

The Revisionists

BY JEFF REICH

When I was a kid, I hated history. When I became an Adventist Christian at about 18 years of age, I was told, “You need to read the book, *The Great Controversy*.” I tried and tried, but about in the middle of the chapter on the French Revolution I would get bored and toss the book aside. Then something significant happened — I was run over by a farm truck!

THE
PAST

While my leg was in a cast, I sat around the house with nothing to do. One day I picked up an old book that came from my wife's parents' house. It was entitled *Cross and Crown* by James D. McCabe, published in 1874. It covered the history of the Protestant Reformation, John Wycliffe's followers called the "Lollards," the French Huguenots, and the Waldenses of Northern Italy. Getting out old maps, I followed the locations of each group as I read page after page.

As a result, I was hooked on history. Reading *The Great Controversy* was now easy. I read everything I could get my hands on: J. A. Wylie's *History of Protestantism*, J. H. Merle D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation*, and many other historical works.

I remember being told that, "A historian's work is only as good as those they copied from." There is some truth to that. History is never 100% accurate on every detail, and the most accurate comes from those writers who were contemporaries of the times they were writing about — one reason I like reading really old history books.

THE REVISIONISTS

Revisionists are those who rewrite history. Sometimes they correct historical errors as new light comes into play through archaeology or the finding of old scrolls or historical writings.

But more often, revisionists act alone, having an agenda. They hope, in reality, to reshape the present and the future by their writings. Many universities have liberal professors bent on rewriting what happened in American and religious history. Sometimes they have a good point, but that point is so often exaggerated and carries such an overwhelming agenda that it escapes reality.

Some examples are ideas such as the white Europeans really being terrorists who came and stole the Indians' land; others reason that Europeans came to

America to escape overpopulation. Some make no mention of the repression of the monarchies by a state-controlled church. The truth is, the "pilgrims" were seeking a place of "freedom" from tyranny, both of church and state. This was one of the main reasons the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Right were written!

It is not the focus of this article to deal with modern liberal revisionists who are attempting to undermine American history. That could be a whole article by itself. I would like to instead address "massive" revisionist attempts that have already reshaped the present. And this has been done by religious entities themselves.

ISLAMIC REVISION

For centuries there's been an attempt to try to erase certain historical facts from the world's view and to even rewrite history. I am sure you have seen on the news how the terrorist group ISIS has destroyed well-preserved archaeological sites and artifacts as found in Palmyra, Syria.

Many people do not know that in February of 2015, ISIS ransacked the Mosul, Iraq, central library and burned 100,000 books and manuscripts. This is part of ISIS' cultural cleansing — historical purification, so to speak, with an attempt to rewrite history by destroying the records of the past.

But this is not the first time a mass eradication of historical and cultural knowledge has been perpetrated by Islam. The Library of Ctesiphon in ancient Persia was destroyed by Arab invaders in 651 A.D., the Library of al-Hakam II had all books consisting of "ancient science" destroyed in a surge of ultra-orthodoxy in 976 A.D.¹, and in the Library of Rayy, also in Persia, all books deemed as heretical were burned in 1029 A.D.² So this is nothing new.

In the Islamic conquest of Egypt in A.D. 642, the massive Library of Alexandria was destroyed. To this day there's been a debate on whether the order came from

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ISIS destroys a well-preserved archaeological site in Palmyra, Syria.

Kaliph Omar or the second Khalifa of Islam. And of course, Islamic revisionists try to say that they're not responsible for the destruction of this library. In these attempts, Islam is simply trying to cleanse the world of any history, theology, or ideology that goes against who they are and what they believe. This is the heart of what revisionists do.

CATHOLIC REVISION

By far the most methodical and comprehensive revisionist has been the Catholic Church. Of course this is a sensitive subject for some, maybe due to their Catholic background. Is there proof that this happened? And if so, why?

I have a number a very close friends who are Jewish. There is even a possibility that my grandfather was a German Jew. But for my friends, especially the older ones, the subject of the Holocaust is a sensitive one. Many Jews lost family members during this terrible event.

Yet there are people — "revisionists" — who try to say that the Holocaust never happened! I have been to Auschwitz.



Upper: Nazi Germany burning books viewed as being subversive or as representing ideologies opposed to Nazism.

Lower: Thousands were burned at the stake for being heretics—holding to views deemed not in harmony with the Catholic Church

My dad was in Germany at the close of World War II. There is no doubt this event happened.

Approximately 10-11 million people were killed, including approximately one million Jewish children.³ But before Nazi Germany, there was the Holy Roman Empire, which gave way to the Roman Catholic Church. Jews, Muslims, Protestants and heretics were all equally eradicated or expelled during the Inquisition.

So when we deal with “why” Catholicism would want to rewrite history, it is in part due to the “Inquisition,” and in part to try to preserve what is called Apostolic Succession — the legacy of being the “one and only true church” handed down directly from the apostles themselves. They say that the Apostle Peter was the first pope.⁴

At any cost, this legacy needs to be cemented into the vaults of history; otherwise the authority of the Church is undermined. Along with this Apostolic Succession is biblical authority and papal infallibility. These teachings affirm the Catholic Church as the only true Church,

confirmed by the Vicar of Christ himself — the pope

But let’s first talk about the inquisitions. History books vary on the number of people killed during this horrible time of history. Some say as high as nine or ten million. Truth is, an exact number is hard to come by due to the time span and places in which it happened.

There was the Episcopal Inquisition (1184-1230s), the Papal Inquisition (1230s onward), the Spanish Inquisition (1478-1834), and the Portuguese Inquisition (1536-1774). Please note the time spans. These inquisitions were not limited to the countries they are named after. Thousands, for instance, lost their lives in India and other countries that were colonies.

There were some who were burned at the stake, others who died through torture or mass slaughters,⁵ and then tens of thousands who succumbed to damp, cold prison cells. Then there were the Crusades in which thousands more were murdered. An actual count is pretty hard to calculate, so historians debate and revisionists revise. It is safe to say several million died over a period of 590 years.

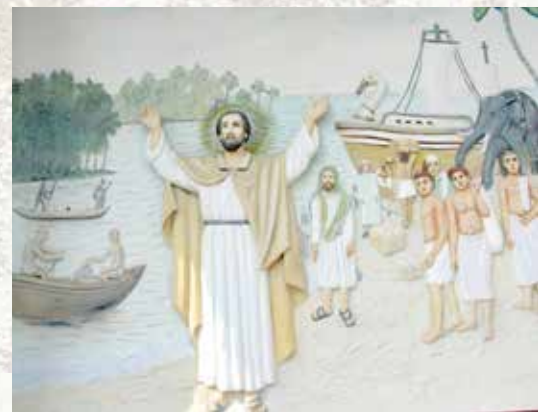
To me, it is a startling fact that the Holocaust is looked upon with such horror while the Inquisition is swept under the rug. Nevertheless, history has been revised over the years to help with this sweeping.

Even recently I read that we should no longer refer to the Dark Ages as such. One writer comments that, “...modern historians no longer use the term because of its negative connotation.”⁶ Why did historians in the past call it thus? It was due to the Roman Catholic Church’s intellectual and spiritual repression and persecution on the populations. Because of the Catholic Church, the Dark Ages gave way to the Era of Enlightenment — where God was replaced by science and reason, creating the rise of modern atheism, evolution, and geology.

INDIA AND THE CHURCH OF THE EAST

India is a place close to my heart. I have traveled the four-corners of the country doing research on India’s Christian history, visiting the places history books talked about. I have visited the site where, in A.D. 52, the Apostle Thomas is said to have landed on the coast of Kerala and also where he first preached the Gospel. But who actually knows where he first stepped on land in India?

I have also visited the place where the Apostle Thomas was supposedly martyred outside of Chennai, India. I tried to locate the places of the early Syrian, Thomas, and Jacobite Christians, whose descendants came directly from Antioch and Baghdad. Those places were great centers of the Apostolic Church and had no connection with the Catholic Church found in Rome.



As I talk about these various groups, I will refer to them as *The Church of the East* (not to be confused with the Eastern Orthodox). Many of the believers in India came from the direct influence of the Apostle Thomas and other missionaries who came in the first 3 centuries. The Church of the East had missionaries that went as far east as China.

In the early centuries of Christianity, many Jewish and Gentile converts sought refuge in other countries due to persecution from both the Roman Empire and Islam. Since the areas of Israel and Syria were the hub of the trade routes, and

since the Malabar Coast of West India was famous for its ancient spice trade, it was logical to see how some of these believers ended up there.

The *New World Encyclopedia* states, "Their (Thomas Christians) tradition goes back to the beginnings of *first century Christian thought*, and the seven churches that are believed to have been established by Saint Thomas the Apostle. The Nasrani preserved the original rituals of the early Jewish Christians, such as covering their heads while in worship and *holding their ritual service on Saturdays in the tradition of the Jewish Sabbath*. They also believed that the Romans killed Jesus... These early Christian Jews believed in Jesus as the Christ but followed Jewish traditions and called themselves Nazaraeans or Nazrani, meaning Jews who followed the Nazarene Messiah (Jesus)."⁷

I sought out the places where these primitive believers had libraries and buildings mentioned in old history books. As I tried to do so, at every turn I saw there has been a systematic removal of history. Libraries were destroyed, old buildings demolished, and historical locations renamed. It is a fact that the Catholic Jesuits committed to the flames handwritten translations of the Bible and history books. I even interviewed Syrian and St. Thomas priests and was surprised at how little they knew about their own heritage.

PERSECUTION IN INDIA

In the year 1502, Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama came to the Malabar Coast of India in an area near Cochin, in Kerala State. This was his second trip to India, as the first trip had been a very unpleasant experience. The expedition had fallen to the wiles of some wealthy Arabian merchants who aroused some of the local Muslims to attack their party.

This time da Gama came on a conquest for the Church of Rome to deal with these infidels and some business deals

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gone bad. The Armada was composed of 20 ships, and between 800 and 1800 men of war, as well as priests — this was going to be a punitive visit. To announce his presence, he set fire to a ship laden with Muslims families coming back from a pilgrimage to Mecca. Like I said, keeping count of how many people died at the hands of the Church is difficult.

But what was interesting, and surprising, on this voyage was that they met Christians who were already living in this area of India. It was those of The Church of the East! When the priests accompanying Vasco da Gama explained that they wanted to celebrate the "divine worship" and "sacraments," the Thomas Christians were shocked by this type of "worship."⁸ The title of "Mother of God," which the Portuguese used, was "offensive to their ears," and they exclaimed, "We are Christians, not idolaters!"⁹

Then to top this meeting off, Vasco da Gama's party stated, "These churches (the Thomas Christians) belong to the Pope!"

"Who is the Pope?" the natives replied. "We never heard of him...We are of the truth faith, whatever you of the West may be; for we came from the place where the followers of Christ were first called Christians."¹⁰

I think you know what happened next. A systematic convert-or-die policy was put in place. The fact was, there were Syrians and Thomas Christians whose faith came straight from the mouths of some of the first apostles. Most of these believers were Sabbath keepers, holding

a simple faith that was once delivered to the saints. A systematic persecution came about, and over the years many of these faithful Christians faced death, while others, hesitantly, converted to the Catholic faith.

PUNISHING HERETICS

As one examines the purpose of the Inquisition from the Catholic's perspective, it was a process to try to save souls by bringing them into line with the "the true faith" of the Roman Church. Heretics came in many forms, but most commonly as Muslims, pagans, Jews, and Judaizers. As you can imagine, those believers of *The Church of the East* fell into the Judaizer category due to their simple faith in keeping God's Ten Commandments, keeping the 7th day Sabbath like the Jews, and not recognizing the authority of the Church of Rome.

In the first few centuries, *The Church of the East* knew nothing about penance, praying to the saints, worship of Mary, infant baptism, celibacy of the priesthood, confession to a priest, worshipping relics, etc.

Old history books, many of which have mysteriously disappeared, testify that these primitive Christians kept the 7th day Sabbath. Historian Lyman Coleman states, "Down even into the fifth century, the observance of the Jewish Sabbath was continued in the Christian Church, but with a rigor and solemnity gradually diminishing until it was wholly discounted."¹¹

Even the famous traveler and historian, Socrates, wrote, "For although almost



Top: A miniature Vatican at the place where St. Thomas supposedly landed on the Western shore of India.
 Middle: An ancient Syrian Church near Cochin, India.
 Bottom: Inside a St. Thomas Christian church. It is a mirrored reflection of Catholicism.

all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries (The Lord's Supper) on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on the account of some ancient tradition, refuse to do this. The Egyptians in the neighborhood of Alexandria, and the inhabitants of Thebais hold their religious meetings on the Sabbath."¹²

For the Church of the West – Catholicism – the Sabbath has long been changed to Sunday – first by Constantine, and more effectively, the Roman Catholic Church itself. As early as 336 A.D., 15 years after Constantine's famous edict in 321 A.D.¹³ making Sunday a day of celebration and feasting in the Roman Empire, the Catholic Church made this decree at the Council of Laodicea: "Christians shall not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather than honoring the Lord's Day; and if they can, resting then as Christians."¹⁴

In 321, Constantine attempted to better unite his kingdom by combining Mithraism, which was a prominent pagan philosophy at that time and actually held Sunday as a day of assembly for worship, with Christian teachings.

It is a fact that there were Christians living and worshiping in India, as well as in other places of Asia, for hundreds of years with absolutely no connection with the Catholic Church. They knew nothing of these councils, edicts and decrees of Rome. Theirs was a simple faith handed down directly from Christ's apostles.

In 1560, Aleixo Diaz Falcão was appointed Inquisitor of India, and he set up his tribunal for that inquisition in Goa.¹⁵ In connection with the Jesuit Order of the Roman Church, thousands met their fate in India. Forced conversions took place, mostly of those whose faith was with the Churches of the East.

EXAMPLES OF REVISIONS ACCEPTED

The sad thing is that the Catholic revisionists, mostly through the Jesuits, have

done their work well. If you go to the supposed place where the Apostle Thomas first landed on the Malabar Coast of Kerala, India, there stands an actual miniature Vatican. Catholics proudly proclaim this event and St. Thomas as one of theirs, even though the Apostle Thomas never had any connection with the Church in Rome.

If you go to Chennai, on the eastern coast of India, there is the famous St. Thomas Mount – the location where, according to legend, a Hindu radical martyred the Apostle Thomas while he was praying in 72 A.D.

And what do we find at the shrine at St. Thomas Mount? A relic of the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child, which was supposedly painted by St. Luke in 50 A.D. and brought from Rome to India by St. Thomas. Please understand, Mary worship entered the church early in the 16th century and was not made dogma till 1854 by Pope Pius IX.¹⁶

These are revisionist fabrications being pawned off on millions of people. The Apostle Thomas would have never consented to such nonsense as "holy relics." Some of the stories are fairytale fiction – outright fabrications. Just google "Girdle of Thomas" and read some of this nonsense.

Around 1551, the Portuguese built a church on top of the mount, and later a shrine dedicated to "Our Lady of Expectation" (Mother Mary), which was built in 1523.

So there are two Thomases – the biblical Apostle Thomas and the Catholic revisionist fairytale "St. Thomas."

It is important to understand that almost all of the ancient translations of the Bible which were held by the Church of the East, as well as all history books and ancient scrolls that were passed down through the centuries, were destroyed by the Jesuits. Anything that went contrary to the teachings and dogma of the Roman Church was

destroyed, and then the revisionists went to work.

REVISION OR INDOCTRINATION?

As one looks at the divisions of *The Church of the East* today, you can't help but see a mirror of the Catholic Church. The pressure, influence and indoctrination has had its effect on those who once stood for the simple faith of the apostles. Historically, there were victories over the authority and work of the Jesuits and the Roman Church, yet the damage was done.

For instance, there is a place called Mattancherry, just outside of Cochin in Kerala, India. This was the place of the famous uprising of the Apostle Thomas Christian community against the Portuguese Jesuits. History tells of a group of Thomas church leaders, along with some followers, who took long ropes and tied them to a large cross outside the church. While grasping this rope, they swore an oath to sever their allegiance to the Church of Rome. The place became known as the *Coonan Cross*, or the Bent Cross.

The effects of this incident caused thousands to leave the Church of Rome and to declare their own churches' independence. Sadly, the damage was already done. These churches ended up splintering, and now there are about eight current divisions along the Malabar Coast today.

If you visit the place of Coonan Cross today, you find a Catholic-looking shrine where one can burn candles and pray for miracles. The shrine is a sad testimony to such a brave historical event. While these churches, now fragmented, have their independence from Rome, they do not realize how far they have fallen from the simple faith of their forefathers. Through years of Catholic influence, these believers no longer hold to the simple faith of centuries past.

It is important to know that revisionists have been at work for centuries, and they

are alive and well today. I have seen their influence on history in many parts of the world. If it were not for my reading of a lot of older historical works, I would have never been aware of these historical revisions. Revisionists are actively working everywhere, especially here in the United States. They are in every religious organization.

May we learn from the lessons of the past. We should know our roots and the faith that was once delivered to the saints. Today God calls us to study His Word for ourselves. His Word tells us that God will make a new covenant with us. And that "the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; *I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.*" Hebrews 8:8-10.

1. Ann Christy, *Christians in Al-Andalus:711–1000*, (Curzon Press, 2002), 142.
2. "Moslem Libraries and Sectarian Propaganda", Ruth Stellhorn Mackensen, *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (January, 1935), 93–94.
3. Wikipedia, *The Holocaust*
4. Wikipedia, *Saint Peter*
5. Example: Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre where French Protestants, or Huguenots, were slaughtered on Aug. 24, 1572. It began in Paris and spread across France by order by Catherine de' Medici. An estimated 3,000 were killed in Paris, 70,000 in all of France. Also see: Wikipedia, *St. Bartholomew's Day massacre*.
6. <http://www.allabouthistory.org/the-dark-ages.htm>
7. *The New World Encyclopedia*, http://www.new-worldencyclopedia.org/entry/Saint_Thomas_Christians, Leslie A. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas: an account of the ancient Syrian Church of Malabar*. (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1956); Shalva Weil, "Symmetry between Christians and Jews in India: The Cananite Christians and Cochin Jews in Kerala." in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 16 (2)(1982): 175-196 [1].sagepub.com. Retrieved July 1, 2008.
8. The St. Thomas Christians Encyclopedia of India, (1882), p. 22
9. Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Ch. 47, p. 31
10. Claudius Buchanan D. D., *Christian Researches in Asia*, p. 60 (1813) (found in H. H. Meyer's book, *The Inquisitive Christians*, p. 20)
11. Lyman Coleman, *Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, Chap. 26, Sec. 2, p. 527
12. *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 5, p. 289 (1892)
13. Chamber's Encyclopedia, Article *Sunday*. Also see *History of the Christian Church*, Vol 3, p. 380, by Philip Schaff
14. John Fulton, DD, LLD translations from the Council of Laodicea, *Canon XXIX, Index Canonus*, p. 259`

15. A. K. Priolkar, *The Goa Inquisition*, pp. 23-24 (1961)
16. *Catholic Belief*, p. 214 (Catholic Belief," is "a short and simple exposition of Catholic doctrine," by the Very Rev. Joseph Faa Di Bruno, Rector-General of the pious Society of Missions in 1884-



Top: The Catholic-looking shrine at the Coonan Cross.

Middle: An example of Revision. This picture at St. Thomas Mount says it was painted by St. Luke and brought to India by St. Thomas. This is a pure fabrication.

Bottom: Jeff Reich meets with a St. Thomas Priest in Cochin, India.