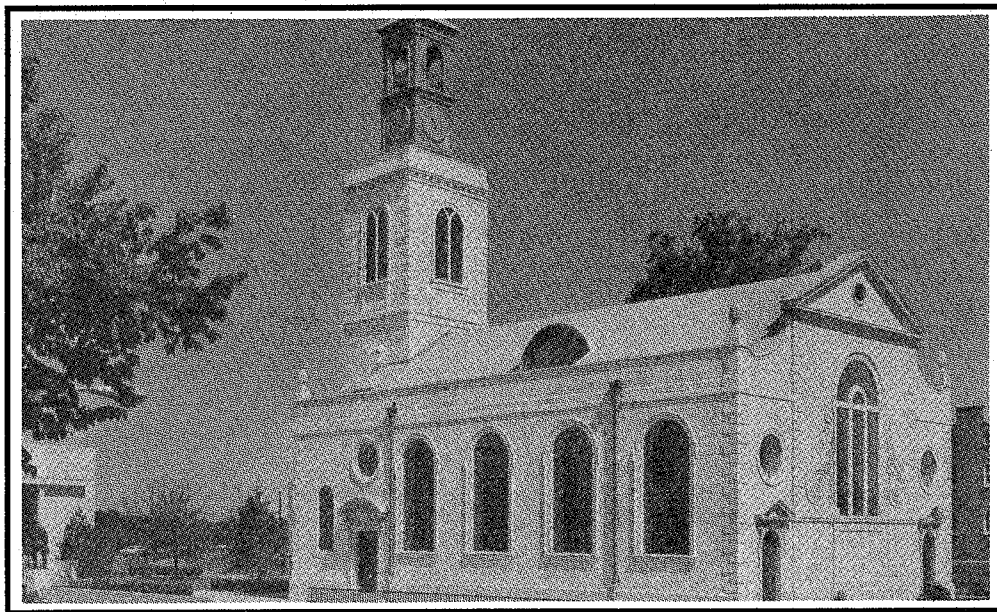


**Can It Be Put Back
Together Again?**



ONE WORLD CHURCH

Catholic and Protestant, Modernist and Fundamentalist, Charismatic and Conservative, the Christian church is splintered into numerous subdivisions today. Christianity is a far cry from the simple united religion of Jesus and his small band of followers.

The inspiring life of the Man from Galilee, his spectacular miracles and his radical new religious concepts, all combined to ignite a flame of sacred fervor in the hearts of his hearers. That flame was so intense that after his death on the cross of Calvary, it erupted into a new movement—the Christian church—based upon his teachings.

Despite rigorous persecution from Romans and fellow Jews alike, the fledgling movement continued to grow steadily and rapidly into world-wide proportions. Except for a few scattered dissidents it was a united body.



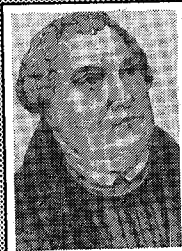
Some 300 years later, under the converted Roman emperor Constantine the Great, Christianity had become the religion of the **emperor**, and in 445, it became the religion of the **empire** under Valentinian. With its new political arm, the church assumed immense organizational power.

For the next thousand years there was virtually one church with few schisms of any consequence. Divisions were simply not allowed. One world church existed. Church unity was a reality, but it was an enforced unity, the unity of a totalitarian state.

Freedom of thought was repressed. Liberty of expression divergent from established orthodoxy was curtailed. The church was in a veritable pressure cooker.

By 1517 expanding religious thought had built up a full head of steam, bursting the bounds of what Martin Luther

called "the mighty monolithic church." Religious reformers appeared everywhere—Luther in Germany, John Calvin from France, Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland, John Knox in Scotland . . . and many others.



Martin Luther



John Calvin



Ulrich Zwingli



John Knox

The unified Christian church began to disintegrate into various protesting—or "Protestant" denominations. These denominations, in turn, began to divide over various disagreements concerning Biblical interpretation. These again sub-divided, like some cancerous cell gone wild. Over 800 denominations of the Christian church are in the world today.

*Christendom
divided into
many sects,
like some
cancerous cell
gone wild*

The ever-escalating rate of division began to concern and alarm many. By the 1840's a new trend began—the reuniting of splintered Christendom. After a particularly painful rupture in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, steps were initiated to prevent further divisions. The first step was the formation of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846.

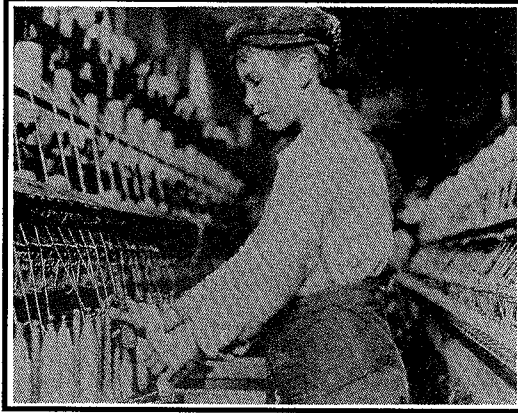
Representing some 52 major denominations, the alliance was designed not only to form a giant unified church, but to encourage dialog and cooperation between the various sects.

Several other developments during the latter part of the 19th century created a desire for a more binding form of a united church, while simultaneously providing further divisive pressures.

MODERNISM: The rise of the twin philosophical concepts of rationalism and humanism found their religious counterpart in modernism. These concepts removed the claim of inspiration from the Bible, substituted the theory of evolution for the doctrine of creation, denied both the virgin birth of Jesus and his pre-existence, and replaced simple faith in the Scriptures with Higher Criticism.

By removing the authority of the Bible as the inspired Word of God, a veritable Pandora's box of new religious concepts opened. In order to accommodate this flood of new ideas, liberalism was needed. Former doctrinal differences seemed petty, and thus were no barrier to church union.

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL: The Industrial Revolution, with its resultant urbanization of society, brought immense social problems to the forefront. Such diverse injustices as child labor, rampant poverty, and the exploitation of the working classes became more and more apparent. The stresses of industrialized living and the urbanization of society brought with it psychological problems, and a rapid increase in divorce. Rising immorality and social diseases had the resultant side-effects of producing unwanted or orphaned children.



Christian leaders began to sense a certain responsibility to join the battle to correct these inequities. The task of social uplift became the dominant theme in the minds of many prominent Christian leaders. Bible-oriented themes of Scripture study and evangelism appeared relatively inconsequential and increasingly irrelevant. The emergence of a "Social Gospel" provided a tremendous boost to the cause of ecumenism.

WORLD MISSIONS: World missionary results slackened noticeably in the mid-19th century. The world's rising perception of social justice exposed the inconsistency of Christians not living up to the ideals they preached. People were also disillusioned by the hopelessly divided state of Christendom. This "shame of division" was yet another prod to accelerate unifying activities on the part of the Christian community.

In the Western world interest in religion had rebounded from an all-time low at the onset of the 19th century. It reached a fevered pitch some fifty years later under the "Great Revival" and the ministry of Dwight L. Moody, Charles Haddon Spurgeon and others. Renewed missionary efforts sprang up with the determination to "win the world for Christ" in their generation.

INEFFICIENCY: The lack of efficiency inherent in such world missionary efforts was curtailing the activity of organized religion. Not only did world-wide evangelism and increased social services require great resources, but an ever deteriorating relationship with the governments of the earth dictated a regrouping of the Christian Church.

FURTHER STEPS TOWARD UNITY

For all these reasons, and more, an effective vehicle was sought to unite the separated branches of Christendom.

In 1893 a *World Parliament of Religions* was convened. The various elements of Christianity were brought together with Buddhists, Shintoists, Hindus, Moslems and other great world religions. The aim was not unification, but open dialog. They hoped to gain a better understanding of the spiritual forces in a world continually growing smaller.

The *International Evangelical Alliance*, though a powerful force, was only a meeting place for interested individuals of all denominations. In 1908 official church sanction to the unity movement was granted through a new alliance, the *Federal Council of Churches*. Approximately 30 denominations were represented. Since modernist churches held a distinct majority their more fundamentalist brothers formed their own parallel institution—the *National Association of Evangelicals*.

The new unity goal was not only cooperation, but actual denominational mergers

By 1948 the *Federal Council of Churches* regrouped under the title *National Council of Churches* in the United States, and world-wide, *The World Council of Churches*, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

The aim was no longer merely to seek cooperation between disparate denominations. The new aim was to actively encourage actual union by merging various sects. The goal of *The World Council* was eventually to form one world church.

Theological discussion threatened to hinder this desired growth. Thus the discussion of doctrine was sidelined in favor of what were perceived as more pressing needs, such as correcting the social inequities that were so rampant around the globe.

Liberalism became Christianity's creed. The vast financial resources of this religio-political conglomerate became available for the financing of ongoing social revolution.

The social turbulence of the 1960's furnishes a vivid example. According to the October 1971 *Readers' Digest*, member churches donated \$10,000 to the Angela Davis defense fund, \$25,000 for Black Panther defense, \$40,000 to assist a quasi-guerilla movement seeking to establish a Chicano nation in the southwestern United States and \$200,000 to the *Black Manifesto* movement.

The drive for unity led the National Council of Churches to form committees which encouraged local zoning boards to limit building permits to churches affiliated with the Council. In another area the Council encouraged the electronic media to restrict broadcast time to material approved by the Council.

The resultant conflict between activities in the political and religious spheres reached a crisis point on June 30, 1955 when the National Lay Committee of the Council of Churches, under the leadership of J. Howard Pew, resigned en masse.

Their letter of resignation succinctly stated their reasons: "Our Committee believes that the National Council of Churches impairs its ability to meet its prime responsibility when, sitting in judgment on current secular affairs, it becomes involved in economic or political controversy having no moral or ethical content, promoting division where unity of purpose should obtain, nor do we believe that the National Council has a mandate to engage in such activities."

While this phase of the ecumenical movement continued to progress, the more conservative, Bible-oriented, fundamentalist churches, while protesting these ecumenical developments, formed a federation of their own. Between 1940 and 1948 these revivalist-oriented churches formed three organizations: the *National Association of Evangelicals*, *The American Council of Churches* and *The International Council of Christian Churches*. To define the boundaries of its unity these groups formulated statements of faith based upon the historic creeds of Christendom.

*Fundamentalist
churches
formed
their own
ecumenical
organizations*

THE BIBLE VIEW

Having considered the history of these movements, what does the Bible have to say on this important topic of Christian unity?

The concern which Jesus felt over the proper development of his church is noted in his prayer just before entering the Garden of Gethsemane on the last day of his life:

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." John 17:21

No greater motivation should be needed by Christians than this strong desire of their leader and Lord. Jesus did not just pray for unity, but for a particular kind of unity—

*"that they may be one **as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee**, that they may also **be one in us**."*

True Christian unity was to spring from the indwelling presence of Christ in his church, even as his own unity with the Father sprang from God's indwelling presence in his Son.

How does Jesus dwell in his followers? He himself explains how in John 15:7—

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

The basis for this oneness, the basis for true Christian unity, lies in the heart acceptance of the words and teachings of Jesus. A unity of belief, a unity of Christian practice, is the glue that should hold the Christian community together.

In Amos 3:3 the prophet puts it simply: *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"*

Two individuals from different geographical locations journey to attend the same conference. They are both motivated by their common desire in the same subject. The nearer these two get to that conference, the nearer they get to each other. This is true with Christians, too. Their goal, their destination, is Jesus and a desire to be like him—in his image. They begin their individual journeys at the same starting point, their common interest is this important goal. The nearer they come to that goal the nearer they become to each other. Such is true Christian unity—unity of purpose, unity of belief, unity of goal.

The only goal that will bring true unity to Christians is the common goal to be more like Christ. This requires study of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. One must begin with the acceptance of Christ as



*The nearer
Christians are
to Christ,
the nearer
they become
to each other*

a personal Savior and continue to learn about his life, striving to copy it. The only authoritative place to study Jesus' life is in the Bible, the Word of God.

Some argue, however, that Bible study separates Christians. The main reason for the many diverse religious organizations today is disagreement over various points of Scriptural teaching. Some have suggested, therefore, that it is better to skip over these matters of difference and cooperate in the work and mission of the church.

This type of union, however, is artificial—organizational, temporary and external. On the contrary, the unity of which Christ spoke is spiritual, permanent, and internal.

Jesus himself stated that his teachings would be misunderstood. He also explained why this would be true. When his disciples queried him as to why he frequently taught in parables and dark sayings, he answered:

"Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."—Matt. 13:13

In times of war, embattled nations will send their secret orders in code, identifiable only through a decoding device. Thus enemy spies may hear the orders transmitted, but will misinterpret their real meaning, while the intended recipient, decoding the message, will both hear and understand.

The same concept is true with the Christian church. Jesus communicates in the code language of parables and prophecies, of types and symbols. These are confusing and conflicting to many who hear, but clear and very forceful to those who possess the decoding device of the holy spirit. Jesus promised his followers the Holy Spirit for just such a purpose in John 14:26—

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

The discernment of God's will for his church comes through a "renewing of the mind" as described by the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:2—

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

*Christ
communicates
in the code
language of
parables and
prophecies*

In order to have their minds renewed, the early followers of Jesus understood the need to study the Bible regularly. The early church at Berea was praised by Paul for such diligent study.

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."—Acts 17:11

Again, notice the admonition in 2 Timothy 2:15—

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

*Topical
Bible study
helps one
"rightly divide
the word
of truth"*

The principle of Bible study which Paul here suggests is called "dividing"—"rightly dividing the word of truth." Some features apply at one time and some at another; some features apply to one person or group and some to another; some features apply literally and others symbolically.

For this reason it is important for Christians to study the Bible topically, in addition to verse-by-verse reading of Scriptures. Knowing what the Bible really teaches will help each Christian find the unity of the spirit that Jesus spoke about.

Notice the following example of topical Bible study. The topic of salvation, briefly considered, relates to the mission of true Christianity.

SALVATION EXAMINED

The key to the doctrine of salvation lies in one simple statement in 1 Corinthians 15:22—

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

First of all, this tells us that all descendants of Adam, **all** mankind, **shall die**, but a promise of life comes through Christ. Romans 5:19 adds to the thought:

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

The sin or disobedience of Adam caused death. The contrasting results of that sin and the righteousness of Jesus Christ are brought to our attention in Romans 6:23—

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

To sin, therefore, is to die. To die is to cease to live, to slip into the unconscious sleep of death where, as Ecclesiastes 9:5 says, *"the dead know not any thing."*

However, God has a remedy for death.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

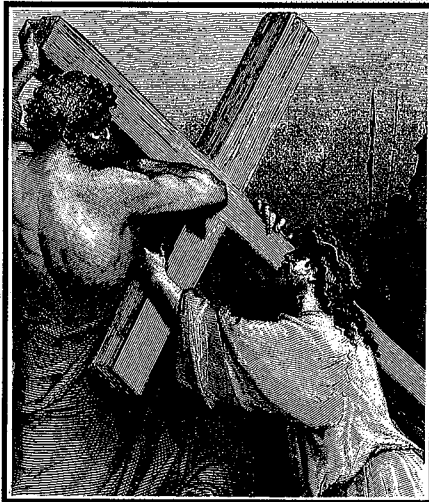
The universality of this redemption is spelled out in John 5:28—

*"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which **all** that are in the graves shall hear his voice."*

But all do not rise simultaneously.

"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."—1 Corinthians 15:23

"Christ the firstfruits" is in the plural and includes not only Jesus, but also his faithful followers. Since they are faithful to him during the present period when evil predominates, they will live with him in heaven, as it is promised in Romans 8:17—



"If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

In the text from Corinthians quoted above, the remainder of mankind are dealt with after the glorification of the church. Mankind will then be raised from the dead to live forever on the earth. This dual nature of salvation—one heavenly and one earthly—is attested often in holy Writ.

"But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. . . . There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another . . . As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."—1 Corinthians 15:38, 40, 48

This resurrection of **all others** will be in the time Christians pray for when they repeat their fervent desire, *"Thy*

kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."
(Matthew 6:10)

This is the time during which Peter says all things will be restored. He calls it *"the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."* (Acts 3:21)

As we read in Zephaniah 3:9, this is the time when God will *"turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon the name of the LORD to serve him with one consent."*

This is the time described in Isaiah 11:9 when *"they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."*

This is the time when they shall not learn war any more and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree. (Micah 4:3, 4)

This is the time when *"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."*—Revelation 21:4

In other words, this will be the time for the rectifying of all the social ills that have marred earth's present society. This is the time when the Bible predicts that God will accomplish the social reform that modern churches are trying to accomplish for God by uniting today.

GOD'S KINGDOM IS NOT A KINGDOM BY MAN

The divine principle is clear. The kingdom is God's. It must be established by God. It cannot be established by man, no matter how well intentioned. It cannot be established by the Christian church before the time God has ordained for that kingdom.

*God's
Kingdom
must be
established
by God,
not by man!*

Christendom tried to establish this kingdom back in the days of Constantine, when they first united church and state. The union of church and state was completed in the days of Charlemagne (800 A.D.) United church and state instituted a 1000-year kingdom upon the earth. The history of that period—terror, repression, inquisition, and persecution—stands in sharp contrast to the Bible's description of the real Kingdom of God.

No kingdom devised by man, no matter how beautiful in theory, has the power to fulfil the conditions of "Thy kingdom come."

Legislative attempts to end social injustice are certainly commendable; but as man replaces legal injustice with "de facto" injustice the results are the same. The point is once again emphasized. Paradise cannot be legislated. Only God can bring in the promised reign of peace because only God can change the stony, bigoted hearts of men for hearts of flesh—hearts of love, hearts of compassion.

In the meantime, the fear of political incursions, of Utopias by Communism, Socialism, humanism or any other "ism" continues to push Christendom to compete with the "ideal state," or "new world order."

The message of God's Word is in sharp contrast to the rush toward such ecumenism and organic joining of churches and states:

*Paradise
cannot be
legislated,
but must be
preceded by
changed hearts*

"Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."—Isaiah 8:12, 13

To the true Christian the Scriptures clearly teach that the present mission of the church is the perfecting of the saints for their future work of service. The church must develop every grace of character in order to be prepared to serve as kings and priests in the next age. This, along with the kingdom message, is its witness to the world.

ECUMENISM IN PROPHECY

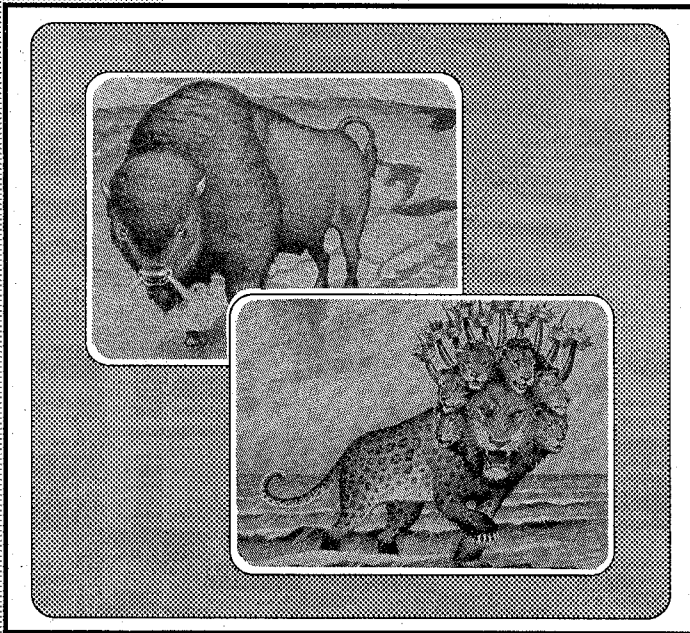
Having established an understanding of the Scriptures regarding the unity of the Christian church and its present mission, an examination concerning the future of a "one world church" is appropriate.

The book of Revelation deals in part with matters of the end time, the period just preceding the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. This book begins with the statement that it will show what the spirit "signifies"—or tells in signs or symbols—to the Apostle John.

The various objects in the book of Revelation are not to be interpreted literally, but as symbols or pictures of prophetic truths. Once again the Bible speaks in code

language, waiting to be decoded by the holy spirit with "Scripture interpreting Scripture."

In the thirteenth chapter of Revelation we are introduced to a leopard-like beast that many scholars of the Bible identify with a fallen church system.



Shortly after, another beast, one with two horns, looking like a lamb, but speaking like a lion, rises on the scene and oversees the making of an image of the first beast. He later gives life to the image, and with life, persecuting power.

A mark of endorsement is forced upon all people of the earth. Those not receiving this "mark" are forbidden to buy or sell.

The progression shown here seems to be that an apostate church system would be joined by a similar system which, though innocent in appearance, would speak with the same oppressive authority. This similar, though protesting system, would construct an image of the first system. As this new beast comes to life, it has the looks of the first beast and the authority of the second. This pictures a united system built upon the previous two.

One 20th Century Bible commentator, Arthur S. Maxwell, in his book *Time Running Out*, put it this way:

"Does this mean that all professing Christians will return to the 'mother church'? By no means. There are many who, though fully in sympathy with the reunion movement, will feel that they cannot go so far as to admit the primacy of the pope. These will find their spiritual home in a non-Roman, but pro-Catholic body, such as the World Council of Churches.

"These two bodies . . . 'Roman Catholic' and 'Catholic and Reformed' . . . will then move on in parallel courses, both so

alike in purpose and method that sometimes it will be difficult to tell them apart. One will be the replica of the other; so much so that the recalcitrant minority of Bible-loving Christians, looking from a distance upon this much published 'religious revival,' will suddenly recognize 'the beast and his image' so vividly described in symbolic and picturesque language by the apostle John."

This same "unity movement" is described in Revelation 16:13. The same leopard-like beast of Revelation 13 is seen here in connection with two other beasts. One is called the "false prophet." This is the name of the image of the beast after receiving life. These two are united with the "dragon," a symbol in Revelation of political power. Now, as in the Dark Ages, a religious system with political power emerges.

Standing united, these three issue certain proclamations described as being unclean, "like frogs." The effect is to bring the nations of the earth into the Battle of Armageddon—the climactic battle of the ages which will fully introduce the blessings of God's kingdom of peace.

The final destiny of the great united church—joined with various governments of earth—is shown a few verses later, in Revelation 16:19. During the final conflict, also described as the seventh, or last plague, the alliance is broken into three constituent parts. We're told then that "the cities of the nations fell."

The break-up of these three systems, however, only serves to pave the way for the establishment **by** God of the exact kingdom which men sought to establish by themselves **for** God.

The first feature of this mediatorial kingdom will be to put down all remaining opposing forces of evil. A pictorial description is found in Revelation 20:2. Here Christ "laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years."

With evil bound and sin removed, the work of raising the billions of earth's dead will begin—"all **that are in their graves**" shall come forth.

This work will not be done by Jesus alone. In Revelation 20:4 we see the followers of Christ, those who have been figuratively "beheaded for the witness of Jesus," live and reign with him for a thousand years.

*Armageddon
only paves
the way for the
establishment
of God's
Kingdom*

*God's One
World Church
will be in
heaven
helping man
on earth!*

God will then establish his one world church composed of the followers of Jesus—his “bride,” his “church”—now exalted with him in heaven. These will help their Lord raise the dead of earth and instruct mankind in the laws and rules of that kingdom, leading them, as the prophet Isaiah says, up a highway that leads to holiness. (Isaiah 35:8-10)

In the meantime the lesson is clear to those truly desiring to be Christians: “*say ye not a confederacy*” (Isaiah 8:12)—steer clear of organizational unity not based upon a unity of the spirit.

Instead strive for that unity of the spirit that exists between all true Christians, that oneness described by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:3-6—

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

For there is “**one body**”—the body of Christ. This body is composed only of those who have devoted their lives entirely to him in a full surrender of their own wills.

There is “**one Spirit**”—the holy spirit that leads the sincere believer into “all truth.”

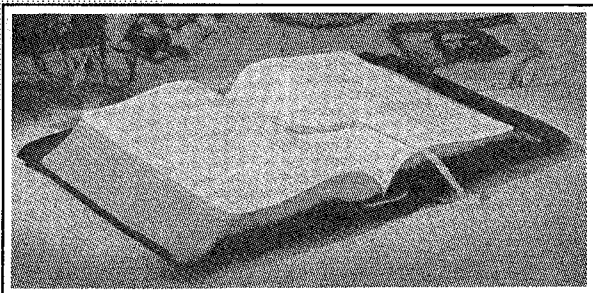
*“Even as ye are all called in **one hope** of your calling”—the hope of obtaining Christ-likeness and ruling with him in the heavenly realm.*

“One Lord”—the Lord Jesus Christ.

“One faith”—for which all true Christians diligently search the Scriptures daily.

“One baptism”—submerging our wills completely into God's will.

“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”—Jehovah, “*the LORD our God is one LORD.*”



To attain this end, then, let us continue daily feeding on the Word of God as ancient Israel fed on manna in the wilderness; proving all things and holding fast to that which is good. (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

Let us be united indeed with other like-minded Christians, comparing our thoughts on Scripture with theirs. Let us draw closer to them in the bonds of Christian love as we are each drawn closer to our mutual goal—Jesus Christ himself.

Let us leave the solution of the world's problems to God, knowing that he has adequately prepared for that solution. His solution will come in that time for which we continue to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

*United
with other
like-minded
Christians,
let us draw
closer to Christ*

Onward, Christian Soldiers

Like a mighty army
Moves the Church of God:
Brothers, we are treading
Where the saints have trod.

We are not divided,
All one body we,
One in hope and doctrine,
One in charity.

Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before.

The History of The Christian Church . . .

A History of Schism and Division

451	Coptic Church of Egypt separates
490	Assyrian church in Persia opposes Rome
1054	Great Schism between Romans and Greeks
1100	Armenian church splits
1166	Peter Waldo starts Waldensian movement
1170	Albigensian "puritans" in southern France
1219	Independent Serbian Orthodox Church formed
1350	European church divides into East & West
1517	Luther's 95 Theses Opens Reformation
1527	First Baptist Church formed in Zurich
1534	Church of England breaks away from Rome
1559	Reformed Churches form in France
1559	John Knox starts Presbyterian Church
1566	First Unitarian Churches formed
1647	Quakers develop under George Fox
1662	Schism in Church of England
1690	Mennonites establish separate worship
1702	First African church independent of Rome
1758	Presbyterian Church divides
1795	Methodists separate from Church of England
1809	Thomas Campbell forms "Christian Association"
1830	Joseph Smith establishes Mormon Church
1844	Seventh Day Adventist Movement begins