

## Summary

The historical overview included in this series of *Discovering the Bible* newsletters is only the tip of the iceberg. It has taken almost two months to sort through thousands of entries that are recorded in the Biblical Heritage Center MRI Databases, the internet and our library. My goal was to raise your awareness of our biblical heritages.

- (1) Follow the development of Christian institutions and beliefs.
- (2) Show how different Christian groups interacted with one another.
- (3) Identify the relationship of political and military power with religious authorities.
- (4) Point out interactions between Christians, Jews and Muslims.
- (5) Understand the impact the Protestant belief systems had on Western Christianity.
- (6) Understand the impact of American freedoms on the development of new Christian religions.
- (7) Highlight the deaths and human suffering caused by the decisions of religious authorities.

## Overview of Growth of Christian Groups & Introduction of New Beliefs

- (1) Yeshua Movement begins as an exclusively Jewish sect around 24 CE.
- (2) Conflicts were between Jewish members over whether Yeshua was the Mashiach.
- (3) Paul joins and introduces his teachings to Gentile audiences; allows them to join.
- (4) Gentile members unfamiliar with Jewish culture & beliefs Yeshua; begin to redefine message.
- (5) Yeshua Movement first named "Christianity" in Antioch years after Yeshua was executed.
- (6) Marcion separates Christianity from its Jewish God, Scriptures, beliefs and cultural roots.
- (7) Irenaeus determines there will only be four Gospels.
- (8) Roman Catholic Church formed when Emperor Constantine affiliates with Roman group.
- (9) Tensions increase between Eastern and Western Christian groups.
- (10) Augustine creates doctrine of Original Sin.
- (11) Church Councils create beliefs about God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, the Church, etc.
- (12) Feudalism introduced; begins to redistribute power & wealth.
- (13) In 831 Catholic concept of the mass introduced by a Benedictine monk named Radbertus.
- (14) Beginning in 12th century universities established by Church, kings and governments.
- (15) Protest against the abuse of power & accumulation of wealth by Church leaders.
- (16) 1376 Wycliffe "The Bible, rather than the Church, should be the only rule of faith."
- (17) Translations of the Bible began to be made in the native languages of the people.
- (18) Pope authorizes the Dominicans to begin holding inquisitions.
- (19) John of Wessel, professor at University of Erfurt -- "The elect are saved by grace alone."
- (20) Martin Luther created a new belief system in which individuals are the ultimate authority.
- (21) Luther's new belief system became very popular and spread quickly.
- (22) 16<sup>th</sup> century - beginning of scientific revolution.
- (23) New Protestant groups hold conflicting doctrines.
- (24) 1581 Congregationalists "Each church is independent and self-governing."
- (25) 1776 American becomes a nation - freedom creates an explosion of new forms of Christianity.
- (26) Christian groups produce many new translations of the Bible.
- (27) 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> centuries "Major revivals have over 80% of American population in attendance."
- (28) In 1970 there were 18,630 Christian denominations.
- (29) In 2000 there were 33,820 denominations (an increase of 15,190 in only 30 years).
- (30) Today there are over 500 different versions of the Bible in English.

## **Deaths, Suffering & Dislocations** (These are just a few to give you an idea of what has taken place.)

### **Christians:**

- 780 Christians execute 4,500 Saxons in one day.
- 1099 Christian Crusaders sacked and pillaged Jerusalem, killing 5,000 Jews.
- 1209 The pope ordered 20,000 Albigensian Christians massacred.
- 1211 The pope ordered 80 Waldensian Christians burned to death.
- 1212 Christian Crusade causes 20,000 Christian children to lose their lives or become slaves.
- 1317 Mongols enslave or kill 12,000 Nestorian Christians.
- 1400-1550 Roman Catholic Church burns at least 30,000 people to death for witchcraft.
- 1558 Queen of England has 300 Protestants burned.
- 1662 15,000 Quakers imprisoned and 500 would die there.
- 1685 58,000 Huguenots forced to convert to Catholicism.
- 1685 400,000 Huguenots fled from France to avoid Catholic persecutions.
- 1620 Bohemia forcibly made Roman Catholic by Austrian armies; 30,000 Protestants expelled.
- 1978 909 Christians lost their lives at Jonestown.

### **Muslims:**

- 996 Muslims destroy over 3,000 churches in Syria and Egypt
- 1301 Muslims destroy all churches in Egypt.
- 1499 Muslims in Spain forced to undergo Christian baptisms.
- 1526 Muslims slaughter 200,000 and enslave 100,000 Hungarian Protestants
- 1688 Muslims destroy 1,000 Mathura and 60,000 Hindu temples.
- 1688 Muslims construct 3,000 mosques on sites of temples they destroyed.

### **Jews:**

- 1096 1,200 Jews commit suicide to avoid forced conversion to Christianity.
- 1099 20,000 and 30,000 Jews were massacred or captured and sold as slaves in Italy by Crusaders.
- 1190 150 Jews killed by Englishmen who owe them money.
- 1191 80 Jews burned in France for trying to punish Frenchman who murdered a Jew.
- 1194 "All debts of slain Jews are to be taken into the kings hands."
- 1290 Jews driven from their homes in England.
- 1306 Jews driven from their homes in France.
- 1321 1,000,000 Jews murdered after being accused of causing bubonic plague.
- 1492 180,000 Jews expelled from Spain and 350,000 others forced to convert to Christianity.
- 1492 12,000 Jews burnt by order of Roman Catholic Church.
- 1497 200,000 Jews in Portugal forced to convert to Christianity or be deported.
- 1648 100,000 Jews murdered by Christians in Poland.

## **Brief Overview of Islam in America**

**1530:** More than 30% of the estimated 10 million African slaves that arrived in America were Muslims.

**1893:** The American Islamic Propaganda Movement is founded by Mohammed Alexander Russell, one of the earliest white American converts.

**1908:** Muslim immigrants from the Arab provinces arrive in North America.

**1915:** Albanian Muslims build a mosque in Maine; one of the first built by Muslims in United States.

**1952:** Muslims in the Armed Services sue the Federal Government to be allowed to identify themselves as Muslims. Until then Islam was not recognized as a legitimate religion.

**Nov. 5, 2000:** For the first time in US history Muslims voted en bloc in the general elections that helped George Bush to secure victory. A study, released by the American Muslim Alliance on the 2000 election, showed that 72 percent of Muslims voted for Bush, 8 percent for Democrat Al Gore and 19 percent for Ralph Nader, a Lebanese-American. According to former Congressman Paul Findley about 3.2 million Muslims voted in November 2000 election

**Sept. 11, 2001** ó Muslim terrorist attack USA. 2,752 (343 firefighters and 60 police officers from New York City and the Port Authority) died in the attacks on the World Trade Center. 184 people died in the attacks on the Pentagon. 44 died in the crash of United Flight 93.

**October 7, 2001** ó US begins bombings in Afghanistan. Since the war began 1,140 US soldiers have been killed and 3,420 wounded. The estimated total number of deaths to soldiers and civilians is 19,629 with another 48,644 wounded. The total cost of this war to the US is \$352,398,000,000 and rising.

**March 20, 2003** ó US invades Iraq. Since the war began 4,414 US soldiers have been killed and another 31,882 wounded. The estimated total number of deaths to soldiers and civilians is 900,338 with another 1,690,903 wounded. The total cost of this war to the US is \$736,669,450,000 and rising.

### **Total Members of Christianity, Judaism and Islam:**

**2000:** Religious Tolerance Report ó Total Christians in world **2,039,000,000** (32% and dropping); Total Muslims in world **1,570,000,000** (22% and growing); Total Hindus in world 950,000,000 (13% and stable); Total population unaffiliated with any religion in the world 775,000,000 (12% and dropping); and Total Jews in world 14,500,000 (under 1% and stable).

**2007:** Pew survey -- 78.4% of Americans are Christians; 1.7% are Jews; and, 0.6% are Muslims.

### **Conclusion**

You may be sure that the lives of people living today and those of our children and grandchildren will be affected by actions of people on the extreme fringes of Christianity and Islam. Over half of the world's total population is Christians and Muslims. When we understand the historical pattern of conflicts between Christians and Muslims the conclusion has to be that the potential for future is great. When this is combined with the anti-American hatred propagated by certain Islamic leaders the odds of future conflicts being deadly and taking place on American soil are very high. The solution that has the greatest chance of reversing this trend is raising the awareness of the histories of the deadly beliefs of all parties involved and educating all members in general. The mentality of just shouting that "our beliefs are from God and yours are from Satan" only produces more violence, suffering and deaths.

BHC's goal is to provide the public with this basic information about the origins and development of the belief systems of Christians, Jews and Muslims. It is also to make the public aware of the interactions between them for the past 2,000 years. The history of religions make it very clear that when religious leaders have the ability to use political and military power to force the public to comply with their agendas the outcomes are always deadly. The founding fathers of America were well aware of potential suffering of this deadly combination and created a government that kept the two separated. The memories of the trials for blasphemy and the inquisitions were clearly on their minds. The last thing they wanted was for American military and police powers to be used to punish or execute unbelievers and heretics.

The path to peace begins with each of us becoming aware of the historical facts about the events that produced our belief systems. I was raised in a religious environment that made it appear that our Christian beliefs came directly from Jesus. As you have been made aware of in this series of newsletters, each of those beliefs came into being centuries after Jesus was crucifixion. They became the official truths of the Church when a council of Church leaders voted on them. I seriously doubt that many of the preachers who are yelling at others and saying their truths came directly from God are aware of this. I really don't think we can expect people from other religions to examine their beliefs, if we don't examine ours first.

In my opinion, understanding our biblical heritages not only provides the greatest potential for creating peace and safety in the future, it is also a link to a repository of very valuable ancient wisdom. Human beings are "belief entities." We are believers by nature and our beliefs combine with facts to create our realities – the way we view and make sense of the world. When we have no facts to interpret events, we turn to our beliefs to fill in the gaps. Our beliefs are the source of our morals and values. The ancient wisdom preserved by our biblical heritages is a tremendous source for universal values that benefit all members of mankind, not just the members of our tribe or religion.

Religion is the source of power and wealth for many people and institutions, as well as the source of faith that many have been programmed to blindly defend. Anything that is viewed as a threat will be vigorously attacked, so don't mistakenly assume that you will be welcomed with open arms when you offer to provide factual information. This is the way that change comes, however. The fact that we are now living in the information age has created an environment when many more people value accurate information and are willing to modify their belief systems to accomplish that goal.

On September 11, 2001 America changed when the belief system of a handful of Muslim came to American soil and murdered Americans. **Mutually exclusive belief systems are an important component of today's wars and will continue to be until people begin to view them in light of their history and facts. Knowledge is the most powerful weapon that can ultimately be used against those who may be plotting the next attack as you read this newsletter.** Pay close attention to the words of Faisal Shahzad, the man tried but failed to set off a bomb in Times Square:

" . . . brace yourself, the war with Muslims has just begun. . . . Muslims have been defending their people and their lands. If that makes us terrorists, then we will terrorize you." U.S. District Judge Miriam Cedarbaum asked him about swearing to defend Americans when he became a naturalized citizen. "I swore but I didn't mean it," he said and pointed to the ceiling and said "Allah Akhbar, or Allah is great . . . My sentence reflects life in this world, not life in the hereafter," he said. "I'm happy with the deal that God has given me. **BHC**



## Thank you for reading this newsletter.

Matters of belief & faith are important factors in the quality of life we lead, because they affect the religious, political and social environments in which we live. They influence how we relate to other people by creating the moral and value systems we hold. The Bible and the heritages linked to it are held by over 2,000,000,000 people today. It is extremely important that they have factual information about the critical components of the Belief Systems that influence many of their daily decisions and create the realities through which they view life.

One of our most important missions is to raise the awareness of the power biblical heritages play in Belief Systems by providing factual information so people are able to accurately understand the origins and historical development of the biblical heritages over the centuries. Incorrect information leads to bad and harmful decisions.

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