

The Nazarene Conundrum

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The Church imaginatively extends the Gospel message, invents the idea of an Apostolic succession and threatens, by stealth of its theology, the intellectual development of the Western world

The Historical Whitewash

In his quite excellent book *Binding the Devil*, Roger Baker makes an observation pertinent to this essay: "It has been recognised that in its need to establish itself the early Church wiped out most of what was valuable in paganism: critical thought, medical progress, the arts - those things that had reached a high stage of development in ancient Greece." He adds for good measure: "The intellectual development of Europe was arrested for a thousand years."¹ Here then is the opposite view from that held by the Jesuit historian Malachi Martin, who believed that without Christianity no great European civilisation would have arisen. Baker, working in reverse, suggests that because of Christianity's early dealings with her pagan neighbours whole echelons of intellectual development already underway were either retarded or obliterated.

By 395 all pre-Christian religious forms had been banned and classified as criminal; by 600 the Church was seriously debating whether women should be considered human or not. Were not labour pains an obvious punishment from God for having indulged in sex? Should not baptism be considered an exorcism of the Devil from the newly born child? Did not unbaptised babies go straight to hell and suffer for all eternity? Were not pagans just devil-worshippers in disguise? This was quickly the state of affairs after the death of Constantine, and it was due to the church *in* Rome turning into the "Church" *of* Rome. God was now dictating policy through this particular group, and He would dramatically escalate his restrictions on human behaviour and thought until the whole of Western society and culture obeyed His divine will. Pagans and heretics alike would suffer the Church's growing intolerance and confidence in herself and, as God's appointed judge on Earth, She would further tighten her systems of control through imaginative extensions to the Gospel message.

As far back as 1968, Dr Hugh Schonfield admirably summed up the situation in *Those Incredible Christians*: "Christianity as we know it" he said, having spent most of a long life studying Christianity, "must not be imagined to be identical with what Jesus taught about himself and what his immediate Apostles proclaimed. Catholic Christianity is based on a radical deviation, which progressively by dubious ways and means was converted into an orthodoxy."² So said the only Jewish scholar allowed to work on the Dead Sea Scrolls when they were first discovered; and today there is a growing number of scholars who are equally aware of the historical whitewash the Church has engaged in to ensure its survival.

To believe that the God of whom Jesus spoke was capable of inflicting such misery, such stupidity, such mindless nonsense on the whole of European civilisation is to be in the clutches of a

neurosis. To unquestioningly accept that this God worked in such a manner, and not suspect that it was human beings who were actually hatching such policies, is to be in need of psychological help. And to argue, in hindsight, that this God had to work through the frailties and limitations of the human mind is to conveniently and illogically overlook the fact that the New Testament *seems* to tell a different story. Jesus appears in visions, communicates with his disciples, and in a flurry of divinity is *seen* to levitate his way into the heavens. But that is not the basic story; in the *basic* story the disciples are all at sea as to what is going on with Jesus, and Jesus, to extend the metaphor, appears to be in much the same boat. Apart from a few post-crucifixion embellishments, *nothing* had actually changed for the disciples, particularly under the leadership of Jesus' brother James. Remember James? Jesus' younger brother takes over the leadership of the Jerusalem church and everything settles back into - *ordinariness*. There are attempts in the Acts of the Apostles to reinstate the miraculous, but they are, to say the least, transparently concocted. Uncertainty is back in play, and it will continue in the background as Jesus' expected return from Heaven fails to eventuate and the fledgling church *in* Rome turns, by stages, into the grandiose Church *of* Rome.

The Roman Church Flexes its Pontifical Muscles

Playing the political game to the hilt, the church *in* Rome turned into the Church *of* Rome, accepted the Emperor Constantine's politically motivated sponsorship and quickly reversed his policy of religious tolerance. Over the ensuing centuries religious freedom was denied to others, and by 1648 the Church was blithely condemning the Peace of Westphalia for allowing citizens the right to hold religious views at variance with that of their sovereign. By 1870 she had turned into a police state.

Churchmen will invoke the "human frailty clause" to explain the Church's centuries-long abuses of mind and body, but that is not acceptable - her supreme leaders did after all claim Spirit-inspired insight, and by dint of its own reasoning that ought to have tempered her decisions. So what went wrong? The answer to this question is to be found in the little-known 4th century appearance of Nazarene-oriented Jews at the court of Sylvester 1, an incident poignantly recorded by the Jesuit historian Malachi Martin who, with novelistic dexterity, imagines a moment of uncertainty as Sylvester dismisses these Nazarenes and their so foolish proposals. How could he possibly give them their Church back? *Their* Church? What had they meant by that? It was the "Christians" who had won out against the Roman Empire, not the Jews - the Nazarenes had fallen back into Judaism and forfeited their right to any kind of authority. Martin, in a reverie, ponders the alternative: what if the two groups had settled their differences and combined - would that have been enough to temper the hypnotic notion of using the Roman Empire to win the world for Christ? A smile. These Nazarenes had probably carried the stamp of Jesus' own countenance among them, but alas, *their* Jesus had long since ceased to be the Jesus worshipped by the Christian community, *that* Jesus had become a stranger.

The "Nazarene" Christians

In contrast to this Catholic thinker, the Jewish scholar Hugh Schonfield tackles the puzzle of the Nazarene Christians and tells us that after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the nation's infrastructure by the Romans in 70, the re-formed Nazarene groups had been only too pleased to receive "the propaganda of Roman Christianity."³ Written communications from Apostles like Peter would not have been recognised as forgeries; the fact that they had emanated from Rome would have secured their acceptance. Did such communications not prove that God was still working on behalf of His people? How else could the new seat of authority have ended up in Rome? Did not the Blessed Peter's name being to the fore not show continuity with those who had known the Messiah in person? And in light of Peter's obvious acceptance of Paul as a brother in the Lord, as a visionary acceptable to the whole congregation, should not his extended theology be accepted as authentic?

Similarly focused, the controversial Catholic historian Peter de Rosa asks why the Roman pontiffs "claim[ed] to be successors not of Peter *and* Paul but of Peter alone"⁴. Why Peter? Why an apostolic succession from Peter when it was on Paul's teachings that the Roman church seemed to be founded? Why Peter when by way of succession among the Nazarenes, Jesus' brother James, not Peter, was the heir from which any such succession should have arisen? Paul was recognised as being out of the apostolic loop, so it had to be Peter, an *actual* Apostle of Jesus' so as to tap into Nazarene status and authority and avoid the James connection. Creating its own apostolic succession on a blurring of boundaries between Nazarene and Christian congregations, the dynastic authority of the Nazarenes was usurped by Rome and duplicated. As is clearly stated in the New Testament, however, Peter was nominated an Apostle *to the Jews*, making it highly unlikely that he ever ended up in Rome, whereas Paul not only set up a ministry there, but is on record as having fallen foul of some other group of Jesus followers who rejected his interpretation of things. This *other* group - most probably a Nazarene enclave to whom Jesus was the promised Messiah of the Jews - would be decimated by Nero, the Christian community established by Paul suffering a similar fate. Paul's "Christians" (mostly non-Jews) would survive, their more strident nationalistic counterparts failing to do so in such a hostile environment. From out of this chaos the Christian segment managed to regroup, their Pauline-influenced theology of the "Christ" as a *new mind* being transmuted, step by step, into the claim that they were being guided directly by Jesus from heaven through the auspices of the Holy Spirit. Who could argue with that? Schonfield describes the situation thus: "In due course any doctrine which the Church found it desirable to proclaim as Catholic Truth could be attributed to this guidance, even when there was no warrant for it in the New Testament itself."⁵ This guidance, one can only suppose, was the source of such notions as that of women not being properly human!

Letters emanating from Rome eventually reflected anti-Jewish sentiments and implied that the original apostolic body in Jerusalem had been superseded. Schonfield says that most of the communities in receipt of such epistles saw no reason to throw out instructions received from the

Apostles prior to the war with Rome, but adds that this period constituted "a time of grave uncertainty ... called for an agonising reappraisal; it was not evident that the situation required a wholesale abandonment of former positions."⁶ Members of Jesus' own family were still around, and together with others who had heard the original teachings found themselves at a loss to explain what had happened. Here were letters with Peter's name on them - what should one make of them? Schonfield sets the record straight: a compromise between the Eastern and Western sources of information took place, a collating of often diametrically opposed religious ideas into a series of strange stories and equally strange doctrinal amalgamations.⁷

One such amalgamation was that Jesus was the politically explosive Jewish Messiah descended from David and sent to rescue Israel from the Romans, yet simultaneously the Divine Son of God come to save all humanity - a mission *above* politics. Another collation was Paul's apparent dismissal of Jesus' genealogy as unimportant and Nazarene insistence that his genealogy was the most important aspect of his life. And what was one to make of the idea that their mutual "Lord" had been born of a virgin by miraculous means, yet simultaneously predestined as king of the Jews through his father Joseph? In spite of revision, the *Book of Revelation* described Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the Root of David, claims that were dangerously anti-Roman by definition. Furthermore, a serious slip in the verses following the "Lion of Judah" claim revealed an error. The passage read: "The dominion of the world has become the dominion of our Lord and his Messiah, and he shall reign for ever and ever."⁸ Our Lord *and* his Messiah? "Lord" obviously stood not for Jesus, but for God, Jesus as the "Messiah" separated from God. The Epistles were similarly topsy-turvy with James and Jude attacking Paulinist doctrine and Peter, of all people, upholding it. And so, according to Schonfield, the two Jesus-based communities battled it out, their perceptions of the past melting into an often disturbed epistemological harmony.

The problem, in essence, was that the Nazarene Mother Church, regarded as dangerous by Judaism, and continually persecuted by the Romans, could do little to halt such a process. Attempts had been made by Hegesippus in the second century to collect earlier traditions of the Christian east and the Christian west, but the surviving records were fragmentary. It was not just a matter of Roman persecution and resentment against the Nazarenes from the Jews for having helped incite, along with other sectaries, a Roman attack, but a policy of persecution by the Romans specifically directed against Jesus' family members. It was the Nazarenes, the Romans had realised, who would fan the flame of insurrection back into life, and that in spite of their having refused to join Bar Kochba's revolt during the reign of the Emperor Domitian - they had only done so because they believed their messiah would soon return. This fact worried the Romans and earned them recognition as a potentially dangerous family dynasty.

By the end of the first century, and during the first quarter of the second, the Nazarenes had little knowledge of doctrinal developments among the Roman Christians. So it must have come as a complete shock to discover that a whole new view of Jesus had evolved as a result of this group's interpretation of Paul's teachings - teachings that had caused the Apostles to question Paul's

conception of their Messiah's spiritual status. When it became evident that a challenge to such ideas should be mounted, they themselves had modified their beliefs and acquired what Schonfield refers to as "eccentricities as a result of new teaching and relationships with remnants of Baptist, Essene, Samaritan and other sects of 'Saints' of the pre-war period."⁹ Here then is the historical mix, and from the clues embedded in it we realise that the Nazarenes considered Paul's teachings, or more accurately what the Roman Church had done with Paul's teachings, to be an idolatrous off-shoot of Nazarene beliefs.

This conflict lasted for centuries, the fact that it did so evidence of the depth of feeling involved. It is however a conflict demoted in most historical writings to no more than a difference of opinion between the Roman Church and its *supposed* "Jewish" equivalent. A complex situation has been simplified through a willful neglect of the Nazarenes and the use of the term "Jewish" to define who these Nazarene sectaries actually were. And to compound the problem the Jews were themselves against the Nazarenes, for it was these sectaries in conjunction with what Schonfield terms the "Essean-Essene" (the Holy Ones of Israel) who had brought calamity on the whole nation with their apocalyptic hopes. And mixed into this potpourri of hopes and beliefs were the teachings of Paul concerning Jesus as the "Christ", a figure that had evolved from its messianic base into a cosmic being of ever-expanding proportions. A blurring of boundaries; a sleight-of-hand shuffling of evidence. It was as if the Nazarenes had never existed, as if Jesus had never been known as "the Nazarene", as if everything that had happened had been set in motion because Israel's God had changed sides.

The Nazarene-Ebonite Connection

Hugh Schonfield notes (as does Professor Uta Ranke-Heinemann) that Irenaeus attacks the Nazarenes as heretics, but calls them "Ebionites", meaning "the poor". This was the term used by both the Essenes and the early Christian Church to describe their position before God: "poor" meant *humble*. The Ebionites were a closely allied off-shoot of the Nazarenes, but with even stricter habits, a fact of history recognised by scholar. It is known, for instance, that they were fanatical vegetarians and opposed to all animal sacrifice. Schonfield, ever careful, says: "it would be going too far on the available evidence to regard the Ebionites as a denomination wholly distinct from the Nazoreans."¹⁰ Irenaeus seems to agree. When describing the Ebionites he actually describes the Nazarene rejection of Jesus as being anything other than a normal man born by normal means, and observes that the Ebionites used only the Gospel of Matthew and rejected the Apostle Paul as an apostate from the Law, that being the principal factor in the Nazarene case against Roman Christianity.

The Nazarenes rejected Paul's theology concerning Jesus as the "Christ" and spent centuries combating the idea. And the later Nazarenes had documented proof to work from: the original *Gospel of Matthew* in Hebrew; the Hebrew or Aramaic *Gospel according to the Hebrews* (also reputed to be by Matthew); the Ebionite anti-Pauline *Acts of the Apostles*; and last but not least other forms of the Aramaic Gospel such as the *Gospel of the Twelve* or *According to the Apostles*. Schonfield speculates

that the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* was probably a propaganda exercise specifically designed to "counter the New Testament Gospels and undermine their effect on Jewish Christians by furnishing a document that was consistent with Nazarene teaching and tradition."¹¹ This brings us closer to the reality within which another set of Gospels were in circulation, *not* Nazarene translations of the canonical Gospels, but *original* Nazarene Gospels (Matthew, John and the Acts of the Apostles) which would later be rewritten by the Christians and parodied by the Jews.¹²

Hugh Schonfield is explicit concerning Peter's role in the early Jewish Nazarene Church. He tells us that Peter was *not* the chief spokesman for that Church, and that he was *never* converted to Paulinism. The Apostle James (Jesus' brother by blood) was "chief representative of Jesus" in the early Nazarene community, belief to the contrary the result of centuries of propaganda initiated by the Roman Christian community. Denigration of the original Nazarene authority "invested in the Apostles of Jesus and members of his family" had been their aim, and they had successfully wrested that authority from Jesus' family by adopting Peter and making him a convert to Paul's new, heretical Gospel. We then learn that the Nazarene rejection of this stance is to be found in the *Clementine Homilies* and *Recognitions* and, although late in origin (probably 4th century translations from Greek into Latin reflecting 3rd century problems) that they carry information quite obviously written to counter Western propaganda concerning Peter. Sections of the *Clementines* said to have been written by Peter were known forgeries, the statements made by this literary creation nevertheless accurate in that they reflected Nazarene concerns at the time. The Nazarenes were outraged at the Apostle Peter being borrowed by Rome and made into an advocate for Paul's ideas about Jesus, the Church's attempt to reverse what the Apostle Peter had said and done denounced as heresy. Names were not actually used, but pseudo-Peter's reference to the "lawless and trifling preaching of the man who is my enemy", and to men "telling their catechumens that this is my meaning, which indeed I never thought of", is too obvious to be interpreted in any other way.

In the *Recognitions*, pseudo-Peter condemns those who dared misrepresent him, and rails against those offering an authority other than that of the Nazarene Council. This is direct and unmistakable. Teachers lacking Nazarene credentials are not to be believed; only teachers from the "Jerusalem Church" carrying the testimony of "James" the Lord's brother; or, interestingly, "whosoever may come after him" are to be believed. All teachers have to be approved by the Jerusalem Council; there are no other Apostles apart from the original twelve. There then follows an argument between Peter and Simon Magus (believed by some scholars to be an alias for Paul), and once again the subject is an extended revelation through "visions", Peter's rebuke of this position being that those who trust in apparitions or visions or dreams are *insecure*. To pseudo-Peter, talk of the Holy Spirit guiding the Church is not to be accepted; it could too easily be a deceiving spirit that is talking, such a spirit being able to "say of himself what he will". *That*, to my ear, sounds like old-fashioned commonsense speaking, and it carries a sentiment against similar imaginings made centuries later by Sir Walter Scott.¹³

The Legend of Peter

It is now a point of faith to believe that the popes are all direct successors of Peter as bishop of Rome. But if Peter never had that title, and was never in Rome, then those claiming succession from him are claiming a meaningless authority. Some historians do allow Peter a period of three or four years in that city on the basis of tradition, but there is no actual evidence to suggest that he was ever in charge of that particular community. Paul's journey to Rome is, on the other hand, recorded in detail, but there is no New Testament evidence, nor any historical evidence that Peter ever went there. There is also no mention of Rome in Peter's Epistle, and when the word "Rome" is mentioned in the New Testament, Peter's name is never associated with it. *All* is legend. And if, as believed, Peter was Paul's superior, then why does he receive so little attention after Paul's arrival?

Paul's letter to the Roman Christians at the height of Peter's alleged episcopate in or around 58 is a case in point? Paul addresses his letter *not* to Peter, which protocol would have demanded had he been leading the church since 42, but to the congregation in general. And what of the letter's ethical content? Paul writes that he longs to see them, for he wants to impart to them some spiritual gift so that they might be established. In what? Paul's version of the Gospel? If Peter was in Rome at this time, then this letter is a calculated insult; either that or he simply wasn't there at all and Paul was free to write whatever he wished. As this letter also states that he, Paul, does not "build on another's foundation", it is hard to imagine that this can mean anything other than that Peter was neither in charge of the Roman church or even physically in Rome.

In his study of Roman Catholicism, Dr Loraine Boettner points out that "Paul was writing this letter because no apostle had been in Rome to clarify the Gospel to them and to establish them in the faith."¹⁴ This means that not only was Peter not there, and until that point had never been there, but that these so-called Roman "Christians" were at that time of a different theological stamp from those established by Paul elsewhere. It is not too difficult to see what this means; it means that in 58 the church at Rome was still Jewish-Nazarene. Not until the great fire of Rome in 64, and the persecution of the Roman Church by Nero would the predominantly Jewish-Nazarene followers of Jesus be put to flight.

Peter was married, his wife accompanying him on some of his missionary journeyings. Catholic parlance has it that Peter's wife was actually his sister, but like their problem with James being Jesus' actual brother, it should be noted that in Greek the word for sister is *adelphē*, whereas the Greek word used in the New Testament is *gunē*, meaning "wife". Paul says: "Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas" (I Cor. 9:5) Even as the rest of the apostles? And Jesus' family heirs? *And* Peter? What now of his railing against marriage and the flesh and goodness knows what else? Could it be that the New Testament texts contain not two points of view, but three? That of the Jewish Nazarene, that of Paul, and that of the

Roman Church as it eventually came to be? For in the above statement Paul is certainly at variance with that church when it comes to "marriage"; and he is blatantly at odds with the church in as far as "spiritual gifts" were eventually outlawed by the Roman church as anarchic and undermining of the authority of the bishops. He is also at loggerheads with the Jewish-Nazarene church in Jerusalem, his seeming conformity with later Roman opinion only because he has been thoroughly edited and made to fit into their theological scheme - a scheme developed, ironically, almost wholly out of *his* theological writings. Sandwiched between two opposed theologies, what Paul *actually* believed about Jesus, his nature and his intentions would be systematically crushed out of existence to allow a hybrid form of Christianity to grow and develop backed by Rome's secular arm.

Surprising as it may seem, Peter's name does not appear on the earliest lists of bishops of Rome. According to Irenaeus, the first bishop of Rome was Linus, and he was appointed by Paul, whereas the bishop after Linus, Clement, is said to have been chosen by Peter. De Rosa's comment is simply to say that the mystery deepens. Eusebius, Constantine's friend and apologist, does not mention Peter; and that in spite of Jerome saying later that he did. In the seventeenth century King Charles II's chaplain, William Cave, corrected Jerome by saying that he had probably reported on a notion of his time quite without substance, "no such thing being found in the Greek copy of Eusebius". In line with modern scholarship, De Rosa notes that in those early days of the Church the Apostles did not belong to any one church, but to the Church as a whole, the fact of Apostleship precluding them from being bishop of one place. "Peter, too," he says, "whatever momentous decisions he made in Jerusalem, Antioch and elsewhere, remained an apostle of the entire community."¹⁵ Hence the reason why Paul, who really was in Rome, did not become its first bishop, but helped appoint someone else.

Basic to this question are the designated "missions" taken on by Peter and Paul. In his Galatian Epistle (2:7-8) Paul speaks of being entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, and of Peter's mission being that of the *gospel of the circumcision*. This is to say clearly that Peter's mission was to the Jews, and that Paul's was to non-Jews, to Gentiles. Boettner supplies the details here, and we learn that Peter's area of mission was to the Jewish exiles in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia - in other words Asia Minor. More importantly his journeyings also took him as far east as Babylon, and it is from Babylon that his first, and probably his second, epistle comes. Boettner points out that although there is no Scriptural evidence for Peter ever having been in Rome, there is certainly "a plain statement of Scripture that he did go east to Babylon."¹⁶

Catholic exegetes play the same game with the word "Babylon" as they play with James's relationship to Jesus, and with words like "wife" and "sister" in relation to Peter. In an introductory note to I Peter, the Catholic Confraternity edition tells us that "Babylon" is a "cryptic designation of the city of Rome." The reason for this curious rejection of what is actually written in I Peter is because in the Book of Revelation "Rome" is referred to as "Babylon". But as Boettner points out, the Book of Revelation is apocalyptic; it is written in figurative and symbolic language. Peter's first epistle, on the other hand, is a straightforward letter in a matter-of-fact style. So why pretend that Babylon means Rome?

The historical facts are that Jews had been living in Babylon since the time of the exile; Josephus confirms that great numbers of them had settled there by the time of Jesus. It was therefore just the kind of place Peter would have headed for. And it should be noted that in terms of New Testament chronology, Peter was part of the Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15, and *that* council had specifically to do with the presentation of the Gospel to the Jewish and Gentile communities. It is at this council, held in 54, that Peter and Paul are assigned their separate missions. Chronologically this alone shows that Peter was *not* in Rome at the time he was supposed to be, and as not long after this event Peter is confronted by Paul over his conformity to Judaistic rituals (Gal. 2:11-21), it is highly unlikely that he went against his assigned mission and ended up at the very heart of the Gentile world.

Boettner asks the appropriate question: "Would he [Peter] defy the decision reached by all the apostles and brethren from the various churches who met in the famous first Council in Jerusalem?"¹⁷ I believe Boettner to be correct in his assumption that Peter's missionary work would have taken him in the opposite direction. Three factors clearly emerge from this: (1) the Nazarene church at Jerusalem controlled by Jesus' brother James was still running the show; (2) Paul was already straining at the theological leash and threatening to break away from the Jerusalem church altogether; and (3) the Church in Rome was still under Nazarene control. Boettner later makes much the same point in relation to the Nazarenes. "It is well known that during the time of the apostles and for generations later the Eastern cities and the Eastern church had the greatest influence, and that the Roman church was comparatively insignificant."¹⁸ The Nazarene church of Rome was in the lion's den and not able to grow like the other churches. Long before the reformation of the Catholic Church Rome's claim to be the only true church had been firmly rejected by the Eastern churches. The first councils had been held in Eastern cities and were composed mostly of Eastern bishops, and the principle patriarchates had been eastern - namely, Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria. Only centuries later after the breakup of the Roman Empire would Rome gain the ascendancy.

The Cosmic War on Earth

Malachi Martin would have us believe that a cosmic war between God and Satan has been in process since the beginning of historical time. Not only are the Scriptures (and history) wrong and Catholic Tradition right about Peter being in Rome, but above and around and in this whole situation Satan-cum-the-Devil-cum-Lucifer is at work. Martin states this plainly:

Through the sacrifice, death and resurrection of Christ, and by the founding of the Roman Catholic Church, God had made it possible for each man and woman to make godly choices in life, and by those choices to attain Heaven after death. In that cosmic and constant war, Christ was the leader of God's campaign; and Christ's personal, visible representative among men was the Roman pope. Lucifer's aim in the war - the

aim of Satan as adversary - was to ensure that as many human beings as possible missed that eternal after-life goal.¹⁹

This is to say that the questioning of Peter's episcopacy in Rome is part and parcel of Satan's *raison d'être* to pin one's soul to his lapel - reject the pope - *any* pope - and you are in deep spiritual trouble. We are no longer dealing with tradition alongside history or Scripture, we are now dealing with a capital "T" truth that cannot be contradicted - the myth has gone manic. And if we do contradict it hell and damnation is the result; at least that is how it was prior to certain theological refinements. Christ is in heaven with God, and the pope in Rome has a divine mandate to do whatever comes into his head to safeguard the Roman Church which, it should not be forgotten, God had *personally* founded through Jesus. We are the "cherished objective" of God and the Devil, and it is in this light that we should comprehend the whole edifice of Church history as taught by the Catholic Church.

What we have to watch out for is the Devil's propaganda campaign. For just as God can communicate by immaterial, supernatural, and totally spiritual means through images and sense-data, through external events, words and actions, Lucifer/Satan can also communicate his desires at the sense-data level. This is to say that all he can offer us is, metaphorically speaking, the apple of temptation, the hard round of sense-data alone. For Lucifer is preternatural, not supernatural; he moves outside of the supernatural because that is God's exclusive domain. Ultimately it is our ability to make "choices" or suitable "acts of will" that determines our spiritual fate; and to be able to make such choices we should attempt to find out from which source the data is streaming.

Malachi Martin refers to the above view of reality as "authentic Christian teaching", and points back to Ignatius Loyola as the man who resuscitated this now ignored perception of reality. We are to realise that we have lost our way, that the cosmic war is still going on, and that the humanistic cry of the Renaissance heralded not light, but darkness.

References and Notes:

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- 8 Revelation 11: 15.
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