



# Shepherd's Voice

Spring 2020



*From Babylon to America*

H. BAERG

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## Greetings!

As mentioned in our last published issue (Winter 2019), already a year ago, *SVM* continues to increase its focus on digital media moving away from the printed format. A few subscribers have felt they have missed an issue or two so we want to remind readers of the new direction we are taking. Please be sure to visit [www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org](http://www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org) and the *SVM* YouTube channel for more content.

The Apostles battled a broad spectrum of worldly influences that were infringing on the faith of their brethren. Interpreting the exhortations of the New Testament epistles, particularly Paul's, in a manner that helps identify and capture the intrusions on our faith in our modern circumstances and culture can be difficult. What appears evident in my pastoral ministry is that though we are exposed to a new generation of intrusions, or a repackaging of the old, the carnal need to embrace them has been consistent. Generally speaking, there is a proclivity in us to look for affirmation of our faith in men, and now more than ever, even in nations and well marketed self-assured Church organizations. The need for external affirmation is a characteristic liability we all share when we look to worldly confidence and success for added security and relevancy.

This fact cannot be more exemplified by the influence of western nationalism and its adoption into bolstering Church programs. When American Christian circles believe that America shares in God's work, or has been divinely blessed, nationalist attitudes fueled by our natural tendency to believe in a need to defend God's interests are easily adopted into the teachings and language of its own culture. This writer and other witnesses can testify to how acceptance of America being God's "modern Israel", and in particular the teaching of Anglo-Israelism, affects practically every activity a Church does. It shapes what is preached, to whom it is preached, where financial resources are spent, how time is spent, how other ethnic groups are viewed and related to.

This is not a recent development. As Christianity adapted to the needs of nations and empires over the centuries, including America, the teachings of Jesus Christ have become remarkably domesticated. The apostles warned of this, and the domestication has gone to such an extent that the Gospel message has become distinctly different

from the message of Christ and the Apostles. Professing Christians have even adopted the tenets of capitalism and democracy into their belief system believing they are a precursor to the kingdom of God.

Two extensive pieces in this issue expose this reality from two different approaches, with specific attention to the Sabbath keeping community which is the primary audience of *SVM*. The article *From Babylon to America - The Perils of Nationalism Infecting God's People* looks at the problem from prophetic, historical and contemporary viewpoints in an attempt to convince and warn the reader of their own exposure, and indeed their contribution to the perils of western exceptionalism. We hope that the article will broaden the perspective of the reader beyond much of what has been commonly taught.

When its impact is fully realized and understood, Anglo-Israelism is one of the most offensive teachings that has intruded on the faith of many in the modern era. This teaching in particular on the surface often appears innocuous and even conducive to the message of the Gospel as it so conveniently provides additional personal affirmation for some and is a proven method to attract and retain church membership. I have been doubted and questioned by even its mildest adherents as to why I have taken such exception to this teaching, but the bad fruits of it are evident. In this issue we look at published material from a large Sabbatarian organization and examine their claims in light of just a few historical facts that they willfully ignore as they are very inconvenient. Our exposure of their claims is further aided by an excerpt from the work of historian Richard Gott, entitled *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt*.

At the time of this writing Covid-19 is a full blown pandemic, and the full outcome is uncertain. Of timely nature is another piece by Tommy Willis entitled, *Stop. Slow Down, Pray and Think*. Almost every state in America and much of the affected world are under "stay in place orders" and are encouraged to social distance, many are now in a situation to do just that. Of notable exception are those who are on the front lines facing this pandemic and all those who are in essential services. We commend them for their service.

*In Christ's Service*  
Jim Patterson

# From Babylon to America

## The Perils of Nationalism Infecting God's People

*Power tends to confuse itself with virtue and a great nation is peculiarly susceptible to the idea that its power is a sign of God's favor.* – Senator J William Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power*.

By Jim Patterson

George Orwell stated that the further society drifts from the truth the more they hate those who speak it. Christian circles are not immune, as truth has a tendency to undermine what people want to believe, and even oppose what we might consider wholesome ideas and practices. What is particularly disconcerting is that those once trusted with truth and have deviated from it are often first in line to attack it. This is not unusual given the example of the Pharisees of Jesus time who could not recognize the Truth in front of them.

Paul glorified the Church on earth as the pillar and ground of truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Throughout his writings and expressions in the New Testament, we feel his concern that believers stand fast to abide in truth, as any belief that intrudes on our identity in Christ is the genesis of departing from the relationship with the Father (Galatians 1:6). Yet we see that Christ, who is the Judge and supreme Witness, even over His apostles' witness, will let those who want to believe a lie to believe it. The Word of God has always been His sufficient warning and it would seem that even Paul had to submit to this reality.

An intrusive and permeating lie that assaults a believer's identity in Christ is American nationalism, or more broadly, western exceptionalism. Nationalism is defined by way of *identification*. It is an *identification* with one's own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations. Christ and His Apostles taught explicitly that there can be no worldly identification outside of Christ Himself:

*"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world"* (John 17:16).

Nationalism is not limited to a teaching; it is a formation of thought passed on from generation to generation, having persuasive elements that appeal to the emotions and insecurities of broad social groups. It taps into the human need to find security and significance. Christian Biblical

language is evoked to provide a pathway for nationalism to meet these needs in very a convincing manner.

Secular slogans such as *"In God We trust"*, *"God keep our land glorious and free"* and *"God save our Queen"* are not theologically based on Apostolic teachings, but instead express an appeal for God's favor in terms that are economic and materialistic. These slogans and other patriotic proclamations are not an expression of worship. They are instead, as in the manner of appeasement to deities of other religions, an appeal to God to preserve and protect the institutions in which they actually do find security. This security is not in Christ, and this becomes evidenced when these securities are threatened. This author finds the integration of God in secular society in this manner a precursor to the deception ahead (1 Thess. 2:9).

Sabbatarians in the United States have for decades trusted and fueled ministries that have directed a significant amount of attention to political and economic threats as a platform for their outreach programs and membership retention. Embedded in these messages is the use of fear, where threats to the world status of America both domestic and international are a constant focus. These threats, whether real or perceived, are contextualized as divine judgments on the horizon. Even the Christian faith itself is portrayed as the pathway to restoring National Security – in that unless there is national repentance and restoration of Judeo-Christian ethics, God will no longer protect America's interests, nor support its military and its wealth. He will, as some claim, cause the foreigner –the immigration of non-Christians–to rise up and rule. Behind this belief is that America, or the Anglo world is like, or is in fact, the modern Israel, and therefore the Word spoken through God's servants from Moses to the prophets of Israel are fully relevant to the modern Republic.

This betrayal of the brethren is generally rooted in capitulating to the presumption that America (and the

British Commonwealth), with its wealth and power, is clear evidence of God's favor. The military supremacy, prosperity, worldwide influence and the advancement of Christianity has been a persuasive background behind this presumption. This view and variations of it have unfortunately evolved into existence through a biased lens that is a reflection of status and self-proclaimed privilege, not divine revelation.

Where there is a doctrinal vacuum or void, there are many lies looking to fill it. Given the prominence of America in the world, there is pressure for ministries to identify it in prophecy. America is indeed part of prophecy, but its real identification may not sit favorably with some deeply indoctrinated in the idea God has favored and blessed America. The good news is that if we are freed from this belief we will find a renewed freedom of worship that need not be conformed and handicapped to worldly values (Romans 12:2). In doing so we will see there is nothing for us to fear, which will be replaced by a true reverence of God's judgment and mercy.

This article, through a brief historical narrative and Biblical exposure of biased worldviews, is offered in the hope of helping and protecting the faith of believers. We pray that God can forgive the purveyors of the lies that have damaged the faith of so many.

## America the Messiah?

Much of the nationalistic appeal from pulpits comes from the idea that America was founded on Christian principles. The Constitution however makes no direct reference to God.

Though the constitution of the United States was a seminal event in the history of human liberty, the God of the Bible was not the central concern in its underpinning. Because of the experience the Founding Fathers had with religion, they opposed the institutionalization of religion and therefore kept the Constitution free of direct references to God, Christ or the Bible. When Benjamin Franklin proposed that the founders begin each day at the Constitutional Conference with a prayer to God for guidance, his suggestion was defeated.

The original Pledge of Allegiance—meant as an expression of patriotism, not religious faith—also made no mention of God. It was not until the religious revival of the 1950s did the mention of God enter the pledge of allegiance. “*In God we Trust*” did not get on paper money until 1955.

Nevertheless, Christian thought had been a dominant cultural factor, and the belief in divine favor developed

early (and earlier in the British Empire). We can go to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century for an example of the early traces dominant in Christian thought in the writings of Herman Melville in *White-Jacket*:

We Americans are the peculiar, chosen people – the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world. . . . God has given to us, for a future inheritance, the broad domains of the political pagans, that shall yet come and lie down under the shade of our ark, without bloody hands being lifted. God has predestinated, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls. . . . Long enough have we been skeptics with regard to ourselves, and doubted whether, indeed, the political Messiah had come. But he has come in us, if we would but give utterance to his promptings. And let us always remember, that with ourselves – almost for the first time in the history of earth – national selfishness is unbounded philanthropy; for we cannot do a good to America but we give alms to the world.<sup>1</sup>

This nation-messiah complex still persists today. It is prevalent in modern Sabbatarian Church of God website material:

Yet God faithfully fulfilled His promises [to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob] by raising up the modern nations of America and Britain. But the same requirement to obey God's laws applies to these nations today. The same God will call to account these peoples for their moral sins and mistakes. Unless there is a change of heart and an acknowledgement of the true God, there will be another day of reckoning and even the power of the mighty United States will fade, as Britain's has.

The author continues his piece with an extraordinary claim:

But God is not finished with America, Great Britain or any other nation. The good news is that the same kingdom they were to model, the Kingdom of God, will become a reality on the earth.<sup>2</sup>

1 Melville, H. (1850), *White-Jacket or The World in a Man-of-War*, London, Richard Bentley

2 McNeely, D. (2008, June 4), *God Blessed America*, Retrieved from <https://www.ucg.org/world-news-and-prophecy/god-blessed-america>. This article typifies the distorted worldviews in Sabbatarian circles, particularly offshoots of the Worldwide Church of God.

There is nothing new as in the above sample in the misguided idea of a nation state being the beacon of Christian faith, even Messianic in its calling.

In the early part of the post 9-11 world of America, various Christian writers were invited to participate in a compendium project of theological essays to express the anxieties of our time.

A contribution by Stephen Chapman, *When Caesar Interprets Scripture*, reflects on a former empire that held the same self-interpretation as a powerful Christian state:

The early church historian Eusebius (263-339 C.E.) celebrated the Christian conversion of Constantine, emperor of Rome, as a key moment in the history of the church because from that moment onward the church of the outsiders became the church of the insiders, an establishment church that could be protected and promoted by all the structures of imperial power. This “Constantinian turn” had profoundly consequences to the church’s later history, reaching arguably right up to the present day. As self-evident as Constantinian Christianity has usually seemed to be for Christians since, its accommodationist character cannot avoid doing violence to the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup>

When Christians adopt a cognitive orientation that integrates nationalism, in even the smallest of measures, they undermine in themselves what is distinctive about the Christian faith itself. In America Christianity has become so successfully domesticated that it interprets its own nation as “good” – that its power, wealth and Christian orientation is evidence of divine favor.

The dominant prevailing catalyst behind this worldview is the comparison of America’s extraordinary rise in power, wealth and liberties in contrast to its less fortunate global neighbors. Nationalism integrates these favorable attributes into the worldviews of believers, thereby undermining Christian identity. Throughout history, replayed countless times, patriotism and allegiance to the nation’s cause is often well integrated into church culture, and has often trumped being a Christian as a primary allegiance and identity. To call on God to protect its military at war being sent to further the nation’s aggressive ambitions is blasphemy in disguise:

*You shall not take the Name of your Lord in vain ...* (Exodus 20:7)

3 Chapman, S. B., *Imperial Exegesis: When Caesar Interprets Scripture*, in Wes Avram, Ed., *Anxious about Empire: Theological Essays on the New Global Realities* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004) 91-102

With these American worldviews in mind, what are power, wealth and liberty of a nation in the mind of Jesus Christ?

*Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”*

*Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your god, and him only you shall serve’”* (Matthew 4:8-10).

Jesus Christ therefore rejects worldly power. Satan’s temptation has worked well in both mainstream Christianity and Sabbatarian groups who claim the Anglo-world has a God given prerogative, and His blessings, to have the sovereign power to represent God on earth. This is reserved for God’s servants alone, in Heaven and on earth. Jesus would reject Satan’s claim today if he offered Him America and all its glory, past and present—should we not do the same?

Followers of Christ are to  
know no home or sense of place  
– in America or  
anywhere else in the World

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God outright rejects all highly esteemed American concepts of security, societal success, secular hierarchical government structures and religious freedoms:

*“My Kingdom is not of this World”* (John 18:36).

The only representation of God’s Kingdom on earth is expressed through the metamorphosis of a believer as accomplished by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The *SVM* audience is primarily Sabbatarian, and may be familiar with the claims of the Worldwide Church of God and its corporate offshoots that America has been blessed by God through Biblical promises to Abraham.<sup>4</sup> The orientation of these teachings is nationalistic and undermines the faith of individual Christians – who are to recognize as part of their transformation to know no home or sense of place in America or anywhere else in the world. If we are to be more responsible in interpreting our times now, and how we might better interpret the future, our

4 This distortion of scripture and history is discussed in further detail in *British Israelism – A Brief Exposure and Refutation* by this author, and can be found at [www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org](http://www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org).

worldviews need to be re-examined. The believer's worldview has been shown to be an integral cognitive component in Biblical interpretation, and very little consideration is given to its formation. Contrary to what we might assert, our worldview is shaped more by our culture, political association and by other intrusive elements and not as much Biblical Truth as we might normally assume. What you believe matters to your growth as a Christian. All errors in belief carry with them an element of bondage. Worldviews are often brought to the surface only in moments of crisis in faith – and that moment is coming for some.

Paul warned Timothy of these types of teachings that are contrary to Apostolic doctrine, which according to Paul spread like cancer. We have however, the encouragement of Paul, that irrespective of what men may say or preach:

*Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, having this inscription:*

*"The Lord knows those who are His", and "Everyone who names the name of the Lord must turn away from unrighteousness" (2 Timothy 2:19).*

We encourage, as Paul subsequently admonishes, to pursue faith, love and peace, and reject all that is foolish and ignorant which is contrary to the Gospel.

When Paul appeals to us not to be conformed to this world (Romans 12:2), he reaches out to us through time, as the world is still the world; America has never been the exception.

## **But America ... where is it in Prophecy?**

The answer to this question is really not that complicated to give. The complication is in recognizing the deception as touched on above, and how it is so deeply embedded in the psyche of the domesticated North American Christian.

The developed world, America especially, is simply the product of the evolution of empires as prophesied in post-exilic scriptures. The gentile world was released by God to develop for purposes both in executing His judgment on Israel, to bring judgment on themselves, and to bring the Gospel to the world. God's judgement holds a supremacy to which we must humbly submit, and the terror of His judgment should also override any pride or loyalty we have.

Assertions in this article may be an affront to the domesticated Christian who has their whole life considered America as a beacon of liberty, human rights, with its landscape full

of Christian symbols of gratitude and customs. Many charitable works have been done in His Name by use of the wealth of the nation and of individuals. However, none of what can be offered up to God will change the reality of how God is working with nations as already expressed in His Judgement. This world, all of it, and the ruler of it, is already judged, and the prophets have expressed His judgment.

In dealing with the worldviews of the Jews amongst Him, who saw their place in the world through the lens of Patriarchal descent, Christ still claimed His preeminence over all:

*"Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).*

Christ came to set us free from all elements of the world, spiritual and worldly, whether they be good or evil, so that we may worship God in Spirit and Truth. The alternative is to continue to subject ourselves to bondage and limit our recognition of the truth. The prevalent danger in believing a deception is to do the works of the chief liar. The particular deception that is being addressed here is that America has inherited a blessing and ordination by Christ to bring the Gospel to the world. Expressions that call on a nation to return to God, or claims of America being "God's country" are symptoms of a misguided allegiance that is not Christ centered.

To challenge this common cultural Christian Western worldview is an admittedly unpopular undertaking not easily embarked upon. To argue such a contrary position may even appear fruitless through Biblical argument alone. To this author there is a possibility the chasm can be crossed if we challenge how this same worldview distorts our understanding of fulfilled prophecy. Because historical record is fact, we have less to speculate on to begin with.

Past historical fulfillments of gentile nation activity, detailed in Daniel, is a special focus of this paper. An examination of Daniel's prophecies hopefully invite the reader to consider a less speculative and conjectured understanding of the times we live in now, and how we might better interpret the future.

## **Forget the Doom of End Times for a Moment**

When I am in discussions as to whether or not we are in the "end times" I suggest we are not based on the book of Daniel. The book tells us when those days will be:

*"At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack*

him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon” (Daniel 11:40-41).

Michael, who watches over the sons of Israel, not the gentiles, will **at that time** enter into the events and what is often referred to as the Great Tribulation (Daniel 12:1). Christ refers to this time as well as the worst time to be experienced in the history of the world (Matt 24:21). Yet, we are not to assume this is also a worldwide event. It is an event that is centered around Jerusalem.

As these events are not occurring, I am not paying too much attention to it. The understanding of the events is explicitly sealed until the time of the end (Daniel 12:9). The God-fearing among us realize we are in our “now times,” the time we are most responsible for.

## Daniel’s Prophecies

Daniel was a person with a passion for his people Israel. Even though Daniel and his people did not comprehend the prophecies they did find comfort in them.

He wrote first to show God’s future program for the nation of Israel during and after ‘*the times of the gentiles*’ (Luke 21:24). The times of the gentiles is that extended period of time in which the land given in covenant to Abraham and his descendants is occupied, controlled in indeed aided by other nation powers. This period began with Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. and will continue to dominate worldwide until Christ returns.

Daniel wrote to show what the believers’ present response should be as they await the return of the Kingdom to Israel.<sup>5</sup> Daniel encouraged his readers to remain faithful to God as they recognize they live in a society with a confusing mix of hostility, prosperity and deception while waiting for God’s promised redemption.

We are privileged to better understand the prophecies of Daniel because we have seen how the historical record of successive empires has fulfilled these predictions. The disconnect is that in many ways, when Christians interpret Biblical prophecies such as the images of the beasts of

5 Daniel and his generation would interpret the land promised to Israel being restored to them through Messianic fulfillment (cp Acts 1:6). Christians can appreciate reading Daniel in the manner of both the restoration of the Levant to Abraham’s descendants, and also recognizing the eschatological Spiritual Kingdom of God.

Daniel and the beasts of Revelation their tendency is to distance their own nation and society from the judgments that come on the beasts in a way that affirms one’s prior beliefs or hypotheses – that being on the side of God’s favor.

## Knowledge will Increase

After the Angel’s discourse to Daniel regarding the Time of The End in Daniel 12:1-3, the Angel gave Daniel specific instructions regarding the prophecy:

*“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”* (Daniel 12:4).

Roughly at that time it was customary for the scribe who recorded important documents, such as in contractual promises, to run a seal across the cylinder of the scroll to guarantee its authenticity. As this amounted to a contractual promise, by sealing it Daniel would certify that the scroll’s contents were exactly what God had revealed to him through His angel. It was a promise God would keep to execute His own will and keep His promise to Daniel’s people.

It has been suggested the last part of this verse refers to the attempts of people in the future to understand this revelation, but there is a broader context the Angel is referring to as we look at the prophecies in Daniel as a whole and how history has unfolded in the developed world. These words describe in part the interim activity of mankind throughout history that God has purposed as He executes His will. This was not a casual offering of words; as to suggest knowledge will increase by mankind’s futility or simply as a matter of course of study and investigation. These words are for wise consideration. There is purpose in the *to and fro* and the growth of knowledge that is connected to the Angel’s revelation.

## The Ram and the Goat

For our purposes, as will become more evident later, we will examine the prophecies of Daniel Chapter 8 before looking at the broader prophetic image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Chapter 2.

*In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time. I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai. Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram*





which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great (Daniel 8:1-4).

The two horns of the ram depict the Medes and the Persians. The Persians were the stronger of the two, symbolized by the higher horn. Cyrus was the King of Persia and his armies did indeed push in all the directions as predicted in taking Libya, Egypt all of Asia Minor and India to the east. This created the largest empire of the time. Once these conquests were consolidated, he captured Babylon.

Cyrus was good to the people held captive by Babylon. He allowed the Jews to return to their land to rebuild the temple and restore worship (Isaiah 44:28, 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-3, 6:2-5). He also allowed them to take the sacred vessels back (Ezra 1:5-11).

Cyrus was prophesied in Isaiah 41 and 45, and was even called the Lord's Anointed. He was a gentile king called for the sake of Jacob. The reader should note here that the gentile world has both opposed, indeed brutally opposed, but also aided the people of Israel to accomplish divinely ordained purposes.<sup>6</sup> The modern scene of the Nation State of Israel was approved by the United Nations and

<sup>6</sup> When a Gentile nation went beyond God's limits in their treatment of Israel, God would take note to recompense (Zechariah 1:15).

recognized by the United States. The establishment of the Nation State of Israel appears to be the precursor to future Biblical fulfillments. Modern aid by America and the west is not without precedence, as we have seen with the Medo-Persian Empire. We should also consider though there is divine purpose that permits circumstances to change where favor for Israel may not be sustained.

*And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand (Daniel 8:5-7).*

Daniel has now witnessed an image of Greece as an angry goat who moves so swiftly that its feet do not even touch the ground. The single horn represents Alexander the Great, who took the armies of Greece further than what the Persian army accomplished. Alexander died at a young age (the broken horn), and four leaders divided up the domain.

What Daniel reported was not just another prophetic beast of the field on a rampage for trophies as often depicted in Church of God literature. Alexander founded cities that are still around today, he spread the Greek language, a very precise language used to write the New Testament. He spread Greek culture and population that influenced the course of history, and he influenced the emerging Roman Empire, one of the strongest and most influential empires in the history of the world. Alexander's legacy extends much further than just military success; he changed the course of history. Without Alexander the Great the modern world could be a very different place including America, and America would have perhaps not come into existence at all.

Most importantly, what Alexander did by his great conquests served a purpose by the design of God to prepare the way for societal development needed for the coming Christ and His message that was to go out into all the world.

Many have been programmed to think these war machines have no place in the advancement of the Gospel message, but that is not so. To take the reader outside the normal sphere of teachings of organized religious groups heavily influenced by popular worldviews, it will be helpful to turn to academic writings that can interpret past events in

a manner that that does not have an expressed need for readership persuasion.

Below is an excerpt from *The Environment of Early Christianity* by Samuel Angus<sup>7</sup> (1914). Moreover, in this issue of *SVM*, we include the introductory content of the book to allow the reader to consider the broader context of history as Christianity began to emerge, and how the gentile world was made ready to receive it.

What did Alexander accomplish for humanity and for Christianity? Conquest, usually the synonym for Alexander, forms the least of his achievements. Briefly we may say that Alexander:

- a) Shook the ancient world to its very foundations and did for it something like what Napoleon did for his and our age. Men like Alexander, Julius Caesar, and Napoleon render it impossible for mankind to loiter in the old ruts; they compel them to re-examine their dogmas, test their traditions, and ask whether society can still be held together by the accepted methods of cohesion. All great events, like the conquests of Alexander, the rise of the Roman Empire, the discovery of America, have given a new impetus to the spirit. Alexander compelled the old world to think afresh.
- b) He also, like the Greeks before him and the Romans later, arrested the Oriental danger which threatened to swamp Western civilization. Greece was exhausted, and Rome had not yet grown to her might, so that, but for Alexander, Persia might have overwhelmed Greece and all that Greece stood for.
- c) Alexander not only arrested the ‘Yellow peril’ and the Northern Barbarian peril of his day and protected Greek civilization, but he greatly extended Greek culture, opened an unbounded future for it, and inspired it with new life. He did not destroy the Orient, but made it easier for it to deliver its message, while he greatly facilitated the growth of the Western spirit. We who have sat at the feet of Hellas can better

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Angus was a Presbyterian but Unitarian in his Theology. He was a brilliant linguist and scholar. He believed that traditional, conventional Christianity was an unhealthy mixture of Judaism and Greco-Roman mystery religion. He affirmed controversial beliefs in the nature of Christ’s Divinity that are not supported by *SVM* and most readers, however the work specifically referenced here by *SVM* is supportable.

appreciate Alexander’s services to the Hellenes than they themselves.

- d) Alexander commenced the task of reconciliation among the nations and brought East and West into those relations of interaction which have never since been broken, and which have benefited both. The Greeks regarded Alexander’s victories as an opportunity of wiping out old scores: they viewed the Orient as their spoil or as a field for their exploitations. Even Aristotle advised Alexander to behave toward the Greeks as a leader but toward the non-Greeks as a tyrant. But Alexander had larger thoughts than either Greek or Macedonian could appreciate: his object was not to avenge or to destroy. He introduced a novel feature into war in treating the conquered not as slaves without rights but as men. He offended his countrymen and the Greeks by blotting out the distinction between conquered and conquerors. As a means of amalgamation he tried the expedient of intermarriages, himself marrying Persian princesses; at Susa, in 325 B.C., 100 of his officers and 10,000 soldiers married Asiatic wives. He paved the way for a larger humanity, and made it easier for men to believe in the unity of mankind.... He inaugurated that comprehensive cosmopolitanism which reached its apogee in the Roman Empire.<sup>8</sup>

Where the author has correctly taken us, is that what ended with the Roman Empire started with what Alexander and the Greeks began – the environment that prepared the way for the coming Christ.

From the casual reader of prophecy to self-proclaimed prophetic authority of our time, no one would deny God as Overseer of history. We praise Him for having foreseen it, but we often fail to recognize the means and methods through which divine providence has purposed it. If we were to have witnessed or had been victim to the bloody and ruthless carnage of Alexander’s troops in conquest, we in our modern righteous and domesticated “Christian” judgment would consider Alexander’s motivations as anti-God—Alexander as an egomaniac, a terrorist invader who even despised his own troops. All this and worse is true, yet America and the developed world are the beneficiaries of Alexander’s agenda, and the beneficiaries of military conquests and oppression throughout history. This less

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<sup>8</sup> Angus, S., (1920) *The Environment of Early Christianity*, New York, NY, Charles Scriber’s Sons.

than comfortable reality is avoided by reinterpreting the past, and repackaging the present. The repackaged version would have us believe that our modern civilization, its wealth, wisdom and advancements has emerged primarily out of Christian ethics.

We deliberately move through this brief and narrow narrative of history to maintain our focus on what relates to our topic of interest and the prophetic words of the Angel "... and knowledge will increase." Setting aside our idealism, knowledge must increase to facilitate an environment through which the Gospel must go forth where it is no longer centralized in Jerusalem or a physical Temple. The knowledge that increases in the gentile world produces wealth, greater stability in society, and the move from autocracies toward democracies with greater individual rights and freedoms. This as we have seen so far, is according to God's will to further the Gospel to the ends of the earth, and God has used human empires and systems to do it. We will continue the discussion in this regard.

## The Roman Empire

Much of what is pictured of the Roman Empire in most prophetic Christian literature and media is a militaristic, policed state that was persistent in its oppression of Jews and the newly emerging Christian faith. Secular movie productions also give us this impression.<sup>9</sup>

The gentile kingdoms of Daniel 7 have been described in church literature as "destructive kingdoms" that were war making machines. Alexander and his army are portrayed as a leopard with "cunning cruelty."

These interpretations can be considered accurate. The beasts as described in Daniel 7 are not particularly pleasant, especially the fourth beast depicting the Roman Empire as

*"...dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet." (Daniel 7:7)*

The animals depicted are powerful creatures and are used to symbolize the particular strengths of the nations. The

<sup>9</sup> The relationship between the Roman authorities and Jews and the emergence of Christianity cannot be fully explored here. For most of the first three hundred years of Christian history in the empire, Christians were able to live in peace, practice their professions, and rise to positions of responsibility. Tensions existed by virtue of the monotheistic religion of the Jews and Christians as it was not about to assimilate in the state established polytheistic system of gods and the social caste system. Under Nero Christians were horribly targeted and persecuted in 64 AD. It was generally considered disruptive and was not without opponents, but much of the treatment of Jews and Christians was under the jurisdiction of local authorities.

composite Beast of Revelation 13 carries the strengths of these beasts in one. What in fact is evil about these nations are the heads, or the horns that grow out of them. The little horn that grows out of the fourth beast of Daniel 7 speaks pompous words. John sees the same beast in Revelation 13 with the heads and horns.

Given these Biblical descriptions of the Roman Empire, along with our present experience, and current worldviews, had we lived within the Roman Empire as its citizens, would we be so astute to recognize it as a destructive power? We would presumably feel we would, but this author challenges this assumption.

We consider our world separated by many centuries from the Greco-Roman age in which the early Church was established. Yet, we are not so far separated as we might think or hope to be. We can say, although with certain evident qualifiers, those who live in developed countries today may find a number of familiar elements and behaviors within the heart of the Roman Empire.

In the empire people travelled for business, pleasure and education. The banking business was highly developed, one could deposit money in a bank for interest, and representative documents for the exchange of money could be used, such as with our check system. The international exchange of goods, thought and religion were prevalent activities. Means of communication were abundant.

Women became prominent and dressed to impress. Entertainment theaters were in regular use. Comforts were accessible with public meeting places to lounge about. Public baths were well equipped. Public libraries also emerged. There was an imperial post, and perhaps other courier systems so that messages and news travelled quickly.

There was the pursuit of luxury and wealth and gambling. Men bet on their favorite horses. The pace of life existed that may not rival ours, but a pace that they considered feverish.

Why do we consider the social, economic environment of the Roman empire?

Our main emphasis continues in that we say without question the systems and laws of the Roman Empire were made available under God's continuing providence to facilitate delivering the gospel message. Church literature is largely devoid in educating believers on the developed conditions of the Roman empire that contributed to taking the Christian message throughout it.

The infrastructure of the Roman empire, the roads and

bridges, mail delivery, enabled people to travel and share ideas and information and conduct business. The Roman authorities enforced the law throughout its dominion, and this system gave peace and security never before experienced. Consider the case of Paul, where even the government paid the bill sometimes for missionaries to travel.

Most students of prophecy identify the Roman Empire of the past as a prefiguration of a future resurrected Roman Empire in Europe, that will one day be the final Beast power that will wage a war against God's people and God Himself. Indeed, the prophetic scriptures indicate this to be the case, however there is one certain flaw in that interpretation – that the final configuration is entirely European. The scriptures do not geographically constrict the influence of a latter-day empire. This requires our attention.

As with all empires they are driven by their self-justified need for influence and control to sustain and increase wealth and security, and capitalism exemplifies this. This is amplified by the audacity of the Christian West by its own self-importance as it considers itself on the side of God. Wars that are conducted by America are justified by means no different from the leaders of the empires of the past:

There may be arguments about the best way of raising wheat in a cold climate or of re-forestation of a denuded mountain. But such arguments never lead to organized slaughter. Organized slaughter is the result of arguments about such questions as the following: Which is the best nation? The best religion? The best political theory? The best form of government? Why are other people so stupid and wicked? Why can't they see how good and intelligent we are? Why do they resist our beneficent efforts to bring them under our control and make them like ourselves?<sup>10</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this paper to conduct a full moral investigation into the activities of a nation such as America, nor conduct what would be an admittedly flawed argument to fully compare America and Rome. Neither is it necessary—as Apostolic teachings guide us away from that arena of discussion. What needs to be challenged is any Christian identification with western exceptionalism, as there are serious implications that can emerge that could undermine a Christian's growth.

<sup>10</sup> Huxley, A., *The Politics of Ecology*, 1963, Santa Barbara: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions (now defunct)

In brief however, it is challenging for the American who remains within the safety of the confines of its borders to consider the Roman style aggression that his own nation is conducting. While United States sets its own standard at home, it so often scoffs at this standard outside its own borders and does so unknown to most of its citizens. This can be a difficult realization. As it asserts itself abroad, America is known to use international law with fluid practices to support its ever-changing agenda while ignoring discontent from both enemies and allies. American aggression in military and foreign policy activity tramples over and breaks the bones of the opposition.

At the beginning of a new century, there can be no doubt that the United States is a global titan. It is able to project and protect power like no other nation in recorded history. Yet Americans have never wished to be an empire despised by others, and that is the fate of all empires. Our American self-conception stands in the need of a reality check. The way is clear to be a good, even admired, neighbor among other nations in the global neighborhood *or* a distrusted, violent, and self-absorbed empire. Self-assertions of goodness by a nation that acts abroad in naked and narrow self-interest are worse than laughable; they are dangerous to us and to others.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, we find ourselves facing the sobering reality of our times. What is our reality? That America is an empire, and is no more godly than empires of the past, because the standard of judgement of a nation rests in the hands of God alone, not in our own measure of goodness, nor our own reasoning.

## Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

We turn our attention to Nebuchadnezzar's dream image and Daniel's interpretation of it:

*"My king, as you were watching, a colossal statue appeared. That statue, tall and dazzling, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was terrifying. The head of the statue was pure gold, its chest and arms were silver, its stomach and thighs were bronze, its legs were iron, and its feet were partly iron and partly fired clay. As you were watching, a stone broke off without a hand touching it, struck the statue on its feet of iron and fired clay, and crushed them. Then the iron, the fired clay, the bronze,*

<sup>11</sup> Hudnut-Beumler, J., *Imperial Exegesis: Shock and Awe – Life in Mr. Rumsfeld's Neighborhood*, in Wes Avram, Ed., *Anxious about Empire: Theological Essays on the New Global Realities* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004) 91-102

Body Part	Material	Empire	Dominion	Governing Structure
Head	Gold	Babylon	Smallest	Autocratic – Complete unrestricted authority of the monarch
Defeated by Medo-Persians				
Chest & Arms	Silver	Medo-Persian Empire	Larger	Restricted rule of the monarch (Daniel 6:8,12)
Medo-Persian Empire Defeated by Greece				
Abdomen & Thighs	Bronze	Greece	Larger still	Democratic form of government
Greece defeated by Rome				
Lower Legs	Iron	Roman Empire	Even larger	High power to the senate with higher authority over the Emperor
Roman Empire was never defeated by foreign power as it fell apart within. Rome continues to exist through the great nations of today <sup>1</sup>				
Feet & Toes	Iron & Clay	Former British Commonwealth, European nations, America and others.  Future nations and alliances	Largest – Almost Worldwide	Democratic governments with divisions of power. Power to the people. Multicultural society.

Increasing Knowledge (Daniel 12:4)  
 Increased rights and privileges to the people.  
 Increased dispensation of the Gospel Message

<sup>1</sup> Rome is still living on in the developed European nations of today and countries abroad where they once colonized. The laws of Rome continue to live on and so does her language. Though Latin is no longer in use today, it is a primary root of French, Dutch, Germanic and other languages, including English. English being the more universal language has over 60 percent of its roots derived from Latin or Greek words. Roman laws that still exist include many civil concepts like checks and balances, vetoes, separation of powers, term limits, and regular elections.

*the silver, and the gold were shattered and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors. The wind carried them away, and not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.*

*“This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. Your Majesty, you are king of kings. The God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and glory. Wherever people live—or wild animals, or birds of the air—He has handed them over to you and made you ruler over them all. You are the head of gold.*

*“After you, there will arise another kingdom, inferior to yours, and then another, a third kingdom, of bronze, which will rule the whole earth. A fourth kingdom will be as strong as iron; for iron crushes and shatters everything, and like iron that smashes, it will crush and smash all the others. You saw the feet and toes, partly of a potter’s fired clay and partly of iron—it will be a divided kingdom, though some of the strength of iron will be in it. You saw the iron mixed with clay, and that the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly fired clay—part of the kingdom will be strong, and part will be brittle. You saw the iron mixed with clay—the peoples will mix with one*

*another but will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with fired clay.*

*“In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, and this kingdom will not be left to another people. It will crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself endure forever. You saw a stone break off from the mountain without a hand touching it, and it crushed the iron, bronze, fired clay, silver, and gold. The great God has told the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its interpretation certain” (Daniel 2:31-45 HCSB).*

The image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is significant as it is the complete projection of history of the dominant gentile world from the time of his reign in Babylon to the Return of Christ. It is a symbolic figure, but its interpretation of it by Daniel is certain (verse 45).

The interpretative reference for this dream is Daniel 7:37-38, and forms the basis of interpreting the balance of the dream. This interpretation takes us from the time of complete autocratic control to the democracies of today.

Nebuchadnezzar had God-given supreme authority over

the world in his relatively short time of roughly 45 years. His empire was not extensive as those that came after, but he exercised absolute control like no other that followed. His word was gold; his word was law and no law or earthly entity could challenge his will. Jeremiah predicted his supremacy (Jeremiah 27:6-7, 14). The Babylonian Empire fell to the unified nations of the Medes and Persians.

The Medo-Persian Empire for a time led by Cyrus the Great is depicted by the inferior metal silver. It was inferior in that the authority of the king was restricted. A law could not be annulled once it came into effect. This truth was highlighted by Daniel's experience by his accusers (Daniel 6:8, 12). The empire was superior in that it covered a larger geographical area. It also lasted longer, approximately 208 years.

Greece succeeded Medo-Persian rule by the successful conquest of Alexander the Great. It lasted even longer—300 years. The even more inferior metal of bronze depicts the lack of unified strength of its predecessors. Its democratic form of government gave more power to the people.

Rome defeated the Greek Empire and ruled the longest, with the Western Roman Empire until 476 A.D. and the Eastern Empire to 1453 A.D. It dominated the map more extensively and with brutal strength trampled down all opposition. The iron is yet inferior to bronze where in terms of absolute authority, it was inferior. The senate had a significant role in setting policy and even controlled the emperors to a certain extent.

Daniel's transition to the interpretation of the toes makes no mention of the emergence of another kingdom. The fact the iron remains from the legs to the feet, and to the toes is indicative that elements of fourth empire remains until the end of this age. Moreover, the multicultural integration of peoples in modern empires and nations as Daniel expressed by the clay, has also clearly emerged.

Democracies that govern the western nations and the multicultural makeup of their citizens have many obvious advantages over other forms of government. In particular the freedoms citizens enjoy and the ability to exercise them. What is also becoming increasingly obvious in America, a nation that champions democratic ideals, is the inherent weakness in the checks and balances imposed by laws. Political expediency is highly limited through the division of governmental powers. The Executive Branch, where the head of state resides, the President, can have his executive orders blocked by a Federal Judge.

As to whether or not America, as it constitutionally

exists today, will be part of the formation of an end time configuration of powers is unknown but should not be ruled out. This however is not the concern of this article. The essential point here is that America, the British Commonwealth, and European nations are the latest precipitates in what the image and Daniel's interpretation had predicted. Whether they exist or not at the time of Christ's return, they along with all that preceded them must come to an end and will be replaced by the arrival of God's Kingdom:

*“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume **all these kingdoms**, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 7:44).*

No religious rival or call to national repentance will change this.

## The Christian in America

The Constitution of the United States did not come about suddenly by only the inspiration of God by God fearing men with Bibles. The Constitution is the product of close to three millennia of increasing knowledge and learning as the Angel predicted, and also reflected in the laws and constitutional rights of other nations. The origins of America and its wealth traces itself back to Babylon, not to the promises made to Abraham as many try to claim.

This writer appreciates the freedom and liberty that exist in my former home in Canada and now current home in the United States. These were granted by God for the purpose of creating an environment for the Gospel to go further with less hindrance than it has encountered before. Indeed, the publication of even this article would not be permitted if these freedoms and protections did not exist. However, Christ Himself made it clear that there is to be no misguided loyalties or affections. Moreover, Christ exemplified His loyalty to the Father by rejecting the glories of the world's kingdoms, and would not comprise this even for all their benefits and freedoms it may offer His people (Matthew 4:8-10, Luke 4:5-8).

Given the appreciation for America's wealth, freedoms and liberty, it is difficult for the professing Christian within its borders and protections to interpret the environment of their world through the same lens as the Apostles:

*However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing (1 Corinthians 2:6).*

This includes the all the collective wisdom that contributed to the Constitution of the United States and all that brought it to being. This does not mean that the Constitution is wrong or evil, it is in fact an extraordinary achievement. It means Paul is sharing what we, if we are to be wise, must come to terms with –there is no measure of democracy, liberty or economic system that we have experienced that prefigures the Kingdom of God (John 18:36).

The tragic reality is that much of the outreach literature and video messages from various Christian groups appeal to the patriotic, economic, and societal welfare concerns of this generation. This opposes Apostolic teaching. Often these appeals point to various existential threats on the horizon, which include political leanings deemed “socialist”, the threat of globalists and Islam. As immigration from Asian countries continues, various preachers with followings point to this immigration as a threat to the values and security of America. Scriptural references from Leviticus and Deuteronomy directed at the nation of Israel are often evoked as backing for the modern backsliding nation—and they are regrettably believed.

Even behind these projected concerns are the ideologies that tend to be material and economic, defining human representative value to God in terms of social influence, or the production and consumption of material goods from the wealth of the land.

It is difficult to escape the bias that anchors these cognitive distortions of God’s will once they have set in. We live in a culture that has been nominally Christian for so long that, unless there is deep consternation and self-realization, and repentance, individual Christians and fellowship groups are at risk of losing what it is distinctive about the real identity of Christianity, including many in the Sabbath-keeping community who have been so successfully misguided by the proud nationalist assertions of men.

## Warning and Wisdom

The Babylonian system controls the politics of the world. It is described as that great city that reigns. The city represents financial and economic power and is a system that at least reaches all developed nations. The Babylonian system offers wealth and security for those fortunate enough to be benefiting from it, and that includes this writer and many of the readers of this article.

Yet, the Apostle John heard an ominous warning from heaven:

*“Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and*

*lest you receive of her plagues for her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her inequities”* (Revelation 18:4-5).

We live short lives in the course of history, and our memories and historical studies are limited by historical rewrites and cognitive biases that are shaped by our loyalties and experiences of the present. Yet, God remembers clearly, and He will *not forget* what the nations have done, including our own.

Nationalism sunders Christian unity, putting in its place a sectarianism of the most violent kind—killing on behalf of the collective that is smaller than the church universal, indeed one that often requires killing other Christians in the interests of the state.<sup>12</sup>

*“And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth”* (Revelation 18:24).

To come out of Babylon is to abandon any worldly identity outside of Christ we that have with it. We violate our Christ centered identity when we allow our security and significance to be infiltrated by the lie that is Babylon.

The Apostles advised that we subject ourselves accordingly to the authorities of the nations (Romans 13:1, 1 Peter 2:13-14). Even Jesus Christ recognized the power of Caesar, as He would recognize the power of the United States; and He would expect us to as well (Matthew 22:20-22, Mark 12:17). Even so, all nations are subordinate to what is coming, and no claim to the Kingdom of God, either in prefiguring or advancing, can be made by America or any other empire. Beyond recognizing the civil power of the nation where a Christian resides, there is no other national loyalty, expressed or implied that a Christian should identify themselves with.

Christ and the Apostles never expressed the need for believers to concern themselves with the overall welfare and persistence of the nation state. Prayer for those in power in nations should only be for the welfare of the Christian and the progression of the Gospel (1 Timothy 2:1-3).

*I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, “My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?” He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified,*

12 Budde, M. J., *Selling America, Restricting the church*, in Wes Avram, Ed., *Anxious about Empire: Theological Essays on the New Global Realities* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004) 87

made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, **but those who are wise will understand**" (Daniel 12:8-10 NIV).

Our source of wisdom must be from God's Word and not from the "righteous" rhetoric of the world.

*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace* (James 3:17-18 ESV).

"Wisdom" born out of nationalist leanings is extremely partial, unreasonable and opposes the traits that the wisdom from above brings believers.

As much past and current empires along with their institutions have aided in carrying the Gospel forward, geographically and through generations of people, Christians must not make the mistake of falling for the deception of honoring an empire beyond the boundaries Christ has set.

Paul warns Timothy of the type who incorporate nationalist teachings as part of their ministry message:

*.... they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain* (1 Timothy 6:4-5).

In the final analysis, Christians need to make the willful decision, which will come at an expense, either to be products of the Holy Spirit or products of a secular environment, including popular nationalist teachings packaged and disguised as "Christian."

If we fail to follow the Holy Spirit in this decision we are just part of the problem. May God grant us the ability to see through the deception. 🙏



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# Stop. Slow Down, Pray and Think

By Tommy Willis

In this modern world we have many time saving devices yet we are more in a rush than ever before. Why? Well, every fulfilled desire lays the seed for more desires. If we had a washing machine that washed clothes in 15 minutes instead of 30 minutes, then we would want that one; then we would want the newer one that claims to wash our clothes in 10 minutes. Then we would want the newer one after that, which is ever faster. The problem is our human nature as it is, is never satisfied. Going faster does not help us draw closer to God. We need to slow down. The busy rush of the rat race is worse than ever with the technology today; and it can be deadly for our prayer lives. We need to stop the busyness and slow down to examine matters. And we often feel we need access to tons of information. The churches today often have the believer flooded with information overload.

In Jesus' and Paul's day people never had access to a fraction of the information we have today yet these believers were often close to God. This should tell us something. This is why prayer and meditation are so important. We often think that we have to become Biblical scholars to be close to God. This is simply not true. Why is it that the elderly lady in her rocking chair, who raised eight children, and didn't have near as much time to study as the biblical scholar, can often be closer to God?

I'm not trying to suggest that Biblical scholarship does not have its place, because it does. But our attitude in our Bible study is so very important. The Pharisees were like the Biblical scholars of their day.

*"At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do" (Mt 11:25-26 NIV).*

The childlike heart and humble mind can be led through the Bible to see what is needed. We need to get to know God; and endless picky doctrinal and prophetic studies can become a distraction. We need to seek to use the Bible to get to know Him personally.

We need to use the Bible to meet the Lord Jesus.

*"You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39-40 NIV).*

Here we see we can study the Bible diligently, yet not come to fellowship with Him. We need to ask Jesus Christ to take us by the hand and lead us through the scriptures so that we will get to know Him personally.

*"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3 NIV).*

This is why we are on the planet; to get to know God and glorify Him in the process. We are here for a short time and we should use it wisely. Too often we stay busy with the cares of this life and do not take the time to sit and think about what is important in life.

*"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:24, 33).*

We are to seek God first.

If we drift from God, He will look to get our attention. When I drifted from God, He used the scripture in Revelation 3:18-20 to get my attention. Here Christ is knocking at the door of our heart and mind because

we have drifted from God. Repentance clears the way for a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. If we drift, Jesus Christ knocks at the door of our heart; He loves us and wants a deeper relationship with us.

The days ahead will be difficult in this nation and the world. Let us pray and seek God, to ask Him to lead us through the Scriptures so that we will get to know Him; and get our foundation down in Him; and as this old world gets shaken as never before we can still be standing because our foundation and trust will be in Jesus Christ.

Don't let the busy rushing schedule of the world take you away from God. The cares of this life can destroy us if we let it. Slow down and make sure you are not neglecting your personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

*Continued on page 27*



# THE ENVIRONMENT OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Editor's Comment: As referenced in *From Babylon to America: The Perils of Nationalism Infecting God's People* this issue, *SVM* includes the introductory text of an early 20th century work by Samuel Angus Ph.D. entitled the *The Environment of Early Christianity*.<sup>1</sup> The introductory text of the book is helpful for students of the Bible to broaden their perception of the history of God's patience with humanity. God's mercy and judgment is centered around Jesus Christ, but so is history. Our modern bias tends to limit our vision and understanding of God's activities. Perhaps a more sympathetic attitude towards God and mankind will help us to break these bonds of bias that limit our vision, and perhaps praise God in fuller capacity.

## THE ENVIRONMENT OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

### Chapter I Introductory

'He (Messiah) is the end rather than the product of prior history; does not so much get meaning from it as give meaning to it' - Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 373

The purpose of this book is not to inquire into the nature and success of Christianity, but to survey the ancient world in which Christianity was first planted, reviewing the conditions which would favour or retard the spread and achievements of the three great peoples to whom the Gospel was first offered. We shall be convinced both of the need and the preparedness of this old world for the Evangel; we shall see that, as God makes no mistakes in history, Christianity came indeed 'in the fullness of the time,' and that the Graeco-Roman world was socially, politically, linguistically, morally and religiously in a wonderful state of preparation for the Kingdom.

We cannot estimate aright the history of Christianity if we are ignorant of its antecedents, nor can we appreciate its success if we overlook the difficulties it had to encounter.

Two extreme views about the condition of the ancient world are prevalent. First, some – e.g. B. Bauer<sup>1</sup> and J. A. Farrer – represent the ancient world as producing Christianity automatically. Christianity is merely a result of evolution and human progress. It is simply the juxtaposition of

1 Angus, S., (1920) *The Environment of Early Christianity*, New York, NY, Charles Scriber's Sons.

A copy of the full text can be found here:

[https://books.google.com/books/about/The\\_environment\\_of\\_early\\_Christianity.html?id=loZTFHV2\\_R8C](https://books.google.com/books/about/The_environment_of_early_Christianity.html?id=loZTFHV2_R8C)

2 *Christus u.d. Cäsaron*, p.149 f. Bauer attributes more of Christianity to Seneca than to Jesus.

elements already to hand without supernatural intervention. The founders of the new faith were astute enough to put some good old things together to make a brand new article. The united ideals of Jew, Greek, and Roman gave to the world Christianity. This distorted view contains a partial truth which deserves attention. The same God who planned the Gospel prepared the soil. Men were His servants and instruments then as now, whether conscious of it or not. The Gospel could not come without antecedents, and could not succeed if men's hearts were not ready to receive it.

Others – and these the majority – would have it that Christianity is wholly new and in absolute antithesis to the world in which it appeared. The ancient world laboured and brought forth nothing: the only contribution it made to the Gospel was entirely negative – dire need. Everything excellent came only with the Christian era, God having given the ancient peoples over to their own carnal hearts. These scholars see only the vices and immoralities of the worst classes of pre-Christian society – such classes as still survive in our Christian civilisation. This picture of the ancient world is painted exclusively in the dark colours of the plays of Plautus, the satires of Juvenal, the unworthy verses of Ovid and Martial, the inanities of Petronius, the bitterness of Tacitus, and the mystic sensuality of Apuleius. The worst side of antiquity is deliberately compared with the best side of Christianity. Moral monstrosities like a Caligula or a Nero are placed beside a John or a Paul. The fact is overlooked that the same God was working in human history before, as after, the Christian era, revealing Himself as men felt their need of Him and were able to comprehend Him. The best method of magnifying Christianity is not the belittling of Heathenism. To secure the right perspective Christianity must be viewed not only in *contrast* but also in *contact* with its environment.

To appreciate Christianity or Paganism we must approach them with an open mind, if not with sympathy. We should contrast the ideals of Paganism with those of Christianity. We may admit that God is the God of the heathen as of the

Christians without admitting that Christianity is only on a par with all its predecessors. We must remember, too, how easy it is, on the one hand, to over-estimate past epochs by reading ideas of our own period and religion into the records of the past; as also, on the other hand, to fail to do justice to old Gospels by unfamiliarity with their language. Thus out of scores of examples- Seneca's thought that gifts given 'in succour to infirmity, poverty, or shame, should be given silently, with no other witness than the giver and the recipient,' is more familiar to us as 'let not they left hand know what they right hand doeth.' Or 'many are called but few chosen,' is better known than 'many are the wand-bearers but few of the mystae.' It was a least as difficult for the pre-Christian world, as it is for us, to put away the gods which their fathers worshipped on the other side of the flood. Likewise the mere use of old expressions does not necessarily imply that those using them had not outgrown them. Many pagan institutions are to us strange, but they once represented the grasping of certain ideas by which society found a means of cohesion. Many old formulae seem empty, yet they were once the repositories of new thoughts and truths crystallized into expression so as not to be lost.

In our day we cannot dislocate history as was possible a generation ago. The idea of evolution and progress has too firmly laid hold of our minds. The unity of mankind and the unity of history are articles of faith. History is now viewed as an organism. The student cannot with impunity discover Christianity from the fabric of its age. To do so is to read history with a bias, and to disregard God's patience in the task of educating humanity and drawing it to Himself. The Gospel of Jesus does not disdain the many evangels which gladdened men and brought joy, consolation, and spiritual support to thousands of the human race before the rise of our faith in history. God has in all ages been listening to the still sad music of humanity; He has been walking with and among men in their toil, error, and waywardness<sup>3</sup>, stretching out His hand in succour as men have in all ages stretched forth hands to God for help.

'...Feeble hands and helpless  
Groping blindly in the darkness,  
Touch God's right hand in that darkness  
And are lifted up and helped.'


<sup>3</sup> 'For they peradventure err, seeking God and desirous to find him'— Wisdom of Solomon 13:6

The human soul has always been always been the 'lyre for the plectrum of the Parsolete.' We, the heirs of all the ages, have entered upon the rich inheritance of the toils and tears, the victories and defeats, the experiments and fears of our predecessors.

'Our fathers watered with their tears  
The sea of time whereon we sail'  
Their voices were in all men's ears  
Who passed within their puissant hail...  
The sufferers died — they left their pain:  
The pangs which tortured them remain'

We must therefore raise our hearts in gratitude to those who were hewers of wood and drawers of water for a period of enlightenment that they never saw and perhaps never dreamed of — to those who desired to see our day but whose eyes God closed. The history of man's religion comes in 'many portions and in many manners.' The efforts of many generations — not unaided by God — prepared the way of the Lord.

The study of comparative religions has given rise to a degree of tolerance, and enabled us to appreciate God's gradual unfolding of His purpose and His self-revelation to different ways of thinking. There is no violent caesura in history. All portions of mankind do not move forward with equal pace: the history of a period may reveal a retrograde movement. Evolution does not always connote progress. We must make allowance for the proneness to degeneration in human nature.<sup>4</sup> But because we believe in God we believe His world has been, and is progressing toward the

'one far-off divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves' 



<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ramsay, Cities of St. Paul, pp. 10-78. On p. 17 he says, 'wherever evidence exists, with the rarest exceptions, the history of religion among men is a history of degeneration'.

# The British Empire



I have in front of me a one page article in *Beyond Today*, an outreach periodical published by the United Church of God (UCG) (March-April 2017 issue) that discusses world news and prophecy. The author uses Brexit and a romantic quotation from Shakespeare of a “happy breed of men” who migrated to their island homeland to launch his short piece that leads the reader in the usual fashion to be offered a free copy of their booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. This usual pattern is to provide the reader of some kind of contemporary geopolitical analysis and then shift the attention to a Biblical perspective:

*“But there is a source of news, written in advance, that does not auger well for the immediate future. Trouble is in store because the related peoples of Britain, Europe, the United States and elsewhere have forgotten where they came from”.* (Beyond Today – March-April 2017)

This would seem innocuous enough, but what follows is a misleading narrative historically and Biblically:

*“They forget God at their peril. It is He who provided the Brits with this beautiful, bountiful homeland set in*

*the silver sea. It is He who has overseen the course of their history, expanding their influence in the vast British Empire and Commonwealth, giving them favor in many lands—so that they and others might learn, eventually, that it is He who sits above the circle of the earth, with men like grasshoppers (Isaiah 40:22)*

*The happy breed of men who came to inherit the “scepter isle” came little by little over land and sea, over many centuries which makes for fascinating history since the ancient people from whom they derive were reputed to have been lost—having vanished from their original homeland following defeat and deportation”.* (Beyond Today – March-April 2017)

Much of their readership are members of their business organization, and they are aware of what the author is alluding to. It is the claim that the northern tribes of Israel, primarily Ephraim and Manasseh once captive by the Assyrians, migrated, primarily under the name of Saxon, to what is now England, and through God’s assured providence became a dominant people in the world, having His blessings and favor.



## ...and a Church Generation Misguided

The UCG and other organizations who have adopted this belief go through a fair bit of length in their literature to ensure there is an idea that God has expanded and blessed the people of the British Commonwealth, and ultimately the United States.

Within their own literature, the UCG quote the pontification of politicians as evidence of God's approval of their wealth and how it was obtained:

*"It is hardly surprising that educated people of the day perceived the hand of God in the process. To them it seemed too obvious to ignore. For example, Lord Rosebery, a British foreign secretary (1886, 1892-1894) and prime minister (1894-1895), spoke in November 1900 to the students of Glasgow University about the British Empire: 'How marvelous it all is! Built not by saints and angels, but by the work of men's hands ... and yet not wholly human, for the most heedless and the most cynical must see the finger of the Divine. "Growing as trees grow, while others slept; fed by the faults of others as well as the character of our fathers; reaching with a ripple of a restless tide over tracts, and islands and continents, until our little Britain woke up to find herself the foster-mother*

*of nations and the source of united empires. Do we not hail in this less the energy and fortune of a race than the supreme direction of the Almighty?"*" – Page 82, United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy.

The booklet goes on to claim that

*"The builders of the British Empire aspired to weld together a peaceful, productive domain ruling over a quarter of the world's population. A great achievement of British administrators was the establishment and extension of law and order in Britain's colonial and imperial territories around the globe. This alone brought untold blessings to the people of these territories."* –Page 83

The reality behind the growth of the British Empire is far different than the authors of this UCG publication would have us believe. The human cost to support the growth of this empire can be evaluated in terms of the deaths of tens of millions in its endeavors to obtain wealth and control people.

The source of this distortion of the historical record that has occurred does not happen by accident. It is the privilege

of conquerors to tell stories that flatter their own past. All nations as they evolve over time attempt to distance themselves from their own atrocities. Most accounts present the British Empire as a great engine for diffusing liberty and civilization to the world.

Popular accounts continue to sell happy stories of the empire to the British public – always marketed as humanely generous revisionist accounts, but avoided are all the prevalent episodes of massacres, rebellions and atrocities. Particularly atrocious was the lucrative slave trade, endorsed by the crown, which afflicted and murdered millions of Africans between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Britain’s expansionist agenda was in large part funded by the profits of slavery. The crimes against humanity committed by the British in its expansionist efforts are virtually unquantifiable.

Even well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Empire continued its aggression at the expense of its colonies. In the book *The Untold Story—The Concise History of the United States*, the authors share the account of one of his sons, Elliott Roosevelt, during President Roosevelt’s meeting with Winston Churchill, where Elliott was in attendance. Churchill met with Roosevelt in Newfoundland to appeal for the US entry into the war. Elliott shared his father’s position:

*“I think I speak as America’s President when I say that America won’t help England in this war simply so that she will be able to continue to ride roughshod over colonial peoples.”*

The authors of the book comment:

*“At the heart of Roosevelt’s vision was that political freedom meant economic freedom, which was in sharp contrast to the British Empire’s rationale that kept the colonies poor and dependent on London. Roosevelt’s global New Deal would create a financial credit system that would allow the colonies to develop.”*

Roosevelt was determined to dismantle the colonial empire and its methods. Churchill knew that America’s terms in entering the war would be that Britain’s post war existence would not be the same.

Roosevelt saw colonialism as a threat to world peace. As recorded by his son Elliott in his book, *As He Saw It*, Roosevelt told his son,

*“The colonial system means war. Exploit the resources of an India, a Burma, a Java; take all the wealth out of these countries, but never put anything back into them, things like education, decent standards of living, minimum health requirements—all you’re doing is storing up the kind of trouble that leads to war. All you’re doing is negating the value of any kind of organizational structure for peace before it begins.”*

Roosevelt did not hold this position in isolation and was not alone in the knowledge of Britain’s exploitation of its colonies, particularly India. It is utterly absurd to read in Church organization literature how the decline of Britain’s Empire came about by God’s withholding of

His blessings by the suggestion they have forgotten God at their own peril. Literature and media programs that convey these ideas prey on the ignorance of its audience.

The high calling of the Church of God leaves it without excuse to adopt convenient ideas of history to serve its own agenda of increasing and retaining membership and advancing the Anglo Israelism doctrine. It is one thing to avoid the unpleasant realities of the past, but for a church organization to suggest “*untold blessings to people of these territories*” in the name of God is a serious matter, and they do so at their own peril.

The following pages feature the introduction of a recent book by historian Richard Gott – *Britain’s Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt*. *Shepherd’s Voice Magazine* has obtained the rights to reproduce the introduction of the book, which this writer feels captures in part the historical narrative that the proliferators of British Israelism, or Anglo Israelism, would like us to ignore, and they themselves choose to willfully ignore.

In the pages of the book, Gott, as few have done before, demonstrates that violence was a central, constant and pervasive part of the making and keeping of the British Empire. We hope that our readers can exercise our individual responsibilities to prove all things, and *to hold fast that which is good* (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

May the Lord God, the Head of the Church, be found righteous in His judgement of it. As Paul said it well

“...let God be true, and every man a liar” (Romans 3:4).

Jim Patterson

Editor—Shepherd’s Voice Magazine

See also the article [British Israelism—A Brief exposure and Refutation](http://www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org) at [www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org](http://www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org).





## Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt

### Introduction

Just over a century ago, in 1908, Henrietta Elizabeth Marshall published a large illustrated book for children called *Our Empire Story*. Within its covers were tales of 'India and the greater colonies', then defined as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and the book included evocative colour illustrations by J. R. Skelton. For the children of Empire, for much of the twentieth century, this work provided all that they were ever to know about the history of the world they lived in. Sound, if partial, history, and easy to read, it had a profoundly influential impact.

Henrietta Marshall told the story from an imperial perspective. For the most part, she took no notice of the existence of the various native populations that the empire-builders encountered, though her thumbnail sketches of the inhabitants of southern Africa were clearly designed to summon up a tiny frisson in the mind of her young readers. They were, she wrote, 'very wild and ignorant ... They hated each other and were constantly at war, and some of them, it was said, were cannibals.'

A distinguished popular historian and a woman of her time, Henrietta Marshall was proud of the British Empire. Yet she was also aware of a downside to her tale. 'The stories are not always bright', she wrote. 'How could they be? We have made mistakes, we have been checked here, we have stumbled there. We may own it without shame, perhaps almost without sorrow, and still love our Empire and its builders.'

Such uncritical expressions of affection, seen from the perspective of a century later, are difficult to justify. Descendants of the empire-builders and of their formerly subject peoples now share the small island whose inhabitants once sailed away to change the face of the world. A history of empire today must take account of two imperial traditions, that of the conquerors and that of the conquered. Traditionally, that second tradition has been

conspicuous by its absence. One purpose of this book is to provide a balance to the version of events published in older histories of Empire.

The creation of the British Empire caused large portions of the global map to be tinted a rich vermilion. Although not meant that way, the colour turned out to be peculiarly appropriate, for Britain's Empire was established, and maintained for more than two centuries, through bloodshed, violence, brutality, conquest and war. Not a year went by without the inhabitants of Empire being obliged to suffer for their involuntary participation in the colonial experience. Slavery, famine, prison, battle, murder, extermination—these were their various fates.

Wherever the British sought to plant their flag, they met with opposition. In almost every colony they had to fight their way ashore. While they could sometimes count on a handful of friends and allies, they never arrived as welcome guests, for the expansion of empire was invariably conducted as a military operation. The initial opposition continued off and on, and in varying forms, in almost every colonial territory until independence. To retain control, the British were obliged to establish systems of oppression on a global scale, both brutal and sophisticated. These in turn were to create new outbreaks of revolt.

Yet the subject peoples of Empire did not go quietly into history's good night. Underneath the veneer of the official record exists another, rather different, story. Year in, year out, there was resistance to conquest, and rebellion against occupation, often followed by mutiny and revolt—by individuals, groups, armies and entire peoples. At one time or another, the British seizure of distant lands was hindered, halted, and even derailed by the vehemence of local opposition.

A high price was paid by the British involved. Settlers, soldiers, convicts—those people who freshly populated the Empire—were often recruited to the imperial cause as

a result of the failures of government in the British Isles. These involuntary participants bore the brunt of conquest in faraway continents—death by drowning in ships that never arrived, death by the hands of indigenous peoples who refused to submit, death in foreign battles for which they bore no responsibility, death by cholera and yellow fever (the two great plagues of Empire).

Many of the early settlers and colonists had been forced out of Scotland by the Highland Clearances, in which avaricious landlords replaced peasants with sheep. Many were driven from Ireland in a similar manner, escaping from centuries of continuing oppression and periodic famine. Convicts and political prisoners were sent to far-off gulags for minor infringements of draconian laws. Soldiers and sailors were press-ganged from the ranks of the unemployed.

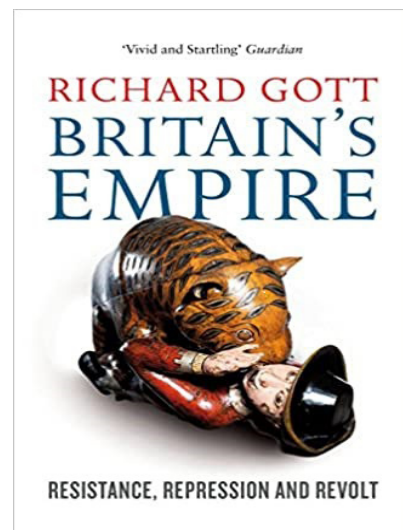
Then, tragically, and almost overnight, many of the formerly oppressed became themselves, in the colonies, the imperial oppressors. White settlers—in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, Rhodesia and Kenya—simply took over land that was not theirs, often slaughtering, and even purposefully exterminating, the local indigenous population as if they were vermin.

The British Empire was not established, as some of the old histories liked to suggest, in virgin territory. Far from it. In some places that the British seized to create their empire, they encountered resistance from local people who had lived there for centuries or, in some cases, since time began. In other regions, notably at the end of the eighteenth century, lands were wrenched out of the hands of other competing colonial powers that had already begun their self-imposed task of settlement. The British, as a result, were often involved in a three-sided contest. Battles for imperial survival had to be fought both with the native inhabitants and with already existing settlers—usually of French or Dutch origin. This was particularly true in the West Indies in the 1790s, where freed slaves and slaves in revolt, Maroons and Caribs, linked up with French Republicans in attempts to curb the overweening ambition of the British to put the clock back.

None of this has been, during the sixty-year post-colonial period since 1947, the generally accepted view of the Empire in Britain. The British understandably try to forget that their Empire was the fruit of military conquest and of brutal wars involving physical and cultural extermination. Although the Empire itself, at the start of the twenty-first century, has almost ceased to exist, there remains an ineradicable tendency to view the imperial experience through the rose-tinted spectacles of heritage culture.

A self-satisfied and largely hegemonic belief survives in Britain that the Empire was an imaginative, civilising enterprise, reluctantly undertaken, that brought the benefits of modern society to backward peoples. Indeed it is often suggested that the British Empire was something of a model experience, unlike that of the French, the Dutch, the Germans, the Spaniards, the Portuguese—or, of course, the Americans. There is a widespread opinion that the British Empire was obtained and maintained with a minimum degree of force and with maximum cooperation from a grateful indigenous population.

This benign, biscuit-tin view of the past is not an understanding of their history that young people in the territories that once made up the Empire would now recognise. A myriad of revisionist historians have been at work in each individual country producing fresh evidence to suggest that the colonial experience—for those who actually ‘experienced’ it—was just as horrific as the opponents of Empire had always maintained that it was, perhaps more so. New generations have been recovering tales of rebellion, repression and resistance that make nonsense of the accepted imperial version of what went on. Focusing on resistance has been a way of challenging not just the traditional, self-indulgent view of empire, but also the customary depiction of the colonised as victims, lacking in agency or political will.



Many of the rebellions discussed in this book fall into four basic categories. First, as in America, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and parts of Africa, there are the revolts of the indigenous peoples against the British imposition of white settlement and extermination.

Second, there are the revolts of people reluctantly dragooned into the imperial sphere, notably in areas such as India or West Africa, where there was no substantial white settlement and no policy of overt extermination. Here the rebellions often took the straightforward form of resistance to foreign rule.

Third, as in the example of the American colonies, there are the revolts against British rule by the white settlers themselves. These occurred on every continent and were often complicated by a history of previous allegiances—to the French (in Canada and the islands of the Indian Ocean), or to the Dutch (in South Africa though not in Indonesia, where the planned British settlement never materialised).

Fourth, as in the case of the innumerable slave rebellions in the Caribbean and elsewhere, there are the revolts of the workforce in the colonies, slaves in the first instance. Then, when slavery was abolished, cheap labour was provided by indentured labourers brought from overseas, who also resisted. By the twentieth century, many workers had begun to organise themselves with embryonic trade unions, capable of withdrawing their labour and going on strike.



The theme of repression has often been underplayed in traditional accounts, although a few particular instances are customarily highlighted—the slaughter after the Indian Mutiny in 1857, the massacre at Amritsar in 1919, the crushing of the Jamaican rebellion in 1867. These have been unavoidable tales. Yet the sheer scale and continuity of imperial repression over the years has never been properly laid out and documented.

No colony in their Empire gave the British more trouble than the island of Ireland. No subject people proved more rebellious than the Irish. From misty start to unending finish, Irish revolt against colonial rule has been the leitmotif that runs through the entire history of Empire, causing problems in Ireland, in England itself, and in the most distant corners of the British globe.

Endless rebellion in colonial Ireland, followed by fierce repression, famine and economic disaster helped to create an immense Irish diaspora spread over the world, where little Irelands arose to endlessly tease and irritate the British. The British affected to ignore or forget the Irish dimension to their Empire, yet the Irish were always present within it, and wherever they landed and established themselves, they never forgot where they had come from. The memory of past oppression, and the barely suppressed rage at the treatment of previous generations, grew with compound interest over the years.

The British often perceived the Irish as ‘savages’, and they used Ireland as an experimental laboratory for the other parts of their overseas empire, as a place to ship settlers to and from, as well as a crucible for the development of techniques of repression and control. Entire armies were recruited in Ireland, and officers learned their trade in its peat bogs and among its burning cottages. Some of the great names of British military history—from Wellington and Wolseley to Kitchener and Montgomery—were indelibly associated with Ireland. The particular tradition of armed policing, first patented in Ireland in the 1820s, was to become the established pattern for the rest of the Empire.

Irish soldiers—the ‘wild geese’ of legend—fought over the years in almost every European army except the British, serving in France and Spain, in Naples and Austria. Irish Catholics were not permitted officially to serve in the British forces until 1760, when 1,200 men were recruited for service in the marines, although some had infiltrated other regiments before that date. The rules were relaxed during the French and Indian War, and Catholics were more readily recruited.

Protestant landlords remained hostile to this development, arguing that arming such men, who might one day turn against them, was dangerous. They were right to be worried, for a fresh outbreak of violent rebellion occurred in 1761, led by the Whiteboys.

This book highlights the rebellions and resistance of the subject peoples. Implicit in its argument is the belief that Britain’s imperial experience ranks more closely with the exploits of Genghiz Khan or Attila the Hun than with those of Alexander the Great, although these particular historic leaders have themselves been subjected to considerable

historical revisionism in recent years. It is suggested here that the rulers of the British Empire will one day be perceived to rank with the dictators of the twentieth century as the authors of crimes against humanity on an infamous scale.

The drive towards the annihilation of dissidents and peoples in twentieth-century Europe certainly had precedents in the nineteenth-century imperial operations in the colonial world, where the elimination of ‘inferior’ peoples was seen by some to be historically inevitable, and where the experience helped in the construction of the racist ideologies that arose subsequently in Europe. Later technologies merely enlarged the scale of what had gone before.

Throughout the period of the British Empire, the British were for the most part loathed and despised by those they colonised. While a thin crust of colonial society in the Empire—princes, bureaucrats, settlers, mercenary soldiers—often gave open support to the British, the majority of the people always held the colonial occupiers in contempt, and they made their views plain whenever the opportunity arose. Resistance, revolt and rebellion were permanent facts of empire, and the imperial power, endlessly challenged, was tireless in its repression. The sullen passivity, for most of the time, of the mass of the population gave a true indication of popular feeling. Individual murder, killings and assassination were sometimes the simplest responses that poor people could summon up to express their resentment of their alien conquerors, yet the long story of Empire is littered with large-scale outbreaks of rage and fury, suppressed with great brutality.

For much of its history, the British Empire was run as a military dictatorship. Colonial governors in the early years were military men who imposed martial law whenever trouble threatened. ‘Special’ courts and courts martial were set up to deal with dissidents, and handed out rough and speedy injustice. Normal judicial procedures were replaced by rule through terror; resistance was crushed, rebellion suffocated.

While many indigenous peoples joined rebellions, others took the imperial shilling. In most of their colonies, the British encountered resistance, but they often had local allies who, for reasons of class or money, or simply with an eye to the main chance, supported the conquering legions. Without these fifth columns the imperial project would never have been possible.

The use of indigenous peoples to fight imperial wars was a significant development in these early years, and became a central element in the future strategy of Europe’s empires. This was as true of India as of the Caribbean and the Americas. Without Indian mercenary soldiers, known as sepoys, Britain could never have conquered and controlled the Indian subcontinent. Clive’s victorious army at Plassey in 1757 was relatively small: 1,000 European troops and 2,000 Indian soldiers. Soon it became necessary to recruit a much larger army of local soldiers to provide protection for the British merchants, traders, and tax collectors moving into the inland markets of Bengal. These mercenaries were subsequently deployed in the 1760s in battles against the Bengali Nawab Mir Kassim.

Indian sepoys played a crucial role in the unfolding history of the Empire, fighting not just in India, but in predatory expeditions sent to Ceylon, to Indonesia, to Burma, to Africa, and eventually to Europe during the great European inter-imperial wars of the twentieth century. They established a pattern for the other mercenary armies of the Empire: the black, originally slave, regiments raised in the West Indies and sent to fight in Africa in the nineteenth century, and to Europe in the twentieth; and the African troops that would fight both in Africa itself, and as far afield as Burma. Without these locally recruited mercenary armies, the expansion and survival of the British Empire would not have been possible.

Yet not every Indian of military age served in the British army. The sepoys who served the British did so because they were paid to do so, and because they were too terrified to withdraw their labour. Britain controlled her mercenary armies with cash and with terror. Much of the early fighting in India in the eighteenth century was devised to secure booty with which to pay the troops. Yet many early campaigns were characterised by sepoy disaffection. Britain's harsh treatment of sepoy mutineers at Manjee in 1764, with the order that they should be 'shot from guns,' was a terrible warning to others not to step out of line.

Mutiny, as the British discovered a century later, was a formidable weapon of resistance at the disposal of the soldiers they had trained. Crushing it through 'cannonading'—standing the condemned prisoner with his shoulders placed against the muzzle of a cannon—was essential to the maintenance of imperial control. This simple threat kept the sepoys in line throughout most of imperial history.

To defend its empire, to construct its rudimentary systems of communication and transport, and to man its plantation economies, the British used forced labour on a gigantic scale. For the first eighty years of the period covered by this book, from the mid-eighteenth century until 1834, the use of non-indigenous black slave labour originally shipped from Africa was the rule. Indigenous manpower in many imperial states was also subjected to slave conditions, dragooned into the imperial armies, or forcibly recruited into road gangs building the primitive communication networks that facilitated the speedy repression of rebellion. When black slavery was abolished in the 1830s, the imperial landowners' thirst for labour brought a new type of slavery into existence, in which workers from India and China were dragged from their homelands to be employed in distant parts of the world—a phenomenon that soon brought its own contradictions and conflicts.

As with other great imperial constructs, the British Empire involved vast movements of peoples. Armies were redeployed from one part of the world to another; settlers changed continents and hemispheres; prisoners were relocated from country to country; indigenous inhabitants were corralled, driven away into oblivion, or exterminated with smallpox infection (as in North America) or arsenic poisoning (Australia).

There was nothing historically unique about the British Empire. Virtually all European countries with sea coasts

and navies had embarked on programmes of expansion in the sixteenth century, trading, fighting and settling in distant parts of the globe. Sometimes, having made some corner of the world their own, they would exchange it for another piece 'owned' by another power, and often these exchanges occurred as the byproduct of dynastic marriages. The Spanish, the Portuguese and the Dutch had empires; so too did the French, the Italians, the Germans and the Belgians. World empire, in the sense of a far-flung operation far from home, was a European development that changed the world over four centuries.

While the origins of the British Empire can be traced back to those early years, this book concentrates on the period since the defeats and victories of the 1750s. The Empire had earlier roots, but what is sometimes called 'the second British Empire' was basically a creation of the second half of the eighteenth century. The formation of British Canada, the white settlement of Australia, the move into central India, the early experimental incursions into Africa: these were all made possible in the period after Britain and the British colonies in America had gone their separate ways in the wake of the settler war of independence.

At that time, the British Empire was but a few small dots on the map. The colonies established on the Atlantic shores of North America had already been lost, and the tiny English settlements in Canada clung desperately to the eastern seaboard, together with a handful of riverine towns captured from the French. In India, a few coastal cities and their hinterland—Calcutta, Madras, Bombay—were Britain's only footholds, while the British slave islands in the Caribbean were under constant threat of rebellion. The capture and subjection of Australia, Ceylon, Burma, New Zealand, Tasmania and South Africa lay in the future. So too did the seizure of strategic outposts like Penang and Hong Kong, Singapore and Aden.

The mood in Britain after the loss of the American colonies had hardly been expansionist. William Pitt's *India Act of 1784* famously declared that wars of aggression, and augmentation of territory, were contrary to the interests and injurious to the honour of the British nation. Yet well-meaning phrases formulated in London had no impact on the fresh patterns of domination soon to be established on the ground.

The story of British colonial settlement in America ended for the British in 1781, after two great rebellions, one by the Native Americans, the other by the white settlers. Events in the British Empire in subsequent centuries continued that tradition. Over the next 200 years, not a year went by without major instances of resistance and rebellion occurring somewhere in the Empire. In some years, the rebellions are almost uncountable, reaching a crescendo of resistance that the imperial cohorts were hard-pressed to crush.

While the stories of some individual revolts have often been told, the tale of resistance over two centuries has never before been considered over the wide sweep of Empire. We know about, and are still taught about, the generals and the proconsuls. Shelves groan under their innumerable biographies. In recent decades, we have also been told of the contribution to Empire of the 'subalterns'

and the British working class. Much less familiar are the stories and the biographies of those who resisted, rebelled, rebelled, and struggled against the Empire's great military machine.

Over two centuries, this resistance took many forms and had many leaders. Sometimes kings and nobles led the revolts, sometimes priests or slaves. Some have famous names and biographies; others have disappeared almost without trace. Many died violent deaths. Few even have a walk-on part in traditional accounts of Empire. Here, in this book, many of these forgotten peoples are resurrected and given the attention they deserve. For they lie at the heart of Our Empire Story. 📖

Gott, Richard. *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (p. 1-8). Verso Books. Kindle Edition.

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*Continued from page 17*

Sit and talk with Him. Spend time getting to know Him personally. As we seek Him diligently, He will settle us and give us His peace to handle the distractions of the world. We often look at prayer as a "chore" or "duty", but instead, look to spend time with the best friend you will ever have. Yes, praying involves asking God for our needs; but you also may have times where you just sit in His presence without saying anything; but just spend time with Him; and you will find he is giving you thoughts to work with. As you learn to spend time with God this way you will learn to not look at it as a "chore" or "duty" that you have to do, but instead look at it as a joy to spend time with your best Friend; just being. To be there in His presence. It took me many years to learn this in my prayer life; some learn it sooner. Think about this, you may look at prayer in this "ritual" sense like I used to do; I had to learn the joy and intimacy in prayer. We often fail to see the reality that it is about our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You will not find a better Friend. "...I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." (John 15:15).

Many are concerned about the days ahead in this nation and the world; the days ahead will be difficult. But if we are praying and meditating as we should, there will be no reason to fear. David said: "*I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*" (Psalms 34:4). If we have fear we need to do something about it and seek God in prayer like this Scripture tells us. But like a hamster on a treadmill, too often we squander our time with fear and worry. We go through "mental gymnastics", saying, "What if that happens?", or "What if this happens?"

And we make ourselves miserable. No matter how bad the chaos gets in the world, we need to keep in mind that important principle about prayer. Think about the above scripture. If you have fear, pray, and keep praying.

God promises to be with us. This is what we are going to need to know for the days ahead. To know He is with us; not just as a religious idea or doctrine—but as a reality. I've never seen people so on edge in my lifetime as I see now. I've heard people talking how they find most people are so stressed out and angry about matters. With all that going on in the world at present, many have a feeling of impending doom as a sense of foreboding clings to their psyche. There's so much going on in the news that the roller coaster of today's news drowns out the shock of the news the day before. It has many wondering again—are we headed towards the beginning of the "birth pains"?

If you fall down a thousand times—get up and cry out to God. Remember the Psalms. Jesus read these Psalms. Remember how David and the other writers cried out to God and learned not to give up. They even wondered why God was taking so long to answer them: "*How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?*" (Psalms 13:1). God used these scriptures to help me while caring for my invalid dad; because I wondered why this was going on for years, and I kept praying and praying. I didn't realize it at the time, but with all those prayers God was pulling me closer to Him. I also learned more of the value of sitting and thinking deeply about life.

Don't let distractions take you away from God. If you are praying and meditating as you should things will work out, so there's no reason to fear. This is the lesson God drove home in my mind with the situation of taking care of my invalid dad when I felt I couldn't go on anymore. Learn to slow down and pray and think about what is important. Pray as you should, and draw close to God. As we get our foundation down in Jesus Christ He will give us His grace and strength, because we all have our real problems. And many of our problems are not dealt with because of our lack of prayer. Think about the two scriptures mentioned below about prayer.

*This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses since he had the same temptations we do, though he never once gave way to them and sinned. So let us come boldly to the very throne of God and stay there to receive his mercy and to find grace to help us in our times of need*" (Hebrews 4:15-16 TLB).

*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*" (Hebrews 11:6 NIV).

Our problems often increase because of our lack of prayer; and the above scriptures tell us to come before God's throne room to get the help we need. Let us think deeply about these scriptures and apply them. Those who seek God diligently will be blessed with His peace amidst the increasing chaos of the times. Hold fast brethren, and God will bring us Home. 📖



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