Dec 2011

Quotes

- I once bought my kids a set of batteries for Christmas with a note on it saying, toys not included. (Bernard Manning)
- Buddha talks about four kinds of horses. The *excellent horse* moves before the whip even touches its back; just the shadow of the whip or the slightest sound from the driver is enough to make the horse move. The *good horse* runs at the lightest touch of the whip on its back. The *poor horse* doesn't go until it feels pain. The *very bad horse* doesn't budge until the pain penetrates to the marrow of its bones. (Pema Chödrön)
- Laughter is like changing a baby's diaper. It doesn't solve any problems permanently, but it makes things better for a while.

Codes: {} = JST; <> = NIV translation;

[] = alternate translation or paraphrase; GR = Greek word

This handout contains excerpts from a draft of an unpublished paper with sources that I was working on a few years ago. Part 1 is available with my notes to this lesson at www.sviewp.com.

1. 1st Century Christianity (AD 1– 100) (MFS)

Crucifixion: AD 30 or 33

Apostolic Church, Christianity, New Testament

Baptism by immersion, Lord's Supper or Eucharist.

Jewish rulers use force to silence Christian heresy (Herod, Paul)

False teachers: *Jewish-Christians*, Gnosticism, Docetism (70)

Nero: Emperor (54–68), Fire of Rome (64), *1&2 Peter*, *Jude*, Christians blamed and killed (Peter, Paul), *Revelation*(?)

Jerusalem Temple destroyed (70), **Vespasian**, Emperor (69–79)

Domitian: Emperor (92–96), *Revelation*(?), *1–3 John* (85–96)

Jews used force to silence Christian heresy: “Early Christians did not believe that they were following a new religion. They were Jews... [who] were convinced that the Messiah had come.” Jewish religious leaders considered Christianity to be a heretical sect that was “tempting good Jews to become heretics.” Christians were considered heretics because they accepted new scripture, believed in new revelations, and rejected Jewish creeds, traditions, and authority. Jewish religious leaders attempted to use force to silence dissent and heretics. Christians were put in prison, killed, or run out of town. Paul thought he was doing God a favor. To protect idolatry crafts or businesses, men stirred up the people against Christians for heresy. King Herod killed James and put Peter in prison. Paul was put in prison, driven out of cities, persecuted. Paul and Timothy were accused of teaching unlawful customs, beaten, and put in prison. Jews attempted to kill Paul.

2. Apostasy or falling away prophecies (MFS)

When the disciples had asked Jesus for the sign of his coming, Jesus said “there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall [show] great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Mt 24:24) Likewise, Peter prophesied that “there shall be false teachers among you, who <secretly> shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord. ... And many shall follow their pernicious ways” (2 Pet 2:1–2). Paul prophesied that Christ would not return “except there come a falling away <or rebellion> first.” (2 Thess 2:3)

“The Greek term [*apostasia* for] apostasy ... means rebellion. It was often used ... to indicate a military rebellion or coup in which traditional bonds of loyalty to a particular leadership are rejected. ... Apostasy or rebellion against God consisted specifically in the breaking of covenants that men had made with Jehovah. ... The Greek word ... *apostasion*, meaning

‘little rebellion’ or ‘little apostasy,’ ... indicates divorce, or breaking the marriage covenant. The Lord repeatedly likened his covenant with Israel to the covenant of marriage, and apostasy from that covenant was likened to adultery.” (ECD, 2)

“In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; ... Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from <certain foods>” (1 Tim 4:1–3) “In the last days perilous times shall come. ... Traitors ... Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. ... All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” (2 Tim 3:1–13) “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (2 Tim 4:24)

3. Evidences of apostasy in New Testament (MFS)

Peter: In Paul's epistles “are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, ... beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.” (2 Pet 3:16–17)

Peter wrote to James about false teachers, “These men, professing ... to know my mind, undertake to explain my words... more intelligently than I who spoke them, telling their catechumens that this is my meaning, which indeed I never thought of. But if, while I am still alive, they dare thus to misrepresent me, how much more will those who shall come after me dare to do so!” (ANF 8:2)

John: “even now are there many antichrists. ... <They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us.> ... He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” (1 Jn 2:18) “Try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 Jn 4:1) “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to <be first, will have nothing to do with us>. ... I will remember his deeds..., <gossiping> against us with malicious words: and... <he refuses to welcome> the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.” (3 Jn 1:9–10)

Jude: “there are certain men crept in unawares, ... ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying ... our Lord Jesus Christ. ... These filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. ... Remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles ...; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.” (Jd 1:4–8)

Paul: “Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine ... and avoid them.” (Rom 16:17) “There are contentions among you. ... [Some say], I am of Paul ... Apollos; ... Cephas; ... [or] Christ. Is Christ divided?” (1 Cor 1:11–13) “Such are false apostles ... transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.” (2 Cor 11:13–15) “There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ... If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Gal 1:6–9) “Hymenæus and Philetus... have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already.” (2 Tim 2:18–19) “Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law [of Moses].” (Tit 3:9–11) Avoid “profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science <or knowledge> falsely so called.” (1 Tim 6:20–21)

4. False teachers and prophets

Jewish-Christians: The apostles warned Church members about those who taught that all Christians must be circumcised, eat only kosher foods, and do other “works of the law” of Moses even though the Apostles said these were no longer necessary.

Gnosticism / Docetism: Spirit is good. Matter is evil. Therefore:

- Human physical bodies are evil. Bodies degenerate and die.
- God is good and therefore only spirit.
- Salvation is escape from the evil physical body. A resurrected physical body would also be evil.
- Salvation comes by special knowledge (*gnosis*)

Avoid “disputations of what is falsely called knowledge” (1 Tim 6:20 footnote). John implies that charity is more important than knowledge (*gnosis*).

- Faith in Christ is not necessary.

“Whosoever ... abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God” (2 Jn 1:9).

- Obedience to commandments (morality) is not necessary.

Physical matter is evil, not sin.

“Whosoever transgresseth ... hath not God.” (2 Jn 1:9).

“He that doeth good is of God” (3 Jn 1:11).

Sins committed in an unnecessary and non-eternal evil body are not sins, but infractions against our fallen nature without eternal consequence. (Sense 482)

Since the Law of Moses had been done away in Christ, and Christ brought salvation by the grace of God, it was no longer necessary to obey the laws of God. (MM #43)

Korihor: “whatsoever a man did was no crime.” (Al 30:17)

⁴ [Nehor said] all mankind should be saved at the last day, ... for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and ... all men should have eternal life. (Alma 1:4)

For some, this heresy is now stated, “Since God loves everyone unconditionally, all will be saved.”

God loves us unconditionally in the sense that like the father of the prodigal son, he continually invites us to come or return to him and waits for us to do so. He is easy to please, but hard to satisfy.

Russell M. Nelson: While divine love can be called perfect, infinite, enduring, and universal, it cannot correctly be characterized as *unconditional*. The word does not appear in the scriptures. On the other hand, many verses affirm that the higher levels of love the Father and the Son feel for each of us—and certain divine blessings stemming from that love—are *conditional*. (Ensign, Feb 2003, 20–25)

- Because the physical body is evil:

- The physical body was to be neglected or treated harshly.

“Neglecting <or harsh treatment> of the body” (Col 2:23)

- Physical senses are evil and not to be trusted.

“Touch not; taste not; handle not;” (Col 2:21)

- Because Christ is good, he only *seemed* to have a mortal body. [*Docetism*: from GR “to seem or appear”]

- Some said the divine Christ (spirit) joined the man Jesus at baptism and then departed from him just before death. Thus, Christ did not suffer for our sins; it was only the man Jesus suffered on the cross. (Ogden 297–298)

5. John refutes false teachings (1 Jn 1)

{*This is the testimony which we give of*} that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, ... seen with our eyes, ... and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; ...

⁵ God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie ...: ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.

“God is light” is in contrast to the Jewish ideal that “**God is law**” and can be followed only through the written word.

Because God is light, we must follow him openly for others to see. (Sense 483)

Heresy: claiming perfection or sinlessness. OR sins of the flesh are of no consequence.

John counters these Gnostic beliefs with his eyewitness testimony. Jesus was the Messiah with a physical body that died and was resurrected. John witnessed these events with all his physical senses. (Ogden 297–298)

6. Christ is our advocate and savior (1 Jn 2)

¹ These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. {*But*} if any man sin {*and repent*}, we have an ^b advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: ² And he is the propitiation <or *atonement sacrifice*> for our sins: and ... for *the sins of the whole world*.

^b GR intercessor, helper, comforter.

Heresy: salvation comes from special knowledge, not Christ.

The Greek word for “advocate” means “one who is called to someone’s aid”; “one who appears in another’s behalf, mediator, intercessor, helper.” (Bauer) The use of this word outside the New Testament gives the sense of a “person called in to help, summoned to give assistance.” The meaning is a “helper in court.” It is not necessarily a professional legal advisor but “is to be understood in the light of legal assistance in court, the pleading of another’s case.” (TDNT 5:801) (MM #44)

³ Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—⁴ Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, ... ⁵ Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life. (D&C 45:3–5)

7. Keep Christ’s commandments (1 Jn 2)

⁴ He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. ... ⁶ He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

... ¹⁰ He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. ¹¹ But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. ...

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and ... of the eyes, and the ^a pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Heresy: Obedience to commandments is not necessary.

¹³ For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart? (Mosiah 5:13)

8. Live Gospel and follow Spirit, not antichrists (1 Jn 2)

¹⁸ Ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time <or hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us.> ... ²⁰ But ye have an unction <or *anointing*> from the Holy One, and ye know all things. ... ²² He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. ...

An antichrist stands in opposition to Christ, or seeks to amend, change, add to, or undermine his doctrine. (I-NT)

Anointing refers to Holy Ghost (v. 27)

Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed [David] ... and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David. (1 Sam 16:13)

²⁴ If ... [our teachings] shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. ²⁵ And ... he hath promised us ... eternal life. ²⁶ ... I written ... concerning them that <are trying to lead you astray>. ²⁷ But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: ... the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth. ... ²⁸ Abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. ²⁹ ... Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

²⁶ But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (Jn 14:26)

⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. (3 Jn 1:4)

9. Children of God shall become like Christ (1 Jn 3)

¹ What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, ... ² Now are we the [children] of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

We do not now appear in the same form as we shall be when we are resurrected like him. (Sense 484)

Lorenzo Snow: As God now is, man may become.

³ And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. ⁴ Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. ... ⁷ Let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous. ... ¹¹ We should love one another. ... ¹⁷ Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and [is hardhearted], how dwelleth the love of God in him? ... ²¹ If our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God. ²² And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. ²³ And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another. ²⁴ And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.

Born of God means baptism is needed.

Dwelleth: GR remains, abides

John implies that charity is more important than knowledge (*gnosis*).

10. Try the Spirits and false prophets (1 Jn 4)

¹ Believe not every spirit, but try <or *test*> the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. ... ³ Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, ... and even now already is it in the world. ... ⁵ They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. ⁶ We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of [deception].

⁷ For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. ... ⁹ Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. ... ¹⁰ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, <do not take him into your house or welcome him.> (2 Jn 1)

Docetism → Jesus only seemed to live as a mortal and to suffer and die. The Messiah did not really come in contact with temporal matter, as that would have desecrated his divinity. (Ogden 295–296)

2 Pet 2 ¹ There were false prophets also among the people, ... who <secretly> shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them. ... ² Many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. ³ <In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up.> ... ¹⁰ [They] walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government <or *authority*>. Presumptuous ..., selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities <or *celestial beings*>. ... ¹² [They] speak evil of the things that they understand not. ... ¹³ <Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.> ¹⁴ Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices. ... ¹⁷ These are wells without water. ... ¹⁸ They allure through the lusts of the flesh. ¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, ... of the same is he brought in bondage. False prophets make false promises.

11. God is love (1 Jn 4)

⁷ Let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. ⁸ He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. ⁹ In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ... ¹¹ If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. ¹² No man hath seen God at any time {*except them who believe*}. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. ...

¹⁴ We ... do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵ Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. ... ¹⁹ We love him, because he first loved us. ²⁰ If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

Love and Fear Have Related Meanings about God: “The Hebrew word for “revere” is (yirah) which is usually translated as “fear,” and that for “love” is (aha’vah). These two concepts, although they may seem contradictory at first glance, are the essence of Judaism’s view of man’s attitude to God.” “The “fear” referred to is not the fright or scaredness which a person feels when he is confronted, for example, with a hungry lion. It

is rather a feeling of awe or reverence felt when witnessing greatness or grandeur . . . the thought of the infinity and greatness of God.” (EJ Jr.) (Rona #44)

Moses’ Farewell Speech: “Just before he died, and on the eve of the Children of Israel’s entry into the Promised Land, Moses made a farewell speech to the Jews. In it, he reviewed their history and gave direction for their future. In one sentence (Dt 10:12) he summed up what the Bible considers to be the entire purpose of human existence: “And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you? Only this: to revere (fear) the Lord your God, to walk only in His paths, to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul.” (EJ Jr.) (Rona #44)

12. Believe in, love, and obey Christ (1 Jn 5)

² We love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not <burdensome>. ⁴ For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. . . .

⁷ For there are three that bear record ~~in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.~~ ⁸ ~~And there are three that bear witness in earth,~~ the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. . . .

Spirit (Holy Ghost), water (baptism), and blood (atonement)

The deleted words are not found in any Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century. (NIV)

The second edition [1519 of Erasmus’s Greek New Testament] became the basis of Luther’s German translation. . . . Among the criticisms . . . [was] that his text lacked part of the final chapter of 1 John, namely the Trinitarian statement concerning ‘the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth’ (1 Jn 5:7–8). Erasmus replied that he had not found any Greek manuscript containing these words. . . . Erasmus promised that he would insert [it] . . . in future editions if a single Greek manuscript could be found that contained the passage. At length such a copy was found—or was made to order! As it now appears, the Greek manuscript had probably been written in Oxford about 1520 by a Franciscan friar . . . who took the disputed words from the Latin Vulgate. Erasmus stood by his promise and inserted the passage in his third edition (1522). . . . Among the thousands of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament examined since the time of Erasmus, only three others are known to contain this spurious passage. . . .

“The text of Stephanus’ editions of 1546 and 1549 was a compound of the Complutensian and Erasmian editions; the third edition (1550) approaches more closely the text of Erasmus’ fourth and fifth editions. As it happened, Stephanus’ third edition became for many persons, especially in England, the received or standard text of the Greek New Testament. . . . The Greek text which [Beza] printed differs little from Stephanus’ fourth edition of 1551. The importance of Beza’s work lies in the extent to which his editions tended to popularize and to stereotype the Textus Receptus. The King James translators of 1611 made large use of Beza’s editions of 1588–9 and 1598.” (Metzger, *Text*, 101, 105)

¹² He that hath not the Son of God hath not life. ¹³ These things have I written unto you . . . that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. ¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

13. 2nd Century Christianity (100–200) (MFS)

No apostles: visions and prophecy cease.

Christian martyrs were arrested, tried, and killed.

In response to Gnostic and Marcion heresies, the “catholic” (universal) church defined the core of the New Testament, developed the Apostles’ *creed*, and accepted only teachings of bishops as the successors of the apostles.

Infant baptism starts

Baptism for the dead (1 Cor. 15:29) ceased *ca* AD 200

Meetings and Sacrament: Christians “were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and *bound themselves by a solemn oath* [or covenant], not to any wicked deeds, but *never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust* when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food—but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.”

Early Christians “called each other ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ . . . Each Sunday they met for their ‘thanksgiving’ in which the baptized ate bread and drank wine in a sacred meal. . . . A serious moral fault entailed exclusion from sharing in the meal, either permanently or for a time. . . .” “They gathered in celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. Those early communion services did not center on the Lord’s passion, but rather on his victory by which a new age had dawned. It was much later—centuries later—that the focus of Christian worship shifted towards the death of Jesus. In the earliest Christian community, the breaking of the bread took place ‘with glad and generous hearts’ (Acts 2:46)”

Churches. “The earliest churches were simply private houses, gradually converted inside as the congregations grew.”

Unpaid Officers. “At first those who filled officers in the Church continued to depend upon their former trades and occupations for the support of themselves and their families.”

Charity and Work. “Everybody was expected to earn his living. Everybody’s work was expected to produce enough to allow his love to help others in want. All had to work, for all had to make offerings . . . that all might live. It followed that the Church had to provide jobs for any who really wanted to work. . . . Whoever was not willing to do the work he was capable of . . . was not tolerated in the communities. . . .”

Morality. Christians put “into practice strict monogamy, absolute faithfulness in marriage, and chastity before marriage.”

Temple traditions: “From the very beginning, Christians had adopted and preserved the ways of the original temple [which was destroyed about 600 BC]. Many priests joined the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:7). A secret, priestly tradition, passed down unwritten, was known in the early church, and it concerned certain practices in the liturgy and temple customs.”

Heretics. When the apostles were gone, false teachers were able to misrepresent the apostles and their writings. Hegesippus (c. 110–180) wrote “When the . . . apostles became extinct, and the generation of those that had been privileged to hear their inspired wisdom, had passed away, then also the combinations of impious error arose by the fraud and delusion of false teachers. These also, as there was none of the apostles left, . . . attempted, without shame, to preach their false doctrine against the gospel of truth.”

For these early catholic bishops and their successors, a heretic was one who (a) rejected any part of the Old and New Testament as defined by them, (b) accepted other writings as scripture, (c) believed in new revelation, or (d) rejected their creeds, traditions, and authority. Like Christ and the apostles, bishops and “heretics”

used *persuasion* to keep and gain followers. No Christian group could use *force* to silence dissent or heretics during the first 300 years.

14. Church and State (MFS)

Before the AD 300, Jews and Romans considered Christianity to be a cult and Christians to be heretics. They often persecuted and killed unpopular Christians. Christians used persuasion not force to attract converts and deal with heretics. Christians received no government money and relied on voluntary donations.

The Roman Emperor, Constantine (AD 272–337), had a dream or vision that caused him to have a Christian symbol put on his soldiers' shields and his standard before the battle of Milvian Bridge (AD 312). He gave credit to the Christian God for his victories. Although he was not baptized until he was on his deathbed, Constantine changed anti-Christian policies. ... Within 100 years after Edict of Milan (AD 313) Christianity grew from 10% to about 90% of Roman Empire.

"After the conversion of Constantine, ... it was possible to invoke the authority of the state to settle theological questions. The Empire had a vested interest in the unity of the church. ... Thus, the state soon began to use its power to *force* theological agreement on Christians. ... As a result, many of those involved in controversy, rather than seeking to convince their opponents or the rest of the church, sought to convince the emperors." Constantine considered himself the "bishop of bishops" and called the first council of about 300 bishops at Nicea (AD 325) to settle the Arian controversy over the nature of God and Christ. The two bishops who refused to sign the Nicene creed, were declared to be heretics and were banished from their cities. Constantine issued an edict condemning Arius and his writings. The writings of Arius were to be burnt and anyone who was found with his writings was to be killed.

Marriage of Church and State: The council at Nicea "was concluded with a grand banquet, which the Emperor gave to the Fathers of the Council. ... The banquet had been arranged with a magnificence which surpassed all imagination. Some of the chief prelates sat with Constantine at the imperial table. ... Before dismissing them Constantine distributed presents among them, and also gave them letters to the proper officers of their provinces, ordering certain quantity of corn to be put at the disposition of the clergy, the Church widows and virgins, and the poor." This grand banquet was in essence a wedding feast to celebrate the marriage of Church and State. As the established religion of the Roman Empire, the Catholic Church was now entitled to **government money** and to use **government force** to silence dissent and heretics.

Government Money. The church received money from the government to pay the clergy, build churches, take care of the poor, etc. "For two and a half centuries, ... the church had always considered it heretical to pay salaries to church leaders. However, when Constantine offered salaries to church leaders, the church reconsidered the matter and decided to accept them." The clergy "came to represent both the most prestigious and the most lucrative career. We have remarked that while most of those who engaged in scientific research enjoyed private means, many earned a living as doctors or teachers. Yet in the sixth century, ... the bishop of Anastasiopolis enjoyed a salary that was six times that of the public doctor at Antinoopolis, and five times that of professors of rhetoric or grammar at Carthage."

Force to silence heresy. The council of Nicea was the first of several universal Catholic councils called by the emperor to settle Christian controversies. The resulting creeds helped identify heresies and government force (e.g., police, courts, prison, war) was used to silence dissent and heretics. Not long before it had been a crime to be a Christian. Now it was a crime to be a heretic. It was certainly easier to use force to silence dissent than to use persuasion to keep or gain followers. Now Christians were using the sword against other Christians with different beliefs. "Eventually, far more Christians... were slaughtered by the sword of the church than had ever been slain by the Romans." Where necessary, armies were used to rebellious groups deemed heretical.

After the fall of the Rome (AD 410), the Catholic Church continued to be the established religion in most European countries and the pope retained power over or influence with kings. In the eastern part of the old Roman Empire, now called the Byzantine Empire, the imperial church continued to exist for another thousand years.

15. Christianity and Philosophy (MFS)

"Athens became the chief intellectual center of Greece. ... Plato [c. 380 BC] and Aristotle [335 BC] founded schools ... that attracted philosophers and scientists from all over Greece." In Athens and Alexandria, Greek philosophy included religion and what we now call science. Greeks frequently criticized Jewish and Christian beliefs that were not academically correct according to Plato and other philosophers. Celsus (c. AD 185), a Greek philosopher and critic of the Christian church, made fun of the God of the Prophets found in the Old Testament. "The Christians say that God has hands, a mouth, and a voice; they are always proclaiming that 'God said this' or 'God spoke.' ... I can only comment that such a God is no god at all, for *God has neither hands, mouth, nor voice, nor any characteristics of which we know.* ... They have not read Plato. ... [The] **God of the philosophers is himself the underivable, the unnameable; he cannot be reached by reason.** ... *He cannot be comprehended in terms of attributes or human experience.*"

The relationship between Christianity and Greek philosophy went through five stages:

- cautious acquaintance (Paul, the apostle),
- casual friends (Justin Martyr [AD 100–165]),
- good friends (Origen [AD 185–232]),
- courtship (first council of Nicea [AD 325]), and
- marriage (Augustine, fourth council [AD 451]).

Mingling philosophy and scriptures, Origen "gave Christianity full scientific standing in that age" by interpreting the Bible allegorically instead of literally. Origen said, "the Scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they are written." Only simple and ignorant Christians accepted the literal interpretation of the Bible.

When people apostatize, what changes first?

Theology (metaphysics), **morality** (ethics), or **rituals**.

In the Vatican Museum's Signature Room, two large murals painted by Raphael in 1510–1511 recognize and celebrate this "marriage" of Christianity and Greek Philosophy. "School of Athens" depicts Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle (in the center), Pythagoras, Euclid, Zoroaster, Ptolemy, Epicurus, and Socrates. On the opposite wall, "Disputation over the Most Holy Sacrament" depicts God the Father, Christ between Mary and John the Baptist, and the Holy Ghost in heaven with prophets (e.g., Adam, Abraham, Moses) and apostles (e.g., Peter, James, John, Paul). On the ground is the Most Holy Sacrament on an altar that is between disputants between Catholic saints which include St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory the Great. "Few viewers need help to recognize the endorsement of both revelation and reason as avenues to truth and the inclusion of [Greek] philosophy in the larger Christian tradition." (ECD, 15)



Disputa (Disputation over the Blessed Sacrament) by Raphael



The School of Athens by Raphael

16. God lost his body (MFS)

After the second council in 381, the belief that God has a human form was suppressed. In 399, "the customary festal letter from Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria... included... a long refutation of the absurd heresy. ... Nearly all the monks in Egypt, being uneducated..., received this with bitterness and hostility. ... [They asked] a deacon of great learning ... how the Catholic Churches of the East understood the text in Genesis: 'Let us make man after our image and likeness.' Photinus explained how *all the leaders of the churches understood the text spiritually, not literally nor crudely*. ... "That unmeasurable, incomprehensible, invisible majesty cannot be limited by a human frame or likeness. His nature is incorporeal, uncompounded, simple, and cannot be seen

by human eyes nor conceived adequately by a human mind.' At last old Sarapion was moved by the numerous and convincing assertions of this learned man. ... When we stood up to give thanks to the Lord in prayer, the old man felt mentally bewildered at having to pray, because he could no longer sense in his heart the anthropomorphic image of God which he had always before his mind's eye when praying. Suddenly he broke into bitter weeping and sobbing, and throwing himself prostrate on the ground with groans, cried: 'Woe is me! They have taken my God away from me, and I have none to grasp, and I know not whom to adore or to address.'" (Owen) Ultimately the monks "answered by descending in force on Alexandria and creating such a storm that Theophilus executed a sudden" about face. (Henry)

Augustine (AD 354–430) whose mother was a Christian had the opposite reaction because of his training in Greek philosophy. Augustine was embarrassed by the Christian belief that God had a body. ... While studying under Bishop Ambrose, he became acquainted with Platonist writings and with the possibility of God's being a purely 'spiritual,' i.e., totally immaterial, invisible and incorporeal being. Augustine accepted this view of God and ... was converted to the faith in 386. ... Augustine acknowledges that belief in God's corporeality was still found among contemporary Christians, whom he mocked for not being able or willing to interpret the Bible allegorically."

Focus on theology not morality (metaphysics not ethics).

"It is impossible for any one ... to fail to notice a difference of both form and content between the Sermon on the Mount and the Nicene Creed. The Sermon on the Mount is the promulgation of a new law of conduct; it assumes beliefs rather than formulates them; the theological conceptions which underlie it belong to the ethical rather than the speculative side of theology; metaphysics are wholly absent. The Nicene Creed is a statement partly of historical facts and partly of dogmatic inferences; the metaphysical terms which it contains would probably have been unintelligible to the first disciples; ethics have no place in it. The one belongs to a world of Syrian peasants, the other to a world of Greek philosophers.

"The contrast is patent. If any one thinks that it is sufficiently explained by saying that the one is a sermon and the other a creed, it must be pointed out in reply that the question why an ethical sermon stood in the forefront of the teaching of Jesus Christ, and a metaphysical creed in the forefront of the Christianity of the fourth century, is a problem which claims investigation. (Hatch & Fairburn, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*, Introduction, 2.331, Williams and Norgate, 1897) <http://www.archive.org/details/influenceofgreek00hatch>

17. Changes in Church practices (MFS)

"After Constantine's conversion, Christian worship began to be influenced by imperial protocol. Incense, which was used as a sign of respect for the emperor, began appearing in Christian churches. Officiating ministers ... began dressing in more luxurious garments. Likewise, a number of [royal] gestures ... became part of Christian worship. ... Services [began] with a processional. Choirs were developed. ... Eventually, the congregation came to have a less active role in worship."

Churches were built where martyrs had been buried. ... [Later] bodies of martyrs were placed under the altar of new churches. "Eventually, the relics of saints ... were said to have miraculous powers." Lavish churches or basilicas replaced the early simple churches. ... The new church buildings were arrayed with impressive colonnades and vaulted ceilings. Many of them had beautiful fountains and elegant marble floors."

Sacraments: Sometime before the 3rd century, Christian writers began changing the meaning of sacraments (e.g., baptism and the Lord's Supper) from covenantal rites into rites performed by a priest that imparted grace to the recipient without covenant. Catholics came to believe in seven sacraments that imparted grace to the recipient.

18. Key Dates in later Christianity (MFS)

In the table below, underlined words indicate Catholic doctrines rejected by many Protestants as being based on tradition, not scripture. An asterisk identifies people or doctrines (e.g., *Arius) declared to be heretical by the Catholic Church. ***Bold Italics*** (e.g., ***Church of England***) identify the beginning of major Christian religions which include the denominations listed in the top ten largest Christian bodies in the U.S. The dates of the 21 universal Catholic councils are listed with key decisions.

3rd Century (200–300)
<u>Baptism by aspersion or sprinkling</u> starts. Alexandrian School: friendship of Christianity and Greek philosophy. Origen “gave Christianity full scientific standing...”
4th Century (300–400): Constantine
“Christmas” moved from May to Dec 25, a pagan sun festival. First Christian <u>monastery</u> . 325: 1 st council of Nicea- Christ of one substance with the Father, beginnings of Trinitarian (“3 in 1”) doctrine, *Arius Marriage of church and state; force used to suppress heresy Clergy: <u>paid</u> , <u>celibacy</u> encouraged, <u>social status</u> <u>Great churches built with baptisteries for immersion</u> 381: 2 nd council- Holy Ghost divine, *Apollinaris Prayer to <u>martyrs</u> as intercessors, <u>relics</u>
5th Century (400–500)
Augustine: Trinity (“3 in 1”), <u>original sin</u> , <u>infant baptism</u> , <u>predestination</u> , grace, <u>sacraments</u> necessary for salvation, six sacraments. 431: 3 rd council- Virgin <u>Mary</u> foremost saint, *Nestorius <i>Armenian, Syrian, Coptic, Abyssinian churches</i> 451: 4 th council- Christ divine and human, *Eutyches Marriage of Christianity and Greek philosophy: “Platonic Christianity” Bishop of Rome recognized as <u>Pope</u> of Western Church
6th Century (500–600)
553: 5 th council- condemned “Three Chapters”, *Origen’s pre-existence of souls Pope Gregory: <u>purgatory</u> , <u>penance</u> , <u>confession</u> , <u>intercessors</u> (saints), <u>remissions</u> (alms) <u>Infant baptism</u> universal
7th–10th Centuries (600–1000)
680: 6 th council- condemned monothelism (Christ had divine will not human will) and *Pope Honorius 787: 7 th council- <u>images</u> venerated not worshiped, condemned destroyers of images 870: 8 th council
11th Century (1000–1100)
Crusades: Roman Catholic wars to recapture Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the Muslims <u>Indulgences</u> (e.g., money, pilgrimages, Crusades) could remit penalties for “deadly” sins. 1054: <i>Greek Orthodox Church</i>

12th Century (1100–1200)
1123: 9 th council 1139: 10 th council- compulsory <u>clerical celibacy</u> 1179: 11 th council- method of <u>papal election</u>
13th Century (1200–1300)
1215: 12 th council- <u>Transubstantiation</u> , annual confession and communion, regulated inquisition, *Waldensians, *Albigensians <u>Inquisition</u> , heretics killed Forbade laity to possess Bible, translations denounced. <u>Baptism by aspersion</u> or sprinkling becomes common. 1245: 13 th council 1274: 14 th council- Papal elections
14th Century (1300–1400) — Italian Renaissance
1311: 15 th council
15th Century (1400–1500)
Spanish inquisition, forced conversions 1431: 17 th council 1448: Gutenberg press invented *** 1455: Gutenberg’s Bible (Latin Vulgate) published
16th Century (1500–1600)
Reformation and English Renaissance
1517: Luther’s 95 Theses, beginning of <i>Lutheran Church</i> 1525: Tyndale’s English New Testament 1534: <i>Church of England</i> 1536: Calvin’s <i>Institutes</i> 1545–63: 19 th Council of Trent; *many protestant doctrines; Aquinas theology, Latin Bible official; tradition, seven sacraments, Apocrypha official Protestants killed as heretics; Inquisition, forbidden books listed
17th Century (1600–1700)
1611: King James Version of the Bible based primarily on Byzantine Greek manuscripts 1647: Westminster Confession (Protestant Creed) <i>Puritans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists</i> <i>Quakers</i> Kepler, Galileo, Newton
18th Century (1700–1800)
John Wesley (<i>Methodists</i>) Rationalism 1788 U.S. Constitution ratified 1791 Bill of Rights ratified (no establishment of national religion)
19th Century (1800–1900)
1830: <i>The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints</i> 1854: <u>Immaculate conception of Mary</u> proclaimed by Pope 1870: 20 th council: <u>Pope infallible</u> : 1881: Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible based primarily on Alexandrian Greek manuscripts
20th Century (1800–1900)
1901: <i>Pentecostal</i> churches (<i>Church of God in Christ, Assemblies of God</i>) 1962–65: 21 st council- common languages used in rites & Masses

19. The Reformation (MFS)

During the 1500s, the invention of the Gutenberg press made it possible to publish many copies of books and pamphlets. The Greek New Testament was printed along with Luther's German translation and Tyndale's English translation. The press also made it possible for many people to read about the protests of Luther, Calvin, Tyndale and others against the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church attempted to ban or burn protestant writings and Bible translations. In Catholic countries like Spain, the inquisition was used to identify protestant heretics who were then tortured and killed. Catholic countries went to war against countries that protected Protestants.

In England, King Henry VIII rebelled against the Pope for not approving his divorce of Catherine. In 1534, Parliament enacted laws rejecting the authority of the Pope and making the king the "supreme head of the Church of England." The Church of England became the established or state religion of England. It retained Catholic beliefs and practices but rejected the Pope as the head of the church. It continued to restrict the religious freedoms of Protestants to meet, write, and teach their heresies.

In 1545–63, the Catholic council of Trent met to address Protestant criticism and teachings. Instead of reforming Catholic teachings and practices, the council restated Catholic teachings and condemned (anathema) anyone who taught or accepted opposing Protestant teachings. The Catholic Church insisted on using the Latin Vulgate Bible and discouraged the laity from Bible study. Translations were sanctioned in 1752 but only if accompanied by an orthodox commentary.

In 1611, the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible was published. About 80% of it was based on Tyndale's translation. The translators were Protestants who believed in God and the Bible. The KJV became the accepted English translation used by Protestants. English translations of the New Testament after 1800 were made from a different Greek text by people who did not believe as strongly in the Bible and the God of the prophets. They omitted or questioned many passages. They changed accepted words, e.g., *love* for *charity*, *signs* for *miracles*.

Church and State: During the Protestant reformation, Catholic leaders used government force to silence heretics and their writings. In some cases, force was used to compel conversion to Christianity. The Church of England continued this persecution.

Protestants began to travel to North America in search of religious freedom. When they had the freedom to practice their religions as they wished, they also established their religion in their states and used the power of state government to fund their church and to silence dissent.

When the Constitution was ratified in 1788, six of the thirteen states still had state religions. The first amendment in the Bill of Rights says "*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.*" This prevented the federal government from establishing a national religion (i.e., funding or enforcing) and from making laws that restricted (a) the religious liberties of citizens or (b) the rights of states to have a state religion. However, now this amendment is interpreted not as a restriction on government control of religion, but as a restriction on religions to prevent religious influence in politics as well as government funded organizations (e.g., schools) or facilities.

Conclusion

New Testament apostles prophesied of an apostasy that started during their lives and continued after the apostles were taken away from their lands.

An apostasy from the Gospel of Christ occurred in the lands of the New Testament lands and the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith restored the Church of Jesus Christ as taught by the apostles in both lands.

Christians did not like government force being used against them as a minority, but they were willing to use it when they were the majority. They used Satan's method of force for their "righteous purposes," (to collect money for their Church, care for the poor, and silence dissent).

How do the warnings about false teachers in the New Testament apply to us now?

Read J. Reuben Clark

Read Harold B. Lee

Philosophies of men mingled with scripture.

**Discernment: George Q. Cannon
and Stephen L. Richards**

Read Bruce R. McConkie

Read C. Terry Warner

Quotes

J. Reuben Clark, Jr.: There is creeping into our midst, and I warn you brethren about it, and I urge you to meet it, a great host of sectarian doctrines that have no place amongst us. The gospel in its simplicity, is to be found in the revelations, the teachings of the Prophet and the early leaders of the Church. We shall make no mistake if we follow them. We shall make mistakes ... if we try to harmonize our simple beliefs with the philosophy and the speculations of sectarian doctrines. When you can hear in our Sunday Schools ... that we do not need to worry much about or think much about the first vision ... [or] the atoning sacrifice of Christ ... we would better be careful. We must not 'liberalize' ... our teachings; we must accept them as God gave them to us and there must be amongst us unity in faith. (CR, Oct. 1944, 117-118.)

Harold B. Lee: There are some as wolves among us. By that, I mean some who profess membership in this church who are not sparing the flock. And among our own membership, men are arising speaking perverse things. Now perverse means diverting from the right or correct, and being obstinate in the wrong, willfully, in order to draw the weak and unwary members of the Church after them. (CR, Oct. 1972, 125)

Joseph: One of the Keys of the mysteries of the Kingdom ... is an eternal principle: ... That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, ... is in the high road to apostasy; and if he does not repent, will apostatize. (TPJS 156-57)

George Q. Cannon: The gift of discerning of spirits ... [is] of exceeding value. ... No Latter-day Saint should be without this gift, because there is such a variety of spirits in the world which seek to deceive and lead astray. (*Gospel Truth*, 198)

Stephen L. Richards: This gift [of discernment] when highly developed arises largely out of an acute sensitivity to ... spiritual impressions ... to read under the surface as it were, to detect hidden evil, and ... to find the good that may be concealed. ... The gift ... of discernment in this world of contention between the forces of good and the power of evil are essential equipment for every son and daughter of God. (CR, Apr 1950, 162-163)

Bruce R. McConkie: First John was "written by the Disciple whom Jesus loved, and who in turn had such great love for his Lord and his fellowmen that he gained permission to remain on earth and seek to save souls until the Second Coming—this Epistle has as its essential theme:

- That God is love;
- That love is the foundation upon which all personal righteousness rests;
- That all the purposes and plans of Deity are based on his infinite and eternal love; and
- That if men will personify that love in their lives, they will become like the Lord himself and have eternal life with him. The doctrines expounded include how to gain fellowship with God; how to know God and Christ; how to become the sons of God; how to abide in the light and love the brethren; how to dwell in God and have him dwell in us; how to be born again and gain eternal life. (*DNTC*, 3:371.)

C. Terry Warner: "Love your enemies and do good to them that hate you." ... Judging others and withholding our favor from them ... capitulates to Satan. ... It is with us as it was with the Redeemer: *Satan does not need to overpower us in order to win the war. He only needs to get us to adopt his way of fighting it.*"

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- Owen = Owen Chadwick, *Western Asceticism*, 234-5
- Henry = Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 185-6
- I-NT = New Testament Institute manual, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus & his Apostles*, institute.lds.org
- Ogden = Ogden and Skinner, *Verses by Verses*
- *Sense* = *Holzappel and Wayment, Making Sense of the New Testament*
- DNTC = Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*
- KJV King James Version of the Bible.
- NIV = New International Version of the Bible
- *TPJS* = *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*
- *OED* = Oxford English Dictionary
- *BDB* = *Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
- *Bauer* = Walter Bauer, *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*
- *EJ* = *Encyclopedia Judaica*
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