

Part 2

**"THE GATES OF HELL"**



## ***The Churchoid of Satan Emerges***

**A**bout the same time as Paul's martyrdom it was reported that the Apostle Peter was also put to death—tradition says by crucifixion, although there is no evidence that it occurred in Rome as was later claimed. The increasingly sadistic and murderous Nero scoured the empire for tens of thousands of captives and especially Messianic believers for his bloody spectacles in the Coliseum.

In AD 70 the Romans decided to finally suppress the Jewish unrest in Judea and, first, Vespasian, and then his son, Titus, in ruthless campaigns destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple, and dispersed the Jews, leaving them without a nation or religious centre. The historian, Josephus, living at the time, described the horrors. There were an estimated three million pilgrims visiting Jerusalem for the annual Feast of Passover and Josephus reported "*one million one hundred thousand butchered, about one hundred thousand prisoners and countless others sent to work in mines in Egypt and elsewhere*".

If none of his fellow-Jews remembered the words of Jesus his followers did: "*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again*". In seventy years from the time of his three-day death, burial and resurrection the Church of the Messiah had been carried across the

Roman imperial world. While this spiritual expansion was happening, in Judea the succession of Roman emperors demanding divinity status throughout the first century AD heightened the persecution of the Church of the Messiah as well as the Jews. There was a period of relief from persecution until Domitian became Caesar and renewed hostilities against all Messiah believers. Even those close to him in Rome were not spared as he put to death Flavius Clemens, his nephew: and the wife of Flavius, Domitilla, with others in the imperial court were banished. It was during the reign of Domitian that the last living Apostle John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos.

With the death of the Emperor Domitian the Apostle John returned from his exile in Patmos and proceeded to visit the many churches in Asia Minor from his base in Ephesus. There were an estimated three to four hundred churches of the Messiah in the region at the time, scattered across four thousand miles, among a variety of religions, cultures, languages and social classes. A *Letter* by Clement, a declared "bishop" from the church of the Messiah in Rome to the church in Corinth, towards the close of the first century AD and within twenty years of the death of Paul, deplored the changes already taking place.

*"It is, beloved, disgraceful that such a thing should be heard of, that the most steadfast and ancient church of the Corinthians should, on account of one or two persons, engage in sedition against its presbyters."*

What was of primary significance in his *Letter* is that there was still a plurality of "*presbyters*", or overseers, in the Corinth church, and not a single bishop over one or more churches as would be later practiced. No doubt so long as the Apostle John was alive and active such a serious departure from the teachings of the apostles in general and Paul in particular was unlikely.

When John died in 99 AD, and the new Emperor Trajan, ruled, he insisted on worship of the emperor and heathen gods. Trajan almost immediately launched an ambitious plan to make Rome an even more impressive capital. He had a personal interest in architecture and engineering and during his reign he was

responsible for the building of the magnificent *Circus Maximus* to hold two hundred thousand spectators for spectacular events such as chariot-racing; the impressive *Senate Forum*; the unique three-storey *Shopping Centre*; and the amazing channelled network of *Aqueducts* to supply Rome with limitless supplies of water for drinking, baths, fountains, and sewage removal.

In 103 AD Trajan sent Pliny the Younger as governor, or proconsul, to the region of Bythinia and Pontus. The younger Pliny was a highly respected member of a distinguished Roman family who had already become famous for his descriptions of the volcanic eruptions of Vesuvius in AD79 with its devastation of Pompeii. As governor of the region of Bythinia and Pontus he became aware of the rapid spread of the Messiah believers there and he reported to Trajan: *"Many of every age and rank, and of both sexes, are involved in the danger, for the contagions of this superstition has seized not only the cities, but villages in the open country."* The belief in Jesus as a prophet was generally acceptable and not considered a danger, but belief in him as the Messiah, or King of the Jews, was a possible threat across the Roman world.

Pliny went on to describe how after interrogating them, if they confessed their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, he met with them for a second or third time, checking their account and increasing the threats of punishment as members of an illicit sect under Roman law. But all that he could learn was that they met before daylight on a certain day of the week, they sang a hymn in praise of their God Messiah, they were bound not to commit crimes or adultery, they kept their word, and after they had participated in a simple and innocent meal, they returned to their homes. He concluded his report:

*"In cases of obstinate perseverance I ordered them to be executed; for this I had no doubt whatever was the nature of their religion that stubbornness and obstinacy ought to be punished."*

Trajan Caesar approved Pliny's decision, but directed that the Messiah believers should not be sought out by police, but if their activities were reported to police they should be arrested and

punished. Trajan had a personal encounter with the Messiah believers during a visit he made to Antioch, the capital of Syria, the city from which Paul and Barnabas had set out on their missionary journeys. At the time of Trajan's visit the Antioch church of the Messiah had become dominated by a single "bishop" called Ignatius, instead of the several spiritual varied overseers taught by Paul.

The strong-minded Ignatius in his *Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* tendentiously altered Paul's report of his visit to Miletus by saying "Paul sent from Miletus to Ephesus called the bishops and presbyters", deliberately making two titles out of what Paul had used as one: namely, "From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church"<sup>5</sup>). He also argued that bishops should be sub-divided into a "council" of presbyters and deacons, in a structured hierarchy that was derived from a proposed "apostolic succession" from the Twelve Apostles, with Peter nominated as chief of the Apostles because Jesus had given him the "keys of the kingdom."

To be generous to Ignatius, his reason might have been that, because he had volunteered for the dangerous task of representing the Antioch church to the Emperor Trajan, he was later given the historical importance of being official "Bishop of Antioch." In that event he presented a courteous but firm defence of his belief in Jesus the Messiah as God, and the furious Emperor pronounced the death sentence that he be taken to Rome in chains "to be devoured by beasts for the gratification of the people." While on his journey to Rome Ignatius wrote to his friend Polycarp, describing his experiences:

*"All the way from Syria to Rome I have been chained to a detachment of soldiers who have behaved like animals towards me. I tried giving them money, but the more I gave them the more they roughly treated me. Quite honestly they are like a pack of leopards enjoying their role as hunters, with me as their prey. All I pray is that when the moment comes the lions will be quick about it . . ."*

In the 80,000-seat Coliseum, crowded with citizens and senators, Ignatius and other fellow-believers in Jesus as their Messiah were fed to the beasts as entertainment. The increasing tempo of persecutions of Christians combined with the insatiable public

demands for blood spectacles resulted in making “martyrs” or “confessors” of the Jesus-as-Messiah believers: with public tortures, decapitations, slaughter by animals, and crucifixions with fire.

Towards the end of the second century Marcus Aurelius was succeeded by his son, the contemptible Commodus (180-192), followed by a period of civil wars and widespread political unrest through the Roman empire. During this period the saintly Christian, Polycarp, was martyred and his disciple, Irenaeus, bishop in the Lyon Church of the Messiah in Gaul, travelled to Rome with a letter to the Bishop of Rome Eleutherus, expressing concern about the spreading influence of Montanist mysticism among the churches. From the meeting of the two bishops there emerged the concept of formalizing the Pauline spiritual authority of several “elders” in each church into an appointed single bishop over several churches. The latter were then “authorized as apostles” in succession from the Apostles Paul and Peter, whose presence and deaths in Rome were deduced as confirmation. The leading Christian apologist at that time, Tertullian, protested:

*“The church, it is true, will forgive sins, but it must be the Church of the Spirit, by means of a spiritual man; not the Church which consists of a number of bishops. For the right belongs to the master, not to the servant; to God Himself, not to a priest. The Paraclete must (after Christ) be the only one to be called and revered as Master.”*

Irenaeus was the most articulate of the apologists for the centralizing “apostolic succession” movement, declaring:

*“Putting to confusion all who in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing or vainglory, or by a blind and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings . . . (by) the tradition handed down from the Apostles, of the very great, very ancient and universally known Church, founded and organized in Rome by the two most glorious Apostles Peter and Paul, and the faith which has come down to our time by means of the succession of the bishops”.*

This deliberately tendentious and misleading statement launched the antithesis of the Church of the Messiah, declared by Jesus the

Messiah as *"I will build my Church . . ."* Irenaeus, and those who followed him through his influential writings, laid the foundation of a centrally organized Church with clerics, laity, rituals, liturgies and, eventually, buildings; opposed to the Tertullian argument of the Church as an organism of Messiah-dominated individuals with a direct personal relationship with God. Tertullian declared in his *Apology*:

*"We are a community bound together by the same religious profession, by the divine authority of our discipline, and by a common hope. We came together as a congregation to offer with our united force our prayers to God, to whom such wrestling is acceptable. We pray for the Emperors, and for all authority, for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, for the delay of the final consummation . . ."*

*"The tried men of our elders preside over us who have obtained the honour, not by purchase, but by character. There is no buying and selling in the things of God. Though we have our treasure-chest, it is not filled by purchase-money as of a venal religion. On the monthly collection-day each as he chooses puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and if he is able, for there is no compulsion, all is voluntary . . ."* And so on.

It was in the time of Tertullian that the substitution of one man, a presiding elder, distributed the bread and wine of the remembrance communion feast initiated by the Messiah, instead of the mutual participation around a single table. Tertullian wrote of the practice:

*"The Lord commanded it to be eaten at meal-times and to be taken by all. We receive it at our meetings before day-break, and from no other hands but those of the presidents".*

Tertullian was said to be the first person to use the word *"sacrament"* for the practice of communion, in classical Latin at that time meaning a soldier's allegiance to the Roman emperor. Irenaeus called it an *"oblation"*, no longer bread but *"it becomes the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly"*.

Elsewhere in the world at that time, as nations beyond the boundaries of the hitherto impregnable Roman Empire saw it apparently crumbling from within, they began launching attacks like

wolves attacking unguarded sheep. Internally the enormous burden of maintaining the empire militarily and financially was being further undermined by its failing infrastructure of slaves, gladiatorial contests and massive entertainment indulgencies. In the socially dissolute, economically debilitating, politically disastrous and authority declining climate the Church of the Messiah both proliferated successfully and yet was being corrupted from within by emerging leaders with arguments, compromise and “centralizing” policies.

One of the leaders was Marcion, a confessed admirer of the Apostle Paul, who arrived in Rome in the early part of the second century with a formidable intellectual understanding of contemporary culture and religion. While he agreed wholeheartedly with Paul’s vision, he lacked Paul’s understanding of the *Law of Moses*, the *Psalms* and the *Prophets*, and of God’s plan through Israel as a prelude to the Church of the Messiah after Pentecost. He accepted only parts of Luke’s *Gospel*, regarded the other *Gospels* as fabrications, and taught only some of Paul’s *Epistles* as authentic. The martyrdoms of Paul and Peter, and the early influence of Marcion, gave the church in Rome greater authority over other churches in the Roman empire. By the middle of the second century he had created deep division with the Rome-based “centralizers”, and he travelled to the east in search of a larger, more sympathetic following. In the east Marcion found a climate conducive to his theory of emphasizing Paul’s God of love while rejecting the *Law of Moses* demands of obedience.

In the latter part of the reign of Emperor Trajan the Jews in Judea broke out in yet another rebellion against Rome, spiralling into a regional slaughter from Africa to Mesopotamia of a half-million Gentiles. The Roman General Hadrian, with an even more violent wholesale slaughter, suppressed the rebellion. When Hadrian became Emperor the following year he was determined to punish the Jews once and for all and he banned circumcision, Sabbath observance and the reading of the *Law of Moses*, and threatened to make Judea a Roman colony.

A few years later a Jew named Bar Kochba emerged in Judea with

a claim to be the Jewish Messiah, and Jews of every description except Jesus believers rose against Rome once again. This time Hadrian ordered the country to be laid in ruins, made it a Roman colony with the name *Aeli Capitolina*, erected a Temple to Jupiter on the site of the ruined Jewish Temple, and a Temple to Venus on the spot where Jesus was crucified.

This savage annihilation not only destroyed Israel as a nation, it also eliminated Judaism as an officially permitted religion, at the same time removing the "canopy" under which the Church of the Messiah had been able to shelter and forcing them into a clear breach with Judaism. The combination of Trajan's and Hadrian's ruthless persecutions and laws against both Jews and Messianic believers drove the churches "underground", as synagogues and public buildings were forbidden as meeting-places for both Judaisers and Messianic believers. The former, who still followed *Moses' Law*, withdrew beyond the River Jordan and became the Church of Pella, and became two sects, the Nazarenes and the Ebionites. The Nazarenes became Judaising Messianic believers; and the Ebionites became philosophical Gnostics, an oxymoronic form of secular religion.

In order to maintain a recognizable community some Messianic leaders initiated a form of practice where a leading figure became a local unofficial "bishop", prepared to speak on behalf of his flock, and also to stand against the malevolent Roman authorities without being part of any regional "system". They wrote *Letters* of encouragement, exposition, debate and admonition to each other, which in time became known as "*Gospels, Epistles and other inspired writings*" and eventually given historical credibility as a mutually agreed system of claimed "*apostolic practice*."

Bishop Clement of Rome earlier had written a *Letter* regarding the necessity of having authorized teachers of the Scriptures, separating them from the mass of lay members and derived from *Old Testament* Levitical priests. Another school of thought emerged advocating the possibility of absolutions for sins committed after baptism, increasing the trend into a hierarchy of religious authority figures eventually antithetical to everything preached by the Apostle Paul.

One of the last of the people who claimed to know the Apostle Paul personally was Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. Irenaeus, the most militant of single bishop advocates taught by Polycarp, and was appointed Bishop of Lyons in 177AD. Irenaeus was noted for his passionate defence against the spreading heresy of “Gnosticism”, an eclectic pseudo-religion based on “secret knowledge” of an amalgam of supernatural theories. In his work *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus declared:

*“God did not make the first man because he needed company, but because he wanted someone to whom he could show love . . . Our work for God— our service—adds nothing to his power or his achievements. He does not need anything we can give him, not even our obedience. But that does not mean that our work and service for him are meaningless or without value. God had promised to those who serve and follow him life, immortality and eternal glory. These rewards are specifically for servants who actually serve, and followers who actually follow.”*

The centralizing of authority in the hands of the increasing self-appointed bishops was accelerated by the introduction of baptism of infants and the doctrine of baptismal regeneration (the infant somehow being given the gift of eternal life by sprinkling a few drops of water by the officiating cleric), together with the transforming of the simple ceremony of open communion remembrance into an act, it was claimed, miraculously performed exclusively by an officiating priest, thereby creating yet another clear distinction between clergy and laity.

One of the most illustrious of the “martyrs” during the reign of Marcus Aurelius was Justin, surnamed “Martyr” who, after studying with the Stoics and, later, with the peripatetic followers of Aristotle, joined the celebrated school of Platonists where he hoped to attain the Platonic ideal of seeing God. In seeking this final objective he unexpectedly met a mysterious old man while he was walking alone on a sea-shore. After sharing a philosophical discussion in which the old man rejected empty philosophies which for centuries had discussed the existence of God but were unable to provide any access to God, the old man said to Justin, “Pray, therefore, above all

*things that the gates of light might be opened to thee, for these things cannot be perceived or understood by all, but only to him whom God and his Christ have given understanding."*

With these words the old man disappeared but the experience and the words remained with Justin and led him to investigate the teachings of the Jesus as Messiah believers and eventually become an outstanding defender of "*the true doctrine of the Christians.*" He described the form of worship among the Messiah believers at the time in a letter to the church in Rome:

*"At the end of the prayers we greet one another with a kiss. Then the president of the brethren is brought bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he takes then, and offers up praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and gives thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at his hands. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgiving all the people present express their joyful assent by saying 'Amen' . . . Then those we call deacons give to each of those present the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and carry away a portion to those who are absent . . . "*

Justin wrote three *Treatises*, two *Apologies* and a *Dialogue with Trypho*, a Jew; the former to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, and the latter to the Roman Senate in the time of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Defending himself before the Prefect of Rome he was condemned to be scourged and beheaded in 165 AD. During this period memorials were erected to the Apostles Paul and Peter in Rome—Paul's on the road to Ostia, and Peter's on a necropolis on Vatican Hill—in order to establish the claims of the church in Rome to apostolic authority above the earlier church of the Apostles in Jerusalem. Twenty years later Bishop Victor of Rome further emphasized the divergence from Judaism influence by celebrating Easter according to Roman custom on the first full moon following the spring equinox rather than the Jewish Passover in the month Nissan, excommunicating all Messiah believers who did not approve.

The persecutions of the Messiah believers under Emperor

Hadrian, followed by the two Antonines and Marcus Aurelius in the second half of the second century, brought a widespread emphasis on paganism and philosophy, possibly a response to the proliferation of Messianic writings and an intellectual justification for persecutions instead of the bestialities of earlier emperors. The persecutions were divided into two classifications: “*martyrs*” for those who died for their faith rather than recant; and “*confessors*” for those who professed to believe in Jesus as Messiah, but who were prepared to compromise their beliefs with other officially acceptable forms of religious practice.

Gradually at first, but with increasing momentum, the Pauline-type overseers in each church were replaced by a single “*bishop*” over several churches, especially if the emerging bishop had expositional skills and intellectual expertise in Jewish history and Pauline writings. They circulated Paul’s *Letters* to the seven churches, and seven *Letters* to individuals, with copies of their own commentaries on them, and arguments against the commentaries of others. In and through all this religious sermonizing and discussion were the Gnostics infiltrating the churches with their insidious teachers of Messiah-designated heresy, which went all the way back to the statements of Jesus to refute his deity and advance their own esoteric doctrines. This was especially evident in Egypt where the *Gospel of the Egyptians* became prominent and widespread along the North African region, giving rise to a Coptic or Carthaginian version of monotheism rather than the Trinitarian doctrine increasingly being accepted by most churches elsewhere in the Roman empire.

Two influential leaders emerged to dominate the emerging controversies, Montanus and Tertullian. Montanus was a charismatic preacher who called himself “*the Paraclete*”, a designation used by Jesus for the Holy Spirit, meaning “*Counsellor*,” who argued for greater participation by women in church services. The Apostle Paul, under the direction of God, had limited the participation of women in church affairs to the office of deacons, praying and prophesying extemporaneously at the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and always with heads covered in token acknowledgement of Jesus as Head of

the Church of the Messiah. Montanus did not believe in either marriage or procreation, and gave to women positions of leadership over churches and his movement until he was accused of breaking up marriages because of the ensuing controversies. He also paid stipends to his followers and practiced a distinctive ostentation in ecclesiastical vestments and church performance.

One important consequence was the emergence of Messianic spokesmen who were prepared for public debate of their Messianic beliefs in the name of the churches where they lived, and who assumed or were attributed the titles of "*Bishops of Rome, Antioch, etc.*". The significance of this was not observed at the time, that it was an important departure from what the Apostle Paul had taught, but it was to have devastating consequences in the creation of "churchoids of Satan", local communities of Messianic believers only resembling true apostolic churches, as further steps were taken to organize themselves into centrally approved institutions by self-appointed clerics. By the close of the second century conferences and "councils" of these representative city bishops were being held to discuss and decide church policies and practices, which the noted Tertullian warned: "*It is no part of religion to compel religion, which should be adopted freely, not by force.*"

Tertullian was an ascetic intellectual, a gifted writer and debater, and the first Messianic writer to use Latin and the word "*Trinity*". He was said to have been a convert while in Rome and he was an outspoken opponent of Montanus and his theories, emphasizing the sinful disposition of human creatures and the necessity of moral judgment. He was a puritan like Paul, but without Paul's emphasis on justification from sin and sanctification of conduct. He also accepted Paul's teaching regarding the "*priesthood of every believer*", including women, with no need of clergy of any kind, declaring:

*"Are not we laymen priests also? . . . The difference between the order and the people is due to the authority of the church and the consecration of their rank by the revelation of a special branch by the order. But where there is no bench of clergy you offer and baptize and are your own sole priest. For where there are three, there is a church, though they be laymen . . . you have the rights of a priest in your own person when necessity arises."*

Tertullian's break with the advocating "centralizers" of the Church of the Messiah occurred when the Bishop of the Rome churchoid postulated that the church's leaders had the power to grant remission of sins after baptism, and even of such serious sins as adultery and apostasy. It was then a growing practice within the increasingly institutionalized churches that such Bishops could remit sins as authorized and officially ordained persons, and this became extended to include all *clergy*, separating them from the lay members into the two categories of the rulers and the ruled.

A third category was also emerging of calling certain leading personalities "*saints*". The designation was first used by the Apostle Paul when writing to the various churches of Jesus believers and it was applied to all those who had been "*born again*" into a "*new life*" through belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and a subsequent life of holiness. A practice was now initiated to confer the word "*saint*" as a title of worthiness on certain prominent figures with only some association with the person of Jesus, or some meritorious action decided by bishops, in conference or by individual acknowledgment.

Towards the end of the second century there was an upsurge of interest in the use of music and singing in the proliferating churches of the Messiah. Ironically, it was a Gnostic heretic, Bardaisan, who composed songs "*with sweet rhythms which beguiled the hearts of men*". The Apostle Paul had encouraged the use of music and singing in the churches, saying:

*"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish each other with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God".*

Bardaisan's popular music, combined with Justyn Martyr's *Harmony of the Four Gospels*, produced the basic framework of an early ritual liturgical "mass" as a form of worship, consisting of readings from the *Old Testament*, a sermon, a kiss of peace and the celebration of the eucharist, or communion, and contributed to the rapid spread of ecclesiology and clergy as they were integrated into formal church services over the next two centuries with hallelujahs

and soulful laments requiring trained choirs and larger buildings. It would be another eight centuries before church music was re-invented by a Benedictine monk, Guido Arezzo<sup>6</sup> who devised the musical structure known as the six-note, later seven-note, scale (do, re, me, fa ,so ,la, te, do) and the four line staff.

With the close of the second century, and the death of Marcus Aurelius, the authority of the *Old Testament*, the "Four Gospels" and "Memoirs of the Apostles" gradually diminished under the onslaughts of the emerging church centralizers, heretical antagonists and the pagan mystery cults as they multiplied self-generated commentaries. Eusebius, writing of events which took place in the second century in the east, describes how these early itinerant preachers "laid the foundations of faith in remote and barbarous places . . . committed to them the culture of those they had perfectly introduce to the faith, and departed again to other regions."

While all this religious ferment was developing, the intellectual world of philosophy was becoming more eclectic. The early schools of Platonists, Aristotileists, Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics had modified into a mélange of philosophical opinion shared by individuals of all nations, involving Plato's *Nature of Being*, the ethics of the Stoics, and the logic of Aristotle. The Apostle Paul had been equipped by both secular and religious training to pick his way carefully through the challenges and contradictions provided by his divine vision from God, but the intellectuals of the emerging Messianic churches of the second century lacked that divine imperative as they sought rationalizations of the religious and secular.

At the start of the third century the merging of the various "churchoids of Satan" into a single Christianized ecclesiastical organization under the control of bishops gave a superficial uniformity to the widely proliferating groups of Jesus as distinct from Messiah believers, and this was articulated in an "Apostolic Creed" and "Rule of Faith". Tertullian fixed the time of this "great schism" between the generic "Church of the Messiah"—and the emerging institutional "Churchoid of Satan" as between 200 AD and 220 AD. In 200 AD he regarded all "apostolic sees" as having the same

status, and by 220 AD he was attacking the increasing power of “*the papacy*” increasingly centred in the Bishop of Rome. The hitherto “*Lord’s Table*” of Remembrance communion, he said, had become an “*altar*”; the free-will spiritual prayers of believers had become the oblation of the Mass offered by the presiding priest; and transubstantiation as “*corpus Christi*” by the re-enactment of the priest replacing the symbolic presence of the Holy Spirit.

In Rome, Bishop Novation claimed the authority to “*bind and loose sinners*”—to excommunicate and absolve them—rested with bishops and presbyters. It was during Novatian’s time that the term “*Catholic*” was first used to describe the new ecclesiology, at first attributed to those who were opposing the institutionalizing of the Church of the Messiah, but later co-opted by the institutionalists for themselves as “*Roman Catholic*.” Novatian, as the primary Bishop of Rome, claimed the title of “*Pope*” for himself, but was excommunicated himself by the synod in Rome in 251. Five years later Bishop Stephen of Rome declared the primacy of his claim to apostolic authority on the commission of Jesus to Peter regarding the “*keys of the kingdom*.”

This devastating combination of secularized religion, together with borrowed influences from oriental mystical cults and Greek philosophy, especially Platonism, gave birth to a world-wide ecclesiastical Chistendom in which religious learning and literature combined with contemporary culture and philosophy in a pseudo-Church—a “*Churchoid of Satan*”—in opposition to the “*Church of the Messiah*.”

An anonymous writer of the time said:

*“That new power which has arisen by the works wrought by our Lord and his Apostles has subdued the flame of human passions and brought into the hearty acceptance of one faith a vast variety of races and nations the most different in their manners. For we can count up in our reckoning things achieved in India, among the Seres, Persians and Medes; in Arabia, Egypt, Asia and Syria; among the Galatians, the Parthians and the Phrygians; in Achaia, Macedonia and Epirus; in all the islands and provinces which the rising or the setting sun looks down upon.”*

From the third century there were more high-ranking officials and military officers, aristocrats and wealthy merchants, recruited into this Churchoid, and they contributed wealth and influence to build "sacred" buildings as churches, monasteries, liturgies, vestments, and— final travesty!—the ownership of slaves for menial services by those who had been taught by Jesus to be "*servants of all.*"

One of the most influential religious groups was a new form of *Gnosticism*, founded by one Mani, born in Babylonia in 216, and which became a formidable opponent of the nascent Church of the Messiah. Mani, designated an "*Apostle of Light,*" developed a universal religious system which he claimed comprised the teachings of Noah, Abraham, Zoroaster, Buddha and Jesus. He travelled extensively, even to India and China, but was eventually put to death by crucifixion.

The persecutions and institutionalizing of the Church of the Messiah throughout the Roman empire and North Africa led to the formation of isolated communities, like the former Essenes in Judea, where devout and wealthy individual Jesus believers founded centres where the ascetically minded could practice religious observances in separate and increasingly isolated "*monasteries*", beyond those required by the emerging institutional church leadership. These began and were expanded from Egypt in the third century by the hermit Saint Anthony when "*monks*" and "*nuns*", led lives of extreme asceticism, renounced families, sexual relations, and possessions for lives devoted to prayer and meditation.

From Anthony and the many extreme hermits who joined or imitated him there emerged imaginative stories, strange visions and accounts of fanciful miracles. A century later these were brought under a measure of control by Basil the Great and Benedict of Nursia, both of whom developed systems of common discipline under the single title of *Rules*, which became the norm for most monasteries. Monks met for prayer seven times a day, and spent the rest of their time in manual labour in kitchens and gardens, hospitality for the poor and pilgrims, and care of the sick and aged.

The practice was introduced into Asia Minor by Basil the Great in

Cappadocia, with separate communities for men monks and women nuns. These became monasteries identified with the emerging institutional churchoids under their different regional leaders and practices, and were compartmented into three different sacramental rituals of Coptic in Egypt, Latin in Rome and Syrian in Edessa.

At the same time the Roman empire was in a state of decline externally on its borders and internally because of excesses, accelerated by the movement of Mesopotamian tribes in a mysterious impulse to push westwards in search of lands and wealth. As Roman military control weakened as a consequence the various tribes gradually advanced on Rome by occupying the territories on the empires eastern perimeter establishing independent states which, in time, became the nations of Europe. By the fourth century the most powerful were the more recent "*Latin Catholic*" Churchoid in Rome and its slowly disintegrating empire; and the earlier "*Eastern Orthodox*" Churchoid in what would become the Byzantine Empire, each with distinctively different ecclesiastical practices. These loose agglomerations of churches and monasteries, represented by wealthy aristocrats, officials and powerful bishops, became a recognized single religious world-wide "*Churchoid of Satan*" with a dominant role in world history to equal that of political States at a time when the pagan Roman Empire was in a final state of disintegration.

## **Chapter 6**

**will be available on this site on the 1st March 2012**