

# **New Religious Movements: Challenges to Christians World Wide**

By

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## **Introduction:**

The Church started historically on the day of Pentecost<sup>1</sup> and has recorded phenomenal strides since inception. The fact however remains that Christianity is an offshoot of Judaism. At that early stage Christianity could be described in comparison to Judaism and the sects that existed before it to be 'New Religious Movement'. Progressively, 'New Religious Movements' usually start as a group preaching or teaching 'heresy' thus causing doctrinal conflict. The way the Church handles the situation goes a long way to determine whether the group will snowball into a sect within the Church or will go all out to start their own "New Religious Movements'. So, as it was before Christianity so it is now and we can say without any fear of contradiction that 'New Religious Movements' shall never cease to emerge as long as man continues to exist. So the task we set to achieve in this paper is to take an historical journey to see how the Church had dealt with the 'New Religious Movements' that sprang up both within and without her fold. How the Church handled each of the cases we hope will be instructive for the Church worldwide today as to how to deal with 'New Religious Movements' that will yet emerge. We shall limit the 'New Religious Movement' in the study to those that are offshoot of Christianity.

We shall also attempt to answer the following questions: What makes people join the NRMs? What are the legitimate needs of people which these movements promise to answer and which the Church should be meeting? Are there other causes of the rise and spread of these movements? How does God want the Church today to act/react to the New Religious Movements?

**Brief Definition of terms:**

**Cult:** A great devotion to a person, idea, objects, movement, or work (as a film or book); especially: such devotion regarded as a literary or intellectual fad, a usually small group of people characterized by such devotion<sup>2</sup>. A cult of Christianity is a group of people, which claiming to be Christian, embraces a particular doctrine system taught by an individual leader, group of leaders, or organization, which (system) denies (either explicitly or implicitly) one or more of the central doctrines of the Christian Faith as taught in the sixty-six books of the Bible.

**Heresy:** St. Thomas (II-II:11:1) defines heresy: "a species of infidelity in men who, having professed the faith of Christ, corrupt its dogmas". "The right Christian faith consists in giving one's voluntary assent to Christ in all that truly belongs to His teaching. There are, therefore, two ways of deviating from Christianity: the one by refusing to believe in Christ Himself, which is the way of infidelity, common to Pagans and Jews; the other by restricting belief to certain points of Christ's doctrine selected and fashioned at pleasure, which is the way of heretics. The subject-matter of both faith and heresy is, therefore, the deposit of the faith, that is, the sum total of truths revealed in Scripture and Tradition as proposed to our belief by the Church. The believer accepts the whole deposit as proposed by the Church; the heretic accepts only such parts of it as commend themselves to his own approval. The heretical tenets may be ignorance of the true creed, erroneous judgment, imperfect apprehension and comprehension of dogmas: in none of these does the will play an appreciable part, wherefore one of the necessary conditions of sinfulness--free choice--is wanting and such heresy is merely *objective*,

or *material*. On the other hand the will may freely incline the intellect to adhere to tenets declared false by the Divine teaching authority of the Church. The impelling motives are many: intellectual pride or exaggerated reliance on one's own insight; the illusions of religious zeal; the allurements of political or ecclesiastical power; the ties of material interests and personal status; and perhaps others more dishonorable. Heresy thus willed is imputable to the subject and carries with it a varying degree of guilt; it is called *formal*, because to the material error it adds the informative element of "freely willed"<sup>3</sup>.

**New Religious Movements:** These religions are, by definition, "new"; they offer innovative religious responses to the conditions of the modern world, despite the fact that most NRMs represent themselves as rooted in ancient traditions. NRMs are also usually regarded as "countercultural"; that is, they are perceived (by others and by themselves) to be alternatives to the mainstream religions of Western society, especially Christianity in its normative forms. These movements are often highly eclectic, pluralistic, and syncretistic; they freely combine doctrines and practices from diverse sources within their belief systems. The new movement is usually founded by a charismatic and sometimes highly authoritarian leader who is thought to have extraordinary powers or insights. Many NRMs are tightly organized. In light of their often self-proclaimed "alternative" or "outsider" status, these groups often make great demands on the loyalty and commitment of their followers and sometimes establish themselves as substitutes for the family and other conventional social groupings. NRMs have arisen to address specific needs that many people cannot satisfy through more traditional religious organizations

or through modern secularism. They are also products of and responses to modernity, pluralism, and the scientific worldview<sup>4</sup>.

### **The Church:**

The word Church is coined from a Greek word *EKKLESIA* literally translated to mean 'the called out ones', that is the gathering of the people that are called out. Another definition: Church is a group of people called out of the world for the glory of God under the headship Jesus Christ to save the whole world through making and maturing disciples. The Church can also be described as an assembly of people that have been called out from the world and separated unto God for a divine purpose. The Church is a new dispensation of Grace where people of different nationalities, tribes, ethnicities that believe in Jesus Christ and his work of salvation are co-opted as joint-heirs with Christ. Lastly, the Church can be viewed as the body of Christ. Every believer is like a unit cell of the body. It is the unit cells that fused together to form the organs and parts of the body of Christ<sup>5</sup>. (1 Corinthians 12: 12 – 27).

New Religious Movements in this essay therefore will refer to people who alone or as a group have other views other than the official views of the Church, consequent upon their holding such views were pushed out or forced to retreat from the Church. By this definition groups referred to as cults, sects, Protestants, denominations, orthodox, heretics among others fall into the category of New Religious Movements. They are New Religious Movements as long as they evolved from an existing order. So in a sense Christianity is a New Religious Movement where Judaism is concerned because Christianity evolved from Judaism.

## **How the Church Reacted to New Religious Movement in the Past<sup>6</sup>**

Let us take a trip down memory lane and see how the Church dealt with members who had other views or teachings different to that taught and held to be true by the Church and its leadership. The Church identifies these groups using various nomenclatures: heretics, sects, denominations, cults etc.

### **The Circumcisers (1st Century)**

Many of the early Christians were Jews, who brought to the Christian faith many of their former practices. They recognized in Jesus the Messiah predicted by the prophets and the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Because circumcision had been required in the Old Testament for membership in God's covenant, many thought it would also be required for membership in the New Covenant that Christ had come to inaugurate. They believed one must be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law to come to Christ. In other words, one had to become a Jew to become a Christian. The Circumcision heresy may be summed up in the words of Acts 15:1: 'But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'

Note. The early church met at the Jerusalem and trashed out the issue to the pleasure of all the parties concerned. The Church did not suspend, ban nor expel those who had other views as recorded in Act of the Apostles.

*Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time*

*hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation<sup>7</sup>*

God made it clear to the leadership of the Church at this time in Acts 10 that Gentiles are acceptable to God and may be baptized and become Christians *without* circumcision. The same teaching was vigorously defended by Paul in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians—to areas where the Circumcision heresy had spread. Of particular interest is verse 33. *‘And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles’.*

### **Gnosticism (1st and 2nd Centuries)**

"Matter is evil!" was the cry of the Gnostics. This idea was borrowed from certain Greek philosophers. It stood against Catholic teaching, not only because it contradicts Genesis 1:31 ("And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good") and other scriptures, but because it denies the Incarnation. If matter is evil, then Jesus Christ could not be true God and true man, for Christ is in no way evil. Thus many Gnostics denied the Incarnation,

claiming that Christ only *appeared* to be a man, but that his humanity was an illusion. Some Gnostics, recognizing that the Old Testament taught that God created matter, claimed that the God of the Jews was an evil deity who was distinct from the New Testament God of Jesus Christ. They also proposed belief in many divine beings, known as "aeons," who mediated between man and the ultimate, unreachable God. The lowest of these aeons, the one who had contact with men, was supposed to be Jesus Christ.

What did the Church do to the Gnostics? They were thrown out without resolving the issue of the personhood of Jesus which was the matter at stake here. Though the Church subsequently wrote lots of apologetics to explain their position on the issues raised, the fact remains that the church did not tolerate nor relate well with people with 'other views', the result was that the church lost them forever.

### **Montanism (Late 2nd Century)**

Montanus began his career innocently enough through preaching a return to penance and fervor. His movement also emphasized the continuance of miraculous gifts, such as speaking in tongues and prophecy. However, he also claimed that his teachings were above those of the Church, and soon he began to teach Christ's imminent return in his home town in Phrygia. There were also statements that Montanus himself either was, or at least specially spoke for; the Paraclete that Jesus had promised would come (in reality, the Holy Spirit).

Just as the Church reacted to Gnostics they did to Montanists. They were thrown out of the Church and were denied communion/fellowship with brethren.

### **Sabellianism (Early 3rd Century)**

The Sabellianists taught that Jesus Christ and God the Father were not distinct persons, but two. Aspects or offices of one person. According to them, the three persons of the Trinity exist only in God's relation to man, not in objective reality.

### **Arianism (4th Century)**

Arius taught that Christ was a creature made by God. By disguising his heresy using orthodox or near-orthodox terminology, he was able to sow great confusion in the Church. He was able to muster the support of many bishops, while others excommunicated him.

Arianism was solemnly condemned in 325 at the First Council of Nicaea, which defined the divinity of Christ, and in 381 at the First Council of Constantinople, which defined the divinity of the Holy Spirit. These two councils gave us the Nicene creed, which Catholics recite at Mass every Sunday.

Again Arius and his followers were excommunicated from the Church meaning the Church severed all contact with this group. Arius was therefore left with no other option but to continue to teach his followers what he considered the 'pure message from God'. The Church

though came up with the Nicene Creed, did little next to nothing to maintain unbroken fellowship.

### **Pelagianism (5th Century)**

Pelagius denied that we inherit original sin from Adam's sin in the Garden and claimed that we become sinful only through the bad example of the sinful community into which we are born. Conversely, he denied that we inherit righteousness as a result of Christ's death on the cross and said that we become personally righteous by instruction and imitation in the Christian community, following the example of Christ. Pelagius stated that man is born morally neutral and can achieve heaven under his own powers. According to him, God's grace is not truly necessary, but merely makes easier an otherwise difficult task.

### **Semi-Pelagianism (5th Century)**

After Augustine refuted the teachings of Pelagius, some tried a modified version of his system. This, too, ended in heresy by claiming that humans can reach out to God under their own power, without God's grace; that once a person has entered a state of grace, one can retain it through one's efforts, without further grace from God; and that natural human effort alone can give one some claim to receiving grace, though not strictly merit it.

### **Nestorianism (5th Century)**

This heresy about the person of Christ was initiated by Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, who denied Mary the title of *Theotokos* (Greek: "God-bearer" or, less literally, "Mother of God"). Nestorius claimed that she only bore Christ's human nature in her womb, and proposed the alternative title *Christotokos* ("Christ-bearer" or "Mother of Christ").

Orthodox Catholic theologians recognized that Nestorius's theory would fracture Christ into two separate persons (one human and one divine, joined in a sort of loose unity), only one of whom was in her womb. The Church reacted in 431 with the Council of Ephesus, defining that Mary can be properly referred to as the Mother of God, not in the sense that she is older than God or the source of God, but in the sense that the person she carried in her womb was, in fact, God incarnate ("in the flesh").

There is some doubt whether Nestorius himself held the heresy his statements imply, and in this century, the Assyrian Church of the East, historically regarded as a Nestorian church, has signed a fully orthodox joint declaration on Christology with the Catholic Church and rejects Nestorianism. It is now in the process of coming into full ecclesial communion with the Catholic Church.

### **Monophysitism (5th Century)**

Monophysitism originated as a reaction to Nestorianism. The Monophysites (led by a man named Eutyches) were horrified by Nestorius's implication that Christ was two people with two different natures (human and divine). They went to the other extreme, claiming that Christ was

one person with only one nature (a fusion of human and divine elements). They are thus known as Monophysites because of their claim that Christ had only one nature (Greek: *mono* = one; *physis* = nature).

Orthodox Catholic theologians recognized that Monophysitism was as bad as Nestorianism because it denied Christ's full humanity and full divinity. If Christ did not have a fully human nature, then he would not be fully human, and if he did not have a fully divine nature then he was not fully divine.

### **Iconoclasm (7th and 8th Centuries)**

This heresy arose when a group of people known as iconoclasts (literally, "icon smashers") appeared, who claimed that it was sinful to make pictures and statues of Christ and the saints, despite the fact that in the Bible, God had commanded the making of religious statues (Ex. 25:18–20; 1 Chr. 28:18–19), including symbolic representations of Christ (cf. Num. 21:8–9 with John 3:14).

### **The Orthodox Church:**

When Constantine became the emperor of the Roman Empire in 312AD and transferred the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium (Constantinople), this political move eventually led to the break of the Church into two distinct groups, i. e. Catholic and Orthodox. At the heart of the break were the irreconcilable theological differences. The patriarch Photius who presided over Constantinople (858 -886) listed some teachings of which he considered Rome to have

gone astray from the orthodoxy. Particularly he pointed: Some irregularities in the observance of the lent, compulsory celibacy for the clergy, denying the priests the power to administer confirmation and false teaching about the Holy Spirit<sup>8</sup>. Rome also had these against the Church at Constantinople: Allowing the clergy to marry, baptizing by immersion, celebrating the Lords Supper with leavened bread and observing different rules of fasting that deviated from the apostolic tradition<sup>9</sup>.

The question of authority between the Church in Rome (West) and the Church in Constantinople (East), raged for some time and finally broke the camel's back. Cardinal Humbert in annoyance dropped a letter of ex-communication on the altar of St. Sophia in Constantinople for Michael Cerularius and all his associates. Michael Cerularius the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1054 also ex-communicated Cardinal Humbert<sup>10</sup>. So, cultural differences, political circumstances, difference in details of liturgy and discipline, clerical celibacy all joined hand to seal the division of the Church.

#### **The Albigensians and the Waldesians:**

Started in France in Albi the group is also known as Cathari. Just like the Gnostics and Montanists, they claim that matter is irreconcilable with the spirit. The group renounced the material world and subjected their bodies to constant denial of pleasure. The Church banned the Albigians.

Peter Waldo also from France founded the Waldenses/ Waldensians. They attack some of the false teachings in their age and the excesses of the Church<sup>11</sup>. Sensing the danger the movement would cause the Church, the Church banned it in the council of Valencis (1229) the Church

forbade the laity to read the Bible in whatever translation. The Church also adopted the persecution method in dealing with the activities of the Waldesians. Many of them were tortured deformed and killed. Other members that survived the persecution escaped to the mountains and caves for their dear lives<sup>12</sup>.

### **Catharism (11th Century)**

Catharism was a complicated mix of non-Christian religions reworked with Christian terminology. The Cathars had many different sects; they had in common a teaching that the world was created by an evil deity (so matter was evil) and we must worship the good deity instead.

The Albigensians formed one of the largest Cathar sects. They taught that the spirit was created by God, and was good, while the body was created by an evil god, and the spirit must be freed from the body. Having children was one of the greatest evils, since it entailed imprisoning another "spirit" in flesh. Logically, marriage was forbidden, though fornication was permitted. Tremendous fasts and severe mortifications of all kinds were practiced, and their leaders went about in voluntary poverty.

### **Protestantism (16th Century)**

Protestant groups display a wide variety of different doctrines. However, virtually all claim to believe in the teachings of *sola scriptura* ("by Scripture alone"—the idea that we must use only

the Bible when forming our theology) and *sola fide* ("by faith alone"— the idea that we are justified by faith only)<sup>13</sup>.

The great diversity of Protestant doctrines stems from the doctrine of private judgment, which denies the infallible authority of the Church and claims that each individual is to interpret Scripture for himself.

**John Wyclife:** Wrote a pamphlet that made him popular in 1366. He insisted that the Pope in Rome had no right to demand from the King of England (Edward 111), a collection of money realized from the Church of England to be sent to Rome. Wyclife was also not comfortable with the monk's attitude to life and their approach to religion. He denounced some Church practices like sales of Indulgences, masses for the dead and worldliness of the clergy<sup>14</sup> in his writings. He also translated the Bible into English.

How did the Church react to John Wycliffe? The Pope issued five Bulls in which John Wycliffe was condemned. The Archbishop of Canterbury called a council (the earthquake) in Britain. Wycliffe's teachings were condemned and directed to appear before the Pope.

**John Huss/The Crusaders/Martin Luther's reformation/African Independent Churches and others.**

History is awash with many of such gory tales of cruelty melted out by the Church to individuals and groups who dared the Church. The Crusaders between 1095 and 1291 fought many battles

in the name of God and in defense of the Church. Many lost their lives. This in part has resulted in resentments for the Church and has defined the way the 'others' also perceive the Church in negative lights. The story changed a little in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century probably because of the growing human right campaigns<sup>15</sup>.

### **Some Reasons for the Continuous Spread of New Religious Movements**

**Existence of Spiritual Needs:** The New Religious Movements indicate that there are spiritual needs which have not been identified, or which the Church and other religious institutions have either not perceived or not succeeded in meeting.

**Cultural Identity Search:** The New Religious Movements can arise or attract because people are searching for meaning when they are feeling lost in a period of cultural change.

**Filling a Void:** Many Christians join the sects or New Religious Movements because they feel that in them there is an answer to their thirst for Scripture reading, singing, dancing, emotional satisfaction, and concrete and clear answers.

**Seeking Answers to Vital Questions:** There are people, for example in Africa, who seek in religion an answer to, and a protection against, witchcraft, failure, suffering, sickness, and death. The New Religious Movements seem to them to confront these existential problems openly and to promise instant remedies, especially physical and psychological healing.

### **Some reflections:**

From the history of the Church enumerated so far, only the Church in Act of the Apostles tackled the issues raised by the Judaizers concerning the issue of circumcision, without losing

the Church members who had other views. The early Church in Acts of the Apostles did not excommunicate members rather they called a meeting well attended by both parties. All parties had the time to state their case. The elders at the Jerusalem Council also listened to both parties before coming up with their decision as announced by James. The decision reflected the teachings of Jesus Christ in John Chapter 17: Specifically Jesus said:

*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 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<sup>16</sup>*

They kept the decision simple and made sure the decision was circulated in all the Churches of the time. Here are the decisions of the council:

*For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well<sup>17</sup>*

The Church is expected to be the stream from which love springs from, but the actions of the Church towards members with 'new' or 'strange' doctrines have shown the other side of the Church.

### **Challenges for the Church Worldwide:**

**Dialogue:** lack of genuine dialogue in the Churches is a major Challenge the Church must take up and face squarely. From the highlighted history of the Church here presented the Church does not give room for dialogue. Only the first century Church did. The Church should always

be ready to study and identify elements or tendencies that are in themselves good or noble in the views of others whenever the need to dialogue comes up and where some collaboration is possible. Issues like homosexuality, same sex marriage, Church and politics calls for dialogue and understanding within the Church.

**Hatred for the 'others' must stop:** The share brute of force and hatred with which the Church faced the New Religious Movements that emerged especially during the reformation that took place within the Church in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, gives a call for concern. The Church ordered the bone of John Wycliffe to be exhumed and not to be reburied as a punishment for his heresy. John Huss suffered excommunication, arrested and detained, removed as priest finally he was burnt alive with his books at the stake. Today, due to human rights activities and other international pressures and the doctrine of the separation of the Church from the State, the Church has adjusted significantly its tactics in dealing with New Religious Movements. Now the Church has adopted the 'cold-war' method; the Churches do everything possible to avoid contacts with the New Religious Movements. Jesus preached love, lived among the 'others' and even said 'love your enemies' so where did the Church pick their hatred for the 'others' from?

**The Church is to serve as a new dispensation of Grace:** The mandate God gave the Church is that of grace (unmerited favor), so the Church most of all should be where people of different nationalities, tribes, ethnicities that believe in Jesus Christ and his work of salvation are co-opted as joint-heirs with Christ. Not an organization that excommunicates.

**Doctrinal Orientation /Adequate Bible Initiation:** The Church needs to work on the systematic teaching of their doctrines to their members. Most members of the Church are not grounded in

the study and in the knowledge of the Bible. In spite of the availability of the Bible in almost all the major languages of the world it is amazing the low level of Biblical doctrines Church members relate with today. Have baked Church members will give birth to more New Religious Movements.

**Discipleship should be re-examined and given the rightful place it deserves in the Church:**

Jesus said in Matthew 28:20 “teaching them to obey everything...” in other words – training. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:25 that Olympic athletes go in to “strict training” to get a fading crown but we go into strict training to get a crown that will last forever. Discipleship could be defined as “A defined training process that continues until the disciple’s life is brought into conformity with Christ’s teachings”. The body of Christ, the Church, should create a clear, systematic, repeatable, comprehensive discipleship training process for those who have died to themselves and been resurrected with Christ.

If the aim of the Church is to produce men, who want to be like Jesus Christ, then the Church should stop emphasizing denominationalism and doctrinal differences after all John 3:15 says: ‘That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life’. The only condition Jesus laid down is simply to believe. Every other doctrine we attach to salvation or acceptance into the Church is manmade doctrines. The word ‘whosoever’; also suggests that the Church should be open to all who are willing to come.

**Prayer and Devotional Life**<sup>18</sup>: Closely related to this is the challenge of the growing secularization process that is making the Church grow cold. The Church is gradually becoming

worldly there by losing its 'salt' and 'light' position. It is no longer fashionable to be addressed as a Christian and core traditional Christian values are gradually fading out. Sexual immorality, abortion, lying, cheating, oppression, and a host of other vices are longer ethical issues of great concern for the Church. Attendance at prayer meetings from my personal observation is usually between 15 – 20 percent of the registered Church members. This shows that the prayer life of most Church members is nothing to write home about. How does the Church hope to win its battles with the cold attitude the Church generally have towards prayers? Spiritual problems deserve spiritual solutions.

**Living Communities:** The Church should form a dynamic community and meet the needs of members both spiritually and physically. Research has shown that dissatisfied Church member is most likely to move out of the Church either to start a new movement or join a new order just to satisfy his/her spiritual needs. The New Religious Movements often attract Christians because they offer them warm community life. Deliberate effort should be made to seek ways to help each individual to know that he/she is appreciated, loved, and given a role to play. The Church should be seen and personally experienced as a community of love and service. The world is dynamic in that it keeps changing, so the Church must also evolving a living community that will address the changing situations the Church may find itself.

**Conclusions:**

*"I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ. The materialism of affluent Christian countries appears to contradict the claims of Jesus Christ that says it's not possible to worship both Mammon and God at the same time." – Gandhi*

The main challenge for the Church as it faces New Religious Movements is that of LOVE. If the Church deal with others in love, both the inter and intra Church relationships will improve. The aim of historical study is to avail us the opportunity to learn from the past so that we can prepare better for the future. How much the Church has learnt from the past will determine what the future holds for the Church. 'There are many in the Church as well as out of it that needs to learn that Christianity is neither a creed nor a ceremonial, but a life vitally connected with a loving Christ'. –Strong. However, our actions MUST match our words. Atrocities perpetrated 'in the name of Christ' in time past should make the Church ask for forgiveness first from God and against those who were the direct victims, the reason Christians and indeed the Church are detested is because of this lack of genuine love and the arrogance that goes with it. Let the Church in warm compassion radiate the pure light of God's infinite love back to the world. Luke 6: 27 – 31 says:

*But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.*

Let us close with the words of Wayne Jackson: These are trying times for the body of Christ. But it is not a time for despair. Instead, courageous men and women must keep the ship of Zion on a straight (and strait) course within the boundaries of divine truth. Truth will prevail in spite of the winds of change—and irrelevant statistics<sup>19</sup>.

## End Notes.

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<sup>1</sup> Act of the Apostles 2: 1ff

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster dictionary: [www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?cult](http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?cult)

<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm, Joseph. "Heresy." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 7. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. 8 Sept. 2012 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07256b.htm>>. Retrieved 26/08/2012

<sup>4</sup> [www.britannical.com/EBchecked/topic/10073307/new-religious-movement-NRM#md-slide](http://www.britannical.com/EBchecked/topic/10073307/new-religious-movement-NRM#md-slide)  
Retrieved 24/08/2012

<sup>5</sup> Dipo Kolade, **Church Restoration** Akure: Bosem Publishers Nig. Ltd., 2010 pp 3 – 4.

<sup>6</sup> Most materials from this section is from Robert H. Brom, *Bishop of San Diego, August 10, 2004*  
*From CATHOLIC ANSWERS web site Accessed 05/09/2012*

<sup>7</sup> Act of the Apostles 15. 19 – 31.

<sup>8</sup> Ernest O Anyacho et. al **History of Christianity: Reformation, Christianity in West Africa and Ecumenism** Abuja: Hil – Alex Ventures, 2003 p 3. Quoting from Carmody, D. L. & Carmody, J, T. *Waysto the Centre: An Introduction to World Religions* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1984. P. 275.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 6

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Robert H. Brom, *Bishop of San Diego, August 10, 2004 From CATHOLIC ANSWERS web site Retrieved 05/09/2012*

<sup>14</sup> Ernest O Anyacho et. al ***History of Christianity: Reformation, Christianity in West Africa and Ecumenism*** op.cite p. 7

<sup>15</sup> There are hundreds of movements we did not mention here, and it is not my intention to summarize them all, or to level any form of criticism at one of them specifically.

<sup>16</sup> John 17: 20 – 21.

<sup>17</sup> Acts of the Apostles 15: 28 – 29.

<sup>18</sup> Cardinal Arinze ‘The Challenge Of New Religious Movements’ at the Cardinals Meeting, April 5, 1991 in an address to the April 4-7 consistory at the Vatican. The Catholic Resource Network Trinity Communications. A translation by L'Osservatore Romano from Italian to English.

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<sup>19</sup> Wayne Jackson The “Emerging Church”—The New Face of Heresy Colson, Charles and Anne Morse. 2009. Doctrine Bears Repeating.

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