

Old Light on the Roman Church

by

Wm R Cooper

a consideration in four parts

of certain neglected areas

of Church History

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About the Author

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Acknowledgements

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr Gene Jeffries ThD (Dean of Emmanuel College of Christian Studies, Springdale, Arkansas), and to Dr James J Scofield Johnson of that same faculty, for their unstinting help and support in the production of this volume. Their expertise in Greek and Hebrew has been as invaluable as their constant encouragement and generosity in other fields. Without them, this book could not have been written. Thank you both.

Preface

Much of the material contained in this book can be read nowhere else - unless the reader goes to the original sources. These early sources have been brought together here into one volume, so that the story that they tell can be made plain. That story concerns the birth, growth and corruption of the Roman Catholic church, a 'church' that pretends to hold the keys to man's salvation, and outside of which church (it is claimed) there is no salvation. It has been shown by a great many others where the falsities of Rome's teachings lay, and how they are each contradicted and proved false by the Word of God. That is not our remit here.

PART 1: THE EARLY CHURCH OF ROME AND BRITAIN

in the light of the New Testament and

other ancient records, with matter concerning

the date of the earliest of the written Gospels

Introduction

Since the "Enlightenment" of the mid-18th century and the teachings of David Hume, it has become the fashion amongst 'modernist' scholars to mistrust evidence, no matter how reasonable that evidence may be. Indeed, such scholars see it as their task to discredit evidence wherever they can, particularly when it applies to the Bible. Hume's view was that, as a given event recedes into the past and becomes more remote from our own time (as has the writing of the Bible - conveniently), so any evidence supporting it is proportionately untrustworthy. Little did he consider, however, that the same 'rule', if applied consistently, must in time apply to his own faulty reasoning, an injustice against which he would undoubtedly have protested.

Contrary to Hume and the modernistic view, however, we shall here proceed on the proven assumption that most historical evidence *is* reliable, especially where it can be tested and *whatever* its age may be, and that both the Old and New Testaments are *utterly* reliable in all their statements, whether these be historical, prophetic, doctrinal or any other.

In support of this assumption, we will examine the records that bear upon the names of certain men and women who are mentioned by Paul in his epistles to the Romans, to Timothy (his 2nd epistle), and to the Phillippians, and examine the significance of these when applied to the surviving records and monuments of the early British and Roman Churches. It will be seen that far from losing their evidential integrity with the passing of time, the records, whether Scriptural or secular, can be tested to a degree that

demonstrates their continuing trustworthiness. In examining them, we hope also to shed some light, at least, upon the question of when the first written Gospel appeared, and on an area of Church history that has been rendered obscure to the point of darkness through the stultifying assumptions of modernism.

We shall, in particular, be considering the facts surrounding the very first Christian family amongst the early Britons, and their coming to faith whilst held as hostages in the city of Rome. But it is worth remembering as we proceed that the early Church in Rome was not that system of idolatry that we now know as the Roman Catholic Church. The two are quite distinct, in spite of Roman Catholicism's claim to rest upon the authority (and the purity) of that earlier foundation. The early Church of Rome was as pure in its faith and doctrine as any of the fledgling churches of Europe or Asia Minor for the first two centuries after Christ. It did not begin to take on corruption until the 3rd-4th centuries, when in order to court favor with the pagan authorities certain ambitious but *nominal* Christians adopted and accommodated aspects of paganism that were to spell the death of the original Church of Christ in that city.¹

It was only after the Diocletian persecution of the early 4th century that the process of corruption accelerated towards the Roman State's adoption of the Church under Constantine, giving birth to the idolatrous system that we know today as Roman Catholicism, and which the Reformers of more recent times knew as the Papacy. But paganism had learned a lesson. If you wish to destroy the Church, you shouldn't persecute it. That only makes it stronger. Instead, accommodate, flatter and promote it. Then it will die, as did the Church of Rome.

In its death throes the Commandment concerning the keeping of the Sabbath Day (Exod. 20:8) was abolished, and in its place was kept the *first* day of the week (a direct reversal of God's command) in celebration of the sun-god Apollo (Sun-day or *Dies-solis* as the Romans knew it).² The 'birthday' of that same pagan god, 25th December, the day of the Winter Solstice, was pretended to be the birthday of our Lord, whose unlawful image thereafter bore the sun-burst, or halo, that hitherto had adorned images of the head of Apollo. Then was discarded another of the Commandments, namely that against the worshipping of images and angels (Exod. 20:4-5). The Paschal feast, or Passover, was replaced with the celebration of Easter, named after *Eastre*, the goddess of fertility (hence the giving of *eggs* at Easter and the 'bunny' of legendary fecundity). And then followed quickly the withholding of the wine from the laity in the Eucharist, and the suppression of the written word of God, lest these deeds became known to the people. And thus the Roman Catholic Church was born.

The sheer scale of this apostasy, which sadly most Protestant churches have unwittingly perpetuated, will only be known by us in eternity. But its irony is the fact that Constantine, who brought about the State's adoption of the Church of Rome, came from Britain, and British prisoners-of-war and hostages, some of them Constantine's own ancestors in fact, were among the very first members of the earlier Church of Rome. They were also among its very first martyrs, and some of them are actually named in both the New Testament and the surviving secular records. These are the focus of this paper.

But this study will differ from most of its kind in one respect. It will not be a case of the secular records corroborating the Biblical account so much, although that will be seen to occur incidentally. It is rather a case of the Biblical record enabling us to make better sense of the secular. In order to do that, the Biblical record must itself possess great historical integrity (we would say *absolute* historical integrity), which is perhaps the clearest hallmark of authenticity that it can possess.

Caradoc

The story begins in Britain, in AD 43, the year of the Claudian Invasion of this island and the Britons' resistance to it over nine long years under the leadership of Caradoc. We could say much at this point of how Caradoc, time after time, defeated the Roman legions, humiliating their finest generals (including the future emperor Vespasian), in more than thirty pitched battles, so that his fame and notoriety soon reached even Rome itself.³ But the truly important aspect of Caradoc's life as far as *this* paper is concerned, is what happened to him and his family when finally he was betrayed into the Romans' hands by the Brigantean Queen, Cartimantua. Tacitus, the Roman historian, takes up the story.

The scene is the Roman Senate, before whom are presented the members of Caradoc's household, and, of course, Caradoc himself. In fear and supplication, every member of the household kneels before Caesar, with the sole exception of Caradoc.⁴ With summary execution awaiting him, he remains standing in chains, and addresses the so-called masters of the world with such dignified defiance that he wins their applause, their pardon, and a home with his family in the imperial palace. And there modern historians (if they mention him at all) leave him, as if there is nothing more to say. Further enquiry, however, leads us to one of the most important episodes in the history of the early Christian Church, and ultimately it helps to answer a question that has been dogging even fundamentalist Biblical scholars for years concerning the date of the earliest writing of the Gospel.

Caradoc (known to Tacitus as Caratacus) is listed in the Welsh Triads (*Trioedd ynys Prydein*) as *Caradawc map Bran Vendigeit*, or Caradoc the son of Bran the Blessed.⁵ Prior to his leading the Britons against the invading Romans, he was one of the three *cynweissieit*, or "Chief Ministers" of Britain, finally becoming *cynwessiad*, or the Chief Minister mentioned in the *Branwen verch Llyr*.⁶ Historians have lamented (when they have not rejoiced) over the fact that Caradoc makes no appearance in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, forgetting, it seems, that they have consistently ruled Geoffrey out of court on just about every other issue.⁷ Had Caradoc appeared in Geoffrey, they would have treated his appearance with the same scorn that they use on the rest of that history. But they argue from this omission either that Caradoc is obviously a 'mythical figure' who did not exist (or Geoffrey would surely have mentioned him - and then he would indeed have been mythical), or he is the subject of unreliable records (the *Trioedd*) whose sense will never be made clear.⁸ The same scholars, however, are quite happy to tell us that Tacitus, who mentions this allegedly non-existent Caradoc, is a

reliable historian, oblivious to the inconsistency of that reasoning. But our interest must now focus itself upon the "household" that appeared with Caradoc at Rome.

The Family Members

At an earlier military engagement, and prior to Caradoc's betrayal, the Romans under Ostorius Scapula had captured Caradoc's family, namely his wife, his daughter and his brothers [*captaque uxor et filia Carataci fratresque in deditionem accepti*].⁹ Captured in ca AD 49, they were kept alive and later exhibited before the Roman people and the Senate in AD 52 with Caradoc himself [*mox fratres et coniunx et filia postremo ipse ostentatus*].¹⁰ Others, whom we know from other sources, were also there, namely Bran, Caradoc's father; Llyr, his grandfather; and at least two of his sons, Llyn and Cyllin. The full family tree is given in the Appendix at the end of this paper.

Later sources are divided as to what became of Caradoc. Some say that he returned to Britain as a puppet king whilst his father and the others remained in Rome as hostages, thus confusing him with Cogidumnus of Chichester (who was already installed in his kingdom when Caradoc was being exhibited at Rome). And others say that he died at Rome. Dying at Rome seems the more probable option. It would certainly account for his father being allowed to return to Britain in AD 58 (see below), for his value as a surety for his son would have died with Caradoc. From here, however, the family history is complex, so we shall proceed by examining each member individually, referring to the family tree in the Appendix.

Two other names will be considered who are not directly related to Caradoc but are as important as the rest, namely Aristobulus (whose name appears in the New Testament), and the Lady Pomponia (whose name does not appear in the New Testament though it seems that she is referred to), for they have a strong bearing upon the history of Caradoc's family and thus of the early Christian Church in Rome and Britain. But to begin with, it would be well to appreciate the background against which these later events took place, and that background begins, as does the Family Tree, with Heli.

Heli

Belonging to the main line of the kings of the early Britons (see *After the Flood*), Heli is otherwise known as *Beli Mawr*, i.e. Belin the Great, in the early Welsh chronicles (e.g. the 15th-century *Tysilio Chronicle*, or Jesus Coll. Ms. LXI).¹¹ The son of Digueillus, he ruled for forty years from 113 to 73 BC.¹²

Lud

The eldest of Heli's three sons, Lud succeeded his father as king in 73 BC. He rebuilt the city which hitherto had borne the name of New Troy (*Troinovantum*), and renamed it *Kaerlud*, the city of Lud.¹³ Geoffrey of Monmouth tells us that by usage over the next two centuries, the name was corrupted to *Kaerlundein*, which the Romans Latinized as

Londinium, hence present-day London.¹⁴ He was buried at the western entrance to the city called in old British *Porthlud*, which today is known as Ludgate.

Cassivelaunus

The second son of Heli, he resisted in 55 BC the invading armies of Julius Caesar.¹⁵ Because the children of Lud, Androgeus and Tenvantius, were minors at their father's death, Cassivelaunus declared himself king in their stead. This was not usurpation, but in accord with British custom of the time by which kingship went to the most able and courageous in battle, and not necessarily to the natural heir. Such was the resistance that Cassivelaunus put up against Caesar's invasion, however, that Lucan, a Roman historian, said of Caesar in derision that "he ran away in terror from the Britons whom he had come to attack [*Territa quesitis ostendit terga Britannis!*]"¹⁶ Caesar, of course, forgets to mention this in his own account, though he does name Cassivelaunus (Brit. *Kasswallon*).¹⁷ After Julius Caesar's ignominious retreat the following year (54 BC), the Romans were to stay away for 97 years, until the almost disastrous Claudian Invasion of AD 43.

Nennius

According to Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Welsh Chronicles (Jesus Coll. Ms. LXI, where he is called *Nynnyaw*), Nennius, in one engagement with the Romans, exchanged blows in battle with Caesar himself, whose sword he captured before being driven off by Caesar's bodyguard. He died later from his wounds, and was buried beside Bishopsgate in London with the sword by his side as a trophy.¹⁸

Androgeus

Resenting the fact that the kingship had gone to his uncle and not to himself, Androgeus, whose name in Celtic was *Avarwy*, later betrayed Cassivelaunus to the Romans.¹⁹ There is an interesting though unwitting testimony to this betrayal in the name by which Androgeus was known to Julius Caesar. He [Caesar] had to rely upon what his Gaulish interpreters told him when he enquired the name of the man as he was presented before him.²⁰ Hearing what they told him, Caesar, or his secretary, Latinized the name to Mandubracius, unaware of the fact that instead of saying the man's name, the interpreters had introduced Androgeus as, "*du bradwr*", which means in the Celtic tongue The Black (or Filthy) Traitor.²¹ Androgeus' feelings whenever he heard Caesar address him by this title, which was often, are not recorded.

Tenvantius

Known to the Britons as *Tenefan*, he was compensated with the duchy of Cornwall on his father's death, and eventually succeeded to the kingship after the death of Cassivelaunus, ruling until AD 10.²² Known to the Romans as Tasciovanus,²³ he reunited his people, his name appearing with that of Cunobelinus on coins of the period.²⁴

Llyr Llediaith

Llyr, Caradoc's grandfather, whose surname means the Stammerer, apparently died whilst held in Rome.²⁵ His nick-name of 'the Stammerer' stems from his comically struggling to master the Latin of his captors.²⁶

Cunobelinus

Immortalized in Shakespeare's play, *Cymbeline*, Cunobelinus ruled jointly for a time with his brother Tenvantius, taking over his territory upon his brother's death (Cunobelinus had ruled from Colchester, whilst Tenvantius ruled from Verulamium). He is mentioned by Suetonius, who calls him king of the Britons [*rex Britannorum*],²⁷ and is mistakenly said by the *Dictionary of National Biography* to be referred to by Tacitus (*Ann. lib. xij. c. 37*), where the quote concerning his (allegedly Cunobelinus') ancestors, "*pluribus gentibus imperitantem*", is actually part of the speech given by Caradoc to the Senate. Cunobelinus, as such, does not appear in Tacitus. He died in AD 43, the year of the Claudian Invasion, which, ironically, he had provoked by taunting Augustus Caesar about the failure of his predecessor, Julius Caesar, to overcome the island.²⁸ Interestingly, his name, *cunos Belinus*, (lit. Hound of Belinus), is linked through the tortuous twists of pagan mythology, to that of Apollo, who was honored amongst the Britons from their very earliest times (see *After the Flood*).²⁹

As found, the inscription read: **[CHECK ON THIS]**

Bran

Among the early Welsh Triads (*Trioedd*), we find the following concerning Bran, the father of Caradoc, who was held hostage at Rome in AD 52 by Claudius as surety for his son: "Of the three holy families of the Isle of Britain [*ynys Prydein*], the first was the family of Bran the Blessed [*Bran Vendigait*], the son of Lear the Stammerer. For this Bran first introduced the faith of Christ into this island from Rome, where he had been imprisoned through the treachery of Aregwedd Foeddawg, the daughter of Avarwy, the son of Lud."³⁰

We have already noted (see Androgeus above) the treachery of Avarwy in betraying Cassivelaunus to the Romans, and it seems from this present notice that his daughter continued the tradition. She clearly had a hand in enabling the Romans under Ostorius Scapula to bring about the capture of Caradoc's family in AD 49. However, of even more interest to us is the following detailed information given in the 35th Triad: "The three distinguished kings of the Island of Britain. Bran the Blessed, the son of Lear the Stammerer, who first brought into the nation of the Cymry the faith of Christ from Rome, where he was seven years as a hostage for his son Caradoc, whom the Romans had taken prisoner after he had been betrayed through the allurements, deceit and treachery of Aregwedd Foeddawg."³¹

Such emotive words betray the contemporary origin of these verses, and they allow us to obtain the native name of that Brigantean Queen whom the Romans knew as Cartimantua the betrayer of Caradoc: Aregwedd Foeddawg . (I have found *no* modern historians who are even aware of this, such is the lack of interest). The chronological information provided is also extremely helpful, as it allows us to date the return of Bran to Britain to the year AD 58/9. This is important when we come to deal with the question of Aristobulus who accompanied Bran on his return (see below), and the reason for his absence from Rome which Paul implies when he greets the household of Aristobulus, but not him personally (Romans 16 :10). But certainly Bran was the first to introduce the faith of Christ (and the use of vellum from Rome)³² to this country. The fact that this is not generally discussed amongst modern scholars, however, is due entirely to the pre-eminence given to the arrival on these shores of the so-called ‘saint’ Augustine in AD 597, who, frustrated at the reluctance of the British Christians to place themselves under the yoke of the Papacy, they having witnessed from afar the decline and spiritual death of the *Roman* Church, instigated the massacre at Bangor in AD 604 of twelve hundred of the leaders of the British Christians. Thereafter, it seems, it was the victors - the Saxons and later the Catholic Norman-French - who wrote the history books.

Pudens and Claudia

"Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens...and Claudia..." 2 Timothy 4:21.

Two of the most intriguing characters who are mentioned in the New Testament, are Pudens and Claudia. Modernists are divided over whether Pudens existed at all, or was in fact two different people, neither of whom were the Pudens mentioned by Paul. Claudia is also said to be such a common name that she could have been anybody if she did exist, and that there must have been several Pudens and Claudias living together in Rome all at the same time - assuming they existed in the first place, I suppose. However, a careful examination of the historical record discloses a part of the Church’s early history that modernism has tried to suppress, but whose importance compels a very close scrutiny indeed.

At the beginning of April, 1723, workmen were digging a cellar under the house that once stood on the corner of St Martin’s Lane and North Street in Chichester, England.³³ As the earth was cleared away, a large marble stone was discovered. It was lying face upwards about four feet below ground level, and had been somewhat damaged by the pick-axes of the workmen before they realized that it was a stone monument. It was thus broken into at least four pieces - with a fifth portion assumed to lie under the house next door. (This fifth piece never having been recovered, may still lie there). However, enough remained of the inscription, which was deeply carved into the marble, to decipher and reconstruct its original words.

EPTUNO + ET + MINERVAE

TEMPLUM

O + SALUTE DOMVS DIVINAE

**AVCTORITATE TIB. CLAUD.
GIDUBNI R. + LEG. AUG + N + BRIT +
GIUM FABRORUM + ET QUI IN EO
D + S + D + DONANTE AREAM
ENTE PUDENTINI FILIO.³⁴**

Reconstructed, with all its abbreviated words given in full,
it reads as follows:

**(N)eptuno et Minervae
Templum
(Pr)o Salute Domvs Divinae
(Ex) Auctoritate Tiberii Claudii
(Co)gidubni Regis Legati Augusti in Britannia
(Colle)gium Fabrorum Et Qui In Eo
(A Sacris Sunt) De Suo Dedicaverunt Donante Aream
(Pud)ente Pudentini Filio.**

Translated it reads thus: "In honor of the Divine [Imperial] Family [and] by authority of the king, Tiberius Claudius Cogidumnus, legate of Augustus in Britain, the Guild of Engineers and those who are its priests have dedicated at their own cost this Temple to Neptune and Minerva. The land was donated by Pudens, son of Pudentinus."

By October 31st 1723, the stone had been cemented under a window of the house under which it had been found, where Dr Stukeley and Roger Gale were able to examine it and take casts.³⁵ From there it was taken shortly afterwards to Goodwood, the Duke of Richmond's estate near Chichester, where, Stukeley later complains, it suffered the further vicissitudes of being "repaired" by an unskilled workman who ended up badly defacing it.³⁶ And today it is cemented into the walls of the Chichester Assembly Rooms in North Street, not far from its original siting.

To briefly explain its contents, the "Divine Family" to which the stone refers is, in fact, the imperial family of the Caesars (Claudius then reigning), whilst Cogidumnus is the

British king whom the Romans placed at *Noviomagus Regnenses* (i.e. Newmarket of the Regni, the Roman name for Chichester) to rule under their authority. Hence his adoption of the *praenomen* Tiberius Claudius before his own native name. Importantly, Cogidumnus was made client-king in about AD 50, which helps us to establish the period during which Pudens had been serving at Chichester. It was around the time of Caradoc's betrayal by Queen Cartimantua of the Brigantes, and it could well be the case that Pudens, knowing that Caradoc's daughter Claudia, whom he already loved, was to be taken to Rome with her father, sought permission of his commander in haste to go with her, and having little time to sell his property, simply donated it to the temple project, thus investing, or so he might have hoped, in the favor of the gods.

But what more might we discover about Pudens? From Martial, the Roman poet, we obtain the fact that his full name was *Rufus* Pudens, this relating him in some way to the Lady Pomponia (also a Rufus), the wife of Aulus Plautius, an intriguing but very important lady whom we shall meet again in this study. Hence Paul, in his letter to the Romans, refers to Pudens when he asks his Roman readers to salute Rufus "chosen in the Lord". In 2 Timothy, however, he calls him (less formally) Pudens, without the *cognomen* Rufus, and so the same character is mentioned twice in the New Testament.³⁷

On his return to Rome from Britain, Pudens was made a Senator,³⁸ and his senatorial chair in which he was carried through the Forum has survived. The chair remained in Pudens' house, the remains of which survive today under the church of St Pudentiana in Rome.³⁹ Then, in the mid-17th century, Pope Innocent X commissioned the architect Bernini to provide a more sumptuous housing for it.⁴⁰ The Pope's interest in the chair stems from the belief that Peter had sat in it while staying in Rome as Pudens' guest.

There can be no doubt whatever that Paul refers to both Pudens and Claudia in Romans (Rufus only) and 2 Timothy as practising Christians, and turning to Martial, who claims Pudens at least as a friend, we find interesting evidence of this. Martial was by profession a licentious member of Rome's *litterati*, his epigrams remaining notorious then as now for their bawdy nature. This makes itself painfully apparent whenever he writes on the subject of conjugal relations. However, he refers to Pudens' marriage to Claudia in an altogether loftier vein, seeming to sense instinctively that any untoward remarks about *them* would be entirely out of place, if not downright offensive. And though Martial aimed always to amuse, he never sought to offend. So instead of descending into his usual lewdness, he writes concerning them in a vein that is not far short of high poetry:

"So, my friend, Rufus Pudens, is marrying the barbarian Claudia....Thus mingles harmoniously rare cinnamon with [costly] nard. Thus blends Massic wine so perfectly with Attic honey. The elm is not more tenderly embraced by the vine...May soft peace ever rest upon their nuptial bed....May she yet love him [as dearly] when he is old. And in her spouse's sight may she seem young, though she [too one day] be old."⁴¹

(My translation)

Evidently this was written shortly after Pudens announced his intention to marry Claudia, perhaps in the late AD 50s. Some years later, perhaps in the mid-late 60s, Martial writes of the wedded couple again, this time in the vein of a eulogy on Claudia herself, though with an interesting aside on her husband Pudens:

"Considering that Claudia Rufina is of the stock of the woad-blue Britons" [note the change from the 'barbarian' or 'foreigner', the *peregrina*, of the earlier epigram], "how is it that she has the breeding of a Latin lady? What decorum, what grace [she has]! Next to the ladies of Italy she appears as a Roman matron, and as an Athenian among them of Attica! Bless the gods, she has borne several children to her saintly husband, and being young will yet see sons and daughters-in-law. May the gods allow that in her husband and their three children she continues to find her joy!"⁴²

(My translation)

These are not at all the kinds of expression that we are used to hearing from Martial, and it is very evident indeed that here we are dealing with a couple who were regarded by all around them as very special. We shall meet their children a little later in this paper. They had four in the end (Timotheus, Novatus, Pudentiana and Praxedes), the last being born after this second epigram was composed, but it is intriguing to hear Martial referring to Pudens as a "saintly" husband (*sancto marito*), and to Claudia as a lady who puts his (Martial's) own countrywomen in the shade. Evidently, Pudens and Claudia found great joy in each other and in their children, and this is such a marked contrast from the norm in Roman society that it is no wonder that Martial is surprised into sobriety when writing of them. They were, it seems, everything that a Christian family are exhorted to be by the Paul who mentions Pudens and Claudia in his own correspondence and who, early tradition asserts, was entertained by them in their house on the Via Urbana in Rome.

Paul clearly knew Pudens and Claudia on a personal level, just as he knew Linus, Claudia's brother, so tradition would seem to be entirely accurate when it says that Paul was entertained at their house. That is not really surprising, but what is surprising is that neither Pudens nor Claudia appear to owe their conversion to Paul in any direct sense, for they were already Christians when Paul first contacted them. They seem rather to owe it to a person known to history as the Lady Pomponia, and we shall consider the circumstances of that conversion (and why she is only referred to but not named in the New Testament) in its due place. Its great importance as far as this paper is concerned, however, lies in the fact that the modernist assertion that the Gospel was a late composition (late 1st - early 2nd century) is shown by the Lady Pomponia's own faith to be patently absurd. The Lady Pomponia's conversion had clearly taken place some years *before* Paul ever reached Rome, and indeed could have occurred at any time between AD 35 and AD 43, thus demonstrating that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ had power to save from the very beginning in the years and months immediately following the Resurrection. We shall deal with this question in greater depth later, but could this be the reason why this period of Church history is ignored? Undoubtedly.

However, Claudia is the only one of Caradoc's immediate family who is said to have died a "natural" death, meaning that she wasn't martyred,⁴³ and according to Morgan she is also credited with the composition and writing of many of the early Christian hymns.⁴⁴ The records are silent concerning the actual fate of Pudens, although the *Roman Martyrology* has the following entry for 17th May: "Natal day [i.e. a euphemism for day of martyrdom] of the blessed Pudens, father of Praxedes and Pudentiana [see below]. He was clothed with baptism by the apostles, and watched and kept his robe pure and without wrinkle to the crown of a blameless life".⁴⁵

Linus

Known in the British records as *Llyn ap Caradawc*, Linus was taken to Rome under the care of the Lady Pomponia with his sisters and brother, and under her tutelage was converted to the Christian faith. Irenaeus, in *Adversus omnes Haereses*. III. iii. 3, and Eusebius, in his *Historia Ecclesiae*. iii. 2 & v. 6., both identify Linus as the man whom Paul mentions (2 Tim. 4:21), and they also tell us that he (not Peter!) was the first bishop (*episkopos* - then meaning steward or overseer) of the early Roman Christians. A portrait of Linus, painted from life, has survived and is preserved in the church of *S. Paulo fuori le Mura* (St Paul's-outside-the-Wall) in Rome. It is reproduced as an illustration for this paper, and it is important to note in estimating the date of the painting that he wears the robes of a Roman patrician, and neither the ecclesiastical garb nor the ridiculous halo that adorns the later 'pictures' (or icons) of even his most immediate successors. Linus survived the persecution under Nero, only to perish in ca AD 81 under Domitian, the third of the Flavian Caesars. His sarcophagus, which lies deep beneath St Peter's in Rome (and which bears his name), was seen in the year AD 822 by the poet Maurus, and eight centuries later in 1629.⁴⁶ Clemens Romanus, who succeeded Linus as bishop of the Roman Christians, calls him, "*Sanctissimus Linus, frater Claudiae*" - the most saintly Linus, brother of Claudia.⁴⁷

Cyllinus

All that I can learn of Cyllinus is that during his father Caradoc's captivity, he was permitted to return to Britain where he ruled over the Silurian Welsh in his father's stead. This from Jowett, who cites the 11th-century records of *Jestyn ap Gwrgant*.⁴⁸ If accurate, and it probably is, then this should mean that Cyllinus was the eldest son, and not the second eldest as shown in the Appendix. The same source goes on to say that, "Cyllin ab Caradoc, a wise and just king, in his days many of the Cymry [early Britons] embraced the faith of Christ...and many godly men...of Greece and Rome were in Cambria [Wales]." He is credited (or blamed?) in the same source with being the first to introduce infant baptism to Britain and the endowing of 'Christian' names. He later abdicated, and with his sister Eurgain founded several Christian schools before his death and burial at Glastonbury.

Eurgain

According to early records, having returned to Britain with her brother Cyllinus, she and her husband Salog later assisted Ild (see Aristobulus below) to found the first church in Wales at Llanilid, where she herself founded the first 'choir' or sacred college, the *Cor-Eurgain* (an institution perpetuated today by the National Eisteddfod of Wales).⁴⁹ She was buried within the sacred enclosure at Llanilid.⁵⁰

Salog

Twice we are told by Jowett that Salog was the husband of Eurgain and Lord of Sarum (Salisbury) in England, yet no reference at all is provided for this information and I am unable to trace him further.⁵¹

Timotheus

Pius, who became bishop of the Roman Christians in AD 142, writes, "Those Presbyters, who having been educated by the Apostles reached even our times, with whom we shared the word of faith...Saint Timotheus and Marcus, after a good fight, passed from this world."⁵² This implies at the very least that Pius, who took office when Timotheus' brother Novatus was still alive, had met and had spoken with Timotheus. Timotheus (mentioned by Petrus Esquilinus - see also Novatus below) was seemingly named after the Timothy of the New Testament, who at the time was bishop of the Ephesian Christians, and to whom Timotheus' parents, Pudens and Claudia, sent their greetings through Paul (2 Tim. 4:21).

Novatus

Novatus, whose name means 'Regenerate' or 'Renewed' was martyred for his faith at an advanced but unknown age on June 20th AD 151 (he would have been in his late seventies or early eighties).⁵³ He is mentioned by Petrus Esquilinus, the *Chronicle of Antoninus* and the *New Roman Martyrology*.⁵⁴ Petrus Esquilinus says of him, "Novatus, a disciple...being the son of Pudens, a disciple of St Paul, and being the brother of Timotheus; their sisters were Pudentiana and Praxedes."⁵⁵

Praxedes

Otherwise known as Prassede, she was martyred and buried next to her sister Pudentiana and their father in the Catacomb of Priscilla, which lies on the Via Salaria in Rome. There is a church dedicated to her (Santa Prassede) on the Esquiline at Rome which was built by Paschal I (bishop of Rome from 817-24) on the site of her house.⁵⁶ It is one of Rome's most ancient churches.

Pudentiana

The lengths to which modernists are prepared to go in order to falsify the historical record are sometimes astonishing, but never more so than in the present instance, and it is

well worth looking in detail at the treatment that is accorded this character by modernist scholars and consider what it tells us concerning their methodology and aims.

Pudentiana is said by modernists not to have existed at all, and an ingenious proof is offered for this notion involving the church in Rome that bears her name, Santa Pudentiana, whilst at the same time *ignoring* the existence of her tomb in the Catacomb of Priscilla (see Praxedes above), as well as certain independent written sources, such as that of Petrus Esquilinus (see Novatus above). Her church is certainly the most ancient church in Rome, and is therefore of great importance. Even the earliest Christians there deemed it so, and they would have been proportionately careful in the naming of it.

In life, Pudentiana was a daughter of Pudens and Claudia, bearing the feminine form of her father's name in his honor, as did many daughters in ancient Rome. However, in a serious attempt to convince the unwary that she never lived, it is stated that belief in her existence is based purely upon a misunderstanding over the name of the church that is dedicated to her.⁵⁷ The argument runs thus. We know that the church is built upon the remains of the house that once belonged to Pudens, but we also know that it was known to the earliest generations of Christians as *Ecclesia Pudentianae* - the Church of Pudentiana. Now, '*Pudentianae*' is the genitive case of (naturally enough) the *feminine* name Pudentiana, but modernists allege that this was 'accidentally' or even 'ignorantly' transposed to the masculine Pudens. However, they are careful *not* to inform their readers what the genitive case of Pudens is so that they can see for themselves how easily or otherwise this transposition could be achieved. We ourselves will look at this in a moment. But it is thus that the reader is encouraged to believe that the simple-minded, not to say dishonest Christians of the time, who were as ignorant of the Senator Pudens and his family as they were of their own language, misnamed the church, and as soon as they realized their mistake quickly put it about that Pudens must have had a daughter, and hence proceeded to invent a myth to account for the building's mistaken identity.⁵⁸ (Changing the name of the building would have been easier!)

But are we seriously to believe such a scenario? Were the early Roman Christians really so ignorant of their own language? *Pudentianae* bears no resemblance at all to the genitive case of Pudens, which is *Pudentes*, as in the following contemporary description of the building in question, "*amplissima Pudentes domus*" - i.e. the most spacious house of Pudens.⁵⁹ And here we see clearly why it is omitted from the modernist argument. *Pudentes* is simply nothing like *Pudentianae*. Even the more complex genitive case of Pudens' father's name, i.e. Pudentinus (gen. *Pudentini*) of the Chichester Stone, is far removed from *Pudentianae*. The seriousness of the matter lies in the fact that modernists who are at all familiar with the elementary rules of Latin, are surely aware of the nigh impossibility of such an error occurring, otherwise they would certainly have included for their readers' information the genitive case of Pudens in order to demonstrate the truth or likelihood of their assertion. Indeed, the main source that gives out this misinformation is all the more culpable in that it was written by two scholars (one, Herbert Thurston, being a Jesuit) to whom Latin is quite literally a second language. (On the other hand, if they *are* unaware of the simpler rules of Latin, then what business have they to pronounce anything at all on the matter?)

The alleged error, however, is not confined to the realm of simple language. It would need also to occur on the level of everyone *else's* knowledge at the time concerning the famous Pudens and his family, and it would have to assume the fraudulent and concerted invention by true Christians (to whom fraud is *always* anathema) of numerous written records. This is to say nothing of the construction of a fake tomb (and we are left to wonder what the owners of the cemetery might have had to say about that), or the fact that all this was done whilst her uncle Linus and brothers Timotheus and Novatus still lived to expose the fraud! And it would assume, moreover, that a modernist had learned more Latin declension in his prep school than the *native* speakers of that language would have known or learned in a lifetime.

The arrogance of that assumption needs no comment from me. But the modernist scholar knows full well that his average reader would hardly know one Latin declension from another, and it is a 'sure bet' therefore that his linguistic sleight-of-hand will be unobserved by most of those who are unfortunate enough to encounter his 'scholarly opinion' without ever realising what that conceals. Some call it scholarship, but in reality, it is plain deceit, and we may think it perfectly just to say that in professing themselves to be thus wise, they have made themselves even *worse* than mere fools. But there is purpose in all this, for if sufficient doubt can be cast upon any one character in this drama, then it is that much easier to dismiss the rest as fiction or fable. We see the same methodology applied to the Bible, so we should not be surprised to see it applied to Church History as well, especially the earliest portions of Church History that just happen to vindicate or illuminate the Biblical record. We may certainly lament the fact, but we needn't be surprised by it.

The historical notices concerning Pudentiana, have, unfortunately, somewhat less to say than the unhistorical ones of the modernist, but they are as follows. Pudentiana was indeed a daughter of Pudens and Claudia. This is verified by, among other authorities, the early Roman author, Petrus Esquilinus (see Novatus above). In other sources we are told that she and her sister, Praxedes, ministered to the persecuted Christians of Rome, helping to bury those who were martyred (there is a very ancient Latin inscription to this effect outside the church that is named after her), whilst she herself was martyred on 19th May in the year AD 107.⁶⁰ Interestingly, and to the further confounding of the modernist, so close were the ties between the ancient Roman Church and that of the early Britons, that the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster still bears the name today of Cardinal of St Pudentiana.⁶¹

Coel

Known in the Welsh genealogies as *Coel Hen Guotepauc*, or Old Cole the Splendid, from whom no less than eight of the thirteen princely families of Wales claim descent,⁶² Coel was raised and educated as a Roman. Geoffrey of Monmouth tells us that as king in Britain, he paid tribute to Rome and was left by them to rule his people in peace.⁶³ His burial mound lies in the grounds of Coilsfield [Coel's Field] House, near Tarbolton in Scotland where he died during an altercation there.⁶⁴

Lucius

In the vestry of the church of St Peter's Cornhill, in London, there is a plaque. It was evidently inscribed in pre-Reformation times (early 1530s at the latest before the abolition of the monasteries took place), and is one of the few church items of London to have survived not just the Reformation but also the Great Fire of London in 1666. It reads:

"Bee it knowne to all men that in the yeare of our Lord God 179, Lucius, the first Christian King of this Land, then called Britaine, founded y^e first Church in London, that is to say, y^e Church of St. Peter upon Cornehill: and hee founded there an Archbishop's See, and made that Church y^e Metropolitaine and cheife [sic] Church of this Kingdome, and so it indured y^e space of 400 yeares and more, unto the coming of St. Austin [Augustine] the Apostle of England, the which was sent into this Land by St. Gregorie, y^e Doctor of y^e Church in the time of King Ethelbert: and then was the Archbishop's See & Pall [pallium] removed from y^e foresaid Church of St. Peter upon Cornehill unto Dorobernia, that now is called Canterburie, & there it remaineth to this day, and Millet [Miletus] a monke which came into this land with St. Austin, hee was made the first Bishop of London, and his See was made in Paul's Church, and this Lucius King [sic] was the first founder of St. Peter's Church upon Cornehill, & hee reigned King in this Land after Brute [Brutus] 1245 yeares. And in the yeare of our Lord God 124, Lucius was crowned King: and the yeares of his reigne were 77 yeares. And hee was buried (after some Chronicles) at London: and after some Chronicles hee was buried at Glocester [Gloucester] in that place where y^e order of St. Francis standeth now."

According to Petrus Esquilinus, Lucius was converted and baptized by Timotheus at an unspecified date.⁶⁵ His name (which the Britons knew as *Lleuver Mawr*) appears after that of Bran (see above) in the 35th Triad: "Lleuver, or Leirwg, son of Coel, son of St Cyllin, son of Caradoc, son of Bran, son of Llyr Llediaith, called Lleuver the Great, who founded the first church of Llandaff, and first gave the privileges of the country and nation to all who professed the faith in Christ."⁶⁶ He died on 3rd December AD 201, and according to Butler he was first buried in the church of St Mary-le-Lode in Gloucester, then reinterred in St Peter Cornhill in London, and later still was taken back to Gloucester and there buried in the church of the Greyfriars by the earls of Berkeley and Clifford, the founders of that monastery.⁶⁷

As for the plaque referred to above, we know that it was in the church of St Peter's Cornhill in 1598, for Stow mentions it without quoting from it, going on to inform us further (quoting Jocelyn of Furness) that, "...Thean, the first Archbishop of London, in the reign of Lucius, built the said church by the aid of Ciran, chief butler to King Lucius;

and also that Eluanus, the second archbishop, built a library to the same adjoining and converted many of the Druids, learned men in the Pagan law, to Christianity."⁶⁸

What we would not give for that library to have survived, but Stow tells us that though it had existed within fifty years of his own lifetime, it was now broken up and dispersed, doubtless during the suppression of the monasteries under Henry VIII. Stow also informs us that this Lucius built a Christian church at Westminster on the site of an ancient temple to Apollo, and that the later Westminster Abbey was built on the site of Lucius' church.⁶⁹

Aristobulus

Aristobulus is a prime example of how the Bible can help us make better sense of otherwise mystifying secular records. The one appearance of his name in the Bible occurs in Romans 16:10 where Paul asks his readers to, "salute them which are of Aristobulus' household." Having directed his greetings to many others directly by name, it is intriguing that here Paul seems to be aware of the fact that Aristobulus himself is not at Rome, and would not be at Rome when his letter arrived (in AD 59/60) to be personally saluted. As we shall see in the next section concerning the Lady Pomponia, Paul was surprisingly well informed about what was happening in Rome, for he sends similar greetings in the same epistle to the household of Narcissus who was also seemingly absent from his house. So, if Aristobulus was not at Rome when Paul wrote his letter in AD 59/60, then where was he? For the answer, we must look to the secular records.

Writing in AD 190, Hippolytus harks back to Aristobulus as the bishop of the Britons, and according to the Greek martyrologies, "[Aristobulus], one of the seventy disciples and a follower of St Paul the Apostle...was chosen by St Paul to be the missionary bishop to the land of Britain, inhabited by a very war-like and fierce race. By them he was often scourged and repeatedly dragged as a criminal through their towns, yet he converted many of them to Christianity. He was martyred after he had built [churches?] and ordained deacons and priests for the island."⁷⁰ This much from later Roman and Greek sources, who would not, we may assume, have had access to local British records. So what do the British records tell us?

The early Britons knew Aristobulus as *Arwystli Hen* - Old Aristobulus. A better translation, however, might be Aristobulus the Elder, this suffix denoting his office in the Church rather than his age. According to the records, he accompanied Bran, the father of Caradoc, to Britain where they preached the Gospel. But they did not travel alone: "These came with Bran the Blessed from Rome to Britain - Arwystli Hen, Iliid, Cyndaw, men of Israel, [and] Maw the son of Arwystli."⁷¹

Of interest is the fact that, according to the Greek Martyrology, Aristobolus was one of the original seventy disciples who were sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:1&17), and in the British records we see him accompanied on his later mission to Britain by other Jews (*Israeliait*- men of Israel) and well as his own son. Of those who accompanied him, Iliid (whose name may be the early Welsh form of Elias) seems to have left his mark by giving his name to the small Welsh town of Llanilid - lit. the Church or 'sacred

enclosure' of Ilid - which lies between Cardiff and Bridgend, evidently commemorating his work in that part of the country. He is further remembered in an ancient British proverb, "Hast thou heard the saying of Ilid, one come of the race of Israel - 'There is no mania like passion'?"⁷²

As for Aristobulus himself, we read in other sources that he was slain in Britain during a mission to the Ordovician Welsh on the 15th March AD 59.⁷³ This would have been about the time that Paul was writing his letter to the Romans. Supporting this information is the fact that a place in Montgomeryshire on the River Severn still bears the name of *Arwystli* as the place of his martyrdom, and it lies in an area once occupied by the Ordovices. Of great importance, however, is the consideration that without Paul's remark in Romans 16:10, we could never have fully accounted for the appearance of this *Arwystli* in the British records.

The Lady Pomponia

The Lady Pomponia is, perhaps, the most intriguing character in this entire study, for it seems that it was she who converted Pudens and Claudia, and Claudia's brother Linus, to the Christian faith whilst they lived in her household. She was the wife of the Roman commander, Aulus Plautius, who was sent to Britain in AD 43 by the Emperor Claudius in an attempt to subdue the island. But it seems that the conquest of Britain was not the only problem that her husband had to face. Again, we are indebted to Tacitus who tells us what happened:

"Pomponia Graecina, a notable lady, the wife of that Plautius who had returned from Britain [to Rome] to the honor of an ovation, was charged with being tainted with that 'foreign superstition', and was committed to her husband for his judicial verdict. According to ancient usage, he looked into this matter which affected his wife's life and reputation in the presence of her own family, and duly pronounced her guiltless. This Pomponia lived to a great age, but in continual mourning. For after the murder of Julia, the daughter of Drusus, at the connivance of Messalina, she lived for forty years without ever changing her mourning dress or her grief of heart. She was never punished for this while Claudius reigned, and it was thereafter judged to her credit"⁷⁴

(My translation)

This is most intriguing. There are several vital clues in this passage that tell us much about Pomponia that is all important to this study. Firstly, there is her nickname, her *nomen per ludibrium datum*, of *Graecina*. This is very rare indeed, for it is given to only three other persons amongst the Roman nobility, and they are Julius, the father of Agricola who was in turn Tacitus' own father-in-law;⁷⁵ an otherwise unnamed associate of one Sertorius; and lastly to Pomponius Graecinus, who flourished during the reign of Augustus, and was grandfather to the Lady Pomponia, she being named in his honor.⁷⁶

The reason for the nick-name was a fondness for, and an unusual competence in, Greek studies that each of the above possessed, and for which they were duly famous.

Secondly, there is the accusation that was laid against Pomponia that she was tainted with "that foreign superstition" [*superstitionis externae*]. This was an expression amongst the Romans that was given exclusively to the *Christian* faith - and to no other! The trial of Pomponia took place in AD 57,⁷⁷ and by that date there had already been serious disturbances in Rome over certain holders of this 'foreign superstition'. Suetonius tells us that in about AD 49, there had been a particularly serious riot at the instigation of the Jews in Rome concerning one "Chrestus",⁷⁸ and so there became attached to the Christians the deadly suspicions of subversion and treason, for the rioting Jews undoubtedly would have echoed to the bemused Roman magistrates the dire warning made at our Lord's own trial and condemnation, that whosoever lets *these* people go, is not Caesar's friend. Acts 18:2 refers to the expulsion of believers from Rome ordered by Claudius at this time. Particularly serious for Pomponia, however, was the fact that the accusation was made against her whilst Nero was emperor, and it is readily seen why Aulus Plautius should avail himself of the nobility's age-old privilege of trying Pomponia himself rather than letting the State try her.

Just how thorough was the trial is something that we are not told. Pomponia's closest relations were present, as required by law, and it may reasonably be suspected that some of them were themselves tainted with this foreign superstition, perhaps even the noble Plautius himself. Certainly his sister, Plautilla, who was hence Pomponia's sister-in-law, was at some time charged with the same offence and banished for it.⁷⁹ Such things were not unknown in the topsy-turvy world of Roman nobility, where Paul can salute those Christians that are even of *Caesar's* own household (Phillipians 4:22), notwithstanding Caesar's (Nero's) own abhorrence of the faith. But Pomponia's state of melancholy after the trial is equally interesting. It was stated officially by the family that her subsequent dejection was caused by the death of one Julia, the daughter of Drusus, evidently a friend or relation of Pomponia's, and Tacitus tells us that this mourning endured for the remaining years of her life.

Whether her mourning was indeed attributable to Julia's death may be gauged when we turn to Suetonius' account. There we learn that Julia had been put to death in Rome by the Emperor Claudius at the instigation of Messalina some years *before* Pomponia's trial in AD 57, in AD 43 in fact, the very year in which Pomponia had come to Britain from Pannonia with her husband Aulus Plautius, and there is no suggestion that she was in perpetual mourning for her then or for any of the following fourteen years up to her trial.⁸⁰ Moreover, Pomponia was a Christian, and deep mourning for the dead, though commonplace enough in pagan societies like Rome, is a foreign concept to those who believe in Christ, as is attested by the thousands of Christian inscriptions that have survived in the Roman Catacombs.⁸¹ So perhaps her lifelong dejection is better accounted for by her trial, and her denial under compulsion that she was a Christian. That, and the added burden of never thereafter being able to declare her faith.

She would have been solemnly warned by her husband Plautius, who thereafter retired from public life, that if she did afterwards declare it, then the outcome would be certain death for herself and perpetual disgrace and disinheritance for her husband and family. Plautius was, after all, high in government, and would be aware of Nero's feelings towards Christians even before the horrors of that reign began. Is it any wonder then that the Apostle Paul should omit to mention her name in his letters? He wrote those letters *after* Pomponia's trial, and he would undoubtedly have been made aware, as he was made aware of much else that was happening in Rome (even the comparatively trivial absences from home of Aristobulus and Narcissus), of the danger in which the Lady Pomponia would now have to live out her life. If she ever chose subsequently to declare her faith as a Christian and die for it, then she would certainly enjoy Paul's every prayer and blessing. But that would not be a decision that Paul would make for her by *publicly* naming her after her trial as a continuing follower of The Way.

However, Paul *does* apparently refer to Pomponia, albeit with deliberate vagueness for her safety's sake, when he writes, "Salute Rufus [i.e. Pudens] chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine." [Romans 16:13]. The strong possibility is that Pomponia was indeed Pudens' natural mother. She was certainly a Rufus, as was Pudens. Aulus Plautius, Pomponia's present husband, was not Pudens' *natural* father (having probably married Pomponia as a widow), for we learn from the Chichester Stone that Pudens was the son of Pudentinus. (He had also reached adulthood by the time of his mother's marriage to Plautius in ca. AD 40). However, that Pomponia and Pudens were in Britain together with Aulus Plautius is known. That they all three returned to Rome is also known. She and Pudens were certainly of the right ages to be mother and son.⁸² And what more comforting for Pomponia herself to hear in her present dejection that the Apostle Paul was not only *not* ashamed of her for what she had been compelled to do at her trial, but was not ashamed even now to own her as if she were his own natural mother, the highest compliment perhaps that any Christian man could have paid her?

Paul certainly would have been aware of Pomponia, for he was a very close friend of her erstwhile charge, Claudia and her family. But how can we know in the absence of specific records to that effect, that Claudia was indeed once in Pomponia's care? For the answer, we turn to the statement of one Pitiscus, who writes concerning the *cognomen*, or surname Rufus, "Rufus was also a *cognomen* of the Pomponii. Among them was L. Pomponius Rufus, who might have been the grand-father of the Quintus Pomponius Rufus, of whom there exists a record in a bronze tablet bearing the following inscription..."⁸³ We know from Martial that Claudia was also known as Rufina, having taken the *cognomen* of her adoptive family. Moreover, we have further noted that Pudens, whom Claudia was to marry, was also a Rufus. All the evidence points therefore to this, that after their capture in AD 49, Aulus Plautius placed the family of Caradoc into the care of his wife Pomponia for them to be raised and educated as Romans, a perfectly common and expected practice of the times concerning captive royal families and the Roman nobility. Claudia, who was only about thirteen years of age at the time of her capture (she was born in AD 36 according to the British records),⁸⁴ would thus have been placed in Pomponia's care, her native name *Gwladys* would have been Latinized to that of Claudia, and she would have taken the family surname of Rufus. More importantly,

she would have been educated by Pomponia in the Christian faith and thus converted. That she became a Christian before Pudens is indirectly suggested by the gift that Pudens made to the pagan temple at Chichester on his departure from Britain (Claudia came into Pomponia's care before that departure). And so what was once a dark and unknown episode in the history of the early Church, becomes crystal clear when once the records are dusted off and examined.

The Date of the Gospel

There is one question, however, that is raised by this evidence, and it has an important bearing upon the date by which the first Gospel was written and published. Pomponia, we have seen, was adept in Greek studies, sufficiently enough for her to be named for it, and we need hardly state the obvious conclusion that as the Gospel was written in Greek she may well have encountered it during the normal course of her scholarly pursuits. Now, we know that Pomponia was a believing and practising Christian some years prior to AD 57 when her trial took place, and certainly before AD 49, when Claudia came into her care. Could Pomponia therefore possibly have encountered a Greek copy of one of the Gospels at such an early date, as early as the mid-40s, or further still, as early as *before* the year AD 43 when she came to Britain? The answer, contrary to all the claims made by modernists, is yes, she certainly could.

Our attention is drawn to the work of Dr Carsten Thiede, and his book, *The Jesus Papyrus* (see Bibliography). Suffice it here to say that a thorough and scientific analysis undertaken by Dr Thiede of the Gospel fragments known to scholars as the *Magdalen Papyrus* (named after Magdalen College Oxford, where it is kept), dates this particular copy of Matthew's Gospel to times so close to the Resurrection, that it could easily have been copied or read by an eyewitness of our Lord's entire ministry.

To be brief, the *Magdalen Papyrus* was copied out between the mid-40s and AD 50. But we must also bear in mind that this particular papyrus was itself but a copy of an even earlier original, though by how many removes we cannot know. The fragments were discovered in Egypt, which tells us further that the Gospel of Matthew at least had gone overseas from Palestine at a very early date, and if an Egyptian could obtain a copy of it in such early years, then why not a Roman whose empire at that time embraced both Egypt and Palestine, the very land where the Gospels were written - and particularly a high-ranking Roman in the military whose duties required himself and his enquiring scholarly wife to travel and have contacts throughout the length and breadth of the Empire?

In this regard it is interesting to trace something of the career of Aulus Plautius, to see where his duties would have carried him. We know, firstly, that he was Consul of Rome in AD 29,⁸⁵ and that before he came to Britain in AD 43, bringing the IX Hispania Legion with him, he served as Governor of Pannonia on the middle Danube.⁸⁶ Pannonia formed part of what is today Yugoslavia, and it bordered upon Dalmatia, an area on the southern part of Yugoslavia's coastline. Which is interesting, for later in the 1st century we hear again from Pitiscus that there is an inscription to the effect that one Pomponius Rufus

held high military command in Dalmatia under the Emperor Domitian.⁸⁷ In other words, the Pomponii Rufi were a long established dynasty in Dalmatia from at least the time of Augustus to that of Domitian, and it was whilst Plautius was serving in neighboring Pannonia, that he made contact with that family, amongst whom of course was the Lady Pomponia whom he married. That Aulus Plautius was of sufficient rank and status within the Roman hierarchy to make such a match is seen in his consularship of Rome in AD 29, his governorship of Pannonia where he ruled in Caesar's name, and in the ovation that was granted him on his return to Rome from Britain, for ovations were usually only reserved for members of the Imperial Family.⁸⁸ After the trial of Pomponia, however, he retired so effectively from public life that, with the exception of one deeply tragic episode, all trace is lost of him.⁸⁹

There is therefore sufficient evidence for us to conclude that Pomponia, who would have married Plautius in about the year AD 40, was herself in Dalmatia from before AD 40 and until AD 43, when she accompanied her husband to Britain. She may therefore have come into contact with the written Gospel of Christ (perhaps Matthew's) *before* AD 43, i.e. within just ten years of the Resurrection, whilst still in Dalmatia.

Yet that is not the only possibility, for there is a most intriguing piece of information hidden away in the writings of Gildas, a 6th-century British author, which suggests that Pomponia *could* have first encountered the Gospel in Britain itself. The arrival of the Gospel here, he says, was indeed an early event: "This happened first, as we know [*ut scimus*], in the last years of Tiberius Caesar...."⁹⁰

Now, Tiberius reigned from AD 14-37, thus placing the arrival here of the Christian faith within just four years of the Resurrection, a by no means impossible event, for news and documents travelled surprisingly fast through the Roman Empire, and four years is a long time. (In this regard, it is worth noting that, if Tacitus is right, then Pomponia would have received news whilst in Britain of Julia's death in the same year, AD 43, that it occurred at Rome!)

We can only lament the brevity of Gildas' statement which seems, if we are to believe the "*ut scimus*", not to have been news to his readers. Much indeed has been lost. But whether it were here or in Dalmatia that Pomponia encountered the Gospel at *some* time in the AD 40s, it all paints a rather different picture to that which the modernists are pleased to present us with, of the Gospel coming together from various oral traditions at the end of the 1st century or even later. Indeed, it makes a nonsense of all such pretences, and goes a long way towards explaining why the history that we have examined in this paper is never mentioned in modernist works without the severest terms of disparagement and criticism.

Footnotes

- 1) It is instructive to compare what happened to the Church of Rome to what has happened to those modern churches who have adopted evolution theory and liberal theology, the paganism of our own day. All such, having sought for the past hundred years or so the respect of their opponents, are without exception now dead on their feet and *still* lacking the respect for which they sold themselves.
- 2) This was achieved under cover of the fact that the early Christians [rightly] already gathered for worship on the first day of the week in celebration of our Lord's resurrection on that day. But at no point has God ever rescinded the commandment to keep the *Sabbath* Day holy. We still have Ten Commandments, not nine. Only in the 5th century did the Roman Catholic Church abolish the true Sabbath, thereafter accusing all those who would keep it of "Judaizing", a heresy punishable by excommunication and for which hundreds were later burned alive.
- 3) "Even in Rome, the name of Caratacus (Caradoc) was not without honor [*Ne Romae quidem ignobile Carataci nomen erat*]." Tacitus. *Annals*. IV. bk 12:36. (Loeb. p. 365).
- 4) *ibid.* "The rest stooped to unworthy entreaties dictated by fear; but on the part of Caratacus not a downcast look nor a word requested pity [*Ceterorum preces degeneres fuere ex metu; at non Caratacus aut vultu demisso aut verbis misericordiam requirens*]."
- 5) Bromwich. pp. 297-8.
- 6) "*Tri Chynweissyat Enys Prydein: Caradavc mab Bran, a Chaurdaf mab Karadauc, Ac Ewein mab Maxen Wledic*. [The Three Chief Men of the Island of Britain: Caradoc, the son of Bran....]" (Triad 13). Bromwich. p. 23. (Emphasis mine).
- 7) In lamenting thus, these same historians forget what Flinders-Petrie once reminded them of, that Geoffrey's chronicle deals with the *London* branch of Cassivelaunus' family and not with the *Silurian* or western branch of whom Caradoc was a member. However, Lucius, Caradoc's great-grandson, does appear in Geoffrey - and for such pains is disparaged anyway!

8) Bromwich, who has edited and translated the *Triodd* with such meticulous care, is an education in the destructiveness of the modernist approach to these priceless records. For her, all is untrustworthy nonsense, with corroborating evidence, if it is mentioned at all, receiving nothing more than a cursory dismissal. What possible interest such 'worthless' records can hold for her (or indeed should hold for us) is nowhere discussed.

9) Tacitus. bk 12:35. (Loeb. P. 363).

10) Tacitus. bk 12:36. (Loeb. p. 365). Who looked after them during their captivity will be considered later in this paper.

11) Cooper. pp. 75 & 226.

12) Geoffrey of Monmouth. pp. 106-7.

13) Cooper. p. 76.

14) Geoffrey of Monmouth. pp. 74 & 106.

15) *ibid.* pp. 76 & 106-18.

16) *Pharsalia*. ii. 572. cit. by Thorpe. p. 117.

17) Caesar. pp. 110-15.

18) *ibid.* 106-10.

19) Geoffrey of Monmouth. p. 116.

20) Caesar. p. 113-4.

21) Ellis. p. 103.

22) Geoffrey of Monmouth. pp. 106, 108 & 119.

23) Ellis. p. 139.

24) *Dict. of Nat. Biography*. vol 5. p. 323.

25) stated by Jowett (p. 119) who thoughtfully provides no reference for it.

26) Morgan. *St Paul in Britain*. p. 84.

27) Suetonius. p. 176.

28) *Dict. of Nat. Biography*. vol. 5. p. 323.

29) *ibid.* p. 324.

30) Triad 18. *Myvyrian Archaiology*. p. 61. cit. Williams. p. 46.

31) Triad 35. *ibid.*

32) *St Paul in Britain*. p. 104. Morgan gives as his reference for this, "Coelbren. p. 25", but I am unable to trace the source.

33) *Itinerum Curiosum*. p. 196.

34) *ibid.* p. 196 ff.

35) *ibid.* p. 200.

36) Horsley's *Britannia Romana*. p. 322. cit. Williams. p. 22.

37) Romans 16:13 & 2 Timothy 4:21.

38) Gontard. p. 56.

39) Pudens' house was discovered during excavations in 1870 (see Lanciani. pp. 114-5).

40) *ibid.* p. 57.

41) "*Claudia Rufe meo nubit Peregrina Pudenti...Tam bene rara suo miscentur Cinnama Nardo. Massico Theseis tam bene vina Cadis....Candida perpetuo reside concordia lecto....Diligat illa senem quondam sed et ipsa marito, tunc quoque quum fuerit non videatur anus.*" Martial. *Epigrams*. 4:13.

42) "*Claudia caeruleis* quum sit Rufina Britannis, *(lit. sky-blue. It refers to the blue woad*

Edita quam Latiae pectora Plebis habet? with which British warriors adorned

Quale decus formae! Romanam credere Matres, their bodies when going into battle).

Italidum possunt Atthides esse suam.

Di bene quod sancto peperit foecunda marito,

Quod sperat generos quodque Puella nurus.

Sic placeat Superis ut conjuge gaudeat uno,

Et semper natis gaudeat ipsa tribus." [Epigram. 11:4]

43) Jowett. p. 127.

44) Morgan (*St Paul in Britain*). p. 104. Morgan, alas, doesn't reference his source for this fascinating and very important snippet of information.

45) *ibid.* cited and - refreshingly - fully referenced by Morgan.

46) Lanciani. p. 131.

47) *Epistola ad Corinthios*. cit. Jowett. p. 126.

48) Jowett. p. 107.

49) Morgan. *St Paul in Britain*. p. 135.

50) Jowett. p. 191.

51) Jowett. pp. 120 & 184. Morgan (*St Paul in Britain*) is usually a little more helpful, but even he fails us (p. 135), telling us only that Salog was a Roman patrician who is named after *Caer Salog* (Salisbury), an estate that he inherited on his marriage to Eurgain. But yet again, no references are given.

52) cit. Williams. pp. 41-2.

53) *Book of Saints*. p. 529.

54) cit. Williams. p. 42.

55) *ibid.*

56) Cross. p. 1115.

57) Butler's *Lives of the Saints*. vol. 2. p. 347.

58) *ibid.* see also *Oxford Dict. of Saints*. OUP. 1978. p. 338.

59) Hermas. cit. Morgan (*St Paul in Britain*). p. 104.

60) Jowett. p. 127. citing the *Roman Martyrologies*.

61) Ashe. p. 151.

62) Westwood. p. 357.

63) Geoffrey of Monmouth. p. 124.

64) Westwood. p. 356.

65) cit. Williams. p. 43.

66) trans. by Morgan. (*St Paul in Britain*). p. 136.

67) Butler's *Lives of the Saints* (1756). Cit. Jowett. p. 208.

68) Stow. p. 203. Eluanus was one of those whom Lucius sent to Rome to ask Eleutherus for teachers of the Christian faith to come to Britain.

69) *ibid.* p. 410. Was the temple of Apollo mentioned here the same as that where Bladud was killed some 1,000 years earlier? - see *After the Flood*. p. 65.

70) Both sources are cited by Seaman (p. 71).

71) *Achau saint Prydein*. cit. Morgan (*St Paul in Britain*). p. 132.

72) cit. Morgan (*St Paul in Britain*). p. 135. His reference for this source is '*British Proverbs*'.

73) *Myrvyrian Archaiology*, and Alford's *Regia Fides* (p. 41). cited by Jowett, pp. 186-7.

74) "*Pomponia Graecina, insignis femina, Plautio qui ovans se de Britanniiis rettulit nupta ac superstitionis externae rea, mariti iudicio permissas isque prisco instituto, propinquis coram, de capite famaue coniugis cognovit et insontem nuntiavit. Longa huic Pomponiae aetas et continua tristis fuit; nam post Iuliam Drusi filiam dolo Messalinae interfectam per quadraginta annos non cultu nisi lugubri, non animo nisi maesto egit; idque illi imperitante Claudio impune, mox et gloriam vertit.*" Tacitus. *Annals*. 13:32.

75) Tacitus. *Agricola*. 4. (see Penguin edition. p. 53).

76) Williams. p. 36. Having said that, however, in the year 1867 the tomb was discovered in Rome of Pomponia's great nephew, Pomponius Graecinus (see Edmundson. p. 86). But this is merely a case of a family member *inheriting* what has become the *cognomen* of a more illustrious forebear, rather than earning it by any outstanding or unusual merit or ability. The *Caesars* are a good example of this phenomenon.

77) *ibid.*

78) Suetonius. p. 202.

79) Edmundson. pp. 230-5.

80) *ibid.* p. 204. Could it be that Julia was herself a Christian and had rebuked the infamous Messalina for her sinful life? The record does not say, but Messalina had others

put to death for lesser offences. It would also explain the assumption amongst those who knew them that Pomponia had mourned for Julia for so long, and that they were bound together by a very special bond. Pomponia's mourning is otherwise difficult to explain.

81) As a brief illustration of the profound difference that lay between the Christian and the pagan concerning death, compare this pagan inscription, "O relentless Fortune, who delightest in cruel death, why is Maximus so suddenly snatched from me? He who lately used to lie joyful on my bosom. This stone now marks his tomb. Behold his mother!" with this of one Petronia, a Christian deacon's wife, "In this place I lay my bones. Spare your tears, dear husband and daughter, and believe that it is forbidden to weep for one who lives in God." (cit. Scott. p. 82).

82) Pudens is also called *Aulus Pudens* in various sources, thus denoting his adoption of his step-father's name, and which evidences further that Pomponia was indeed his mother. Morgan (*St Paul in Britain*. p. 101) calls him "Aulus Rufus Pudens Pudentinus, a young senator of large possessions in Samnium", without, annoyingly, giving his own source for that information, whilst the *New Bible Dictionary* (p. 1065) tells us that Martial salutes him as Aulus Pudens, quoting Epigram iv:13. My own copy of that epigram, however, contains no such salutation.

83) Williams. p. 36.

84) stated by Jowett (p. 115), relying on the early Welsh records, the *Achau Saint Prydein* (Genealogies of the Saints of Britain).

85) Salway. p. 72.

86) *ibid.*

87) *cit.* Williams. p. 37.

88) Both Suetonius and Tacitus mention Plautius' ovation.

89) The tragedy in question writes a sorry footnote indeed to the story of Aulus Plautius.

Shortly after the trial of Pomponia, his son (and perhaps Pomponia's son too), who was also named Aulus Plautius, fell foul of the murderous Nero. Suetonius tells us what happened: "He [Nero] committed an indecent assault on young Aulus Plautius and then put him to death, remarking, 'Now Mother may come and kiss my successor'; he explained that Agrippina [Nero's mother] had been in love with Aulus and had induced him to make a bid for the throne." (Suet. p. 234). No comment is needed concerning Nero's demonic evil, although it is interesting to note that Pomponia's mourning was never publicly attributed by her family to the appalling death of her son. Though that non-attribution was politic enough whilst Nero lived (and because Tacitus wrote his account long *after* Nero's death), it does date her son's murder to after the trial, making it more than probable that young Aulus' death was an act of spite on Nero's part against the

elder Aulus Plautius who had deprived Nero of his Christian prey by pulling rank over Pomponia's trial. To Nero's evil mind, if he would not give up his wife, then his son would have to do. One paid a *price* for being a Christian in those days!

90) By no means the simplest passage to translate, in full it reads as follows: "*Interea glaciali frigore rigenti insulae et velut longiore terrarum secessu soli visibili non proximae verus ille non de firmamento solum temporali sed de summa etiam caelorum arce tempora cuncta tempore. Ut scimus summo Tiberii Caesaris quo absque ullo impedimento eius propagabatur religio comminata senatu nolente a principe morte delatoribus militum eiusdem radios suos primum indulget id est sua praecepta Christus.*" Gildas. *De Excidio Britonum*. trans. John Morris. 1978. (*The Ruin of Britain*). Phillimore. Chichester. p. 91. (My emphasis)

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Chronology

AD 29.....Aulus Plautius Consul of Rome, afterwards Governor of Pannonia.

AD 30.....(?) The year of Pudens' birth. His father, Pudentinus dies in this decade.

AD 33.....Our Lord's death and resurrection.

AD 36.....Birth of Claudia, daughter of Caradoc. Matthew's(?) Gospel is finished.

AD 37.....(?) Gospel arrives in Britain according to Gildas. Death of Tiberius Caesar.

AD 40.....(?) Aulus Plautius marries Pomponia. Pomponia converted by Gospel.

AD 41.....Death of Tiberius Caesar. Claudius becomes Emperor.

AD 43.....Claudian Invasion of Britain. Arrival here of Aulus Plautius and

Pomponia. Judicial murder in Rome of Julia by Messalina, the wife of

Claudius.

AD 49.....Capture of Caradoc's family by Ostorius Scapula. They are placed in the care of Pomponia who converts them to Christ.

AD 51.....Caradoc is betrayed by Queen Cartimantua (Aregwedd Foeddawg).

AD 52.....Caradoc appears with his family before the Senate. Pudens returns to Rome, leaving his land in Chichester to the pagan temple there.

AD 54.....Death of Claudius Caesar. Nero becomes Emperor.

AD 57.....Trial of Pomponia. Retirement of Aulus Plautius from public life.

AD 58.....Return to Britain of Bran, accompanied by Aristobulus.
AD 59.....March 15th, Aristobulus martyred. Paul writes letter to Romans.
AD 60.....(?) Murder by Nero of Aulus Plautius the Younger.
AD 67.....Paul is martyred at Rome.
AD 68.....Nero commits suicide.
AD 81.....September 23rd, martyrdom of Linus under Domitian.
AD 83.....Death of Pomponia (said to be forty years after Julia's death in AD 43).
AD 107.....May 19th, Pudentiana is martyred.
AD 124.....Beginning of Lucius' reign.
AD 140.....(?) Timotheus is martyred with one Marcus.
AD 142.....Pius becomes bishop of the Roman Christians.
AD 151.....June 20th, Novatus is martyred.
AD 201.....December 3rd, death of Lucius.

PART 2: PAUL'S 'LOST' LETTER

TO THE LAODICEAN CHURCH

a critical appraisal of a document

in Middle English (1388) that is a translation

from the Latin of a letter

said to have been written by the apostle Paul (in Greek)

and addressed to the church at Laodicea

the same letter being mentioned in Colossians 4:16

Author's Note

This section, Part 2, is an examination of a certain early document that claims to be of apostolic (Pauline) composition. It is not in the canon of the New Testament, nor ever has been, though it is to be found in certain early Latin and English Bible manuscripts (as well as those of most of the European countries, France, Germany and so on). This paper is not an argument for the letter's inclusion in the canon. The author holds that the New Testament canon has been sealed by the Holy Spirit from the earliest days of the church, and I hold, with our Lord, that the Scripture cannot be broken, taken away from or added to, without great peril to the one who does this. But the present paper *is* a defense of the view that the letter in question is indeed what it claims to be, a translation of one of Paul's extra-Biblical writings, and it should be valued for what it plainly is, a unique document of the apostolic era.

Introduction Whilst producing a modern-spelling edition of the Wycliffe New Testament,¹ I came across a document which purports to be a letter written by the apostle Paul to the church of Laodicea. I was aware that Paul had written such a letter, for he himself makes mention of it in his letter to the Colossian church.² But I was entirely unaware of the fact that it might have survived, albeit that it was not included in the canon. Though appearing in by no means every manuscript of the Wycliffe New Testament (it is generally admitted in its own prologue, when it does appear, that the letter is not part of the canon of Scripture), it is nevertheless included in the majority of the surviving manuscripts, whilst in those that omit it, it is yet referred to and recommended to the reader's attention.³

Consulting modernist scholars on the subject has been (as ever) a fruitless exercise. With one voice, the few that do deal with it condemn the letter as a "late and utterly worthless" forgery, whilst omitting any detailed evidence that might compel - or overthrow - such a view. At the same time, conservative scholars seem never to have questioned the modernist view, and have thus never investigated the truth of the matter. But it soon became apparent on closer inspection that the document deserves better treatment than it has been afforded so far by either school.

Amongst the modernists are those who argue that the letter was forged by Marcion, a 2nd-century heresiarch who was given to forging 'Biblical' writings in order to lend his heresies what he hoped would seem a Scriptural authority. But again, further consideration shows this view to be erroneous. Whilst Marcion certainly took away from Scripture in a big way, it is not known that he ever added to it to the extent of composing fake documents. Whoever did write the letter, and though in its present state it shows signs of possible tampering or loss, it was not Marcion, and we shall consider why later and in somewhat greater depth.

The investigation is taken back to the letter's Latin text which survives in manuscripts from the 6th to the 14th centuries, and of which the Middle English is a translation. This survival enables the question of a Greek original to be also examined in the light of the clues which might lie within the Latin text, and which may, or may not, betray borrowing from the Greek. We shall see that the Latin text's brevity and awkwardness are the result of its Latin sitting awkwardly with the Greek idiom in translation, and how the Latin text is so closely tied to its Greek original that it has been possible to give (after Hutter -see below) a very plausible reconstruction of the original Greek text from it.

If little or no Greek influence had been discernible within the Latin text, then it would have seemed most unlikely that the letter is a surviving relic from the apostolic era. Paul, as far as we know, did not write in Latin. Neither did any other apostle. But if, as we shall see, such Greek influence is indeed discernible, then that will take the hypothesis that the letter is a genuine Pauline (though extra-canonical) epistle one step closer toward proof.

Another such step will be taken if the question of possible forgery reveals no hidden agenda on points of doctrine, for doctrine, or rather *perversion* or *innovation* of doctrine, is always the motivating force behind all the works that have come down to us within what is known as the New Testament Apocrypha and other post-apostolic writings, certain of the so-called church fathers and so on. Doctrine, indeed, is the litmus test of any document from New Testament times, canonical or no, and comparison will be made between the Laodicean epistle, the New Testament itself - with particular reference to the known letters of Paul - and to known but spurious 'gospels' and letters that together make up that corpus of ancient writings known as the New Testament Apocrypha.

Close investigation will be made into the views and teachings of Marcion, and how these came to be disseminated both by himself and his followers. A detailed understanding of this is important, because the modernist contentions against the Laodicean letter rely strongly on the Marcionite hypothesis for their plausibility. The letter will thus be thoroughly examined for any trace of Marcionite influence or contamination.

The Muratorian Canon will also be discussed, as it is from this source that modernists claim authority for their view that Marcion is the author of the Laodicean letter under question. We shall see that if Marcion ever did write such a letter, it was not the one that has survived and come down to us through the Wycliffe New Testament. The letter's brevity and discontinuity are said to be evidence that display the hallmarks of typically Marcionite editing, but we will see that there is another, much better, explanation for the letter's peculiarities.

If the letter is a Latin forgery, and if it is not Marcionite, then it can only be a post-apostolic composition of the Latin church, and may thus be expected to betray influences of early Roman Catholic teachings and points of doctrine. We shall see

that the church of Rome underwent several fundamental shifts of doctrine at a very early stage, and its people witnessed the innovation and introduction of many strange teachings, most of them directly borrowed from the pagan world. One or more of these innovations will be evident, if only in embryo, if the letter is a post-apostolic Latin forgery.

If ultimately it can be shown that the letter is no Latin forgery, but is based upon a Greek original, and if it can be further shown that its doctrinal content is entirely 'primitive', bearing all the hallmarks of apostolic composition and doctrinal purity, then considerable justification will be given to the view that what has come down to us through the Wycliffe New Testament in the body of this letter, is a most fortuitous, not to say Providential, survival of an apostolic (though non-canonical) document of the early Christian church. But we must now let the evidence speak for itself, and consider exactly what it tells us.

The Two Middle English Versions

The letter that purports to be from Paul to the Laodiceans, has come down to us in Latin and in two Middle English versions. The first English version was incorporated into the earlier of the two versions of the Wycliffe Bible known as 'Wycliffe A',⁴ first published in

1382, although today it is found in only one surviving manuscript of that version. The later version was published in the improved 'Wycliffe B' text of 1388, and is included in many of the surviving 15th-century manuscripts of the Wycliffe New Testament.⁵ Both versions, however, are clearly translations of the same Latin text of the epistle. The first, Wycliffe A, reads thus in modern spelling (for old-spelling version and glossary, see Appendix One):

Paul, apostle not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, to the brethren that be of Laodicea, grace to you and peace, of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Graces I do to Christ by all mine orison, that ye be dwelling in Him and lasting, by the behest abiding in the day of doom. Ne He unordained us of some vain speech feigning, that us overturn fro the soothfastness of the gospel that of me is preached. Also now shall God do them leaving and doing of blessedness of works, which health of life is. And now openly be my bonds which I suffer in Christ Jesus, in which I glad and joy, and that is to me health everlasting, that that I did with our prayers and ministering the Holy Spirit by life or by death. It is forsooth to me life into Christ, and to die joy without end. In us He shall do His mercy that ye have the same loving, and that ye be of one will. Therefore, darlings, as ye have heard in presence of me, hold ye and do ye in the dread of God, and it shall be to you life without end. It is, forsooth, God that worketh in us. And do ye without any withdrawing whatsoever ye do. And that it is, darlings, joy ye in Christ and flee ye [those] made foul with clay. All your askings be open anents

God, and be ye fastened in the wit of Christ. And [that] which be holy and sooth, and chaste and rightwise and loveable, do ye. And which heard and taken in heart, hold ye, and it shall be to you peace. Holy men greet you well in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost. And do ye that pistle of Colossians to be read to you. Amen.

*

The second version, 'Wycliffe B', first published in 1388 and encountered in most 15th-century copies of the Wycliffe New Testament, reads thus in modern spelling, and includes a short prologue (for old-spelling version and glossary, see Appendix Two):

Here beginneth the Prologue on the Pistle to Laodiceans

Laodiceans be also Colossians, as two towns and one people in manners. These be of Asia, and among them had been false apostles and deceived many. Therefore the postle bringeth them to mind of his conversation and true preaching of the gospel, and exciteth them to be steadfast in the true wit and love of Christ, and to be of one will. But this pistle is not in common Latin books, and therefore it was but late translated into English tongue.

Thus endeth the Prologue, and beginneth the pistle to Laodiceans Here beginneth the epistle to the Laodiceans, which is not in the canon

"Paul, apostle, not of men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, to the brethren that be at Laodicea, grace to you and peace, of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do thankings to my God by all my prayer that ye be dwelling and lasting in Him, abiding the behest in the day of doom. For neither the vain speaking of some unwise men hath letted you, the which would turn you fro the truth of the gospel that is preached of me. And now them that be of me to the profit of truth of the gospel, God shall make deserving and doing benignity of works and health of everlasting life. And now my bonds be open which I suffer in Christ Jesus, in which I glad and joy. And that is to me to everlasting health that this same thing be done by your prayers and ministering of the Holy Ghost, either by life, either by death. Forsooth, to me it is life to live in Christ, and to die joy. And His mercy shall do in you the same thing, that ye moun have the same love and that ye be of one will. Therefore, ye well beloved brethren, hold ye and do ye in the dread of God, as ye have heard [in] the presence of me, and life shall be to you without end. Soothly, it is God that worketh in you. And, my well beloved brethren, do ye without any withdrawing whatever things ye do. Joy ye in Christ, and eschew ye men defouled in lucre, either foul winning. Be all your askings open anents God, and be ye steadfast in the wit of

Christ. And do ye tho things that be holy and true, and chaste and just, and able to be loved. And keep ye in heart tho things that ye have heard and taken, and peace shall be to you. All holy men greet you well. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, and do ye that pistle of Colossians to be read to you."

Here endeth the pistle to Laodiceans

*

Whenever the epistle to the Laodiceans is included in copies of the Wycliffe English New Testament, it always falls between Paul's letter to the Colossians and I Thessalonians - though in the Latin manuscripts its place varies. Even in those English manuscripts that omit the epistle, the exhortation to read it elsewhere appears in the same place, suggesting that its given place in the 14th to 15th-century Wycliffite New Testament was already an established one and that that was where readers would expect to encounter it. The position, of course, is entirely natural and expected, as it is in the closing verses of Colossians (4:16) that Paul exhorts his readers to now read the text of his letter to the Laodiceans, even as, at the end of Laodiceans, he exhorts those readers to read his letter to the Colossians. But we must now look carefully at the background against which the letter to the Laodiceans was written (if it is by Paul), and at how closely or otherwise the general tone of the letter matches or reflects that background. The Church of Laodicea

The Laodicean church is something of an enigma. We have no idea who evangelized the city, and none of the names of the members or leaders of the church at Laodicea have come down to us save one, that of Nymphas, along with mention of the church in his house.⁶ There is an intriguing survival of the Canons of Laodicea from the 4th century, these dealing with the treatment of heretics and so on, but nothing seems to have survived from the Council of Laodicea (AD 365) which produced these canons.⁷

The city of Laodicea was among the very wealthiest of the Roman Empire, and the place was renowned as a banking centre, and a place where medicine was not just practiced but researched, Laodicean eye-salve being sought after the world over. The citizens were so wealthy that when, in AD 60, a massive earthquake destroyed the place, they were able to decline an offer of financial help from the Roman Senate to rebuild.⁸ That is wealth indeed.

But perhaps the most accurate portrayal of Laodicea appears in the book of Revelation (3:14-22). The first reference in this *decidedly* canonical letter to the Laodiceans, has to do with the church at Laodicea being, "neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot." Now, the city of Laodicea had no natural water supply of its own. This had to be piped in on a truly massive aqueduct from miles away, with the unfortunate result that the water was lukewarm on arrival. This is in marked contrast to Laodicea's near neighbor, Heirapolis, who enjoyed boiling hot

springs of water, and Colossae, whose waters were always chilled and refreshing.⁹ Anyone who tried to drink the untreated waters of Laodicea, would immediately want to spit them out again, and this is exactly what our Lord says that He wants to do with the tepid and insipid church there.

Lukewarm water does, of course, have some usefulness as an emetic, and whether it was this that gave rise to the medical research there that was to produce their famous eye-salve we cannot know. But it is very likely. Luke, the Greek physician, like many of his colleagues, doubtless used medical products from Laodicea in the treatment of his own patients, and might well have had some training there in his younger days. Again we do not know. But what we do know from the letter of Revelation to the church at Laodicea is that her medicines were of no benefit to the soul. For that, she must seek eye-salve of the Lord.

The same thing, of course, goes for her immense riches. In the eyes of the world, Laodicea was healthy, wealthy and extremely wise, but in the eyes of the Lord she was poor and blind and naked, as were particularly those members of the city who had earlier turned to Christ for salvation but who had done little to separate themselves from the world.

Now, it has to be said that the letter to the Laodicean church contained in Revelation, is an extremely accurate, though marvelously brief, portrayal of that church's members and condition. So how does this compare with what that letter says that is supposed to be from Paul to the Laodiceans? Is there anything at all in the *non*-canonical letter that agrees or has material in common with the more famous and decidedly canonical letter of Revelation? The answer, we have to say, is no. A mark of Authenticity

Paradoxically, this non-resemblance between the two letters is one of the great marks of authenticity that suggests the genuineness of the supposed letter from Paul. Let me explain. We have seen that one of the hypotheses concerning this letter is that it is a post-apostolic Latin forgery. In other words, it was written by a member of the Latin, or Roman, church in the immediate post-apostolic era which begins with the late 1st - early 2nd centuries of the Christian era. Importantly, most modernist scholars date the Laodicean epistle - being an alleged forgery - as late as the 4th or 5th centuries. By that time, of course, the book of Revelation was known as famously as any other book of the New Testament, and it is inconceivable that a forger of that time or later would fail to lend his work verisimilitude by 'working in' some aspect or other of the Revelation letter, or even an oblique reference to it, had he but known of its existence and contents.

It is one of the habits of every liar, forger and false witness, that he will seek support for what his document or testimony says, and Biblical support is more desirable than any other. So would our post-apostolic forger really compose a letter to the Laodicean church that bore no resemblance whatever to the one recognized canonical letter to that church? We may hardly think so. Whatever else we may

think of the non-canonical letter to Laodicea, we must surely acknowledge the pronounced independence of thought that is displayed within it. But more importantly, we must ponder the telling and ponderous evidence that suggests that when this letter was written, the book of Revelation had yet to appear, such was the early date of the Laodicean letter's composition. But more on this subject later. Points of Doctrine

But what about the question of the doctrinal stand-point of the letter? As an indication of just how far and how quickly the Roman church began to depart from the Gospel of Jesus (if we are to consider the hypothesis of a post-apostolic composition for the letter), we can do no better than consider the letters that Clement wrote from Rome to the Corinthian church. Clement, whom modern Catholic authors refer to as an early pope, was bishop of the church at Rome after Linus and Anacletus, and was thus (given the fact that Peter never was bishop of Rome) only the third bishop of that church, flourishing in the mid-90s of the first century. But what seems to endear him to modern Catholic scholars is not so much his alleged nearness to the apostle Peter in papal succession (mis-called Apostolic Succession), but his laying the doctrinal foundation upon which the papacy was later to build that poisonous and power-hungry edifice called the Roman Catholic church.

Catholic scholars have long regarded Clement as "the intermediary through whom the Apostles transmit their teaching to the church."¹⁰ Thus, he takes on an immediate authority (in

their eyes) that is at least equal to the authority of the apostles appointed by our Lord, and is thus equal with our Lord's own authority (which is what modern popes still claim for themselves and all their predecessors and successors, even to the extent of titling themselves, "Lord God"). To judge by what was later said of Clement, we might even assume that he had exceeded even such bounds as these, for we are told in Catholic legend that after evangelizing the Black Sea area with much success, he was tied to an anchor and dropped into the sea, only to have a subaquatic tomb built for him by angels (a privilege never extended to our Lord or His disciples), which tomb was shown to the devout (for a fee) at the ebbing of every tide.¹¹ Yet if we judge the matter by doctrine, then we see immediately that Clement was so far removed from the apostles' teachings that he could never be counted their successor in any meaningful way.

Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that if we have to identify the one man who was responsible for the early departure of Rome from the faith of the Lord Jesus, then we are compelled to point the finger at Clement, who was supposed, in his office as bishop, to have charge of the flock. Had he genuinely wanted the church at Corinth to merely follow the Savior and adhere faithfully to the Word of God, then he need go no further than point them to Paul's letters that were already in their possession, and, indeed, to the other books of the New Testament, all of which were in use well before his time. But no. Clement regarded Paul's letters as insufficient, and was

happy to lie about them as he sought to supplement their teachings, very subtly indeed, with teachings of his own, teachings which were to lead to the shipwreck of true Biblical faith in the Lord Jesus throughout the western world. And it all had to do with power and authority. Let us see how.

Irenaeus, writing about AD 180, tells us, "In the time of this Clement, no small dissension having arisen among the brethren in Corinth, the Church in Rome sent a very able letter, urging them to peace."¹² Which sounds commendable enough until we analyze exactly what was in this letter, and what it was that this 'peace' consisted of. Now the church of Rome has always been about power, both spiritual and temporal, and this hunger for power began to show itself less than 30 years or so after the martyrdom of Paul in Rome. Clement certainly embraced it, and he could not help betraying his (and the church of Rome's) eagerness for power in the letter to Corinth, albeit he wrote to them in seemingly 'pastoral' terms.

Power is all about hierarchy, and it is with hierarchy that Clement begins. Early in his first letter to the Corinthians (the second is deemed a forgery by modern scholars), Clement tells his readers:

"Subordination of rank and distinction of office are the necessary conditions of life. Look at the manifold gradations of order in an army, at the diverse functions of the members of the human body," going on to tell them that, "Ye did wrongly to thrust out presbyters who had been duly appointed."¹³

The reason for the rebuke is that the Corinthians had ejected certain priests (who can have no place in a Christian church, given that a priest is supposed to be an intermediary between God and man) that had clearly been imposed on them by Rome. Yet that is not all, for not only does Clement quite falsely state that Paul had rebuked them for the same offence in his day, but he goes on to call the Corinthian church the "enemies of God" and warns them to, "Ask pardon for your offences, and do not harden your hearts like Pharaoh. Else like Pharaoh, ye will also perish!"

Ignoring the none-too-thinly veiled threat, we have to ask whether Clement, the 'bishop' of Rome now thundering these anathemas, had ever read our Lord's words where He says, "But be ye not called 'rabbi,' for One is your Master and all ye are brethren"?'¹⁴ At the birth of the New Testament church, there was one rank among Christians, that of brother. Yet barely fifty years on and Rome, under Clement, has embraced another system altogether, that of bishops, priests and deacons whose titles conveyed authority over others, not servitude or service towards them. This, of course, was because the system of hierarchy belonged firmly to the world of paganism, Rome itself being the very sink of pagan religion and philosophy, and already we can see that, by the time of Clement, the church at Rome had embraced that system of worship that is fatal to any true understanding of God, His Word, or the Church.

The introduction of pagan ideas contained in Clement's letter is not something imagined by us, because later in the epistle, he has this to say, "The end is near when all things shall be burned up by fire. So the prophets and Apostles testify - so also the Sibyl has declared!"¹⁵ Now, the Sibyl was the pagan oracle through which Apollo, Aphrodite, and all the other gods and goddesses were supposed to make their wishes known, and we may wonder what possible interest a Christian bishop could have had in such a blatantly occultic oracle. Sufficient, it seems, for a famous verse to become oft-quoted and popular amongst the early 'Christian' worshippers of Rome: "*Dies irae, dies illa, solvet saeculum in flavilla, teste David cum Sibylla!*"¹⁶ - putting the psalmist and hence the Scriptures on an equal footing with the pagan oracle.

Of course, we needn't be too surprised at this. It is astonishing how quickly men departed from the faith of Christ in the days of the early church, and we see from Paul's letter to the Galatians that the departure of many occurred whilst the apostles were still ministering among them.¹⁷ So it should come as little surprise that the early church of Rome should bring in innovations of strange doctrines and hierarchies once the apostles were all dead. But how do the innovations and none-too-subtle introductions of pagan philosophy contained in Clement's letter to the Corinthians, compare with the doctrinal statements of our Laodicean epistle? Do we see in that epistle any hint of change from the New Testament norm when it comes to questions of hierarchy and so on? We do not. It is entirely primitive in doctrine.

Clement asks the Corinthians why they are no longer collecting money which, before the destruction of that city in AD 70 used to be sent to Jerusalem, and tellingly pleads, "could not Rome become what Jerusalem once was?"¹⁸ The letter to the Laodiceans, however, makes no allusion at all to money apart from the exhortation to avoid those who, like Clement and his colleagues, are defiled by it.

Again, the Laodicean letter makes no allusion of authority to pagan oracles, as does Clement's, nor does it exhort the church to place itself under any human authority, following it up with the justifying plea that that is how things are done in secular society.

The Laodicean letter makes no threat of retribution should the apostle's authority be ignored, unlike that of Clement, but rather warns against those who would turn the Laodiceans from the true faith that Paul had preached.

Moreover, Clement makes the decidedly un-apostolic observation concerning, "unjust and godless jealousy whereby death has come into the world."¹⁹ Here Clement makes a radical departure from the plain teachings of the Bible that attribute the coming of death into the world unequivocally to the blanket disobedience of Adam, and not to the committing of certain *particular* sins which later were to become distinguished from others in Catholic doctrine, as in pagan, by being labeled either 'mortal' or 'venial.' And as if these teachings of Clement are not sufficient to demonstrate the fact that in his time a great deal of Catholic dogma

was already present in the church at Rome, he states, concerning the Corinthians' mode of worship:

"All must be done to the order given us by the Lord at the prescribed times. The sacrifice and the divine service are performed, not as it suits us and with no regularity, but at the times prescribed....Those who do this are pleasing to God and blessed." - implying, no doubt, that those who do it not, provoke God to anger and are cursed.²⁰

We are left mystified as to who is supposed to have prescribed these times for service in the church. Contrary to what Clement says, our Lord plainly did not prescribe them, nor did the apostles. The 'sacrifice' referred to is, of course, the Eucharist or Mass, in which it is said that Christ is sacrificed afresh by the power of the priest's words spoken over the bread and wine, this being in direct conflict with the teaching of the Bible that our Lord was sacrificed once and for all time upon the cross. He cannot be sacrificed again, and no priest has the

power to create Him afresh for such sacrifice on the altar. Space forbids a detailed discussion of the evils that followed the acceptance of Rome's doctrine concerning the sacrifice of the mass, and how this naturally led to the promulgation, 1200 years later, of transubstantiation and the burning alive of thousands who would not accept it. We may note only in this place that the doctrine - I should say heresy - had taken deadly root in the church at Rome even at this early period, and that such teachings are readily recognizable in this official letter of Clement's that was written *ex cathedra* from that city ca. AD 95.

This brief survey has been necessary for us to appreciate the sheer purity of doctrine contained in the Laodicean letter. There is not a trace of the contamination that was so soon to infect the church, and not a jot of the Laodicean epistle is in conflict with any part or portion of the New Testament. In other words, it is pure, through and through, and this purity speaks most eloquently for the early date of the letter, for again, it is inconceivable that any Latin forger working from the time of Clement onwards, would have known what pure doctrine was, let alone would be able to produce such a letter from his doctrinally defiled imagination. And as for the question arising that it might have been forged by a Christian who had not been defiled by Rome, we may observe only that the question answers itself.

But further to the question of the Laodicean epistle being a post-apostolic forgery, we may now turn our attention to the actual text of the letter in Latin as it has come down to us, and see whether another allegation concerning it is valid or no, the allegation being that the letter is nothing more than a mish-mash of Pauline verses strung together from odd places of the New Testament to form an extraneous document. It is most important that we test the allegation thoroughly, for it forms the main thrust of the modernist school's argument against the letter's historical authenticity. The Latin Text

The Latin text of the Laodicean epistle appears in the early manuscripts as a continuous text with little or no punctuation.²¹ If we lay it out, however, like a standard Biblical letter, and divide it into 20 conveniently sized verses, it reads thus:

1. *Paulus apostolus non ab hominibus neque per hominem sed per Ihesum Christum, fratribus qui sunt Laodiciae.*
2. *Gratia vobis et pax a Deo Patre et Domino Ihesu Christo.*
3. *Gratias ago Christo per omnem orationem meam, quod permanentes estis in eo et perseverantes in operibus eius, promissum expectantes in diem iudicii.*
4. *Neque destituant vos quorundam vaniloquia insinuantium, ut vos avertant a veritate evangelii quod a me praedicatur.*
5. *Et nunc faciet Deus ut qui sunt ex me ad profectum veritatis evangelii deservientes et facientes benignitatem operum quae salutatis vitae aeternae.*
6. *Et nunc palam sunt vincula mea quae patior in Christo, quibus laetor et gaudeo.*
7. *Et hoc mihi est ad salutem perpetuam, quod ipsum factum orationibus vestris et administrante Spiritu Sancto, sive per vitam, sive per mortem.*
8. *Est enim mihi vivere in Christo et mori gaudium.*
9. *Et id ipsum in vobis faciet misericordia sua, ut eandem dilectionem habeatis et sitis unianimes.*
10. *Ergo, dilectissimi, ut audistis praesentia mei, ita retinete et facite in timore Dei, et erit vobis vita in aeternum.*
11. *Est enim Deus qui operatur in vos.*
12. *Et facite sine retractu quaecumque facitis.*
13. *Et quod est reliquum, dilectissimi, gaudete in Christo et praecavete sordidos in lucro.*
14. *Omnes sint petitiones vestrae palam apud Deum, et estote firmi in sensu Christi.*
15. *Et quae integra et vera et pudica et iusta et amabilia, facite.*
16. *Et quae audistis et accepistis in corde retinete, et erit vobis pax.*
17. *Salutate omnes fratres in osculo sancto.*

18. *Salutant vos sancti.*

19. *Gratia Domino Ihesu cum spiritu vestro,*

20. *et facite legi Colosensibus et Colosensium vobis.*

*

We may now begin the task of answering that hypothesis which would have us believe that the Laodicean letter is nothing more than a stringing together of typical Pauline sayings borrowed from other *genuine* epistles of Paul, and tacked together some 400 years after the establishing of the New Testament canon, in order to be passed off as that letter to the Laodiceans which Paul himself mentions in Colossians 4:16.

Mercifully, any similarities which do exist between the verses of this letter and those of the New Testament, are mostly confined to Paul's letter to the Philippians, and it is an easy matter to compare one text with the other, and note the startling differences between them, showing that in Latin as well as in English, the two epistles take on a similarity to one another which is more apparent for the modernist than actually real to the Latinist. Let us begin with verse 6 of Laodicea, and compare it with Philippians 1:13, its closest equivalent in the New Testament, and then go on to examine the other alleged borrowings:

(NB. The English translation of the Laodicean verses, is from M R James' *Apocryphal New Testament*, and the English translation of the Vulgate text of Philippians is supplied from the Catholic Rheims New Testament of 1582)

Laod. 6: *Et nunc palam sunt vincula mea quae patior in Christo, quibus laetor et gaudeo.*

(Eng: And now are my bonds seen of all men, which I suffer in Christ, wherein I rejoice and am glad)

Phil. 1:19: *Ita ut vincula mea manifesta fierent in Christo in omni praetorio, et in ceteris omnibus...*

(Eng: So that my bands were made manifest in Christ in all the court, and in all the rest...)

*Laod. 7: *Et hoc mihi est ad salutem perpetuam, quod ipsum factum orationibus vestris et administrante Spiritu Sancto, sive per vitam, sive per mortem.*

(Eng: And unto me this is for everlasting salvation, which also is brought about by your prayers and the ministry of the Holy Ghost, whether by life or by death)

Phil. 1:19: *Scio enim quia hoc mihi proveniet ad salutem, per vestram orationem et subministrationem Spiritus Jesu Christi...*

(Eng: For I know that this shall fall out to me unto salvation by your prayer and the subministration of the Spirit of Jesus Christ...)

*

Laod. 9: *Et id ipsum in vobis faciet misericordia sua, ut eandem dilectionem habeatis et sitis unianimes.*

(Eng: And unto Him shall He work His mercy in you, that ye may have the same love and be of one mind.)

Phil. 2:2: *Implete gaudium meum, ut idem sapiatis, eandem charitatem habentes, unanimes, idipsum sentientes...*

(Eng: Fulfil my joy, that you be of one meaning, having the same charity, of one mind, agreeing in one.)

*

Laod. 10. *Ergo, dilectissimi, ut audistis praesentia mei, ita retinete et facite in timore Dei, et erit vobis vita in aeternum.*

(Eng: Therefore, dearly beloved, as ye have heard in my presence, hold fast and work in the fear of the Lord, and it shall be unto you for life eternal)

Phil. 2:12: *Itaque, charissimi mei, sicut semper obedistis, non ut in praesentia mei tantum, sed multo magis nunc in absentia mea, cum metu et tremore vestram salutem operamini.*

(Eng: Therefore, my dearest, (as you have always obeyed), not as in the presence of me only, but much more now in my absence, with fear and trembling work your salvation)

*

Laod. 13: *Et quod est reliquum, dilectissimi, gaudete in Christo et praecavete sordidos in lucro.*

(Eng: And for the rest, dearly beloved, rejoice in Christ, and beware of them that are filthy in lucre)

Phil. 3:1,2: *De cetero, fratres mei, gaudete in Domino...videte malos operarios, videte concisionem.*

(Eng: From henceforth, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord....see the evil workers, see the concision)²²

*

Laod. 14: *Omnes sint petitiones vestrae palam apud Deum, et estote firmi in sensu Christi.*

(Eng: Let all your petitions be made openly before God, and be ye steadfast in the mind of Christ)

Phil. 4:6: *Nihil solliciti sitis, sed in omni oratione et obsecratione, cum gratiarum actione petitiones vestrae innotescant apud Deum.*

(Eng: Be nothing careful, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be known with God)

*

But there is little more to be gained in laboring the matter, beyond noting the point that the Laodicean epistle's *sordido in lucro* (v.13), meets its closest match in the Vulgate New Testament with Paul's *turpe lucrum* (1 Tim. 3:8), both expressions conveying the same sense, that of being defiled with money, yet both, typically, displaying the glaringly obvious fact that one is *not* copied from the other.

We may wonder at the fact that the hypothesis of copying was ever entertained at all, considering that those who forward it so eloquently are (or were) proficient enough in Latin to have made their own comparisons. But this they neglect to do, leaving the less informed student or reader to draw the conclusion that what they tell him about this alleged forgery is the result of their own proper investigation, and of their having -at the very least! - actually compared for themselves one text with the other. The 'Marcionite' Hypothesis

But next to this allegation is one that is lent a little more plausibility by being conjectured rather than objectively stated, and that allegation has to do with the notion that the Laodicean letter is the product of a certain Marcion, a 2nd-century heresiarch who made it his life's work to 'edit' the entire Bible down to a document that propagated - with a seemingly Scriptural authority - his own decidedly twisted notions concerning everything that the Bible teaches us. Here we will examine the proposal in some depth. "The first-born of Satan"

Marcion, who died ca. AD 160, was a wealthy ship-owner, and the son of the bishop of Sinope in Pontus. He bears the early distinction of having been excommunicated by his own father for gross immorality,²³ and this seems to have fired within him the determination to demolish the Christian faith altogether. He was to seek the accomplishment of his design from within the Church by effectively destroying the

Scriptures, or by destroying at least faith in the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God. He made his way to Rome in ca. AD 140 and attached himself to the Christian church there, making his application to join them all the sweeter by donating the enormous sum of 200,000 sesterces to the church coffers.²⁴ This should have set many alarm bells ringing, but to the shame of that church it didn't, and Marcion was welcomed into the fold as a well-to-do benefactor.

It is distressing to consider what happened next. Marcion, having arrived on the scene in a blaze of glory, disappeared for a while, whether on board one of his own ships or elsewhere is not known, but when he returned it was to announce the completion of a radical edition of the Bible, and a paring away of anything in the Scriptures which did not conform to Marcion's strange and devilish views. As Gontard tells us:

"The seafarer became a Bible critic. Conceiving numerous doubts about the purity of the text, he examined the Gospel to discover the portion that Paul had spoken of as being genuine. What did it treat of? Which was really the original? What had been added? Had there been arbitrary textual additions and substantial errors? After his comparative examinations Marcion rejected Matthew's Gospel with its accommodations of the Old Testament. In Mark's Gospel he disapproved of the scanty relation of Jesus' words. Nor would he accept John's Gospel, finding the statement, 'Salvation is of the Jews,' unauthorized and of no avail for the rest of the world. Luke's was the only Gospel which, in his view, retained its authenticity, though even here he considered he was forced to 'operate' in order to free it of falsifications and interpolations made by alien hands. He realized how colossal was his task and he emphasized that even his investigation was not to be regarded as conclusive....Marcion examined the Pauline Epistles and cut them down too. The Bible critic had become a censor."²⁵

It is wonderful to think that the modernist school, which has carried on the work of

Marcion so faithfully, should boast of being modern when its ideas are so ancient. And equally wonderful is it to hear them speak of Marcion as a false heretic when they themselves hold precisely the same opinions as he. But no matter. Marcion went on to announce to the church that the Father of Jesus was not the God of the Old Testament (whom he said was 'evil'), and that the Old Testament indeed had nothing to say to the true believer, all very wearisome stuff. The result was his expulsion from the Roman church, which - to its credit - refunded his 200,000 sesterces and promptly announced that he was the very 'Apostle of the Demons.' Tellingly, Polycarp of Smyrna had denounced him years before, no doubt accurately, as 'the first-born of Satan,' but Rome had paid no heed.

If the work of Marcion can be said to have any value at all, it is in the fact that his denial of so many canonical books tells us irrefutably that these books existed and were in wide circulation by AD 140 at the latest, and that they were already part of the canon of Scripture by that date and clearly long before, thus demolishing many of the speculations of his more modern followers - Wellhausen *et al.* More particularly, they tell us, as we revert briefly back to our observations concerning the book of Revelation and its letter to the Laodicean church, that this too was known and widely circulated by Marcion's time, as indeed it would have been known to the even later forger of the Pauline epistle to Laodicea if such a man had existed. But we need to examine the nature of Marcion's work a little more closely if we are to consider the alleged possibility that the Laodicean letter that has come down to us is of his authorship. Marcion the Editor

The number of opponents who went immediately into writing against Marcion, is a telling indicator of the tremendous damage that he was causing in the Christian church. Amongst them are: Dionysius of Corinth; Irenaeus of Lyons; Theophilus of Antioch; Philip of Gortyna; Tertullian at Carthage; Hippolytus and Rhodo, both of Rome; Bardesanes at Edessa; and several others.²⁶ Indeed, Marcion and his followers were to present a greater danger to the church than all its persecutors put together, their poison wreaking havoc in the church even today. By the close of the 3rd century, most of his followers (Marcion died ca AD 160) had become absorbed into Manichaeism, which was the Marcionite heresy writ only with a different pen, but from the fold of that sect they were to harass the church for many centuries.

The demonstrably foolish notion around which Marcion had built his heresy, was that the Gospel of Jesus was purely a gospel of love. So far so good. But it was a gospel of love to the utter repudiation and exclusion of the Law of God. In his *Antitheses*, which mercifully seems not to have survived, he explained to his readers that this was why he rejected the Old Testament in its entirety. He claimed that the Creator that was spoken of from Genesis onwards, being a God of law, could have nothing in common with that God who called Himself the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and was a God of love. Marcion's 'studies' - if such they might be called - convinced him that the God of the Old Testament was "fickle, capricious, ignorant, despotic and cruel," and was not at all the loving Father whom Jesus had come to reveal to the world, and whose one purpose was to overthrow the law-loving (but paradoxically "wicked") Creator.

Such notions cannot be read or considered without distress to the Christian heart, but it has been necessary to consider them simply because they lead us on to the subject of Marcion's "editing" the Bible down to what he considered to be a trustworthy document. For him to arrive anywhere near to his strange ideas, it is clear that most of the Bible would have had to be thrown out of the proverbial window, and it is interesting to see - as we consider the subject of this present paper and the allegation that the Laodicean letter is from Marcion's hands - how Marcion actually achieved his grand design.

He began by stating that his strange ideas were fully appreciated only by Paul, and that the twelve apostles and evangelists, as well as numerous other disciples, were completely blind to the truth of what Marcion was saying through having lived under Jewish influences. He seems never to have considered that Paul lived not only under Jewish influences, but was himself a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a veritable fount of Jewish influence who knew more about the Law than most other men then living, Marcion included it seems. Nor does he seem to have considered the fact that the twelve apostles and evangelists, and the numerous other disciples who knew the Lord personally, were not alive to hear Marcion's glad tidings, and therefore could not have been swayed by them even if they'd wanted to be. We are left to stagger at such madness and be thankful for that grace and common sense that compels us on to another, safer course altogether.

Briefly though, his paring away the Biblical text until he had something that might lend a little credibility to his ramblings, meant that he was left with only ten of Paul's epistles (edited of course), and a yet more heavily edited version of Luke's Gospel. And that's it. That is all he was left with once he applied his own foolish notions to the Word of God. It is truly amazing. He got over the loss, of course, by embracing the Docetic heresy,²⁷ announcing that

Jesus had not been born, but had suddenly materialized in the synagogue at Capernaum where He began His ministry, His later suffering and death being the work of the ("evil") Creator God whom Jesus' real ("good") Father was in the process of destroying. The Marcionite Canon

What comfort might be found in such 'theology' and in such a 'Bible' can best be imagined, but following Marcion's teachings thus far, and examining here in slightly greater detail just how he handled the Word of God, enables us at least to consider whether the Laodicean epistle that has come to us is the work of his feverish brain or not. As it turns out, it is not a difficult task.

That part of Marcion's 'canon' which he calls the *Evangelion*, or Gospel, consists solely, as we have seen, of a heavily cut down version of the Gospel of Luke. He seems to have chosen Luke, because Luke was a gentile and not a Jew, and he opens the Gospel thus:

"In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, in the times of Pontius Pilate, Jesus came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught in the synagogue."²⁸

Thus, we can see at a glance the great swathe that he has cut through Luke's Gospel at just its beginning. The opening line is based on Luke 3:1, and 4:31. But omitted is the account that Luke gives us of our Lord's birth (Marcion, we must remember, had embraced the Docetic heresy regarding our Lord's coming into the world), the birth and ministry of John the Baptist, our Lord's own baptism, the genealogy of

our Lord, and His temptation in the wilderness. This emasculates the Gospel of Luke altogether, rendering all else of no account. But he was not finished yet.

The second part of his 'canon' Marcion called the *Apostolos*, meaning the Apostle, referring to Paul, holding just ten of Paul's letters to be valid by rejecting Hebrews and Paul's pastoral epistles, the two to Timothy and that to Titus. So at the end of the day, this is how his canon looked:

Luke (heavily cut down); Romans; 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; 1 Thessalonians; 2 Thessalonians; and Philemon - all of them heavily and radically edited.

It is thus seen that Marcion's intention toward Scripture was solely to cut it down and to get rid of much of the Bible, or at least those parts of it - like the entire Old Testament! - that did not agree with his own ideas. How then are we to suppose that at one point he reversed the process and actually added to it?

Addition seems to go against what we know of Marcion's methodology, and the forging of the Laodicean letter would, in any case, have spoiled his canon by increasing it to *eleven* Pauline epistles and not the ten for which he was *always* famous and to which he *always* held. But had he really wanted to create a "scripture" of his own, as Mohammed later did and others after him, then it would have been easy enough for him to do so. Therefore, let us briefly imagine that at some point, and for some unknown reason, he did decide to add a document of his own. What might that document have looked like?

Would it have looked like the Laodicean letter that has come down to us, and which is the subject of our present enquiry? If we allow that it might have, then we can easily judge the matter by considering the number of points that are contained in that letter and which either agree with, or are intended to promote or advertise Marcion's decidedly twisted but very obvious and plain ideas. After all, if Marcion *had* composed the Laodicean letter, then here was the perfect opportunity to allay any doubts about the validity of what Marcion was trying to say. Here would have been a letter straight from the horse's mouth as it were, the horse being the one apostle who had championed Marcion's cause, the great Apostle Paul himself.

Marcion had made much of the claim that Paul was the only apostle to agree with him, even to the extent of excluding all other apostles from his system, and here Marcion's "Paul" could have held forth at length against the God of the Old Testament and the "wickedness" of His laws, and how He "hated" the Lord Jesus, whose Father was "superior" to the Creator God. Here Marcion's "Paul" could have disowned the Jews and repudiated the Law, and in short, have verified every one of the arch-heretic's wondrous notions. Therefore, our Letter to Laodicea must surely contain such arguments and ideas. Or there must surely remain some

fragment or even a mere trace of a Marcionite heresy in its few brief verses - mustn't there?

Turning to the letter, we see there are none. There is not a hint of an idea which departs in any sense from any book or letter that lies within the standard canon of either the New Testament or the Old. That is extraordinary. Modernists assure us that here is a forged Marcionite epistle, and yet it contains not a whiff of Marcion's ideas, nor yet any of those belonging to the Docetists or the Manichaeists, all of whose ideas succeeded Marcion's and fed off each other, ironically growing into that heresy of today called Modernism. So, on seeing that the Laodicean letter would thus have ranked as one of the greatest lost opportunities of all time had it truly been composed by Marcion, we must ask ourselves where the modernists might have got their own strange notion from?The Muratorian Canon

Lodovico Muratori was the archivist and librarian of the Duke of Modena, having taken up the post in 1700.²⁹ Whilst at work in this capacity, he discovered what was to prove the oldest extant list of New Testament and other writings, known ever since (after its

discoverer) as the Muratorian Canon. The list was bound into the 8th-century Ambrosiana Manuscript, and was considered (no doubt rightly) to date from the latter half of the 2nd century, because certain known historical figures from that time, Pius I, Hermas, Marcion, Basilides and Montanus, are all said to be contemporaries of the list's author.

Our interest in the list stems from the fact that not only does it contain a strange canon for the New Testament, omitting Hebrews, James and 1 and 2 Peter whilst including the 'Apocalypse of Peter', but it also positively rejects the "Marcionite Epistles of St Paul to Laodicea and Alexandria," as well as a list of Gnostic and Montanist writings. Interestingly, the list is written out in very bad Latin for the reason that it derives from a Greek original and has thus been forced to conform to the Greek idiom (we shall encounter this phenomenon again), but it is from this source that the modernists claim a Marcionite composition for the Laodicean letter that has come down to us.

Now, it is clear from all our considerations mentioned above that the letter which has come down to us is not from Marcion's hands, nor, for the same reasons, could it be from the hands of his followers. Doctrinally, it is purer by far than any document could possibly have been that had emerged from or passed through the hands of the Marcionite school. Therefore, the Marcionite letter to the Laodiceans mentioned in the Muratorian Canon, and the Laodicean letter which has actually come down to us, are not, and never could have been, one and the same document.

However, the appearance in the Muratorian Canon of a reference to a Marcionite epistle to Laodicea, whether that refers to an actual document now lost, or whether, as is more likely, the compiler of the Muratorian Canon had wrongly assumed that

our epistle belonged to Marcion, has afforded the modernist school the opportunity of dismissing the letter that we are considering as a "late and utterly worthless" forgery. But it is a claim that flies in the face of all the evidence that has come down to us. In brief, the statement, "There are extant also a letter to the Laodiceans (*Epistola ad Laodicenses*) and another to the Alexandrians, forged under Paul's name to further the heresy of Marcion"³⁰ could hardly be more mistaken. The Letter to the Ephesians?

One authority, though, (and here we must digress for a moment), who disagrees with the notion of a Marcionite origin for the epistle, invents another of his own and has this to say:

"In the genuine epistle to the Colossians, Paul, after instructing them to send their Epistle to Laodicea, adds, 'read that which is from the Laodiceans.' This most probably regards a circular letter, the canonical 'Ephesians'; but it has been held to be a lost letter to the Laodicean Christians. The apocryphal epistle" [i.e. that document which is the subject of this present paper] "is a transparent attempt to supply the lost sacred document....It can hardly be the pseudo-Laodicean letter said by the Muratorian Fragment to have been invented by the heresiarch Marcion. Despite its insipid and suspicious character, this compilation was frequently copied in the Middle Ages, and enjoyed a certain degree of respect, although St Jerome had written of it: *ab omnibus exploditur*."³¹

Loosely translated, Jerome's comment means, "by which all else is booted off the stage" - meaning that it afforded critics of his own day the opportunity to dismiss the rest of the New Testament as false. But that Paul could have been referring to his Epistle to the *Ephesians* when he exhorted the Colossians to read his letter to the Laodiceans, is a suggestion that would be mischievous were it not so naive. It would compel us to assume that Paul either did not know the name of his own letter, or was so stupid that he was quite capable of making a mistake of this magnitude. But before we extend any credibility to the notion, we must remember that Paul's exhortation to read that letter is contained in his Epistle to the Colossians (4:16), which in turn is part of the New Testament, which in turn is inspired directly by the Spirit of God. In other words, the mistake would not be Paul's but the Holy Spirit's who guided him, and it is a dangerous matter indeed to charge Him with error who is the God of all Truth. For which reason alone we need consider the Ephesian hypothesis no further, except to note what a very deep hole its exponents seem to dig for themselves. The New Testament Canon

We have already noted the fact that our Laodicean epistle has never occupied a place in the canon of the New Testament. Indeed, the first time we get a hint of its existence, apart from Paul's own mention of it in his letter to the Colossians (4:16), is, as we have seen, in the Muratorian Canon of about AD 180. Then the letter seems to disappear from view until it emerges about two hundred years later in certain

early manuscripts of Jerome's Latin Vulgate version of the New Testament - and from thence into the 15th-century Middle English translation of Wycliffe's followers. It is clear from reasons that we shall consider shortly, that this Latin version of the epistle is not its original, but that it is a Latin translation from an earlier Greek original. So, the question naturally arises that if this epistle was indeed not just in Greek, but from Paul's own hand, then why was it not included in the collection of other Pauline epistles that have come down to us in the New Testament? For the answer, we need to consider just how the canon of the New Testament came into being.³²

Here we must try to consider a matter that is, even for the Bible-believing Christian, (we might say, *especially* for the Bible-believing Christian) a profound and wonderful mystery, for the books of the New Testament (as do the Old) have a strange and mysterious quality that is quite unknown to *any* other literary work in human history. Ordinary writings are but words written on paper. They can be good or bad or indifferent, wise or foolish. But the words of Scripture are something else besides, possessed of a power that the ungodly cannot even suspect. Indeed, it surprises even the godly from time to time.

By way of illustration, let us consider what happened to Martin Luther, the 16th-century German monk who sparked off the Reformation in Germany, and which was soon to set all Europe ablaze. The well-known story is told, from his own pen, of how he was struggling with his inability ever to be righteous, no matter what good works or penances he might happen to do, when one day, as he was reading the New Testament, his eyes lighted on Romans 1:17 (itself a reference to Habakkuk 2:4), "The just shall live by faith."

Now, Martin Luther was a Doctor of Theology, and he was familiar with these six short words from sources other than the New Testament. Indeed, the words are cited and their meaning made clear in the *Theologica Germanica*, a 14th-century work which was thought of so highly by Luther that he took it upon himself to supervise it through the press in 1518.³³ But when he had read the words, "The just shall live by faith," in the *Theologica*, they strangely had held no meaning for him. The words are the same words, and written in the same order, as those in Romans 1:17. Yet, when he read them in Romans, it was as if his soul was set alight, and he was quite literally reborn - created anew - as he read them. In fact, we know from Scripture that we are, quite literally, born again by the Spirit of God when we come to believe the Gospel, and this is the life-giving effect that these six short words had had on Luther's mind and soul - but only when he had read them in the New Testament.

It is an extraordinary and (humanly-speaking) an indefinable phenomenon of the books of Scripture that they have this transforming effect upon the reader, and we can explain the phenomenon in no better terms than that the words of Scripture are themselves made alive by the Spirit of God. I know of no born-again Bible-believing Christian who has not experienced this miracle for himself, and who does not

experience that life-giving, life-renewing effect in reading the Word of God often thereafter. It is what distinguishes the Bible - the living Word of the living God Himself - from all other literature in human history, and it is what marks out the books and letters of the New Testament (and the Old) as originating in the heart of God to the men and women who lived in the very earliest days of the Church and to the Christian believer of today.

Yet there *is* a material and practical history to the canon of the New Testament which, even so, is veiled from our plain sight at least as far as its very beginnings are concerned, which is not without good reason. Let me explain. Contrary to popular assumption, there never was a meeting or a council of the Church at which it was decided which books should make up the New Testament. Those early councils which do mention the canonical books do so only by way of ratification and never by way of invention. In other words, they mention a canon which was already established by the time the council sat, and never pronounce judgment on the matter of which books are to be newly accepted and which newly rejected. It is a strange phenomenon indeed, but I think that Professor Bruce has it exactly right when he says:

"What is particularly important to notice is that the New Testament canon was not demarcated by the arbitrary decree of any Church Council. When at last a Church Council - the Synod of Hippo in A.D. 393 - listed the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, it did not confer upon them any authority which they did not already possess, but simply recorded their previously established canonicity. As Dr. Foakes-Jackson puts it: 'The Church assuredly did not make the New Testament; the two grew up together.' *We may well believe that those early Christians acted by a wisdom higher than their own in this matter, not only in what they accepted, but in what they rejected. Divine authority is by its very nature self-evidencing; and one of the profoundest doctrines recovered by the Reformers is the doctrine of the inward witness of the Holy Spirit, by which testimony is borne within the believer's heart to the divine character of Holy Scripture.*"³⁴ (Italics mine)

It is thus wrongly held by the Catholic hierarchy that the Church was before the New Testament in time and history and is therefore before it in authority, a belief still strongly adhered to. Indeed, if left to the 'church' or its councils, we would likely not have had a New Testament to speak of, for the canon of Scripture was assailed not just by Marcion and his legions, but by the ignorance and credulity of many within the church who should have known better. We have already witnessed the subtle ways in which Clement, the third 'bishop' of Rome, sought to undermine the plain teachings of the Bible in his dealings with the believers of Corinth. But there were others, more learned than he, who nevertheless had an imperfect concept of Scripture, particularly that of the New Testament. Amongst them, we may think of Irenaeus (late 2nd cent.) who rejected the authenticity of Paul's letter to the

Hebrews, though he acknowledged the Gospels, all of Paul's other letters, *some* of the other pastoral epistles and Revelation.³⁵ Writing in ca AD 230, Origen counts the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, Paul's thirteen epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John and Revelation as canonical, whilst disputing the canonicity of Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James and Jude.³⁶ We say nothing of the apocryphal books that he accepted as inspired. Others lent their own wisdom to the dispute, and such was the disagreement amongst certain of the "church fathers" regarding which books were canonical and which not, that it is a mystery how we finished up with the canon that we have. We know with absolute certainty that it was never the product of church councils or synods, or any other human institution for that matter, few of which could agree on anything substantial. So what is the evidence that we do have regarding the birth and growth of the New Testament canon?

Well, not much, because the process was essentially an operation of the Holy Spirit rather than of man, and as much in the heart of the individual believer as in the Church at large, and so the physical evidence is, not surprisingly, a little sparse. The first clue that we have, though, is that the process began with the writing of Matthew's Gospel at an *extremely* early time of the church, within just a few short years of our Lord's Resurrection in fact.³⁷ But there are other hints within the New Testament itself of the church soon beginning to rely upon a growing corpus of books and writings that are acknowledged and looked to as authoritative and inspired Scripture.

In particular, when Luke begins his Gospel, he tells Theophilus: "Forasmuch as many

have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us..." (Luke 1:1), thus bearing testimony to the written gospels of more than one writer (Matthew and Mark in the forefront, no doubt) that were already in circulation at the time of his own writing.

Again, when Paul writes to the Corinthians, "that the Lord Jesus, in the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it and said, 'Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of Me.' After the same manner also, He took the cup when He had supped, saying, 'This cup is the New Testament in My blood. This do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of Me.'" (1 Cor. 11:23-5) - he is surely relying on Matthew 26:26-8, Mark 14:22-4, and Luke 22:19-20, all three of which were not just in existence by the time 1 Corinthians was written (early 50's), but were clearly accepted by Paul as authoritative.

Then, at the end of John's Gospel, we have this intriguing and equally authoritative subscription: "This," [referring to John] "is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and we know that his testimony is true." (John 21:24). Clearly, John's Gospel was accepted as canonical from the moment of its writing, though it would

be delightful to discover just who wrote the subscription and who the "we" refers to - his fellow disciples perhaps?

We must also, of course, bear firmly in mind the fact that when scholars speak of the 27 books of the New Testament canon being *first* enumerated at the Synod of Hippo in 393, it would be more accurate to say that the Hippo list is the earliest *surviving* list of the complete New Testament canon that has come down to us, for there were more than one of the early church councils whose minutes and records have not survived at all, and no one can say with any degree of certainty that none of these councils had listed the canon long before the delegates at the Synod of Hippo. Moreover, we see that when the canonicity of a New Testament document was questioned, no matter how early on that may have been, that document must already have been regarded as canonical by many for the scholar - surely the Modernist of his day - to challenge it. And as we have seen in the cases of Irenaeus and Origen, considered by most to be of great authority within the early church, such questioners were *always* proved to be wrong - on *every* count.

Nor can we know for any degree of certainty that the ordinary believer looked to an imperfect canon for nigh four hundred years (an unlikely enough prospect in itself). Indeed, our experience tells us that what is pronounced by Synod and Church Council today is often far removed from what the man in the pew thinks and believes, and this situation seems to have prevailed throughout the history of the church. Which is why almost every church council has found that, after its deliberations are published, it is surrounded by a world of new 'heretics' that weren't there before and are otherwise unaware of the council's often political deliberations.

The "man in the pew" would moreover have had the inward witness of the Holy Spirit when he read the Scriptures, a Witness that is decidedly lacking amongst the apocryphal books and epistles, and which is rarely seen or witnessed in the councils of the church. The Synod of Hippo, we must remember, merely reiterated what the man in the pew was *already* reading and had long held to be Scripture. It did not, indeed *could* not, dictate what should or should not be accepted from that moment on.

Ironically, our greatest ally in this question is the heretic Marcion, for his ambition as early as AD 140 was to destroy the New Testament (and disregard the Old). And how did he do this - by attacking the apocryphal books, the *Shepherd* of Hermas for example, or the *Didache*? Did he ever question the *Gospel of Thomas*, or the *Apocalypse of Peter*? Assuredly not. There is not a hint that he ever attacked an *apocryphal* book of the New Testament. When he had a mind to destroy the Scriptures, he went straight for the *same* canonical books of the New Testament that we recognize today - which was mighty strange prescience on his part if the canon were not already in place by his own day.

But Marcion needed no such prescience. He knew only too well which New Testament writings were looked to as inspired Scripture by the early church, and he acted accordingly. Which leaves us with only one question to ask on this subject, a question which no modernist has been quick to answer, namely, how could Marcion possibly have attacked the New Testament canon if that canon was not yet in existence - recognized and strongly adhered to by the church - as early as the year AD 140 and, clearly, long before? The silence which always greets this question - when it is asked at all - is deafening. So why not the Laodicean Epistle?

Which brings us now to the question of why Paul's letter to the Laodicean church was never included in the Spirit-inspired, mysteriously appointed canon of the New Testament. The answer, it seems, is straightforward enough, though it consists of more than one element. Reading the Laodicean letter as it has come down to us, it is immediately obvious even to the casual enquirer that in its earliest translation into Latin, it is fragmented, the text being disjointed in content. In other words, the translation from the Greek original (which we shall consider shortly) was a translation from a document which, though genuine enough, had clearly suffered serious physical damage very early on in its history.

This damage was probably due to the fact that the original letter was written on papyrus, and papyrus, we know, suffers a peculiar kind of deterioration either over time, with misuse or by accident. Because of the way it is made, papyrus disintegrates by losing long and squarish blocks of material. (Parchment, on the other hand, generally deteriorates from the edges of the page inwards, because the parchment consists of a single piece of skin or leather).

This peculiar characteristic of papyrus is due to the fact that it is made up of strands pressed and glued together, and these can disintegrate anywhere on or within the papyrus sheet, in the middle or along the outside edges. So that, in a damaged sheet of papyrus, we can be left with squarish or elongated gaps in the text, gaps which, for those who encounter them only in transcriptions or translations from the original, can seem mighty similar to the results of capricious editing, in this case giving a dubious substance to the modernist idea that the Laodicean letter had been heavily edited in a Marcionite kind of way if not actually by Marcion himself, even though any literary evidence for his hand in the matter is, as we have seen, entirely non-existent.

The illustration in fig 1 demonstrates the manner in which papyrus can deteriorate, and if the text in the illustration were translated into Latin, with no editorial apparatus to show that there existed great gaps in the text, then the result would be a translation that would be disjointed, to say the least, if not nonsensical in places. For those Greek sentences of the Laodicean letter that are damaged or incomplete, our translator might well add what he thinks the beginning or ending (or both) should have been, but again without any editorial apparatus to allow the reader to distinguish between the original text and its editor/translator's own conjectural work. Such editorial disciplines simply did not exist in Roman times.

Furthermore, and as if to vindicate all that has been said in this regard, it is a fascinating characteristic of the Laodicean letter's Latin text, that in many of the early editions the text breaks off halfway through the 10th verse: *Ergo, dilectissimi, ut audistis praesentia mei....*, conveying the definite impression that during its use as a textual model, the papyrus original had deteriorated yet further, losing the entire lower half of its text.³⁸ Only a severely damaged papyrus could be expected to display such characteristics.

But whether or not the papyrus on which the Greek original had been written became damaged, and no matter how that damage might have occurred by the time the document came into the hands of its Latin translators, it is nevertheless the case that the complete and unspoilt original was excluded from the canon of the New Testament at the time the canon was being formed, even though it was, ostensibly, from the hand of an apostle, notably the apostle Paul himself. Now why should this be?

We must remember, of course, that apostolic authorship was not in itself a criterion for inclusion in the canon. Neither Mark nor Luke were apostles - Luke indeed was not even a Jew - and yet their Gospels have enjoyed a firmly entrenched position within the New Testament canon from the very earliest days. Moreover, the misconception regarding apostolic authorship's guarantee of a place in the canon has confused even the greatest and best amongst our Biblical scholars, for F F Bruce is quick to claim that there is no record, except among the Marcionites, of any genuinely apostolic writing being refused admission into the canon.³⁹

But surely Bruce is mistaken, for examples of just such a rejection could easily be added from the New Testament itself. Let us consider the two lost letters that Paul says he wrote to the Corinthians (and here I am indebted to Dr Gene Jeffries for reminding me of this fact). The epistles that we know as I & II Corinthians, are in fact the second and the fourth of Paul's letters to that church: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators" (I Cor. 5:9); & compare II Cor. 2:4 and 7:8, which refer to a third such letter. So, what happened to the first and third of his letters?

Like the two surviving letters to the Corinthians that have come down to us in the canon, they were certainly written by the apostle Paul. He himself lays claim to them. And yet they were not included by the Spirit of God in the canon of the New Testament. Given that their doctrine was pure enough - nowhere does Paul apologize for their content - they could not have been excluded on that account, which leaves us with a mystery pure and simple. We would need to discover the secret counsels of God to answer the question of their exclusion, and that is way beyond the capabilities or even the remit of human scholarship. So it is to be accepted as a fact of life and a fact of history. Paul's second and fourth letters were included in the canon and are known to us as I & II Corinthians, whereas his first

and third letters to that church are lost to us for all time. Why is a question that we cannot answer.

So, bearing all this in mind along with the obvious limitations of scholarship, we might consider possible reasons for the Laodicean letter's exclusion, and consider them in the absence of Paul's first and third letters to the Corinthians with which the Laodicean letter might usefully have been compared, and the one that springs foremost to mind is the simple fact that Paul's letter to the Laodiceans lacks any real spiritual authority. In other words, though its sentiments are nowhere in conflict with those expressed throughout either the New Testament or the Old, the fact remains that it is not an "inspired" document in the same way that we know the New Testament canon in general to be inspired, empowered and indeed enlivened by the Spirit of God Himself. In its present state, it is, in the words of an earlier commentator, "insipid."

It would be an entirely false view if we were to suppose that Paul only ever wrote "inspired" letters. Paul was an ordinary mortal, and doubtless wrote a great deal, both to the churches and about them, that was not "inspired," even though it was doubtless true and edifying. Indeed, he was ready to admit, even in the midst of writing an inspired letter - and here we may return to what we now know as his first letter to the Corinthians - that a certain piece of advice that he was about to give concerning marriage, was not from the Lord, in contradistinction to everything else in the letter that was:

"And unto the married, I command - yet not I but the Lord - let not the wife depart from her husband. But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband, and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I - not the Lord - if any brother..." (1 Cor. 7:10-12).

It seems sensible to suppose that when Paul wrote his letter to the Laodicean church, he was not writing under the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, beyond writing as a mere Christian pastor to his flock. And doubtless, his thoroughly inspired letter to the Philippian church was either fresh in his mind or had moved him deeply enough to try to express its sentiments and teachings in his own ordinary words, which is doubtless why the words of the Laodicean letter differ so markedly from those of Philippians, even though both letters utter the same basic doctrine and sentiments to such an extent that modernists have erroneously stated the one to be a mish-mash of the other.

It may also be the case that when the Latin translator encountered in the original (damaged) papyrus broken sentences that suggested familiar themes from Philippians, he added his own reconstructions to them in a general accordance with the inspired letter, thus giving an appearance of similarity though the (undamaged) original's contents may have been different and/or original enough. Lightfoot's 'Reconstruction' of the Greek Text

Next only to the failure of discovering the original Greek text of the Laodicean letter, perhaps the greatest disappointment encountered during the research for this project has been the calculated reluctance amongst modern scholars to make any real attempt to reconstruct the original Greek text (which seemingly has not survived) from its Latin translation (which has). The exercise would have been perfectly legitimate and one scholar who could have supplied a very plausible reconstruction had he bothered, is Bishop Lightfoot (1828-89), whose competence in Greek and Latin was more than equal to the task, but who chose instead to offer the spurious ‘reconstruction’ that appears in this paper as fig 2. It is spurious for the simple reason that he has unwarrantably assumed that the Laodicean letter’s original Greek text must have been a mish-mash of Greek New Testament verses. It is the same abysmal error that the letter’s Latinist critics have committed, but one that he could so easily have avoided.⁴⁰

To be brief, for what his ‘reconstruction’ is worth, he needn’t have bothered. Lightfoot certainly attempts to add a veneer of plausibility to his effort (for example, by using an archaic form of the Greek alphabet for his ‘reconstruction’ - see fig 2), but the fact remains that his very low opinion of the Laodicean epistle ("this miserable cento", he calls it) has prevented him from lending the project the benefit of his otherwise profound and wide-ranging scholarship. It is a great pity, and his appeal to certain precedents observed in the Latin Vulgate as to how certain Greek words or phrases might have been translated by Latin authors, does little to assure the more wary student that what he is offering is in any way adequate. However, he does offer the following observations concerning the many evidences that exist within the Laodicean epistle’s Latin text which betray the underlying and undeniable presence of a Greek original:

"Altogether it has not the run of a Latin original. And when we come to examine it in

detail, we find that this constraint is due very largely to the fetters imposed by close adherence to Greek idiom....It is quite possible indeed that parallels for some of these anomalies may be found in Latin writers....The Greek cast however is not confined to one or two expressions but extends to the whole letter."⁴¹

Such an appreciation should have been spur enough to have goaded Lightfoot into reconstructing a plausible Greek text for the epistle with all the Latin anomalies that were there to guide him, and one can only express surprise that a scholar of his stamp and mettle, bold enough to charge in on so many other issues, should now have withdrawn so timidly from a task that might have forwarded our understanding of the subject to no insignificant degree.

He certainly discusses in meticulous detail the various early Latin manuscripts in which the Laodicean epistle is to be found, and lists in even greater detail the

variant readings that exist between each manuscript.⁴² But all this achieves is to discuss the *later* history and vicissitudes of the letter, and not its origins.

There are also one or two oddities concerning Lightfoot's proffered 'reconstruction' of the letter's Greek text, the most peculiar, perhaps, being his omission of the entire 17th verse. The question is, is this a typographical error made by the printer (in which case it is unlikely to have escaped the notice of the proof-reader), or is it an omission by Lightfoot himself? Bishop Lightfoot died in 1889, some eight years before his study of the Laodicean letter was printed. It may therefore be the case that his manuscript copy omitted the verse, in which case it is equally strange that the printer did not include a footnote to that effect.⁴³ It is yet another little mystery surrounding this epistle.

To it we may add one more, namely the very curious "? ? ?" that appears in the 5th verse of Lightfoot's offering. It implies that he encountered an illegible word in an original document, whereas his 'reconstruction' is merely a copy of Greek New Testament verses. Whatever his reason behind this editorial mark, he denigrates Hutter's effort by stating that in the light of it (Hutter's translation), it was necessary for him (Lightfoot) to "retranslate" the letter's Latin text back into Greek.⁴⁴ If only he had done just that.

One item of value that Lightfoot includes in his appraisal is his discussion of those scholars of the ancient world who held that the Laodicean epistle had indeed come from the hand of Paul. These run from Gregory the Great to Aelfric of Cerne and later scholars, and Lightfoot takes pause only to make the (to him satisfying) observation that Reformation scholarship finally killed off all such erroneous speculation. But then follows his final lament:

"But some eccentric spirits on both sides were still found to maintain its genuineness. Thus on the one hand the Lutheran Steph. Praetorius prefaces his edition of this epistle (A.D. 1595) with the statement that he 'restores it to the Christian Church'; he gives his opinion that it was written 'either by the Apostle himself or by some other Apostolic man'....On the other hand the Jesuit Stapleton was not less eager in his advocacy of this miserable cento. To him its genuineness had a controversial value.... But such phenomena were quite abnormal. The dawn of the Reformation epoch had effectually scared away this ghost of a Pauline epistle, which (we may confidently hope) has been laid forever and will not again be suffered to haunt the mind of the Church."⁴⁵

Alas for Lightfoot's hope. The Laodicean epistle walks again, and its resurgence is due, in part at least, to the work of one scholar who lived three centuries before Lightfoot. Hutter's Reconstruction

Lightfoot's abysmal effort notwithstanding, a serious attempt was made at the close of the 16th century to supply a plausible reconstruction of the Laodicean epistle's Greek text. It appears in this paper as fig 3, and was made by Elias Hutter in 1599.⁴⁶ The value of Hutter's reconstruction is its very serious attempt to offer a plausible Greek source for the Latin translation that has come down to us, *without* reference to any New Testament epistle, and it is probably as close to the original's Greek text as we are ever likely to get.

We will see from fig 3 that Hutter's reconstruction is dressed in a most unusual typography, but that hardly robs it of its value. Unlike Lightfoot, Hutter seems to have had no particular axe to grind over the genuineness or otherwise of the Laodicean letter, although I think we can assume that he must have accepted its historical authenticity. Why else would he have included it without further comment in his polyglot edition of the New Testament? And is it likely that he would have included it if he'd entertained serious doubts that it was from the hand of Paul? We may hardly think so.

But as we consider Hutter's offering, we may wonder at the fact that Lightfoot was so unhappy with it that he decided that a "retranslation" was called for. Perhaps what made it so unpalatable to Lightfoot, was the fact that Hutter's reconstruction was entirely independent of

the New Testament epistles, which independence was not something that Lightfoot wished to see proven. The opinion that he wished to prove was that the Laodicean letter was a mere mish-mash of Greek New Testament verses, mainly from Philippians, yet Hutter had shown that an independent text was more than just a possibility. That is why Lightfoot ignored it and offered his own less than scholarly effort.

We must also bear in mind the fact that Hutter's reconstruction of the Laodicean text was something that Lightfoot's offering was not, namely a direct translation of the Latin text into Greek. Using the Latin anomalies to guide him, Hutter was able to give a very plausible idea of what the original Greek text would have consisted of (in its undamaged parts at any rate). We can never be sure that his offering is entirely accurate, of course, because, like English, *koine* Greek was a rich and diverse language where a given author had a choice of verbs and nouns with which to express a given subject. But his offering is at least plausible, and it will serve us very well until or unless the original Greek text is discovered.

Conclusion

Assuming that the original Greek text of the Laodicean letter will remain undiscovered, we have reached the end of the road as far as direct evidence is concerned regarding the letter's historical authenticity. We have considered many objections and suppositions that have been put forward since the mid-2nd century that seek to discredit the letter as a

blatant forgery, yet we have also seen that each objection is in turn discredited under the light of hard evidence.

Marcion, we have seen, could not have composed the letter, as it bears nothing of his stamp or philosophy. Neither can any post-apostolic Latin or Roman author have written it, as it contains not one of the sentiments or ideas which so quickly infected the Roman church once the apostles were dead. It stands apart from what we call the New Testament Apocryphal writings, lacking (unlike them) the slightest deviation in doctrine or innovation. It is certainly not what many nowadays claim it to be, namely a mish-mash of New Testament verses. The Latin text alone differs so much from the Latin New Testament verses with which it shares some similarity of sentiment, that it is plain that the Greek verses of the original differed from the Greek verses of the New Testament just as much. Difference is not similarity, and even similarity is not sameness or identity. Yet certain modernist scholars would have the unwary believe that, in this case at least, there is no real distinction between one or the other.

What we do have in the Laodicean letter is an admittedly damaged text, caused perhaps by the material (papyrus) upon which it was written. For that reason it might be more accurate to refer to the letter as the Laodicean fragment. But what little does remain of its contents is entirely "primitive" in doctrine and sentiment, with not one phrase, sentence or verse being in conflict with any part of the Bible, Old Testament or New. The vocabulary and syntax of the Latin text are entirely in keeping with a document that has been translated from the Greek, as even Lightfoot so candidly admits, and it allows a most plausible reconstruction to be made of the probable Greek text - as Hutter has so ably demonstrated.

In short, when we consider the claims made by the opposing camps concerning the genuineness or otherwise of this letter, we are forced to the conclusion that those who would claim that it is a forgery, enjoy not the smallest item of credible evidence to support their view. Opinions and suppositions they have a-plenty, but no evidence.

On the other hand, when we consider the arguments for the letter's historical authenticity, we must confess ourselves mightily impressed with the array of both internal and external items of evidence that together compel the view that this fragment is what it claims to be, namely a portion of a letter once written by Paul to the Laodicean church. As such it is a unique and precious item of immense archaeological, literary and theological importance concerning our Christian heritage, and it is the view of the present writer that nothing should be allowed to rob us of that.

Footnotes1) *The Wycliffe New Testament (1388)*. 2002. ed. W R Cooper. British Library. London.

2) Colossians 4:16.

- 3) Rawlinson Ms. 259 (Bodleian) fo. 131v, for example, exhorts the reader thus at the end of Colossians: "and rede ye that pistle that is of laodicensis."
- 4) Magd. Coll. Camb. Pepys 2073 (6751). cit. Forshall & Madden. vol 4. p. 438-9.
- 5) See Introduction of my edition of *The Wycliffe New Testament* (1388) cited above.
- 6) Col. 4:15.
- 7) *Oxf. Dict. Of the Christian Church*. ed. Cross. p. 799. See also Arnold, pp. 85-7 & 242 for certain articles of this council.
- 8) *New Bible Dictionary*. p. 716.
- 9) *ibid.*
- 10) *ibid.* p. 300.
- 11) *ibid.*
- 12) cit. Lightfoot, *St Clement of Rome*. p. 4.
- 13) *ibid.* p. 7.
- 14) Matthew 23:8.
- 15) Lightfoot. *St Clement of Rome*. p. 8.
- 16) *ibid.*
- 17) Galatians 1:6. I am particularly indebted here to Dr James J Scofield Johnson for drawing my attention to Arnold's invaluable *The Colossian Syncretism* (see Bibliography) which shows something of the extent to which the early church fell prey so early on, not to persecution, but to a mixing of the Gospel with pagan theology and practices.
- 18) Gontard. *The Popes*. pp. 66-7.
- 19) *ibid.* p. 67.
- 20) *ibid.*
- 21) As in Trin. Coll. Camb. MS. B. 5. 1(x)., for example, which contains the following 'capitula' or heading (we would say Prologue): "*Incipiunt capitula epistole ad Laodicensis. Paulus apostolus pro Laodicensibus Domino gratias refert er hortatur eos ne a seductoribus decipiantur, de manifestis vinculis apostoli in quibus letatur et*

gaudet, monet Laodicensis apostolus ut sicut sui audierunt praesentia ita retineant et sine retractu faciant, hortatur apostolus Laodicensis ut fide sint firmi et quae integra et vera et Deo placita sunt faciant, et salutatio fratrum. Expliciunt capitula'' - a mere and unimportant summary of contents.

22) A strange word that seems unnaturally derived from the Latin. But then, the Rheims version was a conscious attempt to latinize the New Testament and return it to the distortions of Jerome. Tyndale (1526), translating from the Greek, has 'dissension,' whilst the earlier Wycliffe New Testament of 1388 (like Rheims, being also a translation of the Vulgate) has 'division,' both more accurate - and more naturally *English* - than 'concision'.

23) Most of Marcion's biographical details are taken from the *Oxf. Dict. Of the Christian Church*, p. 870; and from Gontard, pp. 70-6.

24) Gontard. p. 72.

25) *ibid.*

26) These and the following details are from *Oxf. Dict. Of the Christian Church*. p. 870.

27) Docetism would have been truly laughable had it not been for the damage it caused within the church. It ascribed a phantom-like quality to Jesus, whose sufferings were more apparent than real, and who was said to have changed places either with Judas Iscariot or Simon of Cyrene just as the crucifixion occurred, thus escaping death. What the soldiers who were charged with carrying out the crucifixion and the on-looking members of the Sanhedrin who had demanded it, thought of this sudden swapping of victims, we are nowhere told.

28) Bruce. *The Books and the Parchments*. pp. 108-9.

29) These and the following details are taken from *Oxf. Dict. of the Christian Church*, p. 950.

30) *Documents of the Christian Church*. p. 41. (Art. by Westcott, 'The Muratorian Canon').

31) *Catholic Encyclopaedia*. vol 1. p. 614.

32) The following details are taken from Bruce's *The Books and the Parchments*, pp. 104-13; *New Bible Dict.* vol. 1. pp. 240-5 and the *Oxford Dict. Of the Christian Church*, pp. 232-3.

33) *Oxf. Dict. Of the Christian Church*, p. 1363.

34) Bruce, *Books and the Parchments*, p. 113.

35) *New Bible Dict.* vol 1. p. 242-3.

36) According to Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* Vi. 25., cit. Bruce, *Books and Parchments*, p.112.

37) The Gospel of Matthew, for example, was in circulation in countries other than Israel, and indeed in remote countries of Europe, within only years of the Resurrection. See Part One of this book.

38) Forshall & Madden. vol 4. p. 438.

39) Bruce. *Books and Parchments*. p. 110.

40) Lightfoot. *Epistle to the Colossians*. p. 291, where he makes the following remarkable boast: "But I have retranslated (*sic!*) the [Laodicean] epistle anew, introducing the Pauline passages of which it is almost entirely made up, as they stand in the Greek New Testament." We may wonder how he can call copying NT verses almost *verbatim* a retranslation.

41) Lightfoot. p. 289.

42) *ibid.* pp. 279-85.

43) *ibid.* p. 292.

44) *ibid.* p. 291.

45) *ibid.* p. 298.

46) Hutter, Elias. *Novum Testamentum Domini Iesu Christi*. 1599. Noribergae (Germany).

This is a magnificent polyglot edition of the New Testament in no less than twelve European languages, making its author one the great unsung heroes of post-Reformation scholarship. Today, of course, he is unheard of.

Wycliffe A version in original spelling:

"Poul, apostle, not of men ne bi man, but bi Jhesu Crist, to the britheren that ben of Laodice, grace to you and pees, of God the fadir and of the Lord Jhesu Crist. Gracis I do to Crist bi al myn orisoun that ye be dwellinge in him and lastinge, bi the beheest abidinge in the dai of doom. Ne he vnordeynede vs of sum veyn speche feynynge, that vs ouerturne fro the sothfastnesse of the gospel that of me is prechid. Also now schal God do hem leuyng and doynge of blessidnesse of werkis, which heelthe of lyf is. And now openli ben my boondis whiche I suffre in Crist Jhesu, in whiche I glad and ioie, and that is to me heelthe euerlastynge, that that I dide with oure preieris and mynystringe the Holy Spirit bi lijf or bi deeth. It is forsothe to me lijf into Crist, and to die ioie withouten eende. In vs he schal do his merci, that ye haue the same louynge, and that ye be of o wil. Therefore, derlyngis, as ye han herd in presence of me, hold ye and do ye in drede of God, and it schal be to you lijf withouten eende. It is forsothe God that worchiith in vs. and do ye withouten ony withdrawinge what soeuer ye doon. And that it is, derlyngis, ioie ye in Crist and flee ye maad foul in clay. Alle youre axingis ben open anentis God, and be ye fastned in the witt of Crist. And whiche been hool and sooth, and chast and rightwijs and louable, do ye, and whiche herden and take in herte, hold ye, and it schal be to you pees. Holi men greeten you weel in the

grace of oure Lord Jhesu Crist, with the Holi Goost. And do ye that pistil of Colosensis to be red to you. Amen."

Glossary

gracis = thanks; *orisoun* = prayer; *beheest* = promise; *doom* = judgment

vnordeynede = unordained; *sothfastnesse* = truth; *hem* = them;

leuyng = leaving; *heelthe* = salvation; *boondis* = bonds; *ioie* = joy;

preieris = prayers; *axinigis* = askings; *anentis* = with; *rightwijs* = righteous

Appendix Two

‘Wycliffe B’ version of the letter in old spelling

Here bigynneth a prolog on the pistil to Laodicensis

"Laodicensis ben also Colocenses, as tweye townes and oo peple in maners. These ben of Asie. And among hem hadden be false apostlis and disceyuede manye. Therefore the postle bringith hem to mynde of his conuersacion and trewe preching of the gospel, and excitith hem to be stidfast in the trewe witt and loue of Crist, and to be of oo wil. But this pistil is not in comyn Latyn bookis, and therfor it was but late translatic into Englisch tunge."

Thus endith the prolog and biginneth the pistil of Laodicensis

Here bigynneth the epistle to the Laodicensis which is not in the canon

"Poul, apostle, not of men ne by man, but bi Jhesu Crist, to the britheren that ben at Laodice, grace to you and pees, of God the fadir and of the Lord Jhesu Crist. I do thankyngis to my God bi al my preier that ye be dwelling and lastyng in him, abiding the beheest in the day of doom. For neithir the veyn spekyng of summe vnwise men hath lettide you, the whiche wolden turne you fro the treuthe of the gospel that is prechid of me. And now hem that ben of me, to the profiyt of truthe of the gospel, God schal make disseruyng and doyng benygnyte of werkis and helthe of euerlasting lijf. And now my boondis ben open which Y suffre in Crist Jhesu, in whiche Y glade and ioie. And that is to me to euerlastyng helthe, that this same thing be doon by youre preiers and mynstryng of the Holi Goost, either bi lijf, either bi deeth. Forsothe to me it is lijf to lyue in Crist, and to die ioie. And his mercy schal do in you the same thing, that ye moun haue the same loue, and that ye be of oo will. Therefore, ye weel biloued britheren, holde ye and do ye in the dreede of God, as ye han herde the presence of me, and lijf schal be to you withouten eende. Sotheli it is God that worchith in you. And, my weel biloued britheren, do ye without eny withdrawyng whateuer thingis ye don. Joie ye in Crist, and eschewe ye men defoulid in lucre, either foul wynnyng. Be alle youre askyngis open anentis God, and be ye stidefast in the witt of Crist. And do ye tho thingis that ben hool and trewe, and chaast and iust, and able to be loued, and kepe ye in herte tho thingis that ye haue herd and take, and pees schal be to you. Alle holi men greten you weel. The grace of oure Lord Jhesu Crist be with youre spirit. And do ye that pistil of Colocensis to be red to you."

Here eendith the pistil to Laodicensis

Glossary

Colocenses = Colossians; *disceyuede* = deceived; *lettide* = hindered;

disseruyng = deserving; *benygnyte* = benignity; *moun* = may;

sotheli = soothly, truly; defoulid = made foul.

Appendix Three

The Epistle to the AlexandriansThe Muratorian Canon deprecates two early epistles as Marcionite forgeries, namely that to Laodicea (which we have here examined and found *not* to be of Marcionite origin), and that to the Alexandrians. According to M R James, the Alexandrian epistle is entirely lost, yet it seems that it may have survived, in part at least, in an 8th-century manuscript, shelfmark Paris. Bibliotheque Nationale. Lateran MS 13246. The heading to the epistle in this manuscript is *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians*, but this is clearly an error. The translation that follows is after the version of M R James (*Apocryphal New Testament*. pp. 479-80), and it is given here as an interesting comparison to the Laodicean epistle with which it seems to have been paired in the early days of the church. Like the Laodicean epistle, it appears to have been in a fragmented condition when translated from Greek into Latin, with at least the beginning and ending missing:

"Brethren, we that are under the power of the Lord, ought to keep the commandment of God. They that keep the Lord's precepts have eternal life, and they that deny His commandments get to themselves ruin and thereto the second death. Now the precept of the Lord is this: Thou shalt not swear falsely; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not take gifts against the truth, neither for power. Whoso hath power and denieth the truth, shall be denied the kingdom of God and be trodden down into hell, whence he cometh not forth again. How are we frail and deceitful - workers of sin! We do not repent daily, but daily do we commit sin upon sin. That ye may know this, dearly beloved brethren, that our works [are judged, hearken to that which] is written in this book: 'It shall be for a memorial against us in the day of judgment.' There shall be neither witnesses nor companions; neither shall judgment be given by gifts. For there is nothing better than faith, truth, chastity, fasting, and almsgiving, which putteth out all sins. And that which thou wouldst not have done to thyself, do not unto another. Agree thou for the kingdom of God, and thou shalt receive the crown which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Like the Laodicean letter, this is disjointed in content, but again seems to bear little (if any) of the doctrinal contamination that produced, so early on in the church's life, the apocryphal writings of the New Testament era (though it seems to read more like something that John might have written rather than Paul). But to expand upon its history beyond this present point would require a research programme for which far too little material exists - alas.

***James. *Apocryphal New Testament*. pp. 479-80.**

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PART 3: THE LATIN BIBLE.

A study in early Roman Catholic heresy.

Author's Note

Part 3 proceeds upon the proven assumption that the Word of God - the Bible as given in both the Old and New Testaments - is supremely trustworthy in all its shades and meanings, whether it speaks historically, linguistically, prophetically, doctrinally or in any other way. This inerrancy, however, is owned by the Bible only in its original autographs, be they Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek. As we shall see, it is all too possible to produce a purported translation of the Bible that perverts and misrepresents the meaning and words of the original autographs at certain crucial points and places, thus misleading the unwary reader into a false way of salvation. Such perversions of the Word are sometimes deliberate, sometimes inadvertent, but by the very nature of the subject, no translation - even the very *best* - can be entirely free of some fault or other. This is therefore not a nit-picking exercise. Rather, the subject of this present paper is a

consideration of a certain calculated and *deliberate* perversion of the Bible, one that wreaked havoc in the church in its own day, and continues to do so more than 1600 years later.

Introduction

It is often thought that the most influential book in the history of the western world has been the King James Bible. First published in 1611, it has exercised a truly profound effect upon western thought and history, particularly *Protestant* western thought and history, and even today, after nigh 400 years in print, it still leads the field amongst the now formidable array of English translations of the Bible - and still outsells all other books.

But, in seven years time - in the year 2011 - the King James Bible will have enjoyed only 400 years of life. Next to it, and making its 400 years seem but a brief time span, stands the Latin Vulgate Bible, first produced by Jerome more than 1600 years ago. And it is Jerome's translation of the Bible into Latin, that has had a greater and more profound impact upon the history of the western world than any other book - the King James Bible included. To which, however, I must add the qualifying remark that where the King James Bible has - under God - wrought tremendous good in the world, the Vulgate has not.

It has to be admitted that Jerome's Latin Bible is magnificent literature. Its constant and continuing usage over the past 1600 years testifies well to that fact. Jerome was a master of diction and syntax, and his Latin flows as readily and as beautifully as our finest English prose. His Latin translation's phrases are as memorable as anything that the King James Bible has to offer, and we must remember that it is no easy matter to translate either Greek or Hebrew into Latin. Commonly, Latin translations of Greek prose in particular are clumsy and strained, and their source is easily suspected even when the Greek original no longer exists or is spoken of. But Jerome was a linguistic and literary genius who was able to render *koine* or common Greek into the best everyday Latin, and his translation bears little of the awkwardness and clumsiness that has always dogged comparable works into that language.

However, it has also to be said that the Bible is something more than mere literature. It is not just another classic, Hebrew, Greek or otherwise. Rather it is the very Word of God. The holiness, righteousness, glory, honor, integrity and truthfulness of God are all bound up in it, and when all else has passed away into oblivion, His Word will still stand - for eternity.

To take from the Word of God is thus to take from His honesty and supreme trustworthiness. And to add to His Word is to sully it with the additions and fatal addenda of human philosophy. That is why careless meddling with the Word brings down such supremely dire consequences upon the culprit's head. In short, the Word is not to be tampered with, and neither is it to be judged, analysed or criticized as if God (if He

existed at all) were merely a man, so that at worst He should lie, or at best should speak in ignorance.

That is why the translation of the Bible from one language (usually Hebrew or Greek) into another, is beyond question one of the most sacred undertakings that a man can embark upon. It is so sacred that the man who takes such a work upon himself without first holding the direct commission of God - whose Word it is - opens himself to all kinds of perils, both physical and spiritual. Without God, there is every likelihood that he will color the translation with his own politico-religious views, as happened with Marcion in the 2nd century and with the Douai and Rheims 'translations' of the Bible in the 16th and 17th centuries. Without God, and reading the Scriptures without Christ, he will inevitably misunderstand the Gospel which will in turn appear as foolishness to him, and not being able to understand the Word himself, he will inevitably lead all those astray who may encounter his translation and take it as the authoritative Word of God.

The situation of such a man is therefore perilous. But much more so is the fate of that man who, *knowing* what the Word means in its original languages, and *knowing* what the true meanings are of certain crucial Hebrew or Greek words and phrases, deliberately sets out to pervert the Word, injecting into his translation of it doctrines that he must know to be false; who knowingly emasculates the Gospel by using words that corrupt or weaken its meaning, when other words that would convey the true meaning are available to him; and is happy to let his readers stumble along in spiritual blindness when he could have made the light of the Gospel clear to them - how much more perilous must that man's situation be?

Such a man, we will see, is Jerome, who, for all the magnificent talents he possessed, did indeed pervert the Word that he had been entrusted with. Under the guise of making the Bible available to all when his real intention was to hide it from the laity and render it available to only a select few of his day, Jerome prostituted his God-given abilities and was responsible for introducing notions into his translation that were to prove deadly, both to the Gospel and to all those millions who have been misled and deceived by his translation into following a false Christ and a false way of salvation - a way they have followed now for the past one and a half thousand years and more.

Why did he choose to take such a perilous course - and how did he hope to escape its consequences? For make no mistake, he knew very well what those consequences are. This paper will attempt to answer that. We will examine the history of Jerome's translation, how he came to make it and what errors he introduced into it. We will consider the impact that his translation had upon the ancient western world, and the errors which it promulgated in the Roman church and which, even today, make shipwreck of the millions of souls who are deceived by it. It is not a happy story. It begins in the 4th century after Christ, at a time when a great apostasy was taking place at Rome. And it begins especially with the coming to power of a man who was pleased to call himself "pope" - or 'father' in defiance of our Lord's express command - of the Roman church. His name was Damasus.

Damasus I

The pontificate of Damasus I, who reigned as pope from 366-384, is of great interest to any who seek to trace the development of the 4th century's great apostasy at Rome. Damasus was born the son of a priest in Rome ca AD 305, and was thus born and bred into the hierarchical and ambitious system of priesthood that has prevailed at Rome to this day. Since the time the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official state-imposed religion earlier in the 4th century, worldly, unconverted and ambitious men flooded into the church, bringing their paganism with them, and began to conform the church to the world and its ways in a manner that was before unthought of. Jerome himself, when secretary to Damasus, tells us of one Roman prefect named Praetextatus, who said to Damasus on more than one occasion: "Make me a bishop of the Roman church and I shall be a Christian at once."¹

Not that the church at Rome had been doctrinally pure in any sense since the close of the 1st century. Indeed, it had been on a downward slide almost from day one, ever since Clement I (ca. 91-101) began to introduce the notions of rank and hierarchy into the church. But this was different. This present apostasy was a vigorous, determined and largely successful attempt to banish the true Gospel from Rome, stifle its preaching, and make the Roman church the ruler and worldly sovereign of all others. The Roman church was tasting power, and it meant to keep it.

Damasus himself had come to the early notice of the then bishop of Rome, Liberius, who promoted him to the rank of deacon. But Damasus then switched his allegiance to Liberius' antagonist, the imperially-imposed anti-pope Felix II, an act of betrayal which placed the emperor firmly in his debt, and from which he was to reap rich rewards. Liberius was banished from Rome, and upon his death, Damasus was perhaps not astonished to find himself elected pope (at the cost of much bloodshed and to great public scandal) in the year 366. His election was a landmark in the downward career of Roman Catholicism.²

One of the earliest acts of Damasus as pope was to establish the Cult of the Martyrs, quite literally the worshipping of those who had died during the pre-Constantine imperial persecutions, many or all of them being elevated to official sainthood. These were to be prayed to and invoked by the faithful, and they themselves seen to have made a positive contribution - by the shedding of their blood - toward their own salvation and to that of believers. Their monuments and tombs were restored on Damasus' orders, he himself composing many of their monumental verses and inscriptions, and were to be used as shrines and places of pilgrimage. It was as if the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ had counted for nothing. This was indeed an apostasy of the first water.

But then, in AD 381, Damasus took advantage of the administrative chaos into which both church and state had by then descended, and pronounced that the Roman bishopric was henceforth to be known as the Apostolic See, ruling over all other churches and having the power to decide all controversies within the church on Earth. It was a momentous claim which, once made, was never to be rescinded.

The appalling worldliness that was to mark the character of the Roman church with such immediacy became a scandal to the world. Jerome, again writing as Damasus' secretary, tells us of one Roman cleric of his day who was all too typical of his kind:

"Anyone seeing this man would take him for a bridegroom instead of a cleric. He drives up in a smart carriage, dressed in scented silks, his hair carefully curled. He is everywhere and nowhere to be met with; nothing happens that he is not the first to know; there is no city gossip that he has not heard or exaggerated. He has become a priest in order to have access to beautiful women. Whenever he finds anything beautiful in a house he admires it until it is presented to him."³

Not that the pope himself was to be immune from the charge of gaining "access to beautiful women". According to the *Liber Pontificalis* (the official biography of the popes):

"He [Damasus] was spitefully accused of adultery, and a synod was held at which he was cleared by 44 bishops who also condemned his accusers, the deacons Concordius and Callistus, and expelled them from the Church."⁴

It was no light punishment to be expelled from the church. None would dare have any dealings with a man who was so expelled, and he would face starvation and homelessness. And he would, moreover, be banned from receiving the sacraments of that church, and would consequently - according to Roman theology - be barred from entering the kingdom of heaven. But what Damasus had been up to, to necessitate the calling of a synod to clear him of charges of adultery - even 'spiteful' ones - must best be imagined. Were such a charge to be laid at the present pope's door, it would get no further than the slanderer's lips simply because there has never been so much as an appearance, not even a whisper, of such a scandal. So it is clear that Damasus must have given many people good reason to believe that he was an adulterer for such charges to be made public in the first place - even as it is also clear that there was some weight to the charges for it to be necessary to call a synod to crush them.⁵

It would be interesting to know just how many bishops had been present at the synod, and what percentage of the vote 44 represented. The earlier Council of Nicea (the terms 'synod' and 'council' are synonymous), held in 325, was attended by 318 bishops, so if less than a third of that number had attended Damasus' synod, then it would hardly appear that his loyal following of 44 was a majority. But the outcome need not surprise us whatever the figure, for who would dare to withstand a pope who had begun his reign with the shedding of Roman - and especially *Christian* - blood?

It is an appalling fact, notorious at the time, that during the papal elections, Damasus had ordered the massacre of his opponent's supporters. In the run up to the final vote, 137 of them in a single day - according to the historian Ammianus Marcellinus⁶ - were left dead in the Basilica of Sicinius, the very place where Rome's Christians commonly gathered.

If he could do that *before* he was made pope, what would he not be capable of doing to his opponents now that he enjoyed the absolute power of the papacy? The outcome of the vote was assured.

But even as he was no stranger to the shedding of blood, Damasus was also no stranger to synods and the art of using them to further the aims of the Roman church. In 368-9, he chaired two synods which sat for the express purpose of suppressing heresy, no less than 24 anathemas issuing from the meetings against those who might think that the Roman pontiff had gone too far, or was leading the people down the wrong path. Interestingly, it was at another synod, the Synod of Rome in 382, that Damasus befriended Jerome and made him his secretary. Later, of course, he was to commission this brilliant young scholar to produce a Latin translation of the Bible, and given the nature of Damasus as well as the nature of the translation he commissioned, we have to ask ourselves whether their meeting, and the later commission, were entirely fortuitous.

Damasus, we must remember, was no lover of the Bible. How could he have been? Indeed he had a serious problem with the Scriptures, for the Gospel was known and talked about among many ordinary Roman Christians, and was indeed read and loved by them in - surprisingly - its original Greek, a language still commonly spoken in a Rome where Latin was used only for official and administrative purposes. There were, of course, Latin translations, mainly of the Gospels, but these were used in the main in the North African provinces, where Latin (ironically) had indeed been the *lingua franca* since the rebuilding by Rome of Carthage. But in Rome itself, Greek was still the favored language among the people, and there was much in the Greek Testament that would have been seen to condemn Damasus and his kind in no uncertain terms. And that was the problem, which makes it surprising to some that Damasus would want a translation of the Bible made at all. Would he not want his crimes and heresies hidden rather than exposed to the light of God's Word?

Of course he would, which is why the idea of a Latin Bible appealed to him so much, even as earlier it had occurred to him to conceal the blasphemies of the Roman mass in Latin rather than the Greek that had been used hitherto. For it was at the same Synod of Rome in 382 that Damasus decreed that henceforth the mass and all other church services would be said throughout the empire in Latin, and not in Greek or any other provincial tongue.⁷

It was, diabolically, a stroke of genius, for the recent proclamation - backed by imperial decree - that had announced to all the known world that Rome was now the Apostolic See to which all Christians - even those in the East - were subject on pain of everlasting damnation, meant that none in the whole empire could now worship at church in their own language. And, more importantly for Damasus, nor would the poor and illiterate ever again hear the Gospel read out in church in a language which they could understand.⁸ Rather, everything was to be veiled under a cloak of Latin mysticism, with Jerome's compliant translation of the Bible to give it the Scriptural 'authority' - for those who were permitted to read it - that was so badly lacking in every other sphere of the Roman church.

What aided Damasus immeasurably in all this was the compliance of Theodosius I, the secular emperor of Rome. After his decree of 380, which ordered all his subjects throughout the empire to acknowledge the supremacy of the Roman pontiff, few would dare to challenge the pope in anything that he might do or say. For to challenge him, was henceforth to challenge the emperor, and though resisting papal authority did not yet carry the death penalty, (though very soon it would), resisting the imperial decree certainly did.

Interestingly, the death penalty as an ecclesiastical punishment was not so far off, for just a matter of months after Damasus died on 11th December 384, the first executions of Christians by the Roman church took place. They were those of Priscillian, the widow Euchrotia, and five others. The scriptural orthodoxy of Priscillian and his fellows has always been vehemently denied by Rome, who accused them in synod of witchcraft, immorality and so on. Moreover, the church, in order to avoid the stain of blood on its hands, had handed them over to the secular authority for execution, and thus by legal sleight of hand were free of blame in their deaths (or so they thought and still think).

But the discovery in 1866 of Priscillian's own writings in the library of the University of Wurzburg, casts a somewhat different light on the matter. Priscillian held firmly to the Scriptures as his sole rule of faith, and looked only to the Lord Jesus for his salvation, as did his fellows. And for that, they were beheaded by decree of the Synod of Treves (Trier) in 385. But their persecution had begun under the auspices of Damasus at the Synod of Caesaraugusta (the name being later shortened to Saragossa) in 380, which lays their blood - the first to be shed by the Roman church as a persecutor of Bible-believing Christians - entirely at Damasus' own door.⁹ Thereafter, to live according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ within the very wide jurisdiction of Rome, was even in those early days a perilous undertaking indeed.

Few seem to appreciate today the far-reaching enormity of Damasus' action at the Synod of Rome when he ordered the imposition of the Latin language upon the liturgy of the church, for the cloaking of church services and the Bible in Latin lent real power to the Roman clergy. It meant that the Gospel - such as it was under their hand - became within a very short time the exclusive preserve of the pope and his ministers, and that all sorts of blasphemy and idolatry could be introduced into the church without (hopefully) arousing any undue suspicion among the people.

Very soon, none would be able to question what they saw or heard from the priests, simply because all was done in a language which most of the empire's priests themselves did not understand, and to attempt to question it at all could bring consequences too dire to contemplate, especially after the execution of Priscillian and his friends.

The compulsory adoption of Latin also furthered another deadly trait in the teachings of the Roman church, namely ecclesiastical legalism. Latin was the language of Roman law, and Greek the language of philosophy, and law and philosophy can never successfully or convincingly live together. One of them must always give way to the other. Even today, the modern western world uses legal terms that are almost entirely derived from earlier

Latin formulae. Thus, under the cloak of law, all future teachings concerning the worship of the Roman church would be expressed in Latin - which most of the laity (and even the priesthood) within the jurisdiction of Rome (the entire Roman empire in other words) would be unfamiliar with. This had the immediate effect of stifling any objections that might be made on philosophical or theological grounds - or by appealing to the Greek Testament which now was banned. The people simply would not know what it was they were listening to or being taught. And it is on that note that we must now consider the man from whom the pope was to commission this 'translation' of the Bible into Latin.

Jerome

The biographical details of Jerome are not plentiful, but certain events and influences in his life are traceable and do much to explain what later went wrong with his theology. He was born in AD 342 in Stridon, a town near Aquileia of Dalmatia, his full birth name being Eusebius Hieronymus Sophronius (the name 'Jerome' is merely Hieronymus in English). He was baptized into Catholicism at Rome itself, travelled into Gaul, and then settled in Aquileia where he led an ascetic life with certain of his friends - one of whom, Rufinus, we shall meet later.¹⁰ Then, in ca. 374, he went to Antioch where, crucially, he attended the lectures of Apollinarius the Younger, a man who was later to be declared a heretic.¹¹

Apollinarius (ca. 310-90) seems to have caught Jerome's imagination at Antioch. Indeed, it may well be the case that Jerome had heard of him beforehand, and that he went to Antioch specifically to attend his lectures there, for the views of Apollinarius had attracted attention far and wide for at least three years past. Interestingly, in the course of his career, Apollinarius "rewrote" much of the Bible in "classical" form in response to the edict of Emperor Julian I (ruled 361-3) which banned the reading of the *pagan* classics. Which meant that Apollinarius did not balk at deliberately tampering with the Word, and his rationalization of this may later have influenced Jerome in his own approach to translating the Bible. But of greater interest to us is what "Apollinarianism" actually stood for.

Apollinarianism is noted as the first great Christological heresy of the church,¹² and seems to have taught three tenets that were basic to its theology. The first was simply the unity of Godhead and manhood in Christ, followed by the full Deity of Christ. So far so good. But the third object of its teaching was (oddly) that though in man there is body, soul and spirit, in our Lord there was no human spirit. Its place was instead occupied by the Logos. This meant, of course, that though the Lord Jesus Christ was fully God, He was not fully human when He came to Earth and ministered.

On later interrogation by the powers that then were, Apollinarius seems to have somewhat lamely excused himself by claiming that the Logos was the 'prototype' of the human spirit, and that his teachings did not therefore compromise our Lord's humanity. But it did not wash. Apollinarius' teachings were ruled heretical by Rome on the legitimate grounds that if our Lord's humanity was not complete, then neither could His redemption of man have been complete - an odd objection given the Roman view that

Christ's redemptive work has to be supplemented by man's good works and by the continuing sacrifices of the mass. The views of Apollinarius were thus roundly condemned by the 374 and 380 synods at Rome. They were likewise condemned at the First Council of Constantinople in 381, from which date Apollinarianism was explicitly forbidden to be taught.

But why is this important when we come to study Jerome? For this simple reason. At some time in his career - a year or two after he had heard Apollinarius in fact - Jerome was accused of Sabellianism.¹³ This, yet another of the many *-isms* that plagued the early church, was so named from Sabellius, an early 3rd-century Roman theologian who had embraced what is now known as the 'Modalist' form of Monarchianism.¹⁴ The veritable explosion of *-isms* at this time was undoubtedly due to the seeming inability of the church to take God at His Word and simply believe what the Bible taught. But in Sabellius, two such false teachings came together, and we need briefly to look at them to understand their later influence upon Jerome.

'Modalism' taught that the three Persons of the Trinity were only temporarily distinct from one another, separating at the time of our Lord's incarnation¹⁵ - after whose death the Persons of the triune Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, re-united into one singular Person, God the Father (or simply God the Creator). There is so much that this notion fails to explain, particularly how the Holy Spirit could continue His ministry amongst the faithful till the ending of the world if He were no more the Holy Spirit. We say nothing here of what the Scriptures tell us concerning the *pre*-incarnate Son, nor indeed of His second coming, His subsequent rule over the Earth, and the whole host of other things that the Bible tells us - both of Him and of the Spirit of God - that still belong to the future. In short, the adoption of Modalism necessitated the complete rewriting (or rather the virtual scrapping) of the Bible.

It is astonishing how many of these early heresies (virtually all of them in fact) required the systematic destruction of the written Word of God for their starting-point, but such was also the case with (monotonously) the doctrine of Monarchianism.¹⁶ The term was first coined by Tertullian (160-225), who used it to describe a heresy of his own day that was divided into two camps, the 'Adoptionist' or 'Dynamic' - which taught that Jesus was God only insofar as God influenced Him in His Earthly ministry - and the 'Modalist', which we have already considered. Combine Modalism with Monarchianism, and you have the madness known as Sabellianism, the very same heresy that was laid to the charge of Jerome.

Whilst on the subject of Monarchianism, one interesting item that appears in very many of the early manuscripts of Jerome's Vulgate translation of the Bible, is something known as the 'Monarchian Prologues.'¹⁷ These are pre-fixed to each of the four Gospels, and purport to tell us just what the evangelists meant when they wrote their accounts, obviously with the intention of convincing us of the Monarchian point of view. Their Latin is poor when compared to Jerome's more polished style, so it is unlikely that he was their author. However, the Monarchian Prologues' early attachment to Jerome's version of the Gospels raises the question of exactly what subtle errors had earlier been

found by the Monarchians in Jerome's translation that should lend it so readily to the addition of such material.

What is really interesting here, though, is the painfully lame reply that Jerome made to his accusers when Sabellianism was laid to his charge, namely that "the answer to all ecclesiastical and theological problems lay in oneness with the Roman bishop."¹⁸ Had his views been firmly rooted in the Scriptures, he could - and undoubtedly would - have appealed to them, showing his accusers that he enjoyed Biblical affirmation for his stance. But alas, there was no sensible reply of any kind that he could make other than to appeal to the pope's alleged authority over believers and their consciences, and it must have irked him somewhat when the pope of Rome responded to such fawning flattery with nothing more than a stony silence.¹⁹ Perhaps 'his holiness' had other, more pressing, matters to attend to, although it is interesting that Jerome's appeal to papal authority had the immediate effect of silencing his accusers - as he no doubt knew it would. The authority of the bishop of Rome, thanks to Theodosius I, was already something to be reckoned with, and who could tell in those days what any of the popes actually believed? In such a case, discretion is always the better part of valor.

The Pope's Secretary

The pope at the time of Jerome's accusation of heresy was, of course, Damasus, whose secretary - surprisingly - Jerome was so soon to become. The accusation of Sabellianism had been laid against Jerome whilst he was studying Hebrew at Chalchis in the Syrian desert in the late 370's, an accusation which Damasus - the Roman church's first real pursuer of heretics - was undoubtedly made aware of. But there must also have been other traits of Jerome's that the pope was made privy to, but which he found appealing. His extreme asceticism, for example.

Jerome's mind-set towards the Christian life was severe, his earlier book, *De Septies Percussa* - 'On Seven Beatings'! - giving some indication at least of his horrendous misunderstanding of just what the Gospel is about. But perhaps Damasus had seen something else in Jerome that was even more to his liking, namely the readiness with which Jerome could accommodate the Scriptures to fit in with his heretical notions. It was a talent that Damasus was to find very useful to his purposes, and one which he was soon to employ.

Beyond question, there was a truly indecent haste in Jerome's promotion to the papal secretaryship, a very high and much coveted office in the church. He had not even entered the priesthood until only two years or so beforehand, having been ordained - whilst still tainted with suspicion of heresy - by one Paulinus on his return to Antioch from the Syrian desert in about 380.²⁰ And not only did he find himself suddenly catapulted into what was perhaps the second most powerful position in the Roman church, but he seems also to have obtained an implicit promise from Damasus that he would succeed him to the papacy!²¹

It was certainly his expectation that he would be the next bishop of Rome, and one wonders at how all this can have been made possible under a pope who had made it his life's mission to pursue heretics like Jerome, not promote them, and whose power was such that he could still bring them to execution (namely Priscillian *et al*), even after his own death. But perhaps it is not such a mystery after all.

Very soon after his ordination as priest, Jerome found himself in Constantinople, and his presence there, in the year 381, may be a telling factor in what was to follow in his career. For 381 was the year when the teachings of Jerome's former mentor, Apollinarius, were condemned at Constantinople.²² Now, the First Council of Constantinople was held, not at the instigation of the pope of Rome, but by the emperor Theodosius I, who was seeking to unite the fragmented eastern church after the Arian controversy which was threatening to split his empire in two.²³ No Roman bishops or legates were present at this council, and Jerome's presence there is explained by the fact that Melitius - the bishop of Antioch in whose city Jerome had been ordained - was present at the council. Not for long though, for Melitius died whilst the council was still in progress. Now, Jerome was clearly part of the bishop's entourage there, acting perhaps as an observer whilst carrying out other official, perhaps minor secretarial, duties. On the death of his master, he might therefore have been expected to return to Antioch with the others. But he did not, and here we encounter a most interesting episode in Jerome's career.

Melitius had never been a bishop that was loved by the Roman authorities, either secular or ecclesiastical. He had fallen foul of no less than three Roman emperors, Constantius, Julian and Valens - under the last of whom he was banished twice!²⁴ Yet, immediately after Melitius' death, a minor servant of his called Jerome turns up in Rome - straight from a council of the *eastern* church - where he is immediately befriended by the pope, no friend of his former employer, and walks straight into the second most coveted, if not the second most *powerful*, office in the Roman church - that of papal secretary! What machinery had been set in motion to bring about such an unlikely event - in such haste! - we can only imagine. What had Jerome done at the Council of Constantinople, or even before it, to earn such notice - not to say such papal gratitude?

The church of Rome can hardly have lacked able, not to say brilliant, administrators, several of whom could just as worthily have held such a high office instead of Jerome - and without the scathing criticisms of its clergy that Jerome was so fond of uttering. So it clearly was not Jerome's scholarly abilities that had won him the post. Moreover, the office of papal secretary was not simply that of writing down letters by dictation and ordering the pope's appointments book. It went much deeper than that. By the very definition of the word, any papal secretary is privy to every secret of the papal office. Nothing happens but the secretary knows of it, and - always better informed than the pope whom he serves - he is often called upon to give the pope secret advice that sometimes even the pope's own counsellors would not be privy to.

We have seen that Jerome was by nature an extreme ascetic, and he would certainly not have had the enormous wealth that would have been required to buy such a powerful position. Indeed, he spent his life at great odds with a court that was notorious for its luxury and corruption, believing as he did that he could only earn his salvation by poverty and subjecting his body to the most horrendous punishments.²⁵ Relying on such a regime instead of upon the Gospel, Jerome clearly lacked Christ. But then, virtually all of Rome lacked Christ! So again, what exactly was it that distinguished Jerome from the rest of his contemporaries - in the pope's eyes at least?

It undoubtedly included the extreme reliance that Jerome placed upon good works for his salvation. In fact, this may well have played a major part in Damasus' liking for the man. Salvation by works is the very antithesis of the Gospel, and many of those in Rome who knew their Greek Testament - and especially the letter that Paul had written to their forbears in that city - knew also that neither good works nor the law can save a man.²⁶ The gulf between the church's teachings and those of the Gospel was thus becoming painfully obvious, and Damasus knew very well that not only must he get the Gospel hidden from the people in the Latin tongue, but that version must also incorporate into its text many of the key-words that made up the foundation of church dogma.

And what better man than Jerome - whose very religion was built on works - to make that version? He certainly had the linguistic skills necessary, and, as we shall see, he would have required no persuading whatever to make his 'Bible' conform to the then so recently formulated doctrines of Rome. He was, moreover, greatly indebted to a pope who had chosen to ignore Jerome's notorious heretical views. Damasus could easily have abandoned him to his fate, as he did Priscillian and others, but instead of hounding him to his death, he made him his bosom companion and increased Jerome's indebtedness immeasurably by promising him that he would be the next pope. In short, after Damasus had got to work on him, there was to remain in Jerome no danger whatever to the papal scheme of things, and the pope's dream of building a truly *Latin* church - with the sanction of 'Scripture' - was assured.

The Things That Were Written

Before considering the portions of the Bible that Jerome was actually responsible for in the translation that has ever since borne his name, it would be well to consider what else he wrote, as these extra-Biblical writings give us a valuable insight into the way he saw the Gospel and especially the sufficiency of Christ's blood shed upon the cross for the cleansing of sin.

We have already seen that at the age of 27, in 374, Jerome wrote *De Septies Percussa* - 'On Seven Beatings'. Clearly, he did not then, nor came later to, rely solely upon the Lord Jesus for his cleansing, but sought to commend himself to God by an asceticism that was extreme even for those days (indeed one noblewoman died in

Rome by following his ascetic teachings, and Jerome had quickly to leave the city).²⁷ The blood that our Lord shed upon the cross was not enough, it seems. Jerome's salvation required some of his own sinful blood and sweat to make good the deficiency of God. The doctrine of salvation by works was, and still is, a mind-set that does more than simply border upon the dishonoring of God and the exaltation of fallen man, and when such a man as Jerome takes upon himself the task of translating the Bible, then it is clear that the doctrine of grace is going to be the first to suffer under some subtle - and sometimes not so subtle - word changes.

True to his kind, Jerome did in certain other writings what every one of the early heresies demanded of their followers. He allegorized Scripture. He was not the first to do this, of course. Origen (ca. 185-254) - whom Jerome admired and whose works he translated from Greek into Latin - was perhaps the most notorious proponent of the art, and was considered to be so off-beam by his contemporaries that the emperor Justinian was later to refer to him as one of "the most pernicious heretics" ever to have plagued the church.²⁸ Even whilst Jerome yet lived and was working on his vulgate translation, Pope Anastasius I (399-401) had referred to Origen in his 'Festal Letter' as "the [many-headed] hydra of heresies".²⁹ Amusingly, and being close enough to the pope to sense the change of wind in time, Jerome chose to attack his former mentor before the pope made his damning utterance, but only to be roundly condemned for doing so by his old childhood friend Rufinus - who was later to add his own heresies to the Vulgate version of the New Testament epistles, as we shall see!³⁰

In short, having abandoned the certainty of the Word of God, Jerome was soon hopelessly confused. But things got only worse. When Jerome finally began to familiarize himself with the Pauline and other epistles of the New Testament, he found that he was facing even more severe problems. The New Testament epistles are full of salvation by grace alone. They know no other doctrine than that. There is not a hint of grace mingled with works, for man is saved *unto* good works, not *by* them. It was a distinction that the Roman church had signally failed to recognize, and that they continue to do so is due almost entirely to Jerome and the master he served, Damasus. Unable to honestly translate the New Testament epistles, he allegorized - or "interpreted" - some of them, namely Philemon, Galatians, Ephesians and Titus, "with the stress on the allegorical interpretation."³¹

It was an audacious thing to attempt, for these epistles could hardly be less given to allegorization. Galatians, for example, berates its recipients in no uncertain terms for so foolishly and readily abandoning the Gospel of grace, just as Rome was doing at exactly this time. How on Earth can one allegorize that without doing gross violence to the Word of God - and to one's own conscience? But where Jerome was happy to allegorize the Bible, he was eager that his own statements should be received with more certainty, and it is from his pen that we receive one of the most appalling and damaging doctrines ever to infect the early church. It is encapsulated in a phrase that he himself seems to have first coined.

The 'Communion of Saints'

The phrase 'Communion of Saints' (*communio sanctorum*) first appears in a written statement by Jerome known as *Fides Hieronymi* - the Faith of Jerome.³² Surviving in several manuscripts, the statement is a modification by Jerome of the misnamed Apostles' Creed, which itself had only just appeared on the scene in Jerome's day. In today's nominal Protestant circles, the communion of saints is often misconstrued by the man in the pew as the *community*, or indeed the *fellowship* of the saints. But to quote Cross's *Dictionary*, the communion of saints is defined as:

"The spiritual union existing between each Christian and Christ, and so between each and every Christian, whether in Heaven (the Church Triumphant), in Purgatory (the Church Expectant), or on Earth (the Church Militant). J Pearson... expounds this communion as the communion of holy persons on Earth with the Holy Trinity, with the Angels, with nominal Christians (e.g. in Baptism), with other holy persons, and with the saints in Heaven."³³

It should be obvious from this that such an article or creed should have no place in a Bible-believing Christian fellowship. And yet many modern Protestant churches see nothing of the dangers lurking behind a phrase that is repeated whenever the various creeds are recited during public worship. The supposed communion of saints, devised - or rather formulated - by Jerome, is something rather more than a mere community - or fellowship - of those who belong to Christ. As the above definition makes clear, it is a literal *communing*, or *communication*, between those Christians on Earth and those in Heaven, and communing with someone means talking to them. Given that those in Heaven are counted as dead men here on Earth, it involves talking with the dead and invoking the dead that they might talk to us. In other words, it is necromancy, pure and simple, and as such is expressly forbidden by God in the Law (Levit. 19:31; & 20:6), the Prophets (Isaiah 8:19-20), and the Writings (1 Chron. 10:13) - a threefold denunciation from the Word of God in all three of its foundational parts!

It almost goes without saying that the supposed communion of saints has no basis whatever in the Bible, Old Testament or New. Rather, it has its foundation in the cult of martyr-worship as embraced by Damasus I, Jerome's master in so many things. The veneration of martyrs and saints was nothing new in Rome, of course. By Jerome's day it was perhaps three hundred years old. But Damasus - and Jerome - were the first to formulate these doctrines and to make their acceptance a legal requirement under the ecclesiastical heresy laws of the day. Henceforth, if you argue with the creed, you argue with the church. Argue with the church, and you argue, thanks to Damasus, with the executioner! The doctrine of the communion of saints - necromancy - was thus here to stay, and so it has remained in the church of Rome (and shamefully if unwittingly in several Protestant churches) to this day.

Jerome's Biblical Translations

But this all serves as a mere introduction to the main object of our enquiry, namely those portions of the Bible that Jerome did indeed translate (or rather, for accuracy's sake, *revise* from already existing versions), and his handling of them in such a way as to give a seemingly Scriptural countenance to the decidedly unbiblical dogma of the Roman church. At Damasus' bidding, Jerome began his work not by translating the Gospels from Greek into Latin, but by merely *revising* the already existing and theologically faulty Old Latin Gospels - though with the aid of the Greek New Testament, or so he claimed - that had been circulating in the North African provinces since the mid-2nd century or so. This is quite contrary to the popular myth that he simply and honestly translated the New Testament from the Greek.

Furthermore, Jerome then went on to translate the Psalms, Job, 1-2 Chronicles, the Song of Solomon and the Book of Proverbs, again not from the Hebrew as commonly supposed, but from the Greek Septuagint version contained in Origen's *Hexapla*. All this was carried out at the library of Caesarea, of which Origen - Jerome's hero in so many things - had been a co-founder.³⁴

To place Jerome's Latin version into its chronological context, his work on the Old Testament was carried out between 390-405, with 1-2 Samuel, the Psalms, the Prophets and Job all being completed by 392-3; 1-2 Esdras (i.e. Ezra - Nehemiah) was finished by 394; and 1-2 Chronicles by 396. The "Books of Solomon" (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Canticles) were finished by 398; with the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Ruth and Esther by 405.³⁵

It will be noticed immediately that, apart from his revision of the Old Latin Gospels, the absence of any work done by Jerome on the remaining books of the New Testament is painfully apparent - and quite contrary to the lie that he translated *all* of the New Testament from scratch. His "allegorization" of four of the Pauline epistles cannot be counted as translation by any stretch of the imagination - on the contrary, they were a wilful distortion of those epistles. So we are left with a yawning gap in the Scriptures as far as Jerome is concerned. His reluctance or inability to translate the New Testament cannot be due to his lack of Greek, for as we have seen, he was able well enough to translate some extremely difficult books of the Old Testament from the Greek Septuagint - and from his mentor Origen - into a very fine Latin. He was good, better in fact than any of his contemporaries or successors, at rendering Greek into good flowing Latin. So what can have been the problem?

Undoubtedly it was that of doctrine. The New Testament, from beginning to end, teaches that man is freed from sin *only* by the blood of Christ, shed once and for all time upon the cross. The shedding of Christ's blood in atonement for man's sin was itself born entirely of the free and undeserved grace of God. Man - fallen sinful man - had no part whatever in that act of redemption, because while we were yet sinners,

Christ died for us. Nor can man have any *subsequent* part to play in his own salvation. The blood of Christ is both and entirely sufficient and efficient for our redemption - sufficient to pay for the sins of the whole world, and utterly efficient to pay for the sins of any and all who will accept it. That blood is spotless, and lacks nothing in its sinlessness to achieve that which God Himself desired, and it is certain that the redeeming blood of Christ cannot be offered up as a sacrifice for sin again, (much less be created and offered up anew by a Roman priest muttering words of *hocus-pocus* over a wafer of bread and a cup of wine).³⁶

So, in the light of his reliance upon 'good' works for his salvation rather than the free and undeserved grace of God, we must now address the question of Jerome's revision of the Old Latin Gospels, and see just how he revised them. We must remember as we ponder the question, that Rome was, in Jerome's day, largely Greek-speaking, and that the church at Rome possessed and was familiar with the Greek New Testament. We might also remind ourselves that the Latin translations of the Greek that did already exist, were largely made for the benefit of the Latin-speaking provinces of North Africa, not for Rome, although copies were undoubtedly to be found in Rome. But if there already existed a Latin version of the New Testament, what need was there for another? The need was this.

When we read Matthew 3:2, we are bidden to "*Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Greek original from which our word "repent" is translated, is "*Metanoete*", meaning to change one's mind, or to think again. Thus "re-pent" (re-think or re-consider) perfectly conveys in English the meaning of *Metanoete*. But Latin also has a perfectly good word by which to convey the meaning of *Metanoete*, namely "*Resipiscite*" - which has the meaning not just of repentance but of *recovering one's senses*. It forcefully reminds us of the demoniac of Gadara who, once healed by Jesus, was found by those who knew him to be clothed "and in his right mind." In other words, he had - by the pure grace and power of

Almighty God - recovered his senses, had repented of his sins, and was now eternally saved. And the use of *Resipiscite* would have conveyed this perfectly. Interestingly, the same word was used independently by Pagninus and Beza when they later came to translate the New Testament into Latin from the Greek.³⁷ Why did they choose it? Again, for this reason.

Resipiscite is beyond any question the finest translation that Latin can offer of the Greek *Metanoete*. It is powerful, it is moving, it is precise, it is entirely accurate. There is simply no word better, and that is why Pagninus and Beza incorporated it independently of each other into their translations. Yet what treatment did it receive under Jerome's careful revision? Such a word was directly antithetical to Jerome's self-sufficient theology, and he therefore abandoned *Resipiscite* in favor of a term that was more in keeping with his own complete misunderstanding of the Gospel, *Poenitentiam agite* - or "Do penance!" Or, to develop one of the phrase's finer shades of meaning, "Serve up punishments [for yourselves]!"

It beggars belief that Jerome could knowingly pervert the Gospel of grace with such a wicked and inaccurate substitution. Did John the Baptist - did our Lord? - really command us to "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"? What penance should we do? The Gospels do not tell us. How should we do it? Again, the Gospels are silent. How long should we do it for, or how often? The Gospels tell us nothing. In short, who sets the target at which we should aim for our eternal salvation? It is a cruel and evil 'theology' that would not tell us.

The answer, as far as Jerome was concerned, was, of course, that the pope of Rome would tell us through his priests. And that is why Damasus commissioned Jerome to make this entirely misbegotten 'translation' in the first place. While the people of Rome had the Greek New Testament, they could not be deceived into following a doctrine of salvation by works. Every flaw in the system of Rome would show up in the light of the Greek Gospel. It - the Greek New Testament - must therefore be done away with, and its place taken by a false gospel that was to be forced upon the people on pain of excommunication and even death. For that is how 'heresy' - the denial of the pope's dominion over such matters - was punished even in those early days. As we have noted, before he died Damasus had seen to that much at least.

A Matter of Repentance

But to get a good overview of how Jerome's wilful perversion of the Gospel affected later translations, and thus polluted - except the Lord intervened - the minds of any who read the imperative command of Matthew 3:2, we would do well to consider just how this particular verse was rendered in subsequent versions that relied upon Jerome, the Greek Gospels being unavailable to the translators of the time.

Jerome, as we have seen, rendered Matthew 3:2 thus: *Poenitentiam agite* (do penance), *appropinquavit regnum coelorum* (for the kingdom of heaven approaches).

From that, the Anglo-Saxons rendered the verse in the 9th century as: *Doth daed-bote* (do penance), *sothlice genealaeceth heofena rice* (for heaven's reich draws near).

Likewise, the 'Wycliffe A' version of around 1380 gives it as: *Do ye penaunce, for the kyngdom of heuenes schal nygh.*

Later, the 'Wycliffe B' version of 1388 has: *Do ye penaunce, for the kyngdom of heuenes shal neighe.*

And just to show that the translators of Wycliffe A & B were not mistaken in their rendering or were giving their own partisan interpretation of the verse, another 14th-century English translation gives us (entirely independently of the Wycliffe school): *Do ye penawnce, for sothly the kyngdom of heuene schal come nygh.*³⁸

When we come later to those translations that were made from the Greek into English, we find immediately that the Latin error falls away, to be replaced by the true meaning of the Gospel text. William Tyndale, for example, in his 1526 edition gives us: Repent, *the kyngdome of heuen is at honde*.

Miles Coverdale's Great Bible of 1539 likewise tells us to repent, but, like the Amplified Bible of our own day, develops its meaning slightly, and says: Repent of the life that is past, *for the kyngdome of heauen is at hande*. We shall see in a moment just why Coverdale felt the need to qualify the word repent in this way.

William Whittingham's New Testament of 1557 continues the usage with: Repent, *for the kyngdome of heauen is at hand....*as does the Bishop's Bible of 1573: Repent ye, *for the kingdome of heauen is at hande*.

...which is again exactly echoed by the King James Bible of 1611 with: Repent yee, *for the kingdome of heauen is at hand*.

But between the Bishops Bible edition and that of King James, there appeared a Roman Catholic attempt at providing an English translation of the New Testament begun at Rheims in 1582, but which ignored the Greek altogether and reverted to the Latin of Jerome, giving us rather tellingly: Doe penaunce, *for the Kingdom of heauen is at hand*.

The Rheims reversion to the old heresy of Jerome was not accidental. As we read through its pages, we see immediately that most of the Rheims New Testament is a very close copy indeed of Tyndale's translation and its revisions - with the exception of those important doctrinal words and phrases. Thus, Tyndale is copied for his excellent English, but Jerome is copied for his perversions of doctrine, the Rheims hybrid thus perpetuating the deceptive errors under which Roman congregations have labored, and labour still.

The important point for Rome in all this, is that while a system of penances and especially financial penalties can easily be set up and sold, one cannot sell repentance at any price. It is simply not a sellable commodity. How *can* one sell repentance? When God calls His people to accept the free grace that He is offering them, He bids them through the prophet Isaiah to come to Him in this manner: "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; *and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat!*"

The grace of God is thus free to all, and no church has any authority from God to make merchandise of it. So what, I wonder, passed through Jerome's mind when he came to this verse (Matt. 10:8) where our Lord commands His disciples: "*Gratis accepistis; gratis date!*" - "Freely ye have received, freely give!" Here Jerome 'revises' yet again the Old Latin, which, (translating the Greek: "*Dorean elabete, dorean dote*"), renders this verse: "*Dono accepistis, dono date*" - which bears the

interpretation, "Ye have received a present as a free gift, so give it - or pass it on - as a free gift."

It would be difficult even for someone of Jerome's capabilities in such matters, to falsify such a verse for dubious theological purposes, and its implications must have been crystal clear to Jerome as he pondered how best to render it. Yet he seemingly saw no contradiction between its plain meaning, and his changing Matthew 3:2 from "Repent" into "Do penance" - thus setting in train the distinctly Roman system of buying and selling salvation to those who could afford it. God may say that His grace is free. But Rome would say otherwise and offer His grace for sale - if such a thing were truly possible. Jerome's was a strange mind-set indeed. But it was no stranger than that possessed by the other members of the Roman hierarchy.

What, for example, passed through the mind of Damasus when he ordered the bloodbath that preceded his election to the papacy? How on Earth did he rationalize it? Or those who committed the murders? How did they rationalize what they did, familiar as they were with the law of God that thou shalt not kill - even if the Gospel lay outside their understanding? Strangely, our Lord had prophesied to His disciples that there will be those who will not only put them to torture and to death, but who will actually think that they do God good service by killing His children. It is a mystery - the mystery, in fact, of iniquity. But those who can slay God's children so easily, are going to think nothing at all of twisting His Word so that they can hang on to the power that their murders have so dearly bought them. Our Lord tells us that Satan owns two characteristics, those of being a liar and a murderer from the very beginning. Those who serve him, it appears, may be known by the same identifying traits.

Jerome's corruption of penance for repentance, was to have serious repercussions more than a thousand years after he made it. The followers of Wycliffe, as we have seen, were deceived by it (though under the Lord's great mercy not fatally) when they came to translate Jerome's version into English, there being no better version available to them at that time. And the confusion was carried over into the early days of the Reformation itself. The controversy that threatened to rent the early reformers is only hinted at by Miles Coverdale in 1535, when, under Cromwell and Cranmer, he produced the first complete Bible to be printed in English. Coverdale was a quiet and industrious scholar who had little stomach for controversy, although he was happy to cross proverbial swords with his superiors on more than one occasion, and he even fell foul of Bloody Mary Tudor herself. But he saw this old penance-repentance wound opening up yet again as he prepared his Bible for the press, so he wrote in his Preface a telling qualification, a *caveat* for what his readers were about to encounter, and a plea for peace and common sense to prevail. This was but typical of Coverdale - the man of the Book rather than of any church - and his words are worth quoting in full:

Be not thou offended (good Reader) though one call a scribe that another calleth a lawyer; or elders that another calleth father & mother;

or repentaunce that another calleth pennaunce or amendment. For yf thou be not disceaused by men tradicions, thou shalt fynde no more dyuersite betwene these termes then betwene foure pens and a grote [four pence and a groat - a groat being a coin worth four pence]. And this maner haue I used in my translacyon, callyng it in some place pennaunce that in another place I call repentaunce, and that not onely because the interpreters haue done so before me, but that the aduersaries of the trueth maye se how that we abhorre not this word pennaunce (as they untruly reporte of us) no more then the interpreters of latyn abhorre penitete whan they reade resi[s]piscete. Onely oure hertes desire unto God is that his people be not blynded in theyr understandyng, lest they beleue pennaunce to be ought saue a ury repentaunce, amendment or conuersyon unto God, and to be an unfayned new creature in Christ, and to lyue acordyng to his lawe. For els shall they fal into the olde blasphemy of Christes bloude [the mass], and beleue that they themselues are able to make satisfaccion unto God for theyr awne synnes, from the which erreure god of his mercy and plenteous goodnes preserue all his.

A Question of Charity

Perhaps the next most misleading verse (apart from Matthew 3:2) in the Latin Vulgate New Testament, and the most damaging amongst the general population because of its becoming a proverb, is 1 Pet 4:8, which tells us in its original Greek that "love" (*agape*) covers many sins. Here the Latin Vulgate has "charity" - *charitas* - instead of love, and the damage lies in this. Love is a fruit of the Spirit, but charity is a work. In other words, charity - which in the popular mind has always meant a good deed - and not love - covers a whole host of sins, thus lending an exceedingly dubious Scriptural vindication to Rome's system of salvation - the doing away of sin - by good works.

And so the Vulgate renders 1 Peter 4:8 as: *quia charitas operit multitudinem peccatorum* (for charity buries a multitude of sins).

...which appears in the 'Wycliffe A' (1380) version as: *for charite keuerith [covers] the multitude of synnes.*

...which in turn is duplicated in Wycliffe B (1388) as: *for charite couerith the multitude of synnes.*

...but which is rendered as : *For charite heleth [hides] the multude [sic] of synnes* in the non-Wycliffite 14th-century version.

But when we come to William Tyndale's translation of 1526, which again we must remember was worked from the Greek and not from the erroneous Latin of the

Vulgate, we meet with: *For love covereth the multitude of synnes*, an entirely accurate rendering into English of the Greek original (*agape*)

...which Coverdale's Great Bible of 1539 slightly modifies to: *For loue shall couer the multitude of synnes*.

In turn, the Geneva New Testament of 1557 perpetuates the verse as: *for loue couereth the multitude of synnes*.

Yet when we come to the Bishops Bible of 1568, we encounter a curious reversion back to the Latin error: *For charitie shal couer the multitude of sinnes*. Clearly, the Reformation had gone too far for the tastes of the new Anglican church, which, thanks to the Geneva Bible of 1560, felt itself to be losing its grip on power over the flock. If the faithful are required only to love, then what profit can there be in it for the church? But charity can be turned to most profitable effect, especially if the faithful can be taught that thereby they can cover their sins. The redeeming blood of the Lamb, it seems, was all very well for saving a man in the first place. But if that man wished to continue in his state of redemption, then he must do works of charity to cover those sins that he would inevitably commit after his initial salvation. Hence the ecclesiastical and thoroughly retrograde perversion of rendering *charity* for love (*agape*).

It is hardly a surprise to see that the Rheims New Testament of 1582 perpetuates the error: *because charitie couereth the multitude of sinnes*. After all, this version was produced by the Roman church, and was in any case undisguisedly Latinate in all its renderings whenever these dealt with such doctrinal issues. But it is a surprise to find the word carried over into the much-loved King James Bible of 1611: *for charity shall couer the multitude of sinnes*.

After 1611, *charity* was to be used for the next 350 years, the King James verse even becoming an oft-cited proverb of the English language. Indeed, the correct rendering of *love*, first given by William Tyndale and used in every subsequent version up to that of Geneva in 1560, was not to be seen again in English Bibles until the advent in 1961 of the New English Bible's New Testament, which restores the verse to its original Greek meaning: *because love cancels innumerable sins*.

It was not to be the only instance in which *charity* is substituted for *love*, for all that we have seen that applies to 1 Peter 4:8, applies exactly to 1 Corinthians 13 in every instance of the word given in that chapter. All the way through, *charity* is given instead of *love*, the whole thing culminating in the King James' rendering of the final verse: *And now abideth faith, hope and charitie, these three; but the greatest of these is charitie*.

All of which raises the question: Is that faith by which the just shall surely live, really subordinate to good works? Are good works not the *fruit* of faith? Of course they are, but the perpetuation of *charity* for *love*, which so subtly pollutes the

Gospel, has its roots in the apostate version of the Bible known as the Latin Vulgate. We can only wonder what a different thing the Church of England might now have been had Tyndale's rendering been preserved instead of Jerome's innovation. But such is the damage that has passed down through history from the Latin Vulgate.

A Question of Gender

Which brings us to one of the most arrant pieces of knavery in the whole subject of Jerome's perverting of the Scriptures. The enormity of its implications is immense, so let us first consider just what it is that he 'translated', and then go on to discover its historical and theological ramifications.

The third chapter of the book of Genesis contains a most important passage that is known to Bible students as the *Protevangelium*. The name means the first announcement of the Gospel, and it was an announcement that was made by God Himself at the very moment when Adam, Eve and the serpent were confronted in Eden with the guilt of their sin. In this passage, God declares to Satan (in the person of the serpent) how mankind is to be redeemed from sin, death and the power of evil. He states in no uncertain terms that one day a Man is to be born of woman who would destroy the hold over mankind that Satan and sin now enjoy. This Man, known as the Seed of woman, will figuratively bruise the serpent's head, whilst the serpent will be given leave to bruise His heel. It is arguably *the* most important statement in the entire Old Testament, and there it is near the very beginning of God's Word. We are entitled to assume, therefore, that the words in which God gave out this declaration are of the very highest importance and significance.

In the Hebrew, the verb "shall bruise" is given in the masculine form, and would not normally need the masculine pronoun to accompany it (as it would in English and certain other languages). The Hebrew reader would know by the verb's gender that it is a Man who would do the bruising. Yet, in this particular passage - and we must remember the truly immense significance of *every* word in this instance - the masculine verb is indeed accompanied by the masculine pronoun. The literal meaning of the Hebrew therefore is: "He, *He* shall bruise..." The masculinity of Him who should do the bruising is thus given a double emphasis, and could not be stated more strongly in the Hebrew.³⁹

But what Jerome was to make of Genesis 3:15b is nothing short of blasphemy. He wilfully avoided translating the masculine pronoun of the Hebrew, which should have appeared in his translation as *ipsum*. Instead, he gives us: "*Ipsa conteret caput tuum....*" - or "she shall bruise thy head....." In other words, Jerome has *feminized* the doubly-emphasised masculine gender of the Hebrew, and transformed it into "she", entirely reversing the meaning of the verse as God has given it in the Old Testament. It was a crime that is breath-taking in its immensity and in the damage that it has caused.

The effects of Jerome's rendering is seen immediately in the influence that it was to exert later in the 14th century. The translators of the Wycliffe Bible (A & B), who had no Hebrew against which to check Jerome's rendering, were understandably but utterly deceived by him. Wycliffe A (1380) rendered the verse as: *she shal treed thin hede* - even as Wycliffe B (1388) gives us: *sche schal breke thin heed*. Not until Tyndale in 1530, and more specifically in the later Geneva Bible of 1560, do we see the wilful error corrected in English translations of Genesis from the Hebrew. Centuries and centuries of deception. That was Jerome's legacy to the church.

But why should Jerome have done this dreadful deed? What possible reason can he have had to pervert the plain Word of God in this way? Just who is this "she" supposed to be referring to? Clearly, it is not the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus. So who then, except it be none other than that pagan goddess who was - in Jerome's own day - being masqueraded before the people as Mary, the mother of Jesus - and, more horrendously, was even then being proclaimed co-redemptrix with Him of the entire human race?

And that is the answer to the riddle in a nutshell. For Rome, and her unfortunate congregation of believers, *Mary* was to be the promised conqueror of sin, and not Christ. It is why today the Roman faithful can buy their very own Miraculous Medal, an item which shows in pictorial form an image of 'Mary' - and not Christ - standing with *her* heel upon the neck of the serpent.

But what exactly is the historical background against which Jerome had come to think it necessary, or even desirable, to so change Genesis 3:15b by corrupting its gender? For there is such a background, and it makes very interesting reading.

Rome and the early growth of the worship of Mary

We have seen earlier in this study that Jerome was present in 381 at the Council of Constantinople. But someone else was there whom Jerome would have known - or come to know in the course of the event. That someone's name was Gregory of Nyssa. Now, this man was the younger brother of 'St' Basil (much revered today in the Eastern Orthodox Church), and was to become bishop of Sebaste, attending in that role the Council of Antioch in 379. Subsequently he attended the Council of Constantinople in 381, where he and Jerome would have made each other's acquaintance - assuming that they were not already known to each other from their mutual dealings with the church at Antioch (which I am sure they were).

Importantly, Gregory of Nyssa was a most enthusiastic advocate of the elevation of Mary to the title 'Mother of God' (or *Theotokos* - lit. 'God-bearer') rather than simply the earthly mother of the incarnate Christ.⁴⁰ He also held (somewhat crazily in view of the Bible's teaching on the matter) that all the souls in Hell - and even Satan himself! - would one day return to God. But of a more historical importance is the fact that his grandmother was Macrina (the elder), who had been taught in turn

by one Gregory Thaumaturgus, and it seems to have been this man who was more instrumental than any other in establishing the surprisingly early cult of Mary.

Gregory Thaumaturgus (ca. 213-70) is one of the stranger characters to be thrown up by the Roman church in these years. Travelling to Palestine in 233 (as a pagan), he fetched up in Caesarea where he met Origen (the inspiration for so much of Jerome's strange views), who in turn converted Gregory to what was taken by Origen to be Christianity. He then returned to his native city of Neocaesarea in Pontus and was to be made bishop of its church there within a suspiciously short time. He was soon to be publicized as a miracle-worker, a reputation that he did nothing to play down, and was said by the credulous to have removed a mountain out of its place and to have drained a swamp by dint of his mental powers. Indeed, his epithet, *Thaumaturgus*, means 'Wonder-worker'. But that is not all. What he taught his flock was, he claimed, directly given to him in a vision by Mary (accompanied by John the Evangelist) - the very earliest recorded claim of a vision of Mary! Not surprisingly, he was himself soon elevated to sainthood, and is commemorated today in the Roman calendar on his so-called feast day of November 17th.⁴¹

But his claim that Mary (being dead) can and does communicate with the living - a kind of necromancy in reverse - gave much impetus to those who would see the old pagan practices continued, with Mary worshipped as a divine figure. As we have seen, Gregory Thaumaturgus taught Macrina the elder, who taught her grandson Gregory of Nyssa, who in turn promoted this teaching concerning Mary before Jerome at Constantinople. Subsequently, as we have seen, and again with incredibly indecent haste, Jerome became papal secretary and received his commission to weave these and other teachings into the fabric of a new Latin 'translation' of the Bible. Thus we can see each stage of development as the story unfolds.

There are other elements to the story, of course. The push for Mary's elevation began as early as Justin Martyr (ca. 100-65), who shamelessly declared that as Christ was the new Adam, so Mary was the new Eve. Had Martyr read his Genesis, then he would have seen immediately that Eve was Adam's *wife*, not his mother. But what is a mere fact of history when theology is at stake? Justin Martyr is thus seen to be responsible for influencing directly Jerome's later decision to feminize the promise that God made in Genesis 3:15.⁴²

Justin Martyr also gave impetus to the surprisingly early notion of Mary as co-redemptrix and co-mediatrix with Jesus of the human race, something that Jerome was to find dear to his heart. Intriguingly, there is an early apocryphal work called the *Gospel of the Birth of Mary*, several manuscripts of which contain a preface attributing the work directly to the hand of Jerome himself, so well known was he in the old world for embracing the cause of Mary's alleged 'divinity'.⁴³ The purpose of this 'gospel' was, of course, to promote the lie of Mary's supposed sinlessness, for had she herself been tainted with that sin that permeates the rest of humanity, she could not have been enthroned as the Queen of Heaven, and nor could she intercede

for sinners before an allegedly angry Jesus, who must be appeased by the softness of His mother's intercession before sinners can find but a temporary respite from Heavenly justice - a 'theology' that is so false, so cruel and so blasphemous that I forebear offering any further comment on the matter.

Conclusion

One curious pattern emerges with these early 'fathers' of the Roman church, and that is the surprisingly indecent haste with which certain of them were promoted, Gregory of Nyssa for instance to the office of bishop of Sebaste, Gregory Thaumaturgus to that of Neocaesarea, and more wonderfully Jerome to the extremely high and influential office of papal secretary. These promotions occurred just as soon as the very strange and anti-Biblical views of these men became known to those in power, and the vivid impression that is left behind is that of an organized religious system that had planned long before the route that it intended to take towards lordship over the flock of Christ, and which was merely waiting for the 'right' men to come along.

It was in every sense a planned usurpation not just of political power over the kingdoms within the Roman world - indeed, lordship over *every* kingdom on Earth is claimed to this day by the papacy! - but the more dreadful usurpation of the place of Christ Himself over His flock - the flock for which the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ had died and shed His blood. Not that Rome limits herself to claims of earthly power, but usurps to herself power over souls in Hell and over the saints of God in Heaven, her anathemas, curses and canonisations holding sway throughout all eternity (or so she believes, and worse, would have us believe).

The religious system of Rome is so clearly that of paganism dressed in a Christian garb, that it is no great feat to trace its beginnings back to the days of Constantine and his successor thrice removed, Theodosius I. It is also a simple matter to read the many excellent histories that detail the subsequent history of the Roman church up to the present day. Here we have attempted to examine some of those more hidden features which tell us how certain of the foundational heresies of Rome had their beginnings, and how they came to be imposed on pain of excommunication and death upon those who had - and still have - the misfortune to live under the sway of the Roman pontiff.

But these things all had a practical effect as well. We can see it in one of the more curious productions of English literature from the 17th century, namely Coles' *Dictionary*.⁴⁴ Coles' book, based though it was upon previous dictionaries,⁴⁵ has certain important omissions which are entirely consistent with his fear that Jerome's perverted use of certain words and definitions had given them strange and dangerous meanings. Let me explain.

Cole flourished (ca.1640-80) during the years of the Restoration, when King Charles II took up the crown of England at the invitation of the Commons. The country had

just emerged from the Civil War, which war had culminated in the severing of the head from off the shoulders of the king's father, Charles I. Now, for all his declarations of Protestant sympathies, it was an open secret that Charles II was, like his father, a covert Catholic, as was his brother James who was later to succeed him. The difference between Charles and his brother, however, was that James had made no secret of his Catholicism, and there was the very real danger that England would be returned to the papal yoke once James succeeded to the crown. (It was the ejection of James II from England and the battles that followed that were the starting point of the present troubles in Ireland).

In such an uncertain atmosphere, a man had to be very careful indeed about what he said, and even more careful about what he wrote down. Thus, it is most instructive to see in Coles' *Dictionary* that the words penance, repentance, love, charity and so on - indeed, virtually any word that could be construed as theologically ambiguous - is omitted altogether. In those days, a 'wrong' interpretation - by which I mean one that is at odds with the prevailing church's dogma - could lead a man into the trap of heresy, and it was not that long before Coles' time that men were burned alive for such a 'crime'. Indeed, Archbishop Laud, Charles I's right hand man, had attempted to revive the punishment of burning shortly before the Civil War broke out, but the public executioners very wisely pretended that all knowledge of how to execute such a sentence had gone out of memory. They, again very wisely, had feared the people, and so Laud's plan was thwarted and he himself later beheaded. But if an English archbishop - and a Protestant archbishop at that - could so readily contemplate the relighting of the fires of Smithfield when civil war threatened, then what could a Catholic archbishop not achieve in time of peace once he was installed under the protection of a Catholic monarch?

They were dangerous times indeed, and Coles was only one of the many Englishmen of the day that had good cause to fear. And it was all down to Jerome whose wilful and deliberate perversions of the Word of God had taken such deep root. In all, it makes a very sad chapter in the history of the Church - a chapter, moreover, that has yet to be finished.

1) Cheetham (p. 23). Whether Praetextatus was revolted by the corruption then being displayed by professors of Christianity, and was merely giving that revulsion a sarcastic voice, or was sincerely asking for church office, we cannot now know, though his promise either way is a shameful comment on what was happening in Rome.

2) Most of the general details on Damasus' reign can be found in *Encycl. Britannica* (1985), vol 3, p. 866; Cheetham, p. 22-4 (see Bibliography); the *Chronicle of the Popes*; and the *Encyclopaedia of Catholicism* under the entry for Damasus.

3) Cheetham, p. 23.

4) *Chronicle of the Popes*, p. 29.

5) Interestingly, the *Chronicle of the Popes* (p. 30) tries to water down the charges a little by stating: "But Damasus also had charm which he exercised upon upper-class women in particular - a tactic which may have lent superficial weight to a charge of adultery he once had to face. His line of reasoning was obvious. Convert the ladies and their men-folk will follow." So much for rich folk. But what Damasus may have thought of the command to preach the Gospel to the *poor* we are nowhere told.

6) *Chronicle of the Popes*, p. 29. The reference given is "Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, 27.3.12-13." But according to the *Gesta inter Liberium et Felicem*, 160 of Damasus' opponents were murdered in this election. Perhaps the 23 unaccounted for by Ammianus died later from injuries received at the basilica.

7) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, vol 3, p. 866.

8) Damasus must have thought it a stroke of extraordinary good fortune when the Emperor, Theodosius I (379-95), ordered "all the inhabitants of the empire" to follow "the form of religion handed down by the Apostle Peter to the Romans, and now followed by Bishop Damasus...". (see *Chronicle of the Popes*, p. 30).

9) Broadbent. *The Pilgrim Church*. pp. 58-62.

10) Cross, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. p. 731.

11) *ibid.* p. 72.

12) *ibid.* p. 72.

13) *ibid.* p. 731; & *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, vol 6, p. 535.

14) Cross, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. p. 1218.

15) *ibid.* p. 926.

16) *ibid.* p. 929.

17) Cross, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. p. 929.

18) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, vol 6, p. 535.

19) *ibid.*

20) Cross, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. p. 731.

21) Bruce. *Books and the Parchments*. p. 205.

22) Cross, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. p. 72.

23) *ibid.* p. 339.

24) *ibid.* p. 900.

25) In something of a classic understatement, we are told: "His response to temptation was excessive prayer and fasting." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, vol 6, p. 535. Jerome heavily criticized the corruption and worldliness that he saw around him in the Roman church, and it is suspected that it was this that robbed him of his own expected election to the papacy at the death of Damasus.

26) It is interesting that the one epistle in the New Testament that explains the Gospel in greater depth than any other, should be written by Paul to the church at Rome. The Greek-reading Roman Christians would have been all too familiar with the key-texts on grace: Rom. 3:21-25; 4:13-16; 5:6-8; Eph. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:9; *et al* - texts for which the pope and his co-religionists would have had no answer. No wonder a corrupted Latin Bible was decided upon!

27) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, vol 6, p. 535. The other general details are to be found in Cross, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. p. 731.

28) Cross, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. p. 1010.

29) *ibid.*

30) *ibid.*

31) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, vol 6, p. 536.

32) Cross, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. p. 511.

33) *ibid.* p. 323.

34) These and the following details are to be found in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, vol 6, p. 536.

35) *ibid.*

36) The phrase *hocus-pocus* - meaning magical nonsense - derives from the Latin rendering of "This is My body...." (*Hoc est corpus meum*), which the Roman priest still speaks over the wafer during mass, and which formula is still claimed by Rome to magically transform the bread and wine of the mass into the actual body and blood - yes, and living Soul too - of the Son of God.

37) Pagninus and Beza at Matthew 3:2 etc. (See bibliography)

38) Paues, Anna. *A Fourteenth-Century English Biblical Version*. 1904. Cambridge. p. 202.

39) I owe this information entirely to Dr James J Scofield Johnson of Dallas, Texas, who on first hearing of Jerome's corrupting this text, most forcefully argues the point as follows: "The Hebrew text of Genesis 3:15 literally translates as: Enmity I-shall-put between-you(2nd p.masc.sing.) and-between the-woman(fem.sing.), and-between seed(masc.sing.)-of-you(2nd p.masc.sing.) and-between seed(masc.sing.)-of-her(fem.sing.); He/Himself(3rd pers.masc.sing.pronoun *for emphasis, because not needed for grammar of sentence*) He(3rd p.masc.sing.)-shall-bruise-you(2nd p.masc.sing.) head, and-you(2d p.masc.sing.)-shall-bruise-Him(3rd pers.masc.sing.) heel. In other words, the literal meaning is not just 'He shall bruise you [of] head,' but, 'He Himself shall bruise you [of] head' -- which the inclusion of the 3rd person masculine singular pronoun (*he-waw-aleph*) preceding the *bruise* verb-form, which itself explicitly denotes a masculine subject for the action of Who will do the bruising to the serpent's head. The Hebrew could not be more clear: it is a HE Who will be bruising the serpent's head, and that HE is the Seed (masc.sing.) of the woman. It was necessary that Christ be incarnated in a woman (see Galatians 4:4), so that He would enter the human race apart from a man (since Romans chapter 5 clarifies that the sin-nature is inherited from a man, not a woman)."

40) Cross, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. p. 599.

41) *ibid.* pp. 600-1.

42) *ibid.* p. 692.

43) *ibid.* p. 884.

44) Coles, Elisha. *An English Dictionary*. 1676. Samuel Crouch. London.

45) His dictionary was based firmly upon that of Edward Phillips' *New World of English Words* (1658), and Thomas Blount's *Glossographia* of 1656 - a fact that led Blount to accuse Coles of sheer plagiarism. But in fairness, it is nigh impossible for any lexographic work to be entirely original. Bibliography

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PART 4: THE CASE OF RICHARD HUNNE

The pre-Reformation story of the London merchant Richard Hunne, and how he challenged the great abuses of the church, being murdered for his pains by certain church officers. What Hunne achieved very much impressed and influenced Henry VIII and determined the course of the Reformation in its earliest years.

Introduction We come forward now some 1100 years to the time when Europe, and England in particular, stood upon the very threshold of the Reformation. We see a Europe that is locked fast in the stranglehold that the papacy of Rome had placed upon it centuries before. But we see, in particular, the deep dread that Rome had of the true Word of God becoming known among the people, and its deep enmity towards those who sought to read that Word in their mother tongue. It is an enmity and dread that showed itself candidly in the case of Richard Hunne, and because his story is told nowhere else these days, we will tell it here.

On Saturday, 29th March 1511, an argument developed between Richard Hunne and a priest, whose name was Thomas Driffield. The occasion was the funeral of Richard Hunne's five-week old son, Stephen, who had died at the Whitechapel home of his wet-nurse, Mistress Agnes Snowe. Thomas Driffield had just conducted the baby's funeral at the local church of St Mary Matfellow, and he demanded as his fee for burying the child the christening gown in which the child's body had been wrapped.¹ The gown was an expensive garment which the priest would normally have sold, pocketing the proceeds. Richard Hunne, meanwhile, was one of the wealthiest merchants of London, famous for the scale of his giving to the poor, and he could easily have afforded to give the gown away and buy a hundred more to replace it. Yet Hunne refused to give the gown to the priest. He pointed out that for his mortuary fee (as the payment was then known), the priest was entitled - under *church* or canon law - to the most valuable possession of the deceased. But as neither

a child - nor indeed a dead person - could be deemed to own anything under the *civil* law of England, it followed that the priest was not entitled to it. The gown was Richard Hunne's property, not Stephen's, and as Richard Hunne was still living, the priest had no claim to it. And so the two men parted with great enmity.

Now, at first sight the argument seems petty. But behind it stood some of the most important issues of the day. The priest was claiming something to which he was entitled under ecclesiastical law. But Richard Hunne was countering his claim with civil law - the *king's* law, in other words. And the question which would not have been lost on any of those who witnessed the row - nor indeed on either of the two antagonists themselves - was simply this: Which system of law was to prevail in England? That of the church, or that of the king? In other words, Richard Hunne was questioning - long before Henry VIII was to do so - who held the supremacy in this land of England, the king or the pope? He was not to hear the last of it.

Mortuaries, or fees for burying the dead, had long been a cause of great bitterness between the clergy and the laity, and not without reason.² When the item claimed by the priest - the local plough or breeding-bull perhaps - was the surviving family's only means of livelihood, as was often the case, then it could mean destitution, homelessness and ultimately starvation for those left behind. And while much of Richard Hunne's wealth would have been expended upon the relief of such families, his ability to combat the abuse was severely limited. If he challenged the system of mortuaries on theological grounds, then he would open himself to the deadly charge of heresy. So instead of theology, he was to use the civil laws of England to counter the financial claims of Rome. As we shall see, having embarked upon his course, his attention was to focus upon one particular law of England, the Great Statute of Praemunire, which was first enacted in 1393 under Richard II, though used since that date - when at all - with little or no effect.³

Richard Hunne's challenge was to hit the London scene like a bombshell, its echoes reverberating through the distant courts of Rome itself, when Pope Leo X found it necessary to thunder timely anathemas in the Lateran against those who would dare to suggest that the clergy ought to be subject to the same secular powers as the laity. But it was too late, for Richard Hunne was to set Church and State together upon a collision course, and once the legal process was set in motion, no man, be he pope or king, would be able to stop it.

Since 1949, there have been three major contributions to studies of the Hunne affair. They are those of Ogle (see Bibliography), Dickens and Marius.⁴ Ogle's study, heroic though it was, was necessarily much less informed than either he or we might have wished, for many of the documents relevant to the case have come to light only since his day. Dickens and Marius *et al* have added considerably to our appreciation of the political background of the case, but with the disadvantage of an incomplete landscape, as certain records still lay undiscovered or unappreciated.⁵ Here, however, we are able to bring all the known documents together into one cohesive study, where we can also introduce a document of which previous scholars

have been hitherto unaware, namely a portion of the original coroner's report on the body of Richard Hunne.

Richard Hunne's clash with the church did not, of course, simply erupt out of the blue. It had its real origins in earlier incidents, in particular the arrest and interrogation of his neighbor, Joan Baker. Joan's husband, Gervais Baker, was - like Hunne - a merchant-tailor living in Bridge Street, London.⁶ Gervais and Richard were both members of the Merchant-Tailors' Guild, and were members also of a strong Lollard community centered around Bridge Street. Mostly, the Lollards in this area kept a low profile, and were left unmolested by the church. But this changed when, on Wednesday 18th September 1510, Joan Baker loudly declared to the local priest that she "would do no more reverence to a crucifix in the church than she would do to a dog, for they be but stocks and stones."⁷

A few days later, at the death-bed of Thomas Blake - yet another merchant-tailor of Bridge Street - Joan loudly uttered many other 'heresies', leaving her long-suffering priest, John Cawode, no alternative but to have her arrested and taken before Richard Fitzjames, the bishop of London. In May of 1511, some two months after Stephen Hunne's funeral in fact, Joan was taken from prison - the Lollards' Tower at St Paul's Cathedral in London - to the bishop's palace at Fulham, where she faced her interrogators. Her examination has survived, and it makes grim reading indeed (see Bibliography).

Meanwhile, Richard Hunne had teamed up with a friend of his, one William Lamberd, in a minor litigation against the priest of St Michael-in-Cornhill, London, in a dispute over tenement rights.⁸ It was a time when many others had their own axes to grind concerning church abuses, and Parliament itself was to sit less than a year later to debate the passing of a bill that would strip the clergy of their age-old immunity against prosecution in the secular courts.⁹ It was a major crisis for the church, and we can only guess the extent to which Richard Hunne's activities had moved the Commons to debate such a bill. As one of the wealthiest men in London, he would after all have had many friends in high places.

Interestingly, while the bill was still before Parliament, Thomas Driffield (the priest of Whitechapel still looking for his mortuary) struck back. On Monday 26th April 1512, he cited Richard Hunne before the spiritual court at Lambeth, where he laid his complaint against him. But here we encounter a strange twist in the tale, for under normal circumstances such a case as Driffield's would have gone before the bishop's court - the Court of Arches - in London. But these, it seems, were not normal circumstances. Special permission would have been required to move the case to Lambeth, for the London court was under the jurisdiction of, naturally enough, the bishop of London - who was then Richard Fitzjames, Thomas Driffield's ordinary - whereas the court at Lambeth was under the prerogative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham. Just why Warham wanted the matter heard in his own court rather than in London is something that we may only ponder. Undoubtedly, it had something to do with the fact that Richard Hunne had

struck deep into the flesh of the church - so deeply, in fact, that the wound was felt in Rome, and it is more than just probable that Warham was under instructions to resolve the matter - though in Rome's favor, of course. Doubtless, such heavy politics also account for the readiness with which Fitzjames, normally extremely jealous of his office, abrogated his own authority in the matter in favor of Warham. London was, after all, sufficiently far from Lambeth in those days for Fitzjames to remain unscathed should the whole thing blow up in their faces.

Thus, on Wednesday 28th April of that year, Richard Hunne received a summons to present himself at Lambeth. The court official who delivered the summons was one Charles Joseph, and we shall meet him again soon as the story unfolds. Presiding over the court was Cuthbert Tunstall who was later to succeed Fitzjames as bishop of London. But for the time being, he was Auditor of Cases to William Warham, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Richard Hunne presented himself at Lambeth on Thursday 13th May, and Tunstall duly opened the case against him. However, Tunstall now did a curious thing. He declared that he was hearing the matter "out of court", and he pointedly ignored Thomas Driffield's demand that Richard Hunne should be excommunicated for his obstinacy. To excommunicate an offender like Richard Hunne, and to throw the entire weight of the ecclesiastical court against him, would have been the normal course of events. But instead, Tunstall merely admonished Hunne to either hand the gown over to Driffield, or compensate the priest with the sum of 6 shillings and 8 pence - just a third of an English pound. Then, ignoring the protests raised by the plaintiff, Tunstall let Hunne walk away from the court a free man.

Driffield and those who supported him must have been aghast, but, though they couldn't see it, there was good reason for Tunstall handling the case as he did. Tunstall was by nature a lenient man, yet even for him this was an extraordinary judgment to give. However, we must remember that just across the Thames from Lambeth Palace, Parliament was still in session debating the clerical immunity bill, and by the November following a law was passed by both Houses in Parliament (Lords and Commons) that abolished clerical immunity for all those in minor orders - those below the rank of sub-deacon in other words, which included the motley collection of pardoners, summoners and bell-ringers. But it pointedly did not include bishops, priests or deacons, and this omission - some would say this fudge - undoubtedly led to the following series of events in the Richard Hunne affair. (Had Tunstall come down heavily upon Richard Hunne in his judgment at Lambeth, then who knows what other ranks of the church the new law would have ensnared? Tunstall's leniency, it seems, was richly repaid).

On 27th December of that year (1512), Richard Hunne unaccountably returned to the church at Whitechapel, ostensibly to attend evensong there. That day in the Roman calendar is the feast of St John the Evangelist - an important day for the Catholic church - so why did he go all the way to Whitechapel (some two miles from his home in Bridge Street), when he could and should have heard the service in his

own church of St Margaret's, a church which stood right next door to his own house? We don't know. But what we do know is a matter of record. He had walked straight into the lion's den.

Richard Hunne was spotted sitting among the congregation by Drifffield's chaplain, Henry Marshall, and Marshall immediately stopped the church service.¹⁰ Then he loudly denounced Richard Hunne as accursed and ordered him to leave the church - which Hunne did, in some alarm. Being denounced publicly as one accursed by the church was no light matter, and Richard Hunne now found himself ostracized - in public at least - by his former business associates and friends. None dare be seen to help him or befriend him in any way, for by doing either, they would have incurred a like censure - yes, even members of his own family would have been in danger of being denounced as accursed if they sheltered him.

Such was the plight that Richard now found himself in, that he decided once more to fight back against the church by appealing to the law. Having engaged the services of an attorney, one Richard Hawkes who was himself taking a great risk by representing Hunne, he began proceedings against Henry Marshall for slander in the Court of King's Bench. The case opened on Tuesday 25th January 1513, and present before the court were the defendant, Henry Marshall, and his own attorney, William Fisher. The court then heard how the defendant:

"...in great anger and raging wildly...spoke to the said Richard Hunne insultingly and in a loud voice these hateful words in English, to his physical hurt and the loss of his good reputation, as follows: 'Hunne, thou art accursed and thou standest accursed. Go thou therefore out of the church, for as long as thou art in this church, I will say no evensong nor service!'"¹¹

One notable fact that we glean from Hunne's writ of slander is that he was not alone when he entered the church at Whitechapel, for Marshall's words had caused him and "several other honest persons nearby and their respective servants" to vacate the church in fear of violence. Hunne's Lollard friends were clearly taking an active interest in the unfolding of events. But the main thrust of Hunne's complaint before the judges was the fact that Henry Marshall had denounced him as accursed when such a term could only be applied to excommunicates. Under canon law as it then stood, the only occasion on which it was lawful to stop a church service was when an excommunicated person entered the church, and as Richard Hunne was at pains to point out, he had never been excommunicated - thanks to the leniency shown to him at Lambeth by Cuthbert Tunstall. The words of Henry Marshall were therefore slanderous.

We must not think from this that Richard Hunne was merely being peevish by splitting hairs over this point. He had clearly had enough of clergymen falsely denouncing individuals as heretics and "accursed" without having to answer for their falsity. Men and women - and, yes, children too - had been burned alive on the

strength of such wrongful accusations, with absolutely no legal comebacks awaiting the false accuser simply because, as a cleric, he enjoyed immunity from prosecution in the king's courts no matter what his crime might be, save treason. And that is what Richard Hunne was attempting to put an end to.

Confusion, however, reigned on both sides concerning Hunne's status as an excommunicate or otherwise. In Hunne's later writ of *praemunire* (see below), he complains that Thomas Driffield, the priest at Whitechapel, had caused "various sentences of suspension from sacrament and excommunication to be brought and charged against the said Richard Hunne", which had all occurred at Lambeth the previous May. But Henry Marshall was to deny this later by pointing out in his own defence in the *praemunire* that Tunstall had pronounced against Richard Hunne "out of court". By saying this, he was, in the tangle of the law, inadvertently admitting his antagonist's claim against him in the slander writ, which claimed - rightly - that Hunne was never formally excommunicated. But the point seems not to have been taken up by Hunne's attorney, Richard Hawkes. Would that it had been.

Richard Hunne, however, cannot have seen the danger in which his complaint of slander now placed him. For if he was to contend that he was not an excommunicate, then the church was only too happy to make up the deficiency. Perhaps his attorney sensed the danger, but by now it was too late. Henry Marshall, through his attorney Fisher, promptly requested an adjournment of the proceedings, and a day to be set aside for his reply. This was granted by the judges, who adjourned the case until "Friday next after the octave of Easter", which in this year fell on Friday 8th April 1513. And it is between the date when the slander case was opened (Tuesday 25th January 1513) and the resumption of proceedings in April of that year that we may place the date of Richard Hunne's formal excommunication from the church. The record of the event has not survived, but it doubtless took place in the bishop of London's own Court of Arches under the auspices of Fitzjames. Tunstall at Lambeth would no longer have been trusted to exercise the required severity in the matter. But more importantly, its occurrence would also explain Hunne's sudden reply in issuing against the church what was potentially one of the deadliest writs of the age, that of *praemunire*.¹²

Briefly, the Great Statute of Praemunire made it treasonable to appeal to any power higher than that of the king. And it also made treasonable the trying of a matter in a spiritual court which should more properly have been dealt with in the king's court. By appealing to such a power, and by appealing to a court that was not the king's, the appellant automatically placed himself outside the king's protection. He would cease to be a subject of the king, and the king would cease to be his protector and his "good lord". His wealth could be stripped from him, and he could be imprisoned for the rest of his natural life. Moreover, and this by implication rather than decree, the appellant could be assaulted, robbed and murdered without protection of the law by any of the king's subjects, not one of whom could be brought to book for the crime.

But what really heightens the drama of Hunne's writ is not so much its dire penalties, for most penalties were dire in those days, but those public figures who were embraced by it. Although he was to die within the month - due no doubt to the stress that it placed him under - Thomas Driffield is cited, for it was he who had pursued Hunne at Lambeth in the first place. Henry Marshall, Driffield's chaplain, is another whose name appears, as does that of Charles Joseph, the bishop's summoner. Cuthbert Tunstall, as Auditor of Cases at Lambeth, is also named in the writ. But the real stunner as far as everyone else in London was concerned, from the lowliest up to the king, was William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury, whose court Lambeth was. For by providing the court, he had directly aided and abetted all others involved in an act of treason.

Under the terms of the Great Statute, Warham's treason, of course, went even further than this, for Canterbury was not the only office that he held. He was also papal legate, whose office it was to represent and enforce the pope's authority and will in the realm of England, an authority which the popes had always claimed was higher than that of any king. But even that was not the end of his entanglement in the law of *praemunire*.

Warham was also Henry VIII's own lord chancellor, and when he took the oath that pertains to that office, he had sworn himself to uphold all the rights and privileges of the king against all other interests and powers, foreign or domestic. But he had taken this oath knowing that he had previously sworn to uphold the *pope's* rights and privileges *against* those of the king whom he now pretended to serve and defend. Thus, his activities as papal legate, coupled with his perjury as lord chancellor, were exactly the stuff that the Great Statute condemned. Warham, and with him the entire church in England - and the pope - were in trouble.

Hunne's contemporaries were stunned by all this. What he had done was unheard of, although it has to be said that, given the delicacy of the balancing act that held church and state together in those days, this was a bomb just waiting to go off. All it had required was a man of sufficient courage and integrity - and wealth - to set it ticking. But Richard Hunne was to discover that he had one real problem, and that problem consisted in the judges who sat in the Court of King's Bench, and whom he was now asking to try the case.

The judges of King's Bench, just as modern judges are, were the subordinates and appointees of the lord chancellor, indeed the same lord chancellor who was now being cited before them. Moreover, being in the royal pay they were also the servants of the king. Now, Richard Hunne was rightly claiming before them that the church, in the persons of those named in the writ - their own lord chancellor included - had transgressed the royal prerogative as defined by the Great Statute, and he rightly proclaimed before them that according to the Statute, "all prosecutors, maintainers, abettors, supporters and counsellors" of such traitors "should be placed outside the Lord King's protection and should forfeit their lands

and tenements, goods and chattels...and should be arrested in person...' and so on.¹³ All of which presented the judges of King's Bench with the following dilemma.

If, as good and loyal servants of the king, they upheld Richard Hunne's undeniably lawful claim, then they would be seen to take away from the church and its pope their alleged right and authority to try English subjects in the spiritual court, a court of foreign jurisdiction no less. They would also fall into the deadly trap of heresy by denying the pope's claim to be head of the church in England, which would in turn place the standing of the pope beneath that of their own secular prince. Furthermore, they would be aiding and abetting a (now) pronounced excommunicate of the church, which under canon law would mean that they themselves would become excommunicate. In fact, men had burned for less.

But that was not the end of their woes, for if, as good children of holy church, they upheld the pope's cause, then they would themselves become guilty of treason under the terms of the Great Statute for allowing that it was lawful for an English subject to appeal to an authority higher than that of the king, thus denying the royal prerogative and placing the king of England's authority beneath that of the pope, who was himself a foreign prince. Likewise, men had been hoisted aloft by the neck, disembowelled whilst still alive and chopped up into quarters for saying less than what they were now being asked to say.

It was not an enviable position to be in. They were damned if they found in favor of Richard Hunne, and equally damned if they didn't. This, of course, was the state of affairs that the church of Rome had worked hard towards for centuries, so as to make herself immune not just from prosecution for her crimes, but from even the very challenge of the law. She had sought to make herself unassailable, and for the time being at least, she had succeeded.

It was all going horribly wrong for Richard Hunne, for what he and his attorney had failed to anticipate was the tendency of a compromised judiciary to prevaricate, and to delay giving judgment indefinitely. For if the judges decided neither for the king nor for the pope, then they would be taking the only way open for them to save their own lives. What followed, therefore, was an interminable series of adjournments. By this, the judges could hope that an endless litigation would ruin Hunne financially and simply fizzle out of its own accord. Or they could hope for Warham's death (he was an old man by now). Or they might hope for the king's death. But they and the church must surely have hoped, less treasonably, for the death of Richard Hunne himself - an event that was not long in coming. The church herself was to see to that.

Then, wishing the world to hear his own voice in the matter, the pope thought it expedient to fulminate in the Lateran Council against any who sought to bring the spiritual power under the heel of the secular. The date was Friday 5th May 1514, and the pope's name was Leo X, the same man who was to thunder so ineffectually against Martin Luther three years later. No doubt the bill recently passed by

Parliament depriving the lower clergy of their immunity from prosecution loomed large in his mind. But the news of what Richard Hunne was doing must also have reached him, for it challenged his political authority in a novel and dangerous way.

Such was the danger in which the church in England now felt itself that the following month, on Thursday 22nd June, the Convocation of Canterbury opened to discuss the implications of the Parliamentary bill - only to be surprised to hear a defence of it given by one of their own, the speaker of the Lower House of Convocation no less, Dr John Taylor. Clearly, some of the clergy at least were appalled by the abuses of their colleagues, and were willing to denounce the scandal before them. But the more conservative among them - those that were convinced that Rome could do no wrong - had one cause for optimism, namely the clause in the bill which stated that the act would run only until the next Parliament. And then, they were assured, Richard Fitzjames, the irascible bishop of London and, as such, a member of the Upper House of Parliament, would have a word or two to say on the matter.

On the very same day that all this was happening, Richard Hunne's slander case was re-presented before the Court of King's Bench, and the by now predictable answer of the judges was to adjourn the case once again, this time till the "Monday next after the octave of St Michael" - Monday 13th November 1514, in other words. But Richard Hunne was not to attend that hearing, for it was in October of that year (according to Arnold) that he was arrested on a charge of heresy and imprisoned in the Lollards Tower adjoining old St Paul's cathedral.¹⁴ It seems that the king himself was informed of the arrest, for on 23rd November Henry VIII summoned Parliament to assemble. It did so in an atmosphere that was becoming more charged by the day. The wish of the king - who was by now taking a quiet but close interest in Richard Hunne - was that Parliament should debate whether to make the clerical immunity bill a permanent feature of English law. Richard Hunne's fate, it must have seemed to many, depended heavily upon the outcome. A decision by Parliament to keep the law intact would have strengthened Hunne's cases before King's Bench immeasurably, the *praemunire* suit in particular. Which is doubtless why the following sequence of events occurred as quickly as it did.

The events began in Eastcheap, a market thoroughfare in London that lay just around the corner to where Richard Hunne's house stood in Bridge Street. There, between the hours of eight and nine on the morning of Friday 1st December 1514, one John Spalding, alias John Bellringer, fell into conversation with John Enderby, who was a friend of Richard Hunne.¹⁵ John Spalding was one of Richard Hunne's jailers, and on being asked by Enderby how his prisoner fared, Spalding chillingly replied, "There is ordained for him so grievous a penance that when men hear of it, they shall have great marvel thereof." His words were overheard by John Rutter, a scrivener, and William Segar, an armourer - two more friends of Richard Hunne, no doubt. But this was not all, for on the same day, James, a cook in the bishop's household, was heard to announce to five women elsewhere in London that Richard Hunne, "would die before Christmas, or he would die for him."

The following day, Richard Hunne was taken from his cell in the Lollards Tower to the bishop's palace at Fulham, there to be examined on certain charges of heresy.¹⁶ The articles laid against him are cited by Foxe, and include the charges that he denied the clergy's right to tithes; had called them Pharisees; stated that they took all and gave nothing; that he had defended the damnable opinions of Joan Baker, his friend and neighbor, saying that the bishop was more worthy of punishment than she; and - most heinous crime of all - that he had kept certain English books such as Wycliffe's damnable works and the Apocalypse and Gospels in English containing infinite errors - "which he read and studied daily."¹⁷

This was all standard fare for the arraignment of Lollards, but what is of more note than all the matters included in the charges, are those matters that are *omitted* from them. Most tellingly, no mention is made of Hunne's denying the clergy's right to mortuary fees, and nothing at all is said of the far more serious challenge that he had lain against the church, namely the suit of *praemunire*. Nor is mention made of his holding temporal law - the law of the king - to be superior to that of the church. Clearly, events in Parliament were now making even the bishop of London cautious, for even he could not predict which way things would go for the church. And how could he answer in law for condemning a man for doing what the king and Parliament considered lawful? The charges against Richard Hunne, therefore, had to be worded carefully.

Foxe was able to tell us such close detail about Hunne's interrogation because he possessed the loose leaves from the bishop's register on which his examination was recorded. These leaves were never reunited with the rest of the register (they are missing still), but what is interesting is the story of how Foxe came by them - a story that we shall hear shortly.

Meanwhile, Foxe tells us that Richard Hunne had admitted the charges against him in a general sense, and - not wishing to be burned alive - had placed himself under the good bishop's correction.¹⁸ It was the only sensible thing he could have done under the circumstances. Richard Hunne knew that if he obstinately stuck to his opinions, he would be burned. But if he recanted his opinions, the bishop would be compelled under canon law to impose certain penances on him and afterwards release him. But the bishop also knew something, namely that, once released, Richard Hunne could return to pursuing his *praemunire* suit against the church. Because Fitzjames had not included this suit in his list of charges against Hunne, Hunne could not recant or abjure them. He would therefore be free to continue, and this could not be allowed to happen. The normal course of events would have seen Richard Hunne signing his abjuration prior to his release - just as Joan Baker and hundreds of others had signed theirs before him. But no such abjuration was allowed. His submission to the bishop's authority notwithstanding, he was simply taken back to his cell at St Paul's. Richard Hunne was the bishop's prisoner still, and his fate was sealed.

Hunne re-entered his cell in the Lollards Tower at four that afternoon. John Spalding, who had announced his prisoner's impending death only the previous day, was there to greet him and take charge of him. He did so on the instructions of Dr William Horsey, the bishop of London's chancellor, who had warned him not to allow anyone to communicate in any way with his prisoner without his prior knowledge and consent. Moreover, the prisoner was to have but one meal a day and was to be denied any clean linen. There was a significance to this last order which will become evident as we proceed.

At five o'clock, Spalding took a piece of fresh salmon to the prisoner (in those days salmon was plentiful in the Thames) along with his own knife, which he was to retrieve later on the instructions of the bishop's commensary, Dr Head, who had presided over Joan Baker's examination. Richard Hunne gave Spalding what was left of the salmon for the jailer to take home to his wife, and that is the last incident recorded for that night.

At six the following morning, which was Sunday 3rd December 1514, Charles Joseph, the bishop's summoner who had served Hunne with the Lambeth writ and who was one of those cited in Richard Hunne's writ of *praemunire*, took horse and rode noisily out of London to a place called Neckhill (now untraceable). He had a cousin there called Barrington, a brothel-keeper. His noisy departure at such an hour, together with his cloak of orange tawney upon a grey horse, was intended to catch the eye of the city's gatekeepers - who were useful witnesses to have for the alibi he was building. And so he disappeared beyond the city wall into the fields around London.

Three hours later, at nine o'clock, Richard Hunne was asked, presumably by Spalding, what he wanted for his dinner that day. But the prisoner, understandably enough, lacked all appetite. The reason was the fact that since he last spoke to Spalding and gave him the remains of the salmon, he had been visited in his cell by the bishop's chancellor, William Horsey. To Richard Hunne's surprise, and doubtless to his great trepidation, Horsey fell on his knees before the prisoner and begged his forgiveness for all that he had done - and for all that he must yet do. Then to add to his alarm, in the later hours of the morning, the bishop's penitentiary came to the prisoner's cell to "say a gospel", and to administer "holy water and holy bread". Richard Hunne, in other words, was being given the last rites - an interesting development, for he would not have received such treatment if his tormentors had really believed that he was guilty. Their behavior shows clearly that they knew that their man was innocent, and that the charges against him were malicious.

However, at noon that day, once the penitentiary had left the cell, Spalding gave Richard Hunne his dinner and locked one Peter Turner (Charles Joseph's son-in-law) in with him. Turner was another who had announced the prisoner's coming death only forty-eight hours previously, to a wax-chandler's wife dwelling next to the church of St Mary Spital in Shoreditch, saying that, "before this day seven-

night, Hunne should have a mischievous death". Both Turner and his father-in-law lived at Shoreditch, as later events were to show.

Then, at one o'clock, Spalding unlocked the cell door and told Turner not to return until noon the next day. He then locked Richard Hunne into the stocks that were built into his cell. This was an added and unnecessary cruelty, causing immense pain and discomfort to a man whom Spalding knew was shortly to be murdered. But it would have had the desired effect of weakening the prisoner, thus preparing him for the slaughter.

Later, at six that evening, Spalding unlocked the cell door again to admit one William Sampson, an assistant jailer. Sampson gave Hunne a quart of ale and stayed in the cell to converse with him. Was his brief to persuade Richard Hunne to drop the *praemunire*, and to offer him his life in return? We cannot know. But Spalding and Sampson then released Hunne from the stocks in which he had been locked for the past five hours or more, and bound his wrists behind him, leaving him lying helplessly on his bed. Then they both left the prison.

Spalding was subsequently to claim that he did not return to the Lollards Tower until the following day, but that claim was shown to be false. For the very next morning, at nine o'clock, he met John Enderby again, this time by the conduit in Gracechurch Street, and told him a different story, saying, "He [Richard Hunne] fared well this day in the morning betwixt five and six of the clock. Howbeit, I am sorry for him, for there can nobody come to him until I come, for I have the keys of the doors here by my girdle" - showing the prison keys to Enderby as he said it. The truth was, as we shall see, that Spalding had returned to the prison surreptitiously just soon as Sampson had gone away, and that when he spoke to John Enderby, he knew only too well that Richard Hunne was already dead.

But now we come to the part that Charles Joseph was to play in this tragedy. Shortly before midnight on that day (Sunday 3rd December) he returned to London. He did not ride in on his horse, but left it at the Bell Inn in Shoreditch. Turner was there waiting for him by pre-arrangement, and as Joseph left the inn on foot towards the city, Turner ordered the landlord to leave the horse saddled and ready, even though the animal was sweating heavily and was "all bemired". Then Joseph made his way to the Lollards Tower where he met with Spalding and Horsey, the bishop's chancellor. Spalding had the prison keys hanging on his arm and a candle to light the way. Joseph followed him up to the cell, and Horsey trailed behind. Then, on entering the cell, Horsey cried, "Lay hands on the thief!" - and together Spalding and Joseph attacked the still bound and helpless prisoner.

We know what happened next from the later testimony of Charles Joseph himself contained in the inquest report, and a remark that was later made concerning the manner of Richard Hunne's death in another case altogether that was heard before 'Bloody' Bonner, the man who was to succeed the murderous Stokesley as bishop of London.¹⁹ Joseph had taken into the cell with him a long wire or needle. The plan

was to bring it to red heat in the candle flame and then thrust it hard up into the prisoner's nose in the hope of penetrating the brain whilst leaving no visible sign of violence. But it all went horribly wrong, for after several bungled attempts they merely caused their victim to haemorrhage violently from the nose, leaving his jacket drenched in blood. The pain that such an assault would cause the victim is probably indescribable, and Richard Hunne doubtless struggled violently to avoid it, so violently in fact that, with either Spalding or Joseph gripping his head to hold it still, his neck was broken, and Richard Hunne died.

But the murder - like most murders - had not gone according to plan. The intention had been to simply give out the news that Richard Hunne had died peacefully in the night, and so he and his challenge to the church could be buried for all time. But his neck was now broken (something that no suicide could achieve), and the cell - and Richard Hunne's body - bore every evidence of a titanic struggle. The decision was made, therefore, to tidy up the cell, clean up Hunne's body, and try to make it look as if he had committed suicide by hanging himself. The body was washed and dressed in a clean shirt - no doubt made available by Horsey's earlier ban on the prisoner having a change of clean linen. Horsey had clearly foreseen that their method of killing the prisoner would likely leave blood on the shirt that he was already wearing, and that a change of the prisoner's own linen would be required for when the body was displayed to any enquirers. Then Richard Hunne's girdle was made into a loop through which his head was passed, the three assailants then lifting his body up to a hook or staple in the wall. As a touch of authenticity which in the event fooled nobody, they combed Hunne's hair, closed his eyes, and placed his cap neatly upon his head.

But the three of them had not been thinking calmly. In their haste to leave, they overlooked the many signs of violence that the cell yet contained. Hunne's jacket still lay on the floor drenched in blood, unnoticed in the gloom. In a corner of the cell was a great pool of blood which again the darkness concealed from them. Foolishly, the stool on which it was to be pretended that Hunne stood while he hanged himself, was left upon the bed some distance from the body, and there was one more detail that they had forgotten to see to. They had forgotten to leave the candle burning as they left the cell. As was noted later by the coroner's jury, a hanging man cannot blow out a candle. And, as if such a catalogue of errors was not enough, the bishop's chancellor, Horsey, had foolishly left his expensive furred murrey gown draped over the stocks.

The length of time that it had taken for Richard Hunne to die can be gauged by the fact that the murderous assault had begun at midnight, yet it was not until seven in the morning (7.15am to be exact) that Charles Joseph was seen leaving St Paul's in an agitated and very nervous condition. He was seen by at least three people, and they all observed his nervousness. They were able to note the time so precisely because the great clock of St Paul's was one which struck the quarters. One of the witnesses was Thomas Chitcheley, a tailor, who encountered Joseph at the north door of the church. Chitcheley greeted him with, "Good morrow, Master Charles".

Joseph replied, "Good morrow," as he scurried past. But once he was clear of the door, he turned and "looked upon the said Chitcheley" - in some despair at having been recognized, no doubt.

Thomas Symondes and his wife also saw him. Symondes was a stationer (Stationers Hall still stands close to St Paul's), who was setting up his stall in the churchyard. Charles Joseph hurried past him, trying to effect an air of normality by greeting him first. But because of the "deadly countenance" and "hasty going" of Joseph, Symondes bade his wife watch him to see where he went. But all she could tell in the gloom of the winter dawn (the sun did not rise until eight that day) was that he either entered an ale-house next to the alley that joined Pasternoster Row (still there to this day), or he went down the alley itself. Evidently, he had used the alleyway, for by eight o'clock he appeared at the Bell again, booted and spurred. He leapt upon his horse and told the landlord to let him out the back way, whence he rode to Stratford-at-Bow some miles to the east of London.

At that very hour, eight o'clock, Peter Turner was at the Lollards Tower looking for Spalding. But Spalding had already left and was -as we have already noted - to meet John Enderby again in Gracechurch Street. Having informed Enderby that his friend had been alive and well between five and six o'clock that morning, Spalding was doubtless rejoicing in the truth of his statement. For if it had taken as long as six hours to kill Richard Hunne, then that would have left the murderers with a whole hour in which to attempt to disguise the murder before they emerged into the light of the dawn at around seven. Which sheds some light at least on the length of time that it taken to murder Richard Hunne. In the event, that last hour proved not long enough for the men to hide their crime.

However, shortly after nine when mass was finished in the church, Turner met Sampson, the assistant jailer at the Lollards Tower, and Sampson gave him a set of keys to the cell. But he pointedly refused to accompany him there. Turner rightly suspected by this that Richard Hunne was now dead, and in order to provide himself with witnesses to his own innocence in the matter, he persuaded two summoners - colleagues of Charles Joseph - to accompany him to the Lollards Tower. There they discovered, as expected by all no doubt, the body of Richard Hunne hanging by the neck from the staple, his face to the wall. Turner then fetched Horsey who, together with a dozen or so others, went to see the prisoner hanging. And as a final and ominous note, later that day, Monday 4th December, Peter Turner again met the wax-chandler's wife at Shoreditch, and he said to her, "What told I you?"

It can only have taken hours for the whole of London to become aware of the fact that Richard Hunne was now dead. Ever since Spalding, Turner, Cook and others had announced that he was to suffer a "grievous" death, the air had been full of expectation of the news. And on hearing of it, the citizens were angry. Very angry indeed. The well-rehearsed announcement by the bishop's office that Richard Hunne had killed himself was rejected out of hand, and such was the outcry that the

coroner, Thomas Barnwell, was ordered immediately to set up an inquest . The sheriffs and jurors were summoned and sworn in on the Monday, and the next day (Tuesday 5th December) they made their way to the cell where Richard Hunne's body and the contents of the cell had been left undisturbed. And there they began to undertake a most detailed and painstaking investigation. It seems that nothing escaped their notice.

The strength of the Londoners' reaction to the news of Hunne's death was not expected by their bishop, Fitzjames. It became all too clear that no one believed the church's claim of suicide, and that the city's civic officers were determined to bring all to light. Fitzjames therefore decided to attack rather than defend, and he did this by immediately instigating proceedings against the dead body of Richard Hunne on a charge of heresy. It was all quite illegal, even according to canon law, but such had been the usage of the heresy laws by the church over the centuries, that it was hoped - vainly - that the citizens would be cowed by them in this case. The attempt by Fitzjames to vindicate the church's behavior against Richard Hunne, however, now took on such comic proportions that it began to look increasingly like some kind of ecclesiastical pantomime.

The post-mortem proceedings against Richard Hunne were opened on Sunday 10th December 1514, by giving notice at Paul's Cross of Hunne's English Bible, with an open invitation for anyone who wished, to come and see its prologue for themselves.²⁰ There they might see the "great articles and damnable points of heresy" contained in it, and which were now to be laid against Hunne's dead body. The articles of heresy previously alleged against him at Fulham were then duly read out - with not a word about his submission by the way - to which was added the warning that if anyone present at Paul's Cross had seen or heard Richard Hunne reading from this Bible, or if they themselves owned one like it, then they were to come forward between that day and Candlemas next following (Friday 2nd February 1515), when the bishop would receive them "mercifully, and they would be charitably dealt withal". But if they did not come forward of their own volition, then they may expect nothing but the full rigor of the law to be executed upon them. Hardly surprisingly, no record exists of anyone present availing themselves of the good bishop's "mercy". Not when the church considered it an act of mercy to burn a man at the stake.

That very same day, Fitzjames called a convocation of the clergy, where a tribunal was set up to examine witnesses and all the articles of heresy alleged against Hunne. The tribunal consisted of Fitzjames himself who presided, Bishop Longland of Lincoln, (a noted persecutor of Lollards), and Bishop Young. As members of the Upper House, these and many other bishops would have been present already in London awaiting the opening of the new Parliament that was about to sit. Interestingly, a summary of the witnesses' depositions before this tribunal has survived, and its contents bear repeated reading.²¹ Set out here in chronological order - which in the original they are not - the depositions reflect something of the

sheer determination of Fitzjames to quash once and for all any further talk of murder.

The first witness on the opening day of the tribunal, Monday 11th December, was Thomas Brooke, Richard Hunne's servant, and the tribunal heard from him that, "...at the commandment of his master of late, he fetched to him being in the tower at Paul's, 4 books, that is to say, A book of the Bible in English, a book of the 4 evangelists, a book of the *Prick of Conscience*, and a book of the 10 commandments, which the said Richard Hunne was wont to keep under lock and key in his own keeping &c."

But Thomas' words can have done the bishop's cause little good. Were the Londoners of the day - knowing full well that these books had been retrieved from Hunne's house in Bridge Street - seriously meant to believe that, whilst Hunne was held in close confinement in the Lollards Tower, where not even food or clean water could reach him without Horsey's consent, he had his servant bring him such incriminating and irreplaceable books, and that he sat in his cell cheerfully reading them under the watchful eye of his captors? That Richard Hunne possessed such books, we needn't doubt. At least two that he owned have survived to the present day, and Lollards commonly kept them and studied them avidly. The charge of reading such books arises time and time again against Lollards in bishops' registers up and down the land. However, it was in the privacy of their homes and in the secrecy of their meetings that they read them, and not whilst they were being held in custody awaiting the tender mercies of the church. Thomas' deposition, primed no doubt by threats from the bishop of London, made Fitzjames look foolish even to his sympathizers. But it appears that nothing was too silly to say about a heretic.²²

The second witness to be heard that day scarcely improved matters. He was Thomas Hygdon, who, "...said and deposed that he heard one Roger, the parish clerk of St Botolph's, say that the English Bible which Hunne had was one Thomas Downe's, and that the said Roger said also to him this day that the said book was wont to lie in St Margaret's church in Bridge Street sometimes a month together when he was clerk there."

Amazingly, this Bible, a Wycliffe New Testament in fact, has survived, and was on recent exhibition in America.²³ (We shall see shortly how it got there). But the embarrassing element for the church in Hygdon's deposition is that in his eagerness to please the bishop, he had compromised one of the bishop's own parish priests, the long-suffering and much misunderstood John Cawode whose church St Margaret's was. Fitzjames must have despaired at this, for the nature of Hygdon's deposition now dictated that the next morning it would be Cawode's turn to try to save the bishop's face.

And so the next morning, just as the members for London were being returned to Parliament, Cawode took his place before the tribunal. He informed its members that, "the said Richard (Hunne) had a book called the Apocalypse, to his sight and

knowledge, and other books such as the Bible in the mother tongue, namely a great book that he showed him at the time of his examination."

This was again, perhaps, a little more than the tribunal wished to hear, for, like that of Thomas Brooke, Cawode's deposition was unlikely in the extreme. This Bible - the second of Hunne's books to have survived (see Bibliography) - is handwritten on vellum, and is a large and bulky volume, consisting of Old and New Testaments, the Apocrypha and Prologue. Just how Richard Hunne was supposed to have hidden it about him whilst under examination was something that Cawode neglected to tell. Interrogators who examined a man so closely that they could claim to be "scraping his conscience" would hardly have overlooked it.

It is, moreover, unlikely that Cawode was even at the examination. He was not one of Hunne's accusers, and his presence was simply not required. And why would one accused of heresy show a priest at his examination a book, the mere possession of which would have burned him? But again, the hearers of this testimony would have known that this Bible was retrieved from Hunne's house by the bishop's officers, and was never in Hunne's possession after his arrest. It was simply one lie after another.

But Cawode then went on to tell the tribunal something about Richard Hunne himself that we could never have learned from any other source. He told how Richard Hunne would stand in the doorway of his house in Bridge Street, and read this Bible out loud to passers-by. Bridge Street was a busy thoroughfare indeed. The traffic coming off old London Bridge went straight past his house, and the street itself was one of the busiest markets in the city. How many hundreds must have heard the Bible in English for the first time in their lives from the mouth of Richard Hunne we simply cannot know. But we do know that such were the laws of the church against Bible-reading in those days, that Richard Hunne was placing his life in the direst peril whenever he did this. And he would have known that fact.

Cawode was careful to avoid any discussion of the subject of why he had failed to report this depravity to the bishop. The people of his parish were virtually all of the Lollard persuasion, and he, poor man, must have walked a daily tightrope of despair. But he had been very careful over the years to turn a proverbial blind eye to his parishioners' activities, and his parishioners repaid this discretion with discrete behavior of their own - for the most part. Joan Baker stepped outside this arrangement when she decided to rant against the idolatrous beliefs of the church publicly, leaving Cawode - after several such episodes - the choice of either having her arrested, or being arrested himself for the concealment of heretical depravity, a crime that could send a man to the stake as easily as the heresy itself. That he never reported the Bible-reading activities of Richard Hunne, and that he allowed Richard Hunne to keep an English New Testament - the Thomas Downe Bible - on open display in his church, says a great deal for him.

On Wednesday 13th December, Fitzjames summoned one Hugh Saunders to give evidence, in the hope no doubt that if enough mud is thrown, then sufficient is bound to stick for a conviction. But all Saunders could lamely depose was that, "...the said Richard told him that he had a beautiful Bible in English with a Prologue" - and that seems to have been the sum of that day's testimony. But it seems that Fitzjames was trying to make a point, namely that the Bible's Prologue contained phrases and sentences that matched exactly the further articles of heresy that were shortly to be laid against Richard Hunne's dead body once the trial proper got under way. Because Hunne owned the Bible, it was to be assumed that he therefore held all the views expressed in its Prologue - which doubtless he did. These views included the damnable opinion that "poor men and idiots have the truth of the holy scripture more than a thousand prelates." But, and more damnably in the eyes of the church, he had also defended "the translation of the Bible and holy scripture into [the] English tongue, which is prohibited by the laws of our mother, holy church."²⁴

All of which was furthered - most remarkably - by the testimony of a man who did not appear in the witness-box until two days after Saunders and his lame deposition. His name was Bishop Young, who just happened also to be one of the judges who were sitting on Fitzjames' tribunal. Now, in a court where one's judge is also a witness for the prosecution, anything can happen, and even at this remove in time, we cannot fail to be appalled at such a wanton injustice. Young deposed that Richard Hunne had once argued with him "agreeably and reasonably" that the Bible should be translated into the English tongue. But we may wonder at this. The likelihood of a Lollard expressing such lethal sentiments before such an irascible and conservative bishop as Young is only slightly greater than the plausibility of the good bishop allowing such a heretic to go unmolested. Why had the good bishop not had Richard Hunne arrested for saying this? Not surprisingly, he did not say. But the vital point had been established - by whatever means at hand - and the timely jogging of Bishop Young's memory was corroborated by that other day's witness, John Davis, who merely repeated the bishop's allegations.

With the day's depositions safely on record, Fitzjames either thought that he had enough evidence to proceed against Richard Hunne (albeit his prisoner was now dead), or he feared what might become of his credibility should more such 'evidence' be heard. So, on Saturday 16th December 1514, the post-mortem trial for heresy began. The proceedings were held in the Lady Chapel of old St Paul's, with the ghastly addition of Hunne's body being presented, standing, for trial. A series of thirteen articles of heresy were read out against him, and, whatever its shortcomings, the evidence gained from the tribunal would do very well for Fitzjames' purposes. Then, once the four-day proceedings were over, there remained nothing further to do but to hand over the body to the secular arm for its ritual burning.

The secular arm was represented at the trial, as it was at all heresy trials within the city, by the sheriffs of London, who for this year were Munday and Yarford - who

were, ironically, still busying themselves in the hunt for Hunne's murderers. But perhaps Fitzjames was delighting in his own crude subtlety. Convicted heretics, like convicted traitors, were not entitled to the king's protection, and the fact that the sheriffs had now been cowed by the bishop into complying with the order to burn Hunne's body as a heretic, he must have hoped that all this would make a suitable impression upon the jury of the inquest and their coroner. He was mistaken, of course, but for the time being, he could enjoy the taste of victory. On that same day, Wednesday 20th December, having witnessed the burning of Richard Hunne's body at Smithfield, and considering its work of righteousness now to be complete, the convocation was prorogued.²⁵

Two days after the burning, on Friday 22nd December, Charles Joseph returned to his house at Shoreditch. His purpose in coming was to retrieve some of his goods (whilst taking time to 'borrow' some silver from a neighbor), and then go into hiding. He then took his stuff to Stratford (then a small village to the east of London), and proceeded thence to the greater seclusion of the tiny village of Good Easter in Essex, where he registered as a sanctuary man. This, however, was not to be his hiding-place for long. By early January he had been hunted down by the sheriff's men and was locked up in the Tower of London where the king's own royal council were waiting to interview him.

Now, the Tower was not the place into which lowly criminals like Joseph were normally thrown. Its use as a prison could only be procured by royal assent or command, which, added to the presence of the king's own council, tells us something of the deep interest that Henry VIII was now taking in the case. The breaking down of Joseph's alibi and his confession to the murder of Richard Hunne are all contained in the coroner's report. How long it took him to confess we do not know, but by Sunday 4th February (1515) it must have been general knowledge in the city, for on that day, Richard Kidderminster, in a damage limitation exercise, denounced at Paul's Cross the Clerical Immunity Act of 1512 as being contrary to the law of God and the liberties of the church. Before that Act was passed, Joseph, being a bishop's summoner and therefore in minor orders, could have claimed immunity from the king's law. But not now. Now, all Londoners hoped, he would answer to the law.

The following day, and with Kidderminster's words ringing in its ears, Parliament sat to reconsider the 1512 Act, which act would have retained the culpability in law of men like Joseph but which was to expire at this present sitting. The public hoped that Parliament would do the sensible thing and retain the Act, but they had reckoned without the intervention of Fitzjames in the Upper House. He stood before the Lords and pointed out to them that there was a bill before them that sought to declare that the jury who were sitting on the inquest on Richard Hunne's death were true men. But he then denounced the jury as "false perjured caitiffs", and said that if the Upper House did not look into the matter, then he himself dare not keep his own house for heretics.

Richard Hunne's death, he declared, was his own deed and no man's else, and he followed this with a silly story about a man who had recently called to see him in order to denounce his own wife as a heretic. But, silly or not, the story worked, and Fitzjames' address to the House was enough to tilt the balance in the church's favor. Within just five days of its first sitting, Parliament threw out the bill, and with its demise both crown and church were saved (for the time being at least) from an embarrassing and damaging confrontation.

News of Parliament's decision travelled fast, for on Monday 12th February 1515, Pope Leo X obligingly denounced all those who had become clergymen in minor orders simply to embark upon a life of crime and escape the law's penalty. It is interesting to speculate whom he would have denounced had Parliament retained the bill. However, and notwithstanding all the politics of the case, the jury pressed ahead with their inquest, examining Charles Joseph's maidservant, Julian Littel, in her sanctuary at the Bethlehem Chapel of old St Paul's on Wednesday 14th February 1515. She was able to tell the inquest that when he returned to his house at Shoreditch to collect some belongings at midnight on 22nd December last, Joseph had told her that he had murdered Richard Hunne.

A few months later, on Tuesday 17th April 1515 to be exact, the city's aldermen found themselves up in arms over yet another impolitic remark by Fitzjames. The bishop had written a letter (which is included in the coroner's report) to Wolsey, in which he had slandered the good citizens of London by saying that they were so maliciously set in favor of heresy that they would condemn his chancellor, Horsey, out of hand for Hunne's murder, "though he were as innocent as Abel". Fitzjames' remarks were accompanied by a plea to Wolsey to get the king to intervene in Horsey's indictment for murder - although it is ironic that he should now plead for secular intervention in a matter concerning ecclesiastical immunity from prosecution. After all, by the time of his writing, not only had Parliament thrown out the bill concerning the vexed issue of clerical immunity, but even had the bill been retained, it still famously excluded clerics of Horsey's rank. Moreover, the inquest had not yet delivered its verdict, so the bishop's anticipation of its findings is a telling point against both him and his chancellor. In short, there was no good reason - apart from a guilty conscience - for him to have written to Cardinal Wolsey at all.

However, he had written to him, and a delegation of aldermen were dispatched to speak with the bishop, "for certain perillous and heinous words....spoken of the whole city touching heresy, specified in a copy of a letter supposed to be written by the said bishop."²⁶ The wording of the record ("supposed to be written") allowed Fitzjames the diplomatic escape-route of denying having written any such letter. But what is lacking is any further record that might have told us of the bishop's reply to the aldermen, whose company again included that of the two sheriffs, Munday and Yarford. It would be interesting to discover who it was who leaked the letter to the aldermen in the first place. Was it someone in Wolsey's office, or someone in Fitzjames'? By now, the good bishop must have been seeing traitors everywhere.

Less than a month after the delegation to Fitzjames, the last hearing occurred of Richard Hunne's writ of slander in the Court of King's Bench. The date was Tuesday 15th May 1515. Not that anything could now be judged of it, for the plaintiff was dead. The *praemunire* went the same way, and Fitzjames must have thought that it was all over. However, on Monday 12th November that year, Parliament reassembled for a second session, and such was its mood and agenda that Archbishop Warham found it necessary to convene the Convocation of Canterbury to discuss the further erosion of clerical privileges. A fortnight later, Henry VIII himself was to lend the church a helping hand concerning Horsey's indictment before the Court of King's Bench for the murder of Richard Hunne. Henry's action in this - to the dismay of all but the church - was to issue written instructions to his attorney, Sir John Earnley, to simply accept Horsey's plea and to pronounce him not guilty, without any evidence being permitted to be heard to the contrary.²⁷

There is, of course, much in this sordid business that we have not been told. As we have noted, as the bishop of London's chancellor, Horsey was entitled - even after the Clerical Immunity Act of 1512 - to claim immunity from prosecution. Yet here we see him arraigned before King's Bench like any common layman on a charge of murder. Moreover, it requires a written instruction from the king himself rather than the usual nod-and-a-wink behind closed doors to get Horsey acquitted. Had Fitzjames, in an uncharacteristic moment of political sensitivity, instructed Horsey not to claim his immunity? Perhaps, if his instruction was also sweetened with the assurance that Wolsey would arrange the verdict. For Horsey's acquittal was almost certainly in response to Wolsey's string-pulling.

But perhaps it was the judges of King's Bench - the very same judges who had sat upon Richard Hunne's writs of slander and *praemunire* - who were in no mood to acquit Horsey for all that the cardinal might say. Indeed, their mood might well have made it plain that they would ignore even the royal behind-the-scenes whispers, and that Horsey's condemnation by them was certain. This, of course, would have driven a disastrous wedge between the king and his bishops, and could have split the nation into two open factions. Which alone explains the extraordinary matter of the king setting pen to paper and issuing a royal command to his attorney to acquit the prisoner - whatever the evidence might say. It was highly embarrassing for Henry, but he had a very long memory when it came to those who embarrassed him. As yet, he was to have the last word concerning Dr Horsey.

That came on Monday 4th May 1523 - some seven and a half years later - when Parliament passed a bill for the restitution of Richard Hunne's property to his children.²⁸ Because Richard Hunne had been excommunicated, as well as declared a heretic and a suicide, his property had all gone to the king. Walking with the delicacy of Agag, the church had always made a point of refusing such property so as to avoid the suspicion that there was an ulterior motive for hounding a man to his death. However, the coroner's jury - sitting in the name of the king - had found that Hunne was no suicide, and that fact, coupled with Horsey's scandalous acquittal of

Hunne's murder on royal instructions, had become a political boil, both in Parliament and the country, that needed urgent remedy.

But the royal dilemma was this. The king had benefited substantially from what had been an unlawful deed, and he agreed with Parliament - by ratifying the bill - that justice would best be served by the immediate restitution of the confiscated property. However, what had not been lost on Henry VIII was the fact that it was not he who had committed the unlawful deed. That had been instigated by another - Horsey - and so it was only just, in the king's eyes at least, that Horsey should repay the debt. The sum of Hunne's property, in other words, was to come out of the murderer's pockets, and not from the royal coffers. Hunne's wealth was to remain safely in the hands of the king.

The king himself duly wrote to Horsey, which is an indication of just how personally Henry VIII was taking the matter. The erstwhile chancellor had been serving the bishop of Exeter since the date of his acquittal, it being deemed too dangerous for him to stay within reach of the Londoners. As a member of the Upper House, the bishop of Exeter would have been in London for the Parliament, and Horsey doubtless had travelled back with him amongst his retinue. So it was in Exeter where Horsey was to receive the king's instruction. Like all else in the Hunne affair, the letter bears repeated reading.

In the letter, the king makes some startling admissions. He is, to begin with, aware of Horsey's guilt in the crime, his instructions to Earnley to acquit him notwithstanding. That he was aware of this from the beginning is shown when Henry says in his letter to Horsey, "We then supposed and intended your amendment, and restitution to be made by you...as well for his death as for his goods, embezzled, wasted and consumed by your tyranny and cruel act so committed..."²⁹ It was, of course, Henry himself who had "wasted and consumed" the goods of Richard Hunne, but he went on to threaten Horsey with "our high displeasure" should the full restitution of Hunne's property not be made by him.

No doubt this was all news to Horsey, and his shock must have been profound. After seven years and more of living quietly away from London, he must have thought that he had gotten away with his crime, and that no further pursuit would be made of him. Although the chancellor was not a poor man - for all his vow of poverty - the value of Richard Hunne's estate had been considerable, even once the vast legal costs had been deducted, and it laid on Horsey a crippling debt that was to take him six years to settle.

That he did settle it is certain, and it is made certain by the following series of events. Richard Hunne had a daughter named Margaret. It was she, as the eldest child, who had so successfully petitioned Parliament for the restoration of Hunne's wealth to his children. And to celebrate the victory, at Eastertide in 1529, she and her husband, Roger Whaplode, employed one Thomas Norfolk to convey a bill to Dr Goderidge, the incumbent of St Mary Spital church in Shoreditch. The bill

announced that if anyone wished to contribute towards the costs of repairing the water-conduit in London's Fleet Street, then he would receive from Richard Hunne's estate the sum of £6 13s. 4d towards the same.³⁰ But that was not all, for the bill also called down God's mercy upon the Christian soul of the late Richard Hunne.

Almost immediately, Goderidge was to regret having read the bill, for Whaplode's choice of venue was no accident. The church of St Mary Spital, standing in Shoreditch, was the parish church of Charles Joseph, one of Richard Hunne's murderers, who had been spared any further prosecution for his crime due to Parliament having scrapped the Clerical Immunity Act of 1512. Margaret Hunne and her husband were clearly trying to rub Joseph's nose in the fact that Richard Hunne's wealth - along with his good name - had been restored, and was at last being officially recognized. All of which carried immense implications for the church.

Inevitably, the matter was reported at once to the bishop of London who, fortunately for them both, was no longer Fitzjames - who would have had them arrested and probably burned - but Cuthbert Tunstall, his successor. Roger Whaplode, Norfolk and Goderidge were both accordingly "troubled" before him, the incumbent Goderidge being forbidden to say mass for a while and compelled to read out a humiliating recantation at Paul's Cross.³¹

We do not know what penance was laid upon Roger Whaplode (Margaret was presumably not summoned before the bishop), whose appearance is anyway undated in the register, although he was very fortunate indeed to have appeared before Tunstall - who was about to be moved to Durham - and not his successor, the murderous John Stokesley.³² Before long, however, he was indeed to clash swords with Stokesley, and that episode sheds a most interesting light upon the closing stages of the case of Richard Hunne. Our consideration of the matter begins with a letter that Roger's wife, Margaret, was to write - a letter that has puzzled historians until now.

At some time in the late 1530s - either 1537 or 1538 - Richard Hunne's daughter, Margaret, wrote to Thomas Cromwell, whom she addresses as the Lord Privy Seal. Her letter is a most dignified appeal for help, for herself, her husband and their seven small children, who are reduced to "extreme indigence and poverty."³³ Her words to Cromwell reveal the fact that they have been appealing to the king's grace for aid and succor for some years, but to no avail. She compliments Cromwell on being the setter forth, under God and the king's highness, of the Bible in English (a subject always dear to the Hunne family), but pointedly avoids mentioning the very reason for her writing. It is as if Cromwell was by now so familiar with her case that mentioning it is superfluous. Hence, it has often been assumed by scholars that Margaret Hunne (or Whaplode) was still appealing for restitution of her father's property as late as the late 1530s, in spite of the Parliamentary bill restoring that wealth some fifteen years previously, and in spite of the bill read out in 1529 which

announced the dispersal of some of that property in deeds of charity. Clearly, her father's property cannot have been the cause of her now writing to Cromwell, and we must look elsewhere for the subject of her appeal.

What actually happened was this. By 1537, Margaret's husband, Roger, had been in prison for some years. The occasion for his imprisonment was his part in the riot that had occurred in 1531 at St Paul's, a riot that had begun with the levying by the king of the sum of £100,000 from the clergy. This enormous sum was an expression (according to the king) of the clergy's gratitude for having such a wonderful monarch reign over them.

The audaciousness and size of this tax - and the reason given for it - are almost comic in their proportions, but it fell to Stokesley, Tunstall's successor as bishop of London, to raise the sum, and such was his gratitude for having Henry VIII to rule over him that he decreed that the lower clergy should pay it out of their small benefices. Therefore, on Friday 1st September 1531, he announced his intention to call a meeting at St Paul's for the 26th of that month, of a select few of the London clergy, hoping thereby that he would be able to cow just a few of them into accepting the burden. Later, this could be presented as an acceptance by all the London clergy. But, unluckily for Stokesley:

"...the matter was not so secretly carried, but that all the clergy about the city hearing of it, went thither. They were not a little encouraged by many of the laity, who thought it no unpleasant diversion to see the clergy fall out among themselves. So, when they came to the chapter house on the day appointed, the Bishop's officers would only admit some few to enter; but the rest forced the door and rushed in, and the Bishop's servants were beaten and ill used. But the Bishop, seeing the tumult was such that it could not be easily quieted, told them all that as the state of men in this life was frail, so the clergy, through frailty and want of wisdom, had misdemeaned themselves towards the King, and had fallen in a praemunire, for which the King of his great clemency was pleased to pardon them, and to accept a little instead of the whole of their benefices, which by the law had fallen into his hand: therefore he desired they would patiently bear their share in this burden."³⁴

It is interesting to see the now older and wiser Henry VIII at last using the Great Statute of Praemunire to bludgeon the clergy. (He was later to bring down Wolsey with the same statute). But what really interests us here is the official report of the riot that was made by Sir Christopher Hales to the king's council, for this tells us what part Roger Whaplode, Richard Hunne's son-in-law, had to play in all this.³⁵

In that report, which is addressed principally to Sir Thomas More as the king's lord chancellor, Hales endeavors to provide the names of both clergy and laity involved in the riot - or at least the names of their ringleaders. Due to the urgency of the

investigation, most of the names are incomplete, with either surnames or Christian names missing. Spaces were left for their later inclusion should they be discovered, but the *only* missing name that was eventually found out is that of Whaplode, with *Roger* being supplied by a noticeably later hand in the space provided. Roger Whaplode's name is the only example in the report of the full name later becoming known to the authorities, and it is likely that a special effort was made to discover it. And just why that special effort was made is apparent from the following sequence of events.

According to Hales, Roger Whaplode and others had assembled themselves at Greyfriars in London on Wednesday 30th August 1531 to plan the riot. (The fact that their planning preceded the bishop's announcement of the meeting at St Paul's by two days, speaks of someone on the bishop's staff again leaking information to the Londoners - the same man who had earlier leaked Fitzjames' letter to Wolsey, perhaps?) The riot occurred, as planned, on Tuesday 26th September, and reading both Hales and Burnet, we learn that the riot was conducted in two distinct phases, with the main body rioting at the cathedral's chapter house on the south side of St Paul's, whilst a smaller contingent (of laymen, it seems) broke away and raided the now unattended bishop's palace situated on the north side.

And it is here that we encounter the reason behind the urgency with which Roger Whaplode was finally run to ground by the authorities. For this seems to be the occasion when certain pages - those that dealt with Richard Hunne - had been cut out of the episcopal register of Stokesley's predecessor but one, Fitzjames - a register that would have been kept in the palace archives. The pages turned up again years later in the hands of John Foxe, who was now (early 1560s) busily compiling his *Acts & Monuments* (or *Book of Martyrs*). In that book (first published in English in 1563), he tells us that he was given the pages that dealt with Richard Hunne by none other than Dunstan Whaplode, the son of Roger and Margaret, and hence a grandson of Richard Hunne.³⁶ The pages are not now amongst the surviving papers of John Foxe that are held in the British Library, which confirms what he tells us when he says that, after he had finished with them, they remained in Dunstan Whaplode's keeping.

Stokesley had calmed the storm at St Paul's by promising that he would review the matter of the £100,000, and would see to it that none of the rioters would be punished for their participation. "Yet," (alas), "he was not as good as his word, for he complained of it to the Lord Chancellor [Sir Thomas More], who was always a great favorer of the clergy; by whose order fifteen priests and five laymen were committed to several prisons."³⁷

Evidently, Roger Whaplode, whom the authorities had been at such pains to trace, was amongst them. Whether Margaret ever obtained his release we do not know. But we do know that by Thursday 8th August 1560, Roger was dead, and had been for some time. For on that date, Margaret appears in the will of one John Hulson, as

"Margaret Whapplett, widow," living in rented property in "Snowrehilstrete" - today's Snow Hill off Holborn in London.³⁸

But there is also a much happier postscript to the story of Richard Hunne. Margaret was his eldest daughter, but it has lately emerged that he had another named Alice.³⁹ This ties in with Margaret's petition to Parliament in 1523, in which she asks for the wealth of Richard Hunne to be restored to his children, and not just to herself alone. We do not know when Alice was born (though clearly it was sometime before 1514 - probably around 1509), but we do know that she died in 1533, just nineteen years after her father was murdered. However, she herself had married long enough before 1533 (in 1527 in fact) to have children, only one of whom survived to adulthood. We shall consider him presently.

The really telling detail here, though, is the name of the man she married, Adam Winthrop. He was the grandfather of John Winthrop, one the early American colonists of New England, and it is fascinating to see how Lollard families married (naturally enough) into other Lollard families. Old Adam Winthrop, a Suffolk man, would have known all about Richard Hunne - all of London and its Home Counties did, Suffolk being a particular hotbed of Lollardy. Moreover, Richard Hunne and Adam Winthrop doubtless enjoyed close business ties, with Adam providing the wool that Richard turned into cloth. Either way, it is clear that Alice's hand was eagerly sought -and obtained - by Adam. (It is equally interesting to note that Richard Hunne's 'Thomas Downe' Bible is in America today because John Winthrop inherited it from his grandmother, Alice, and took it with him to Massachusetts).

Between them, they had several children, but, as was sadly so usual at that time, only one of them survived to adulthood. His name was William Winthrop, and until the day he died he was a thorn in the flesh of the Anglican church. The Church of England, after the Reformation, always had a hankering after the old days, and whenever it could re-adopt the old Romanist ceremonies and doctrines, it never failed to do so. Nor did it fail to persecute those who held a more Biblical view of the church. As with his maternal grandfather, Richard Hunne, before him, it was not a situation that William was happy with. In the words of Professor Bremer:

"William Winthrop followed his father into the Clothworkers, but he left his mark in history not through his work there but for his efforts in promoting advanced Protestant reform. A member of the London congregation of Protestants forced underground in the reign of Queen Mary, who sought to restore Catholicism to England, he had contacts with and raised funds for those imprisoned for their beliefs. He may also have used his commercial ties to smuggle books and funds back and forth between Protestant exiles abroad and those true to the faith in England. With the ascension of Queen Elizabeth I, William's activities could be conducted more publicly. He supplied John Foxe

with some materials for the *Book of Martyrs* and was associated with Foxe, John Field, and other reformers."⁴⁰

But that was not all. Professor Bremer goes on to tell us that William provided material assistance to the Spanish Protestants in London. He actively engaged himself in raising funds for the French Protestants both when they were struck by the plague in 1564 and following the St Bartholomew Day Massacre of 1572. In 1570, the Italian congregation in London elected him as an elder, and he was an important "behind-the-scenes" member of the growing Puritan movement, being fondly remembered on his death in 1582 by his half-brother Adam Winthrop as, "a good man, without harm, and a lover of piety."⁴¹

It is satisfying indeed to see William Winthrop pursuing his grandfather's agenda so vigorously and well, and it is interesting to see how the cloth trade was so filled with men and women who were committed to reform of the church in general - and to an English Bible in particular. It was clearly a highly organized effort, and we see it at its best at the coming of William Tyndale in the early 1520s. The clothworkers of London not only financed his work and funded his extended stay abroad, but they used their ships and carts to smuggle Tyndale's New Testament into and around the country - and often paid for this with their lives.⁴² In short, they were the very despair of Henry VIII and the bishops, and it is due entirely to their efforts - under God - that we have an English Bible today. Epilogue

But what shall we say of all these things? What shall we say when we see men like the iniquitous Bishop Stokesley boasting on his death-bed that he had earned great merit by burning scores of 'heretics', and regretting that he had not burned more. Who, while he was engaged upon this work of righteousness, had a notorious and open affair with the Abbess of Wherewell, with whom he had at least one child.⁴³ Adultery and murder were fine with the good bishop, it seems. Reading the Bible was not. At one time, Stokesley - for no good reason (as if there could ever be one) - attempted to starve one Richard Johnson and his wife to death. And when Henry VIII himself intervened to put a stop to this, Stokesley had them both spirited away to a more secluded abbey, but from which they fortunately escaped.

Hatred; murder; adultery. Are these the fruits of the Spirit of God? Most assuredly, they are not. We have it on very good Authority indeed that those who do such things, will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And is a 'church' that brings forth such evil fruit, a good tree or a bad tree? For we have it on equal Authority that a good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, nor a bad tree good fruit. For a religious system to bring forth such rotten fruit, it has itself to be a rotten system, rotten to the very core. And its rottenness comes from the fact that it is grounded firmly in this world and its ways, and not in the Gospel of Christ.

Consider. Bishop John Stokesley was a deeply religious man. Do we pray often? He could and did pray all night, remaining on his knees until they bled. But was he a 'Turk or Saracen' - or even an atheist? - that he should see it as his mission in life to

burn those whose only crime was reading the Bible, the very Word of God? No. He would have called himself a Christian, and a good Christian too. Evidently, the mere name of Christian is not in itself sufficient to make a man a child of God.

So what is the difference between a man like Bishop Stokesley and a true Christian, one who is redeemed, cleansed from sin, forgiven and sanctified by God Himself - one who *does* bear fruit in the Spirit of God? It is surely this. John Stokesley believed - very firmly - that he could earn his own salvation by his efforts and good works. This, after all, was - and still is - the teaching of the church of Rome, the church in which Stokesley and thousands like him down the ages were born and bred. In short, he was a *religious* man, and between religion and Christianity there is a great difference.

Religion, by definition, is all about what man can do for God. This may extend from putting money into the poor-box or helping an old lady across the road. For some, it means building great cathedrals and churches, whilst for others it even extends to placing bombs on aircraft. Yes, as our Lord foretold, there are those who genuinely think that in killing others, they are doing God good service. Stokesley believed this whenever he consigned a man or a woman, or even a child, to be burned alive in the flames of Smithfield. He believed when he attempted to starve Richard Johnson and his wife to death, that he was doing a good thing, something worthy of God's acceptance, and that he would be rewarded richly for it, both in this life and the next. Otherwise, he surely would not have done such things.

So, if religion is all about doing things for God, then what is Christianity? It is this. Christianity - the pure and untainted Biblical Christian faith - is not about what man can do for God. Quite the opposite, in fact. It is about what God has done for man - yes, for wicked, sinful, fallen humanity that could not redeem itself from sin by works in a thousand eternities. It is about God sending forth His own Son from eternity, to take upon Himself the form of sinful flesh - though remaining without sin of any kind - and whilst in that flesh to make Himself a spotless and a sinless sacrifice for sin. Only His spotless and pure blood can cleanse us from our iniquities, and answer the requirements of God's most holy law. Nothing else will do. Nothing else can be added to it. Neither church, nor works, nor sacraments. Nothing!

Yet, as we have seen in this history, works, penances, charity, prayers, fastings, and all the pretences that religion can blind a man with, are, according to the Roman Catholic church, necessary to salvation. It is as if the blood of Christ counted for nothing. Which raises the following question: What fellowship should a Christian have with such a system? In these days, when Catholicism is making such inroads into countries around the world, preaching reconciliation, and preaching unity with the Protestant churches, we see hundreds of churches and thousands of individuals turning to Rome when they should be turning to Christ. Only He can save us. Rome, as she has demonstrated down the ages, cannot.

Footnotes

- 1) The church of Mary Matfellow no longer stands, its site being the present-day gardens that occupy the space between Whitechapel Lane and Adler Street off the Whitechapel Road. The outline of the church's foundations, though, can be seen in the grass.
- 2) For a general complaint of this and other clerical abuses of the time, see Christopher St Germain's, *Treatise concernynge the diuision betwene the spiritualtie and temporalitie*. Thomas Barthelet. London. 1532. The author was a well-known lawyer who, as a young man, had attended the inquest on Richard Hunne's body. It is thought to be his bundle of papers on the case that is reproduced in, *The enquirie and verdict of the quest panelled of the death of Richard Hunne which was found hanged in Lollards Tower*. Parker Library. SP445.
- 3) 'Statute of Praemunire', 1393. *Statutes of the Realm II*, pp. 84-86.
- 4) A G Dickens. *The English Reformation* (1964), p. 90-96; Richard Marius. *Thomas More* (1984), pp. 123-41.
- 5) Wunderli, for example (see Bibliography), expresses puzzlement over the case, as do many others.
- 6) Known today as Fish Street Hill, it used to be part of the small parish of St Margaret's, the site of which church is today marked by Wren's Monument (St Margaret's being the first church to be burned down during the Great Fire of London in 1666). Hunne's house stood on roughly the same site as today's Britannia public house.
- 7) *London Episcopal Register Fitzjames*, fo. 24r. This register is kept at the Guildhall Library (London) Manuscript Room, shelfmark 9531/9.
- 8) *Corporation of London Record Office Repertories. II (1505-13)*, fo. 122r. The litigation concerned tenements in Westcheap, to which the priest and wardens of St Michael's wrongly claimed title. The case was to be resolved before the Court of Aldermen by Christmas of 1511, but no record of the outcome has survived. Wunderli (p. 218) thinks that it is this litigation that prompted Driffield's action at Lambeth. But given the irregularity of the Lambeth hearing, this decision was most likely taken at a much higher level than Driffield.
- 9) For the wording of the bill, see *Statutes of the Realm*, III, p. 386. As an Act of Parliament, it was designated 4Henry8.1512.c.II.

- 10) Public Record Office (PRO) document KB27/1006, m. 36.
- 11) *ibid.*
- 12) PRO document KB27/1006, m. 37.
- 13) *ibid.*
- 14) Richard Arnold. *Customs of London* (Guildhall Library), 1521(?). Unpaginated.
- 15) John Enderby became a barber on 1st March 1513. For his indentures, see *Lond. Episc. Reg. Fitzjames* (Guildhall Library 9531/9) under that date. Barbers in those days, of course, did much more than cut hair, being surgeons of a sort and able to pull teeth. By an Act of Parliament they had to register as such, and it is a measure of the church's grip on things that they had to file their indentures and register with the local bishop before they could work at all.
- 16) The palace at Fulham still stands, its grounds open to the public. Fitzjames' coat of arms can still be seen, gracing the porter's lodge. Richard Hunne was examined for heresy in the chapel, which stands at the back of the building.
- 17) John Foxe. *Acts & Monuments*, IV. Ed. J Pratt. London. 1877. pp. 183-4.
- 18) *ibid.* p. 184.
- 19) During the later examination of Robert Smith by Edmund Bonner, bishop of London, Smith threw back at the bishop, "...both you and your predecessors have sought all means possible to kill Christ secretly; record of Master Hun[ne], whom your predecessor caused to be thrust in at the nose with hot burning needles..." (Foxe, VIII, p. 351).
- 20) Foxe, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 186-7.
- 21) MS 775, Trinity College Dublin. D.3.4. fo. 124 b. (see also J Fines, 'The Post-Mortem Condemnation for Heresy of Richard Hunne'. *English Historical Review*, lxxviii, pp. 528-31).
- 22) As a happier postscript, Thomas Brooke was not left destitute at the break-up of his master's household, but was able to set up a small shop or stall in Bridge Street, aided no doubt by his master's Lollard friends (Richard Arnold, *op. cit.*).
- 23) The Thomas Downe Bible was seen recently in its original 15th-century binding, at the Dead Sea Scrolls Exhibition, Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas from September 5th to December 28th 2003. See also: www.DeadSeaExhibit.com

24) These articles appear in the Dublin Manuscript (see footnote 21), in the 5th and 13th of the later articles of heresy against Hunne, and in the Bible's prologue (Parker Lid. Ms. 147).

25) PRO Documents, Chancery significations, file 126.

26) Minutes for the Court of Aldermen for Tuesday 17th April 1515, Repertory III, fo. 17 (Guildhall Library London).

27) PRO Document, KB27/1019, Rex rot. 4.

28) *Letters and Papers* (Henry VIII), III, 2, 3062(4): "Roger Whaplod and Margaret his wife, daughter of Ric. Hunne deceased. Grant to them and to their executors forever of all Hunne's lands and tenements, and all leases and deeds relating thereto."

29) Foxe, *op. cit.* IV, p. 198.

30) *ibid.*, V, p. 27.

31) *ibid.*, V, p. 28.

32) *ibid.*, IV, p. 586.

33) PRO Document, SP1/162, RH163.

34) Burnet's *History of the Reformation*, I, (Oxford, 1816), p. 209.

35) PRO Document, SP 147.

36) Foxe, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 198: "...as the bishop's registers and special records remaining in the custody of Dunstan Whapplot, the son of the daughter of the said Richard Hunne..."

37) Burnet, *op. cit.*, I, p. 209.

38) Chanc. Inq. PM. 5Eliz. pt. 2. no. 34. (Guildhall Library). John Stow's *Survey of London* (p.343. see Bibliography) describes Snow Hill in 1598 as being, "...all replenished with fair building". Which implies that the earlier tenements in which Margaret was living in the 1560s had been somewhat run down - so much so that they needed pulling down and replacing. Evidently her circumstances had not improved in the twenty-three years or so since she had written to Cromwell. This leaves the conclusion that perhaps Roger Whaplode had died in prison.

39) I am indebted for this information (contained in his prize-winning essay), and for that which follows concerning Alice Hunne's son, William, to Professor Frank

Bremer of Millersville University, Pennsylvania (see Bibliography). As well as being Millerville's Professor of History, Professor Bremer is also editor of the Winthrop Papers for the Massachusetts Historical Society.

40) Bremer, Frank. 'The Heritage of John Winthrop'. *The New England Quarterly* (offprint). 1996(?). p. 517.

41) *ibid.* p. 520.

42) Intriguingly, John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was later to marry Margaret Tyndale, (who was descended from William Tyndale's brother, Edward), in 1618. Margaret lived until 1647. See Bremer, p. 518.

43) Denny, Barbara. *King's Bishop*. Alderman Press. London. 1985. p. 128.

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