

Paul's Offering "For the Poor Among the Saints in Jerusalem"

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Editor's Note: Independence breeds diversity. The independent movement within Adventism has no shortage of this. The beliefs of some go beyond belief. But there are others who merely want to be Seventh-day Adventists and feel that the ground is shifting under their feet. The article by Clark Floyd entitled, "How to Get Rid of the Independents" (*Our Firm Foundation*, 7 [1992]: 28-31), is one that everyone on both sides of the debate should read. It contains some of the clearest thinking I have seen in print for a good while. In fact Floyd's article almost persuaded me not to publish this one. But I am not writing to that class of independents who are insincere. That would be a very small readership indeed. Instead I am writing to that class of independents who are independent—in whatever way Paul was. The Holy Spirit is not through with this church. He has a work for it to do. So let us seek to learn where duty lies both as individuals and as a body. If the problem is that the body is ill, the solution is not to dismember it. Pure air, sunlight, water, and so on will do it much more good.

Introduction

In the years immediately following Pentecost the church went through a crisis of cohesion. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Andrew, for example, pressed northward until he had gone beyond the Black Sea,¹ Thomas carried the gospel as far as India,² and others penetrated far down into Egypt.³ We can gain insight into the regional nature of ecclesiastical authority in the early church by considering the regional nature of textual authority as the Scriptures were later copied for widespread use.⁴ The earliest equivalent of denominations within the church—barring now such radical departures as gnosticism—were often geographical in nature.⁵ So distance was one factor.

The opposite counterpart to the problem of geographical separation was that sometimes too many workers were brought together in one place. At home in Jerusalem, in nearby Syria,⁶ and around the perimeter of the eastern Mediterranean⁷ missionaries found themselves tripping over each other.

One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." (1 Cor 1:12; see also Rom 15:20, 24).

When apostles traveled widely, as Andrew and Thomas did, they necessarily had an independent ministry. How could such men maintain contact with Jerusalem? On the other hand they were not sent to speak on their own behalf.⁸ They were responsible to God. But were they responsible only and exclusively to God? There is an irreducible tension between working for God and working with others who are working for God. Christian ministry is a social act not only in the sense that it involves outreach to others but also in the sense that it involves interacting with one's fellow workers.

So how can we use the unique insights that the Spirit gives us for the express purpose of ensuring that they will be used and yet do so in such a way as not to give the impression that Christ is divided? The church body is not merely an agglomeration of separate parts brought together by a power outside itself. We must maintain a relationship first and foremost with God but also with others who stand in the same relationship with God as we do. If God works through His church to accomplish His purposes, then working for Him will always involve working with them. How can we do that most effectively? We know how we should relate to God. But how should we relate to all those other people whose task it is to represent Him as we do? How can the various parts of the body function together? And how can the body accomplish anything useful if its parts do not function together?

More specifically, what can be done when one part of the body appears to reject another--as in an unsuccessful organ transplant? How can there be reconciliation when a given ministry says it has tried every available means of resolving differences with church leadership but the differences are still there? In the present paper I offer a specific suggestion for getting beyond this impasse. It is based on a biblical precedent.

The Story

From the beginning of his ministry Paul had a strained relationship with the Jerusalem church. In Gal 1:15-17 he is at pains to show that he did not consult with its leaders in order to learn anything from them, even though these men had known Jesus personally. Paul's was the original and prototypical independent ministry. His gospel did not require any input from church leaders in Jerusalem or anywhere else. Moreover, he speaks of James, Peter, and John disparagingly as "those reputed to be pillars" (Gal 2:9). Then there was his open confrontation with Peter, of which he says: "When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was in the wrong" (vs. 11). What we do not know is how Peter reported the incident to his fellow apostles or to his congregation back in Jerusalem.

In the above passages we know who Paul had in mind because he tells us. In 2 Cor 11:5 and 12:11 he does not. There he names no one but states, "I am not in the least inferior to the 'super-apostles,' even though I am nothing" (12:11). Could the men in question be disciples of those mentioned earlier? He would not have accused the remaining eleven of being "false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ" (2 Cor 11:13). But if they were men of lesser stature than this, why would he use the term "super-apostles" to describe them?⁹ We simply do not know who Paul was referring to here.

After returning from Damascus Paul was not close to his Jewish brethren either inside or outside the church. In his letter to the Colossians Paul mentions Aristarchus, Mark the cousin of Barnabas, and Jesus surnamed Justus, pointing out that, "These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me" (Col 4:10). One might say that Paul never came all the way back from Damascus. Even while traveling throughout the eastern Mediterranean one part of his mind remained near Damascus seeing over and over again that indescribable vision of Jesus which had ruined his eyes and nearly cost him his life (see Acts 9:3-9; 22:6-11; 26:12-18). Everything else was viewed in that perspective. Thus, when Paul wrote, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2) he knew what he was talking about. He also had encountered Jesus at first hand: "and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born" (1 Cor 15:8). Paul did not need to have anyone tell him what Jesus was like or coach him

on what to say--or not to say--when speaking about Him. When members of the mother church "came from James" (Gal 2:12) and followed him into Galatia to undermine his work he responds by calling them "false brothers" (2 Cor 11:26). It did not matter who these men were. He was not trying to curry their favor.

Some of those who opposed Paul wanted "to be teachers of the law" (1 Tim 1:7; cf. Luke 5:17; Acts 5:34). There was talk of genealogies and "Jewish myths" (Titus 1:14; cf. 1 Tim 1:4, 6; 4:7; 6:4-5, 10, 20; 2 Tim 2:14, 16, 23; Titus 1:10-11; 3:9), of ceremonial foods (see Gal 2:11-15; 1 Tim 4:3) and of specified times for eating them (see Gal 4:10)--not to mention the whole debate over circumcision (see Rom 2:25-29; 4:9-12; Col 2:11-12). Paul was quite content personally to view circumcision as having no significance either way (see Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15; Col 3:11). He himself was under grace and yet circumcised (see Phil 3:4-6). More than this, he did not hesitate to circumcise Timothy when the situation indicated doing so (see Acts 16:3). But some people could not see beyond the outer act and for them it was a problem capable of destroying their faith. This Paul would not tolerate. In one place he lashes out saying, "Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh" (Phil 3:3-4). Jerusalem's concept of the church might well have been that it was a sect of Judaism (see Acts 6:7). If this is so, Paul did not share the concept.

Peter for his part speaks gingerly of Paul: "His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Pet 3:16). He recognizes the working of the Spirit of God in Paul's writings but is at a loss to explain everything in them.

Thus, Paul acknowledges the status of James, Peter, and John in the church and Peter does accept the fact that Paul's wisdom is from the Holy Spirit, speaking of His writings as "Scripture." But while the parties involved were willing to accept and work with each other, their mutual acknowledgements show that there was a state of affairs which made conciliatory statements of that sort necessary.

Paul's gospel was right and by undermining his influence the Jerusalem church had genuinely wronged him. And more was involved than a conflict of personalities. To accept what the circumcision party was saying would mean that some of Paul's converts would fall from grace and be eternally lost (see Gal 1:6-9; 5:2-4). But despite all the barriers of disagreement, misunderstanding, and tension, Paul's ultimate solution was to bring his opponents an offering. It is instructive to notice that the passage in 2 Corinthians which speaks of Paul's offering (2 Cor 8-9) comes just before one dealing with the opposition he had received from the people he would be giving it to (2 Cor 10-12a).

The Moral

Today also some have been wronged by their leaders, i.e., by those who should have been most supportive of their efforts. And some have made a religion of documenting the fact. Admittedly, those who continued agitating the question of circumcision--against the decision of the Jerusalem council--were not the church's leaders. It was not official policy at Jerusalem that Gentile converts must be circumcised. But toleration for uncircumcised Gentile Christians was a concession and many who endorsed it might have done so less than wholeheartedly. There was still a lot of sympathy for circumcision in the Jerusalem church and those who toured Galatia

trying to undo Paul's influence will have seen that congregation as their main source of spiritual nurture and sustenance.

Think of the position this put Paul in. How could he in good conscience advise his converts to support a church that had fallen so far as to advocate doctrines which undermined the very basis for their salvation? When the churches in Galatia started to adopt those positions commonly accepted in a de facto manner by the Jerusalem church, Ellen White calls the process apostasy.¹⁰ By modern logic Paul would have been amply justified in breaking away and organizing the "true" church along different lines. But he would not do this. Instead he continued to exert his influence from within the body--faulty though it was. And it really was desperately faulty. Let no one deny it. But we can all be glad that Paul followed the course he did. The church without Paul would have been more or less like Israel without Moses (see Exod 32:10).¹¹ Moses believed God was leading out a people and he would not abandon them when they needed him most.

The Israelites of Moses' day were not the people of God in the sense that they were godlike, but in the sense that God was leading them and fulfilling His promises to them. Moses did not stay by because he liked what the people were doing. He stayed in spite of it because he wanted God to receive credit for finishing what He had started out to do. Can we find no parallels with this story today?

The church's membership is just as big a problem as its leadership ever was. We are all Laodiceans--those who think they are not Laodicean being no exception. In view of the nature of this condition, who can claim to be anything more or less than part of the problem? And if we share this condition equally, then we are all making about the same contribution to the church's welfare. Not one of us is any part of the solution. Jesus alone is the entire sum of that. So we should have no illusions about ourselves.

The heavenly eyesalve Jesus offers in Rev 3:18 will help us to see Him as He is and, as it does, it will help us to see ourselves as we are. It is not the function of the eyesalve Jesus gives us to render our brothers' defects more clearly visible. Instead it brings into clearer focus our Lord's lack of defects. In this light we see ourselves and Him but not others. Let any lack of support for the body come from those who do not know Christ or who, while knowing Him on one level, do not share the hope of His second coming.

A Specific Suggestion

The following suggestion is addressed only to those individuals or groups within the church who have a relationship to church leadership similar to that of Paul. If the relationship is more strained, what I say here will have greater relevance. If it is less strained, it will be of only passing interest. The logic of my remarks is that if one's circumstances are similar to those of Paul, then one's responses under those circumstances should be similar as well. The particular response I have in mind is the offering he gathered "for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem" (Rom 15:26).

What Paul gave to the mother church was a gift of money. So let any organization to whom these remarks apply gather an amount of money--however much might be indicated by circumstances--and offer it on a one-time basis (Paul did not gather two offerings) to a local or union conference, or to the General Conference, to be used by that entity within only broadly

specified parameters. Paul's offering was "for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem" (Rom 15:26) but he did not specifically state how they should benefit from it. He himself had a burden for the poor and he knew that the church's leaders in Jerusalem had a similar burden (see Gal 2:10). Thus, quite apart from the fact that his offering was needed, he was seeking reconciliation in the way he designated its use as well as in choosing to offer it. He contributed to a cause that was close to the hearts of those who would receive his gift.

On arriving in Jerusalem Paul's noble and unexpected gesture was apparently interpreted as a token of compromise. He was asked to go a step further by financing the completion of a Nazirite vow made by four men. Doing this did not violate his own conscience but seemed to fly in the face of his instruction to others. Moreover, the immediate results of Paul's actions were disastrous to himself. But they were not disastrous to the cause of Christ because they accurately reflected the principles on which it rests. Any time such principles are illustrated, whatever the circumstances or apparent results, Christ is honored. This is Christian witness in the best sense of the word, where by witnessing to Christ I mean revealing Christ.

When Paul gathered the above offering he hid nothing from his contributors but told them exactly where their money would be going. That is one reason why they gave it so liberally. The offering was to be theirs as well as his. Thus, any funds raised in the present context should not be diverted from other operating expenses in a private manner. Allow the donors to join in this project with you from their hearts.

What I have in mind here is exactly the opposite of any mentality which seeks to divert funds from denominational channels. Here we are talking about multiplying rather than dividing such funds. Away with research into the question of whether anything Ellen White says might obligate us to keep paying our tithe to the organized church! What is to be gained by such study? There is no need for external constraints--whether proofs or excuses--if we love the body of Christ and feel that we are part of it. What kind of external constraint did Meropi Gjika need to pay her tithe after saving fifty years for such a privilege in Albania with no one to give it to?¹² For her it was the ultimate expression of love for her church to be able at last to turn this money over to an official representative of the world body. It was a spiritual act of fellowship on her part with all the other members of that same body, whose hearts she knew were one with hers in this service--many of whom were busy paying their tithe elsewhere as she did so. I hope Meropi never learns about us in the same way that we have learned about her. Until Jesus comes her example will be a rebuke to our own pride and haughtiness.

As we contemplate whether to go on supporting the organized body of Christ in view of its many weaknesses let us ask whether Christ is willing to do so. Has Christ continued being a part of the body? He is the Head of the body (see Eph 1:22-23; 4:15; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:18-19). Or do the church's shortcomings make it unnecessary to consult Christ's example in this one regard? In every other matter it is essential, but here it is not. What kind of logic is that? It is the same logic as keeping nine of the commandments (see Jas 2:10). Of what value is an Example we will not follow? So let us follow Jesus in His relationship to the body as in every other area of our lives. If we do, we will continue to support the organized church with our time, influence, and means. And we will do it joyfully (see 2 Cor 9:7).

Returning now to the lesser example of Paul, the challenge is straightforward and clear. Instead of diverting funds from the church, let us channel more funds into it. Raise an amount that could be put to good use elsewhere with the full and accurate knowledge of those who give it. Transfer that money to a central entity of the church, which may or may not ever thank you for

your trouble, whatever the consequences might be to yourself or your ministry. Imitate Paul's example or determine openly that you will not.

Discussion

But if you do imitate Paul in this most difficult and humbling manner, could it be that some pulpits which have been closed to you before will be thrown open? There is no conference anywhere that would not be delighted to have a cadre of independent supporters. If our church's various independent ministries could see the church as the body of Christ and the act of documenting any personal wrongs as one the evils from which it must eventually be cleansed (see 1 Cor 13:5), and if the church could see its lay ministries as a source of tangible and heartfelt support, who knows but what there would be fewer trademark law suits to criticize leadership for and more openness to the points of doctrine that such ministries feel is their major asset?

Who can say that a period of reconciliation such as the disciples went through--and needed to go through after all the campaigns for high office were over, the reconciliation they finally experienced at Pentecost--who can say that such a period of reconciliation would not have the same effect now that it had then? Who can say with assurance that it would not usher in the latter rain? And what would we lose if it did not? Hard feelings perhaps. Ill will. But how much we would gain if it did! Would it not be worthwhile to see what God can do with such a turn of events in the church?

This does not mean we must say we do not believe what we do believe or that we do believe what we do not. Paul's views on grace did not change in any particular when he went to Jerusalem for the last time. The proof of this is that Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon were all written after he went there. Are these epistles somehow different in regard to grace than Romans and Galatians? He was not conceding error, or giving in, or changing his gospel in any way by taking an offering to Jerusalem but was merely holding out an olive branch to people who at least in some respects might have disagreed with him.

Conclusion

The church today might be dancing around any number of golden calves at a time in history when present truth has to do especially with God's law. But if some men are like Aaron, actively helping the people to apostasize further, are there no others like Moses who will work to correct the evil where it exists? Where are those who will stay by long enough to ensure that a solution is set in place where it is needed rather than looking for room to work where no work is necessary?

Our church--and the church in every age--has been liberally supplied with Aarons. It is also well supplied with people who know where to find Isa 58:1 ("Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" [KJV]). The words of this passage are the words of God. But there is a criticism which heals and a criticism which only wounds further. Isa 58:1 is not a divine mandate for slander. One way to tell when this passage is being correctly applied and when it is not is to ask where the criticism goes. Are we addressing the person who sinned or a group of interested bystanders? Does the

church need gossips to publicize the many sad deeds of its Aarons? What kind of solution is that? If truth is always humbling, is it humbling to deliver the Lord's rebuke when that becomes necessary? It should be. Or is it merely titillating? The church's great need now is for men and women who, after showing God's people their sins, will labor to make things right, doing whatever is required for the good of the body--people who will not consider it one of their options to leave God's people under His wrath in the wilderness.

Those who leave the church because it is too corrupt and those who leave the church because they themselves are too corrupt have both done about the same thing. When the masses of God's people who are still in Babylon start listening to the loud cry and they start leaving in large numbers, where will they go? Into a bewildering array of "true church" offshoots? Will they leave one Babel of confusion only to enter another? Those who hope to give the loud cry must learn to speak with one voice. Many people saying many things is Babylon. That is what God's last remnant are called upon to leave (see Rev 18:4). The loud cry is the opposite of this. It is many people saying one thing--in answer to Christ's prayer in John 17:23 ("May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me") and now reiterated in the church's recent Perth Declaration as well as by the Holy Spirit silently in our hearts. Will we ourselves be found leaving through one door while these new members come in another?

At present--ironically--sinners are being sifted into Zion and saints are the ones being sifted out. But giving up is no part of the spirit of Jesus. Consider Isaiah's words:

I offered my back to those who beat me,
 my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;
 I did not hide my face
 from mocking and spitting.
 (7) Because the Sovereign Lord helps me,
 I will not be disgraced.
 Therefore have I set my face like flint,
 and I know I will not be put to shame.
 (Isa 50:6-7)

How does all of this apply to Jesus' experience before, during, and after His trial? What can we learn from it that will clarify our relationship to the body of which He is the Head? Christ could so easily have justified not leaving heaven in the first place by pointing out that the people He had created on planet earth were apostate. How could He have fellowship with them in such a condition? Indeed, if He did not come, how could He ever have fellowship with us again? He could not bear the thought of such separation. And so He came. Shall we now reverse that process in His name? If He, though infinite in holiness, was not too pure to associate with us when we were His enemies (see Rom 5:10), how is it that we are too pure to associate with our brothers and sisters who are fallen like we are?

The Perth Declaration, mentioned above, was approved at the 1991 Annual Council in Perth, Australia.¹³ It is a call for unity in the church. Granting that the concept of unity can be abused (it was abused throughout the middle ages), I submit that it is something that can be enjoyed without abusing it--allowing latitude for legitimate differences while uniting on the great central theme and purpose which binds us together under one message. But if unity is always an act of compromise, what was Christ praying for in John 17? There are ways to do this thing

wrong but surely there is some way to do it right. There may be local congregations where it is true that we can find no fellowship. But here I am speaking more broadly about the organized church family worldwide with special reference to membership and to tithe. I can speak freely about these things because I have secular employment and see no tithe beyond what I return to the Lord every pay period.

Epilogue

There has been a delay in Jesus' return beyond our first expectations. Otherwise the predictive value of Matt 25:1-13 would be lost. There had to be a delay for that part of Scripture to be true. But there must also be an end to the delay for many other parts of Scripture to be true. Christ will not be put off forever. The delay will end and He will come.

Consider some familiar passages in Daniel.¹⁴ Everything else Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream about the great metal image of chap. 2 has happened just as God said it would. Soon after seeing the vision, while it was still fresh in his mind, the king thought he would just alter a few details to meet changing circumstances. His image would be gold throughout and thus avoid the complication of having any other metals. We all know how that turned out. Nebuchadnezzar tried both flattery and rage to get Daniel's three friends to worship the new image of chap. 3 and, when he saw they would not, had them thrown into an overheated brick kiln to silence their dissent. But the preexistent Christ went through the experience with these men and they were unhurt (see Dan 3:24-27). God does not give up or turn aside. In this case the most powerful king on earth wanted something at cross purposes to the divine will. But after the king did all he could do, Persia eventually followed Babylon anyway. The metals would differ from each other after all, just as God said. In the same way Greece followed Persia and Rome followed Greece. Finally the ironlike unity of Rome became transformed into the incohesive amalgam of European states that we know today.

Only one part of Daniel's prophecy remains. God must set up His own kingdom in a manner that causes all the other preceding ones to be destroyed. This did not happen at the first coming (see John 18:36). Instead of Christ destroying Rome, Rome destroyed Christ by providing the legal framework in which He was crucified. This is not a fulfillment of Dan 2. But we will soon see the fulfillment. God keeps His promises. He tells the truth and He does what He says. What He has said in this case is that, "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever" (Dan 2:44). This passage that we have presented to others in our evangelistic meetings so often is perhaps what we ourselves need most just now. The last part of this prophecy is not less important than the first.

The great Jehovah, being infinite, does things on a large scale. For more than a thousand years the Roman Empire was divided. And for the past two hundred years we have seen the deadly wound of the power which presided over its broken fragments.¹⁵ The period of powerful church control in Europe is part five of the seven-part sequence in Rev 17:8, 10. The expansion into a new largely uninhabited world under secular circumstances is part six. We are now seeing the wound heal before our eyes.¹⁶ That is part seven. All of these things have happened. Not one thing has been omitted of all that the prophets foretold. The crowning prophecy that rises over and above all the others, however, is, "I will come again" (John 14:3, KJV). Can we not agree at least on this much and unite in giving the message to the world? If

we remain silent at this time, others will give it. And if not, the very rocks will cry out (see Luke 19:39-40). This message will be given. So let us be the ones to have the blessing of giving it.

The last part of the prophecy is what all the rest leads up to: "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy" (Dan 2:45b). At least the interpretation of vss. 39-43 has shown itself to be trustworthy. The time has come and almost gone for vss. 44-45a to be fulfilled as well.¹⁷ When they are--as they surely will be--then at last we will see Jesus.

Note: All Scripture quotations in this paper, except when noted otherwise, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.

¹"In the tenth or eleventh century the belief was held, based on the writing of Eusebius, that the Apostle Andrew, during his trip to the Greek colonies on the Black Sea, had visited the territories that were later to become Russia. This legend became very popular with the Russians and laid the foundation for the later-developed theory of Russia as the guardian of the Orthodox Christian faith. According to the *Primary Chronicle*, Andrew crossed through Russia from the mouth of the Dnieper River, passed the hills on which Kiev was later founded, and went as far north as the ancient city of Novgorod" (Serge A. Zenkovsky, ed., *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales* [New York: Dutton, 1963], p. 47).

²"The coming of Christianity [to India] is associated with the legend of St Thomas, who, according to the Catholic Church of Edessa, came twice on missions to India. The first took him to the north-west to the Parthian king Gondophernes, but this tradition is open to doubt. The story of the second mission appears to be more credible. St Thomas is said to have arrived in Malabar in about A.D. 52. After establishing a number of Syrian churches along this coast, he travelled overland to the east coast to a place near Madras city, subsequently called Beth Thuma, where he began to preach. But here his preaching of a new religion was strongly opposed and he was killed in A.D. 68 at Mylapore in the vicinity of Madras. The Syrian church survives in strength in the region of Madras. The Syrian church survives in strength in the region of Malabar and may well have been founded in the first century A.D. Considering the frequent communication between the Mediterranean world and south India during this century, it is not beyond belief that one of the disciples of Christ came to India to preach Christianity" (Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, 2 vols. [Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1966]), 1:134-35).

³"The origins of Alexandrian Christianity form an obscure and fascinating subject. There is certainly every probability in the view that Christianity had found its way to Alexandria by A.D. 41. Hellenistic disciples who had left Jerusalem after Stephen's death (c. A.D. 33) are as likely to have gone to Alexandria as to Antioch; the appearance of the Alexandrian disciple Apollos at Ephesus and Corinth in A.D. 52 (Acts 18:24ff) is a factor of special importance in this connexion" (F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, Anchor Books [New York: Doubleday, 1972], p. 294). We do not know who took Christianity farther down into upper Egypt either, but someone did this at an early period.

⁴"Streeter emphasized the immense importance of the early local text current at the great centres of Christianity. He argued that in a given area copies would be corrected by one another, and especially by those in use at the principal Churches, Byzantium, Antioch, Caesarea, Alexandria, Carthage, and Rome. The growing veneration for the text as inspired would result in the tendency to lay more and more stress on the importance of an accurate text. 'This would naturally result in the smaller churches obtaining new copies from the greater metropolitan sees, since these would be thought likely to possess a pure text. . . . Thus the local texts of smaller churches would tend to become assimilated to those of the greater centres in

their immediate neighbourhood" (Vincent Taylor, *The Text of the New Testament: A Short Introduction* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961], p. 58).

⁵Here we have the geographical contrast between the church in the West and that in East. The patriarchs of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria were eventually overwhelmed by Islam. But these were not the only centers of Christianity. There was a thriving church in Ethiopia throughout the middle ages and Ireland defied Catholic tradition for centuries. Today there are Orthodox churches centered not only in Russia but in Bulgaria, Ukraine, and elsewhere. Differences in doctrine and practice within the church not infrequently correspond to differences in geographical location--as we also find in the matter of language.

⁶During the second century Christianity penetrated Syria "and some distance into Persia, Media, Bactria, and Parthia; and in the third, into Armenia and Arabia" (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols. [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910; reprint ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], vol. 2: *Ante-Nicene Christianity, A.D. 100-325*, p. 23).

⁷See Hardy, "Paul's Intention to God to Spain," *Historicism* No. 17/Jan 89, pp. 37-56.

⁸"There are over 80 occurrences of the Gk. word *apostolos* in the NT, mostly in Luke and Paul. It derives from the very common verb *apostello*, to send, but in non-Christian Gk., after Herodotus in the 5th century BC, there are few recorded cases where it means 'a person sent', and it generally means 'fleet', or perhaps occasionally 'admiral'. The sense of 'sent one, messenger' may have survived in popular speech: at least, isolated occurrences in the LXX and Josephus suggest that this meaning was recognized in Jewish circles. Only with Christian literature, however, does it come into its own. In NT it is applied to Jesus as the Sent One of God (Heb. 3:1), to those sent by God to preach to Israel (Lk. 11:49) and to those sent by churches (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25); but above all it is applied absolutely to the group of men who held the supreme dignity in the primitive church. Since *apostello* seems frequently to mean 'to send with a particular purpose', as distinct from the neutral *pempo* (save in the Johannine writings, where the two are synonyms), the force of *apostolos* is probably 'one commissioned'--it is implied, by Christ" (*New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1982], s.v. Apostle). Thus, the Greek word *apostolos* ("apostle") in the New Testament takes over much of the same meaning that the Hebrew word *mal'ak* ("angel") has in the Old Testament. See Hardy, "What Does the Hebrew Word *mal'ak* Mean?," *Historicism* No. 5/Jan 87, pp. 2-25.

⁹The Greek word *huperlian* in 2 Cor 11:5 and 12:11 could be taken in either of two ways. On the one hand it could mean "beyond all measure." In this case the sense is pejorative and NIV's rendering "super-apostles" is correct (group 1 below). On the other hand it could mean "beyond all doubt." In this case the sense is that, while some may doubt Paul's credentials, he is not inferior to any of those whose apostleship no one questions (group 2 below). The phrase is rendered variously as follows:

Group 1

King James Version	"the very chiefest apostles"
Revised Version (1901)	"the very chiefest apostles"
New King James Version	"the most eminent apostles"

Group 2

Revised Standard Version	"these superlative apostles"
New Revised Version	"these super-apostles"
New English Bible	"these superlative apostles"
Revised English Bible	"those super-apostles"
Jerusalem Bible	"these archapostles"
New Jerusalem Bible	"those super-apostles"

Moffatt conveys the pejorative sense more vividly than any other translation: "I am not one whit inferior to these precious 'apostles.'" Context will have to be the arbiter. The word *hyperlian* itself can be used to support either reading.

¹⁰"While tarrying at Corinth, Paul had cause for serious apprehension concerning some of the churches already established. Through the influence of false teachers who had arisen among the believers in Jerusalem, division, heresy, and sensualism were rapidly gaining ground among the believers in Galatia. These false teachers were mingling Jewish traditions with the truths of the gospel. Ignoring the decision of the general council at Jerusalem, they urged upon the Gentile converts the observance of the ceremonial law" (Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* [Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1911], p. 383).

¹¹Moses' experience is one that bears careful study today. When he came down from Mt. Sinai he found the people dancing around a golden calf in gross apostasy. More than this, people who should have been their leaders were actively helping them do it (see Exod 32:1-6). But when Moses was offered the opportunity to go his own way--under God's blessing--he refused, choosing to stay with the same group of people that he had started out with on leaving Egypt.

¹²See Ray Dabrowski, "Believers Found Faithful After 50 Years of Isolation," *Adventist Review*, November 7, 1991, p. 29.

¹³The complete text of the Perth Declaration was published in the *Adventist Review*, November 7, 1991, p. 7.

¹⁴Dan 4 illustrates the same point. See Hardy, "Some Thoughts on Dan 4," in the present issue of *Historicism*.

¹⁵The best evidence of this is that we are beginning to be where we can see the wound itself in historical perspective. "For fifteen hundred years and more, Rome had kept as strong a hand as possible in each local community around the wide world. Still, because what might be advantageous for one locale might be detrimental for another, it had always been an essential practice for Rome to make its major decisions on the premise that the good of the geocommunity must take precedence over all local advantages. International politics might be driven and regulated according to the benefit to be derived by certain groups or nations at the cost of others. But geopolitics properly conducted must serve the absolute needs of the whole society of nations. By and large, and admitting some exceptions, that had been the Roman view until two hundred years of inactivity had been imposed on the papacy by the major secular powers of the world. . . . It was the first distinguishing mark of John Paul's career as Pontiff that he had thrown off the straitjacket of papal inactivity in major world affairs" (Malachi Martin, *The Keys of This Blood: The Struggle for World Dominion Between Pope John Paul II, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the Capitalist West*, Touchstone [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990], pp. 22-23). That is a Catholic perspective. Harold Lindsell, former editor of *Christianity Today*, offers an unexpectedly similar Protestant viewpoint: "First, it is necessary to look at the Enlightenment to see what it consisted in and what it stood for and who the key actors were. It will also be necessary to take careful note of the charges leveled against the Christian faith, charges that have been accepted by multitudes and that must be assessed and answered if the Christian faith is to recoup the ground it has lost in the past two centuries. Right now, in the Western world, the Christian faith exists in a sea of paganism and the situation is not getting better. It is getting worse" (*The New Paganism* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987], p. 45). Lindsell speaks for what we might call the New Protestantism. Its protest is not against the papacy but against the secularism which brought the papacy down at the end of the eighteenth century. It sees the mission of the Christian church in societal terms rather than as a means of saving individuals: "The church was sent into this kind of world [in the early centuries A.D.] to sound the death knell to paganism and put in its place a civilization that would be consistent with the Weltanschauung of the Christian faith" (ibid., p. 21). For some 1260 years, starting in A.D. 538, the church succeeded in doing this very thing--an accomplishment which Lindsell

views with nostalgia. The New Protestantism is no enemy of the papacy as classical Protestantism was. The former might have doctrinal differences with the papacy (these are the subject of dialogue) but they have the same social agenda and in a world where the church's mission is conceived in societal terms, this fact makes them natural allies. We have not heard the last of this combination--the one power emerging, the other reemerging. A third is New Age spiritualism. Malachi Martin speaks of the capitalist West, the papacy, and the communist East. Communism is no longer with us. But if we compare the views of Christ espoused by New Age spiritualism with those of communism, the essential outlines of a trilogy involving the new, the old, and the openly antagonistic can still be seen. Will these find common ground? We will not have to wait long to see.

¹⁶In his book, *The Time of the End* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1967), George McCready Price points out and emphasizes that it is not the beast who receives the deadly wound and not the woman riding it (see pp. 63-76).

¹⁷We now stand in the same relation to the wound's healing that the Millerites stood in relation to its infliction. By the first decades of the nineteenth century students of prophecy were able to look back over the entire period of pre-1798 papal ascendancy as a single unit of historical fulfillment. We are just now becoming able to look back over the entire period of post-1798 papal inactivity in similar terms. That period--part six of the series in both Rev 17:8 and 10--has run its course and is now behind us. Here is one part of the context for the delay.