

Contend Earnestly For the Faith Which Was Once For All Handed Down to the Saints

An Expository Study of the **Epistle of Jude**

Chapter 6- The History of Heresy **Jude 4**

80. The History of Heresy Part 50

WOSM Tuesday 02/26/08

Welcome again my brothers and sisters in Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse study of the Epistle of **Jude** and today I want to continue our examination of The History of Heresy by looking at the fourth verse of Jude- so let's read verse 4 together:

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus

Now we are continuing to study about who these "certain men" that Jude talks about here in verse 4 were by studying the seven major groups of heresy and today I want to look at the seventh and final ancient heresy that attacked the Christian Church. This seventh false teaching is called, *Socinianism* and rose up in the sixteenth century. And the ancient heresy of Socinianism is the root of the modern day *Unitarian* movement and brought what is called "rational criticism" to the Scriptures.

Faustus Socinus was born in Siena, Italy in 1539. His uncle Laelius was involved in the Protestant Reformation for a while, but left over a dispute about the Doctrine of the Trinity which he denied- saying it was humanly impossible for God to be one and yet three. Of course, Socinus also denied that Christ was Deity. Faustus was theologically trained by his uncle until his uncle died and Faustus devoted the remainder of his life to promoting his uncle's anti-Trinitarian beliefs.

Faustus left Italy in 1578 and traveled to Poland where he found a group that was sympathetic to his false teachings. At first, the Anabaptist and Unitarian sects refused to allow Socinus membership

because he rejected the need for baptism, so his influence on the Polish Unitarians was minimal- although he did join with them in worship.

As time went on, Socinus was admitted into the Polish Unitarian group and later became their leader. He was successful in causing them to finally adopt his heretical beliefs and suffered physically at the hands of both the Protestants and the Catholics.

Socinus believed that the Scriptures should be interpreted in a way called, “rationally”. And that means that all supernatural manifestations of God and Jesus were either discarded or explained away. Rationally interpreting the Scriptures also means that in addition to rejecting the Doctrine of the Trinity and the Deity of Jesus Christ- rationalists must also reject Grace and the substitutionary Death of Jesus on the Cross.

To Socinus, to believe in the supernatural aspect of God was to deny human intellect- and to some extent- he was right- because the Bible declares very clearly in **1Corinthians 2:14:**

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

And again, in **Romans 8:7:**

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

So a fallen; pagan; lost; unregenerate mind cannot and will not comprehend the things of God. Socinus taught a very strange theology that said that Christ was not Divine until *after* His Resurrection- at which point God delegated *some* of His Divine Power to the risen Jesus. Curiously, though, and in great opposition from other rationalists- Socinus *did* accept Christ’s virgin birth and miracles, which just goes to show you that all man- made theology is inconsistent at best.

Socinus did *not* believe that Christ’s Death on the Cross brought *anyone* forgiveness of sins, but he held that God could and did forgive sins regardless of what Jesus did or did not do. Socinus taught that human initiated repentance and good works bought forgiveness from

God. So logically- Socinus denied Original Sin, Predestination, and the Resurrection of the body (except for a select few who were particularly conscientious followers of Jesus). Socinus also regarded the Lord's Supper as purely commemorative and not something that we had any obligation to observe.

Perhaps Socinus' most lasting legacy and the one item that I want to concentrate on is his promotion of what is called "rational criticism".

"Rational Criticism", or "Rational Interpretation", or "Rationalism" is the concept that anything that is worthwhile is best captured by the natural mind of Man. In other words, rationalism is the deification of the mind of Man at the expense of God. Rationalists glory in Man's ability to think and they worship at the altar of Man's mind.

Some of the most famous men in history have been followers of the Socinian heresy of rationalism- here is a short list:

- ✓ Sigmund Freud- the father of modern Psychology
- ✓ Voltaire- the father of the French Revolution
- ✓ Thomas Paine- the author of *Common Sense* and one of the fathers of the American Revolution
- ✓ Benjamin Franklin- another father of the American Revolution
- ✓ Richard Dawkins who is known as the "pit bull" of modern atheism
- ✓ Conservative MSNBC analyst- Christopher Hitchens
- ✓ 20th Century Philosopher Bertrand Russell
- ✓ 17th Century Philosopher Rene Descartes
- ✓ Political Commentator Noam Chomsky
- ✓ 19th Century American political leader Robert G. Ingersoll
- ✓ And Prolific Science Fiction authors Isaac Asimov, and Gene Rodenberry- the creator of the Star Trek series

It is interesting to note that the stated reason why both Isaac Asimov and Gene Rodenberry were so interested in Science Fiction was so that they could bring comfort to the masses about the future of Man- who they believed would create a world of peace and prosperity and tranquility through science and technological advancements and

the power of the human will- all without a Savior and all without Grace and all without the Cross.

And it is not surprising that the men who are responsible for more human slaughter in the history of the world were all rationalists:

- ✓ Adolf Hitler
- ✓ Joseph Stalin
- ✓ Mao-Tse Tung

Together, these men are responsible for the mass murder of over 100 million human beings. So even though most of us have never even heard of Socinus, or even have heard of Socinianism- many, many important movers and shakers of our world *have* heard of this heresy and they have read about what Socinus taught and they have agreed with his teachings and they have promoted it through their writings and actions which form a great deal of our own modern thought today.

It is common today to hear modern rationalists rail out against what they call the “backward” and “superstitious” and anti-intellectual views of Christianity. Today, Christianity is wrongly and inaccurately portrayed as scientifically naïve; politically childish; culturally backward; artistically ignorant; and intellectually broken. But nothing could be further from the Truth.

Genuine Science is not in competition with Christianity for followers. True science; real science; scientific science is not anti-Christian at all- in fact true science is the observation of God’s Creation and thus proves the claims of the Bible; proves the existence of an intelligent and all powerful God; and proves that the transformed life in Jesus Christ is the best life that exists on earth for Man.

The same is true of all the aspects of life. Christianity does *not* teach that we should withdraw from society or that we should hide from evil or that we should abstain from vocal and public affirmations of our Faith. Biblical Christianity actually *promotes* these things. The best and most brilliant scientists throughout history were either powerful Christians themselves or else they so greatly admired and

respected Christianity that they praised it more than their occupations.

We need to remember that it was Christianity that created schools so the masses of people could learn. Our most famous Universities, like Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were all created by Christians for the sole purpose of training men to become ministers of the Gospel. In fact, the goal of education was not simply to get smart- no, to be smart for smart's sake was considered to be idolatry and a waste of time. Neither was the goal of education to simply make people more qualified for a higher paying job- that too was looked at as being selfish and also a waste of time. No, the original goal of education was to enlarge the mind so that people could grasp and appreciate and value the glorious things of God and of God's Creation better than if their minds were ignorant and closed.

It was Christianity that promoted language and art and music so that people could read what God has said and see with their own eyes and hear with their own ears- the glory of God's Creation.

For example- to attend Harvard University in the 18th century, a young man was required to have 2 hours of prayer and Bible Study under his belt *before* he was allowed to come to class- and class started at 7:00 a.m. And that was the Business School! So young energetic men who would become giants of American Industry and Business were all up and studying the Word of God at 5 a.m. No wonder this nation was blessed.

Princeton Theological Seminary which is now a reproach to the Lord Jesus Christ and is now a den of snakes and frogs and creeping things used to be a bastion of Gospel purity like the world had never known. America's greatest Theologian, Jonathan Edwards was a graduate of Princeton. And part of the requirement to earn a theological Degree from Princeton was that a young man had to be able to read, write and speak fluent Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic in four years- because those were the languages of the Bible.

It was Christianity that promoted artistic talent. It was Christianity that pushed believers to become politicians and doctors and writers and artists and Presidents. These men did all; they wrote all; they spoke all; they made all; and they did all to the Glory of God.

Now the greatest enemy of the heresy of Socinianism and of rationalism in the 16th Century was a group of people that have

become known to us as the Puritans. Most everybody today thinks that they know a little about the Puritans, but in reality most of what we think that we know about these people is wrong. That is because most of what we have read or seen about the Puritans comes from the books and stories and the pen of one American writer- Nathaniel Hawthorn. Nathaniel Hawthorn hated the Puritans. He despised their righteous lives, and he hated their sermons which boldly proclaimed the Word of God and he rejected the God that they loved.

One of his best known books is called, *The Scarlet Letter*, which tells the story of a sweet and wonderful women who commits fornication and is treated horribly by the self righteous and bigoted people called the Puritans. This book is required reading in most schools and has been made into several different motion pictures-0 always favoring the sinful woman and never showing the truth about the Puritans.

Most everyone who thinks that they know something about the Puritans will quote this book or these movies as the source of all that they know about who the Puritans were and what they believed and how they lived.

The problem with that is that *The Scarlet Letter* is a fictitious and brutal attack by Mr. Hawthorn toward this group that he personally despised.

The Puritans are portrayed by Nathaniel Hawthorn as being backward and superstitious people who feared science and art and sports and business and who hated people and who were so draconian and legalistic that very few people could keep up with their rough and rugged lifestyle.

Nothing could be further from the Truth. Other than the Apostles- who actually walked and talked with Jesus- no other group on earth has had such a clear and pure understanding of the Gospel than did the Puritans. They were the most prolific writers who ever lived, and they wrote volumes on every spiritual subject imaginable.

Every Christian Doctrine; every Christian thought; every Christian concept was studied and discussed and written down in detail by these men.

Several of the Puritans, most notably, Matthew Henry who spent his entire lifetime writing a Commentary on every verse of the Bible and Dr. Strong, who organized every word in the Bible by verse

in his Concordance did what they did by hand- without a typewriter or a computer or a library.

Richard Sibbes, John Bunyan, John Owen, Jeremiah Burroughs, Thomas Watson, William Perkins and many, many others were used by God to create entire libraries of books which share with us a glimpse of the majesty and the Sovereignty of God that will curl your hair.

Their writings that bear titles such as *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* and *Pilgrims Progress* and *The Art of Prophecy* and *The Reformed Pastor* and *The Bruised Reed* and *The Doctrine of Repentance* and *The Mortification of Sin* and *The Glory of Christ* and *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* have humbled my own heart and caused me to place my hand over my mouth and put me on my knees and made me weep in embarrassment of my own arrogance and my own pride.

The Socinians and the Puritans squared off against each other in the sixteenth century just like Paul and the legalists did in the first century; Just like John and the Gnostics did late in the first century; Just like Athanasius and Arius did in the third century; Just like Augustine and Pelagius did in the fourth and fifth centuries. And like the heroes of the Church that came before us- you and I must now earnestly contend for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. May God help us all.

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