

# AGAINST THE GRAIN

The Necessity of the Maverick  
Among God's People

## ABSTRACT

It is a startling and rarely acknowledged fact (humanly speaking) that there would be no Christian gospel left to preach today if there had not providentially been a myriad of "mavericks" among the Lord's people throughout this Gospel Age. A true "maverick" is not a trouble-maker but a blessing to the Church. Every assembly should have one (at least) or, preferably, let all disciples be mavericks together. They keep us on our toes, remind us of our roots and provide us with a model demonstration of Christian courage. As all believers are called to be heroes of the faith, they should take their lead from these pioneers of truth who have been raised up by the Lord in every age. In the following study, we will together examine this phenomenon, giving instances from Scripture and from the annals of history

Alan Morrison

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*The Necessity of the Maverick  
Among God's People*

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Dedicated to my Divine Master  
**The Christ**  
who walked this earth in the flesh  
fulfilled His mission  
defeated the forces of darkness  
and who will come again  
with power and great glory

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Written and designed by: Alan Morrison.

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**Bible references** in this eBook can be from a certain few translations, but often the [Berean Standard Bible](#) is used verbatim. The author also always consults the Hebrew or Greek texts and uses his own personal translations of them in order to get as close to what he believes to be the best meaning possible.

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## Preamble:

It is a startling and rarely acknowledged fact (humanly speaking) that there would be no Christian gospel left to preach today if there had not providentially been a myriad of “mavericks” among the Lord’s people throughout their pilgrimage in this Gospel Age. **A true “maverick” is not a trouble-maker but a blessing to the Church.** Every assembly should have one (at least) or, preferably, let all disciples be mavericks together. They keep us on our toes, remind us of our roots and provide us with a model demonstration of Christian courage. As all believers are called to be heroes of the faith, they should take their lead from these pioneers of truth who have been raised up by the Lord in every age. In the following study, we will together examine this phenomenon, giving instances from Scripture and from the annals of history.

## INTRODUCTION: DEFINING OUR TERMS

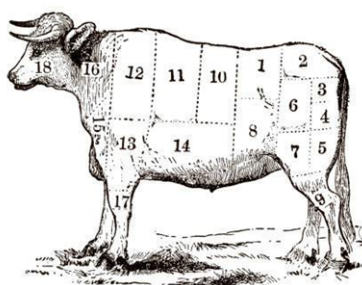
Before commencing our study proper, it would be helpful to define the term “*maverick*”. The word is derived from the sir-name of a Texas cattle-raiser, Samuel Maverick (c.1840), who would not brand his cattle, and it began to be used to refer to any stray animal without an owner’s brand. Eventually it came into popular usage to describe anyone who does not generally conform to traditional norms and who has not only *not* sold out to the highest bidder but has sold out to no bidder at all.

**Within the Church, I have seen the term increasingly being used by members of the religious establishment to refer to someone by whom they feel most threatened, who cannot easily be labelled or pigeonholed, and who eschews the prevailing slavery to men and their systems of teaching, and who will not conform to church ‘cults’ of any kind.** From the establishment standpoint such a maverick is viewed as a troublemaker — whereas the maverick himself regards his maverick behaviour as necessary for the health of the Church to keep it on the ‘strait and narrow’ and to prevent assemblies from becoming little cults. How far each of these views represents the truth, we will shortly discover.

I fully realise that those desiring to discredit the central thesis of this study may cite the inclusion of the destructive heretic under the title of maverick, thus trying to prove that mavericks — far from being a desirable or necessary element in the Church — are actually a scourge. To clarify, therefore, I will define a true maverick among the Lord's people as follows:

“A genuine disciple of Christ who refuses to be a slave to the traditions and systems of men. The only ‘brand’ they have is “Christ’s name and His Father’s name written on their foreheads”, symbolically speaking. Such mavericks as these take a firm biblical stand against the religious establishment of the day or even against the entire world for concerns which are essential to the furtherance of truth, justice and the universal cause of God in Christ”.

#### **Branded from Head to Foot**



This is the sad condition of many believers today, who so readily shackle themselves to the flawed beliefs, traditions and systems of men, rather than solely to the inspired words of God (cf. Matt.23:8-10).

The primary purpose of this study is to ascertain whether such a maverick is justified in his or her purpose and, if so, what function does he or she serve in the work and historical development of the Lord's people? Before I pursue this enquiry concerning the maverick insofar as he occurs among the Lord's people, let us take a brief look at the precedent offered to us by the position and purpose of the maverick in secular history, and the relevant lessons which can be learned from that.

## I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAVERICK IN SECULAR SOCIETY

The Lord Jesus made the enigmatic statement that the children of the world are wiser in their own generation than the children of light (Luke 16:8).<sup>1</sup> In the outworking of God's "common grace" through the institutions of this world, and the traces of light of God's law which remain in the unregenerate human heart, unbelievers have often proved themselves to be extremely shrewd and resourceful in the way that they go about their chosen business.<sup>2</sup> But within the institutions of the world, in the wake of any great advancement or innovation, there is the inevitable occurrence of a repeated gradual down-curve tendency to ossification and stagnation. This is an endemic process in human affairs — a consequence of the effects of the Fall, occupying a similar status to the Second Law of Thermodynamics in regard to the degeneration of energy in the universe. In the present age the only element in the cosmos which is not prone to decline and degeneration is the true Church and kingdom of God — against which, from a spiritual standpoint, the effects of the Fall and the gates of hell can never *prevail*. Although we only have the firstfruits of the kingdom of God, present as yet in grace rather than glory, the body of Christ is pure and spotless.

### The Maverick is a Counterbalance to Societal Stagnation

Yet, presumably in order to prevent an early total decline in human affairs, the Lord has ordained that certain people will be raised up, under the auspices of "common grace", in the field of

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<sup>1</sup> To read my CyberSermon on this Bible text, please follow this link: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2023/05/26/cybersermon-the-parable-of-the-dishonest-manager/> .

<sup>2</sup> By 'common grace' (referred to by some early teachers or Puritans as "restraining grace", or the "*generalem Dei gratiam*") I mean the manner in which the Lord exercises dominion over the fallen world system of government, civil law, industry, etc., in order to preserve society from a premature occurrence of the downfall of humanity prophesied in Scripture. The primary manifestation of this 'common grace' is what we have come to refer to, somewhat euphemistically, as '*civilisation*'.

secular human affairs to tackle this repetitive problem of the stagnation and ossification in secular culture. These innovators have generally been despised in their time and made outcasts of society – misunderstood and feared as too *avant-garde*. Such folks indeed often appear to have come before their time – in all fields: the arts, sciences, engineering, music, business endeavours, etc. One thinks of Galileo, Isaac Newton, Gustav Mahler, or Nicolai Tesla, and numerous other innovators and pioneers – many of whom were ridiculed in their lifetimes but eventually, often posthumously, were recognised as geniuses.

The secular dictionary definition of a maverick is, “*A person who shows independence of thought and action, especially by refusing to adhere to the policies of a group to which he or she belongs*”. Ironically, later in history, when their contribution comes to be fully appreciated, people will often build monuments to these mavericks and revere them. This process of the maverick in secular affairs – men and women who are prepared to take a stand against the establishment – has been interestingly charted by researcher Colin Wilson in his book “*The Outsider*” (1956), which he wrote at twenty-three years old sitting in the British Library by day while sleeping on Hampstead Heath by night.

Although as a disciple of Christ, one cannot accept the full sweep of Wilson’s thesis, they are nevertheless interesting studies. Indeed, a complete existentialist conceptual framework has been developed out of the study of the maverick/outsider which came to have a major philosophical influence on the novels of such authors as Fyodor Dostoevsky, Knut Hamsun, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.

### **The Maverick in Old Russian Culture**

Another very interesting illustration of the maverick in secular culture occurs in the constellation of what we now know as Russia. Here, though, he has actually been placed on a pedestal and held in an almost superstitious awe. Known officially as the *yurodivy*, such a person was an integral part of the court of the Czar, whose role was to act as the conscience of the realm. As one musicologist has described this phenomenon:

“The *yurodivy* is a Russian religious phenomenon, which even the cautious Soviet scholars call a national trait. There is no word in any other language that can precisely convey the meaning of the Russian word *yurodivy*, with its many historical and cultural overtones. The *yurodivy* has the gift to see and hear what others know nothing about”.<sup>3</sup>

It is precisely this ability “to see and hear what others know nothing about” that forms a basic characteristic of the maverick, both Christian and secular — although they plainly manifest in radically different ways. In the English Medieval period, a similar role to that of the *yurodivy* was the well-known figure of the court jester, who could speak openly to the monarch, or whoever was his lord and master, in an esoteric, critical, or lampooning fashion without fear of losing his head!

The Russian *yurodivy* was a widely tolerated anti-establishment figure, whose formidable critical faculties and insight into human affairs was officially recognised by the civil powers. For instance, the *yurodivy* was able to be wholly honest with, and also extremely critical towards, the Czar without any fear of retribution. He held what amounted to an almost ‘prophetic’, protected status in society. It has been claimed that the writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008) and the composer Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) — especially by the musicologist, Solomon Volkov — have been among the more recent representations of the *yurodivy* in Russian culture.

There are many other aspects of the maverick in secular society which could usefully be brought to our attention; but our main purpose in this brief paper is to show the place of the maverick in the history of the Lord’s people rather than going into detail about the maverick among the children of the world. However, the parallels are interesting, as I think we will shortly come to appreciate.

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<sup>3</sup> Solomon Volkov, *Testimony*, (Faber, 1979,), p.xxvii.

## II. THE OCCURRENCE OF THE MAVERICK AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE

Although these remarks about the maverick in secular culture may not seem immediately significant to the purposes of our study, I am at great pains to show that there is a direct parallel of great importance. For the occurrence of the maverick among the people of God has its roots in very similar causes, while he also shares the same gift as his secular counterpart of being able “*to see and hear what others know nothing about*” — although we must bear in mind that the maverick among God's people occurs in a distinctly Judaeo-Christian context. **In other words, the maverick who operates among the Lord's people has all the insights of the secular maverick, but with the added dimensions of faith in Christ and the spiritually-imparted gift of discernment.**

In just the same way that the institutions of secular, common-grace-inspired culture have a natural, fallen-world-induced tendency to stagnation and ossification, so the various manifestations of the Church in the world — especially if they have become absorbed into the secular establishment, or been downgraded through sectarianism — display a similar propensity for such endemic decline. **This tendency to spiritual decline and conformity to the mere standards of the world has happened on a continuous basis for as long as the Lord's people have been represented in the world by a Divinely constituted body of people.**

The entire Old Testament Scriptures bear witness to such corruption as it affected the people of Israel from the time of their exodus out of Egypt onwards. By the time of our Lord's incarnation — with the exception of a faithful remnant — Israel was officially represented by an establishment religion which was barely recognisable as that in which God originally intended His people to engage. This was the culmination of one and a half millennia of cumulative apostasy. Similarly the past two millennia have been marked by repeated degeneration of the New Testament Church as it appears in the world, as a result of either a predilection for the empty form of religion, or engaging in too compromising a relationship with the civil authorities.

### The Blurring of Necessary Divisions Creates the Need for the Maverick

In the time of the Old Covenant, the decline most often occurred when the division (ordained by God for the sake of purity, see e.g. Exodus 33:16) between Israel and the surrounding nations became blurred. During the New Covenant this has also most often occurred when the division (ordained by God for the sake of purity, 2 Corinthians 6:17-18) between Church and the satanic world-system has been blurred. One of the primary manifestations of this has involved the Church being drawn into the affairs of the secular state in an increasingly unbiblical capacity. As one historian has well said:

“As long as the Church had remained separate it had been a powerful witness for Christ in the world, and was constantly drawing converts into its holy fellowship. When, however, already weakened by the adoption of human rule in place of the guidance of the Spirit, it was suddenly brought into partnership with the State, it became defiled and debased”.<sup>4</sup>

That is a very profound statement and right on the nail. One high spot (or should that be “low spot”?) of such compromise in the New Covenant era occurred with the creation of the Vatican as a powerbase. But Protestantism cannot point a wholly innocent finger in the direction of the corruptions of Rome, for it has repeatedly attempted to manipulate the state through various political machinations and liaisons, not to mention the formation of an “establishment” Church — the repeated apostasy of which can be seen to this very day.<sup>5</sup> As the same historian astutely observes:

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<sup>4</sup> E.H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church*, (Pickering & Inglis, 1931), p.23.

<sup>5</sup> Observe, for instance, the Protestant “establishment” Church organisations of Scotland and England to witness this phenomenon. Looking further afield to Europe, the “established” churches of Scandinavia and Germany (Lutheran), and the so-called “Reformed” churches in the Netherlands and Switzerland have all become similarly

“The first three centuries of the Church’s history prove that no earthly power can crush it. It is invincible to attacks from without. The witnesses of its sufferings, and even its persecutors, become its converts and it grows more rapidly than it can be destroyed. The following period of nearly two hundred years shows that the union of the Church and the State, even when the powers of the mightiest empire are put into the Church’s hands, do not enable her to save the State from destruction; for, in abandoning the position which her very name implies — of being “called out” of the world, and of separation to Christ — she loses the power that comes from subjection to her Lord, exchanging it for an earthly authority that is fatal to herself”.<sup>6</sup>

More wisdom from Edmund Broadbent. This importance of being “called out” is absolutely crucial to our study. For the Greek word which is uniformly translated as “Church” in all the Bible versions is none other than *ekklesia* — a term which very definitely refers to those who are **called out** by the Lord for separation from the world and faithfulness to Christ.

#### **The Visible Church = The Ekklesia + a Vast Amount of Impostors**

The commonly-made distinction — although, admittedly, a good term of convenience — between the *visible* and *invisible* Church is, therefore, one which finds no real support in the New Testament Scriptures in regard to God’s *Ekklesia*.<sup>7</sup> To explain, when I use the

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infested with compromise. It is no exaggeration to say that every single denomination that has ever been formed — whether Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, or Episcopalian — has either degenerated into theological liberalism on the road to apostasy or has fossilised into an obscurantist sect fit only for cranks and cultists.

<sup>6</sup> E.H. Broadbent, op. cit., p.29.

<sup>7</sup> Obviously, this distinction was blurred in reference to the Lord’s Old Covenant people, the covenant of which was made with an earthly nation made up of both believers and unbelievers. The New Covenant,

term, “visible church”, I am referring primarily to that which the world looks at and thinks is the Church. But the true *Ekklesia* itself, the body of Christ, is not divided into ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ elements and never can be. The false “church” has nothing whatsoever to do with the *Ekklesia*. Whereas Old Testament Israel was made up of both God’s people and impostors, the same can never be said of the true New Testament *Ekklesia*. **That *Ekklesia* plus a vast amount of impostors are what makes up “the visible church” in the world.** What the world thinks of as “the church” is not the true Church of Jesus Christ but a motley hotchpotch of wheat (true children of God) and tares (unbelievers, darnel/*Lolium temulentum*/ζιζάνια/*zizania*), as shown in Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43.

The Church of Christ is a body of divinely constituted people who are sojourners, pilgrims and strangers as they travel through the wilderness of this world. Yet they are also required to be heralds of the Gospel and providers of an exemplary model of godliness and genuine spirituality. History has shown that these characteristics frequently become jaded, faded and eventually obscured as usurpers superimpose their own traditions and interests on the body of Christ — a factor of decay which has affected both Roman Catholic *and* Protestant streams of the Christian scene.

Accordingly — parallel to the timely appearance of the maverick/*yurodivy* in secular culture as an alarm to be heeded — we have the emergence of the Christian maverick, one whose God-given role is to recall the *Ekklesia* to her divinely-appointed role as an exemplary body wholly distinct from the secular institutions of the world. Before I give examples from history of this character — the Christian maverick — I want to provide a template to which we will refer repeatedly. For what is of great interest to our study together here is that there are very definite patterns followed — both in terms of the descent into religious

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however, is one which is made in Christ’s blood — shed only for those who have believed in previous times and who now constitute the *ekklesia* in this Gospel Age (cf. Ephesians 5:25).

establishmentarianism and in that corrupt establishment's response to those who have the courage to dare to question its authority.

### III. THE BEDROCK OF RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTARIANISM

Having already noted the tendency to religious establishmentarianism wherever the earthly manifestations of the Church do not adhere to New Testament guidelines for their constitution, let us now briefly note the foundations on which this decay is erected. I will not here go into the various historical manifestations of these characteristics — that will be reserved for the appropriate later pages — but **I am outlining the principles behind the degeneracy of the Christian milieu, bearing in mind that Christ never came to start a religion but to raise up disciples and followers.**

#### 1) Conformity to the World's Values

It must surely be agreed that the “rulebook” for the Church is the Scriptures. It is in the Bible that we find our norms and examples. Now, it is true that there is much in the secular world which can be admired in its own place — for its beauty, intelligence, emotional power, dedication, skill and civic sagacity — but the norms of the world must never become the regulative foundation for the thinking and comportment of the disciple of Christ.<sup>8</sup> One can observe, for instance, the manner in which the Church has divided itself into denominations, sects, and factions, in very much the same fashion as the political parties of the world carry on their business!

One sees this conformity to the values of the world to a very great extent in the churches. The manner in which hyper-congregationalism has occurred in so many churches is a mirror

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<sup>8</sup> Unless, of course, they are civil laws which are in complete conformity with the Word of God — and even then, we must not conform to them because the world does them, but rather because they are commensurate with Divine law.

of the democratic model of secular government, which stands over against the theocratic roots of the Church, for Christ alone is its King.

Another example of conformity to the world's values can be seen in the fact that very often a man will be judged to be good eldership material, not so much because of his loving heart, spirituality and acquaintance with the Word, but more because he has a good standing in the community, a "good" job, is always well-groomed (in the middle-class sense) and, to cap it all, his father was an elder before him. This may be a somewhat superficial example, but it is part of the general degeneracy into a soft establishmentarianism, which substitutes the values of the world for the teachings of the Word of God, making social "respectability" the primary criterion for eligibility in the churches. I am not suggesting that one should avoid being socially respectable but, rather, that social respectability in itself is no qualification for a role of responsibility in the churches. One has to be very wary of worldly popularity. For, contrary to these secular values, Jesus said: *"Woe to you when all men shall speak well of you! For so their fathers did to the false prophets"* (Luke 6:26). Let us take that on board in the manner in which it was intended!

## **2) Blind Acceptance of Manmade Theological and Ecclesiastical Systems**

Hand in hand with conformity to human traditions goes the acceptance of manmade systems of Church order and doctrine as if they were shibboleths and actual articles of faith. These various systems — while being useful as summaries of Bible knowledge — can so easily take on a higher significance than the Bible itself. So very often, among the Lord's people, mere human traditions actually become substituted for the edicts of God, as the Lord Jesus noted (Matthew 15:1-9). It happens so easily because the legalistic mind loves to be bound and hedged about with regulations and also has a deep desire to bind others with those same regulations — and legalism abounds in countless churches which think that the wearing of a suit and tie for worship is more indicative of salvation than what is plainly rooted in the heart,

irrespective of outward sartorial affinities. This is worldly thinking and is a major aspect of religious establishmentarianism.

### **3) Acute Compromise of the Biblical Antithesis**

Another layer in the bedrock of religious establishmentarianism involves the clouding of the *vital biblical 'Antithesis' between the children of God and the offspring of Satan* which was set in force by the Lord in the wake of the Fall of our first parents in Eden at the beginning of human history (see Genesis 3:15).

The people of God have always been designated as an exemplary force which stands distinct from the satanic world-system and its structures, for which we are supposed to be the counterculture. This has been most necessary in order to provide a paradigm to which the children of the world can aspire and, ultimately, be attracted as the spiritual alternative to what the world offers. This does not mean that the Lord's people become an esoteric enclave hiving off permanently into monasteries, desert hideouts and caves, or on a platform on the top of a pole like Simon Stylites. Neither does it mean that there is no structure in the churches themselves. **For the Church to provide a counterculture paradigm to which the children of the world can be attracted, it must set itself forth as a spiritually-based Christological organism rather than a materialist worldly organisation.** The quintessence of salt and light is that they are rooted in the profound spiritual relationship which exists among believers and which must shine out into the world (Matthew 5:13-16), as an organism which is separate from the world. When that distinction, that Antithesis, becomes blurred and the Church becomes subsumed into the powerbase structures of secular culture, that shine fades rapidly — whether it involves Romanists or Protestants — as history bears witness only too well. As Prof. Albertus Pieters has put it in his exposition of Romans 13:1-7:

“There are two independent sovereignties, both ordained by God: The Church and the State. The State is as truly a divine institution as the Church. The State is the trustee of the law; the Church the trustee of the Gospel. The State bears the sword for the forcible

restraint of sin; the Church holds the secret of the only true remedy for sin. The State compels men to abstain from the grosser forms of open sin; the Church inspires them with a hatred of secret sin and a love for holiness. Both are necessary in this fallen world; and neither has the right to interfere with the other.”

Dr. D.M. Lloyd-Jones put his finger on this recurring problem when he answered the question: “*What went wrong with the Puritans who had been in the ascendancy during most of the period [1640-1662]?*” by stating that

“the first cause...was the admixture of religion and politics. That was the thing that seems to me to bedevil most of Puritan history... To mix politics with religion in the Church is always a danger. May we learn the lesson of 1640-1662 and keep clear of any such worldly entanglements! Let us fight the battle of the Lord with spiritual weapons”.<sup>9</sup>

Therein lies the essential difference between the children of the devil and the children of God. The latter use spiritual weapons and develop their organisations on the firm footing of spiritual foundations rather than becoming embroiled in secular politicking.<sup>10</sup> What it is important to realise is that the *Ekklesia* exists as the result of the bounties of special grace, whereas the secular civil powers are the result of the common grace which — through the suppressing of evil and anarchy, and the retention of some small traces of light within man in the wake of the Fall —

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<sup>9</sup> D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors*, (Banner of Truth, 1987), pp.60-61. This entire section, from pp.58-71 is a brilliant analysis of where the Puritans went radically wrong in their thinking in relation to the civil state.

<sup>10</sup> This entire interesting issue will be addressed by me in an upcoming article, “Backward Christian Soldiers: The Spiritual & Historical Regression of Dominion Theology”. This article will appear on my website in the near future.

the Lord has ordained for the safe passage of His children through the world. This has been far more important than many realise, as before the victory of Christ on the cross, Satan really was the usurped ruler of the world, which is why whole nations ran amok in sorcery, idolatry and debauchery, all under a seductive pall of satanic darkness. Therefore, special measures of general grace were needed in order to restrain all that evil.

#### **IV. THE MAVERICK IN THE HANDS OF THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT**

In just the same way that the above circumstances can be shown to form a consistent representation of the bedrock of religious establishmentarianism, so there is also a consistent response of the religious establishment – which has departed from the true pathway through this wilderness of a world – towards the one who dares to highlight the apostasy.

Before looking at this pattern at various specific times in the history of the Lord's people, let us trace some of these responses to the maverick among the Lord's people as they have shown themselves on a regular basis down through the centuries. I will not now give direct examples of these responses in action – that is reserved for later sections. But I am simply recording them here in order that the diligent reader can refer back to them to gain a measure of their consistency. These responses are given in order of their occurrence; for there is a very definite pattern of increasing intensity which is dependent upon the resistance of the maverick to the pressures from the religious establishment. Thus, that establishment response begins with...

##### **1) Ridicule**

The first thing that occurs is ridicule. The maverick is made to feel ridiculous in his actions and teachings – as if he is somehow out of step with all “sensible” people. Not only is he ridiculed to himself, but he is often deliberately ridiculed in front of others and made to feel that what he is espousing is unbiblical and a blight on society or on the Church.

## 2) Defamation

If ridicule does not coerce the maverick into submission to the religious establishment, then the next line of attack is the public and private defamation of the maverick's character in order to damage his influence and standing. Such character assassination begins with false rumours being spread about the maverick. Anything will do – or should I say, “any old lies will do”. Gossip and tattle about his morality, doctrine, family responsibility, ‘dubious’ background and achievements will be put out there – so long as it undermines people's readiness to listen to the truths which come from his mouth. If mere rumours do not prove to be effective, then he can always be publicly destroyed through the media, religious or secular.

An interesting, highly publicised, example of this occurred in the Church of England in 1987 when Gareth Bennett – the author of the usually anonymous preface in Crockford's Clerical Directory, which criticised the then Archbishop Runcie for the decline in Anglicanism – was outed and publicly censured by the Bishops in a vile and hurtful manner. As one newspaper put it: *“From a conservative viewpoint, Bennett wrote a carefully constructed demolition of the hierarchy of the Church of England, which he himself described as ‘wicked’”* (from a report in the Los Angeles Times on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1987, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-12-09-mn-18510-story.html> ). In other words, Bennett was the maverick which the Church of England really needed but yet which immediately conspired to drive him out of this world. He was hounded by the press, and he is said to have taken his life with a hosepipe from his car exhaust three days after he was outed by the Church of England hierarchy, despite all his friends saying that because of his faith he would never have committed suicide. Some have suggested that more sinister background pressure was brought to bear on this unfortunate man who naively had no idea of the satanic venom which would be directed at him by his own denomination and religious affiliates. I might even venture to say that this account could well appear in part 4 of this section under the heading “Liquidation”!

This level of the religious establishment's response to those who dare to be mavericks, defamation, is one which usually 'does the trick'. It is easy to ruin a good person's life with this. Even if publicly shown to be false reports, most people will still carry the damning idea that 'there is no smoke without fire'.

### **3) Persecution**

When the ridicule and the defamation prove to be of no effect, then the persecution can begin in earnest. Psychological torture, incitement to imprisonment, denial of necessities are but some of the methods used. Let's face it, as Jesus said, *"all who desire to live devoutly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"* (2 Timothy 3:12). The genuine disciple of Christ, as the maverick that he is in this world, will know persecution personally, intimately.

### **4) Liquidation**

If none of the above methods work in the suppression of the maverick, then the final resort is complete liquidation. Please do not say that this never happens and could never happen in the Church. You would have to be very naïve to imagine that. And all the while, Christ's voice is saying, *"Be faithful unto death"* (Revelation 2:10).

We will have occasion to refer back to all the above as we deal with individual cases in different eras of the pilgrimage of the Lord's people through this world.

## **V. THE MAVERICK IN THE BIBLE**

The necessity for mavericks among the earthly manifestations of God's people did not really arise until the Lord began to deal with them as a corporate nation. This commenced with the inauguration of the people of Israel as a law-covenanted nation at Sinai. The giving of the Law provided the perfect opportunity for those who wished to ignore the spirituality which lay at back of it and would instead rather concentrate on going through the motions of the dotting of i's and the crossing of t's. Religious establishmentarians just love the outward form of religion: they especially revel in the enforcement of their outward forms and

beliefs on as many others as they can coerce into it. The more people who do as they do, the better they feel about their husk of a religion.

Essentially the religious establishmentarian camp is made up of unbelievers. In the Old Covenant era the nation Israel — God's chosen people at that time — was an amalgamation of unbelievers and true believers, with the latter as a small minority or "remnant" throughout the entire period of that covenant's operation. It was for this reason that the so-called "revivals" which took place during this period were only short-lived — usually for as long as the life or faithfulness of the leader who inspired them.

### Non-Disciples of Christ in the *Ekklesia* are Monstrous Impostors

In the New Covenant era, the *Ekklesia* with whom this Covenant is made does not consist of one solitary nation made up of both believers and unbelievers, but rather of a transnational, multicultural group *consisting wholly of spiritually regenerated people* who have no real place in this world, being sojourners and pilgrims here until the time of the renewal of all things. Therefore, although the unbelievers among the Old Covenant people were in the group by right (for the covenant was made with the entire nation), when unbelievers are found among the New Covenant people they are monstrous impostors. **Unfortunately, because of the establishmentarian approach of so many influential churchmen at various stages of the Gospel Age, coupled with their faulty concept of the *Ekklesia* as a carbon copy of the nation Israel, these impostors and hypocrites have been allowed to predominate and dictate the Church's agenda for the greater part of Church history.**

It is out of the remnant of believers among both Old and New Covenant peoples that the maverick has been drawn — the one who would call the Old Covenant nation or New Covenant Church back to faithfulness and repentance, or to remind it of some important truths. Let us now briefly examine the role of the maverick in both these eras, with examples drawn from the biblical data.

## 1) The Maverick in the Old Testament

In many ways, the maverick in the Old Covenant era was continually confronted by impostors because of the predominance of unbelievers who made up the majority in the nation Israel. As one example of their propensity for apostasy, when Moses went up the mountain for a short while to commune with God (Exodus 32:1-10), he had barely been gone for a moment when almost the entire nation was orgiastically worshipping a dumb metal idol – and that was after having witnessed the most astonishing miracles ever performed in the history of the universe. Imagine that! I mean, come on! The Red Sea parting then swallowing up their Egyptian enemies. Manna and quail coming out of the sky miraculously to feed them in the Desert of Sin (Exodus 16:1-21). Who could possibly want to worship a dumb idol after all that?

Because of this preponderance to apostasy – in which even the genuine believers could also occasionally acquiesce on a temporary basis (witness Aaron's wimpish compliance in relation to the above-mentioned golden calf incident) – the Lord raised up certain mavericks who could *"see and hear what others knew nothing about"* – that is, the Prophets. The prophets were mavericks! As examples of the maverick raised up to combat establishmentarianism and its resulting complacency, I will give just two illustrations. Elijah the Tishbite and Jeremiah of Anathoth.

### The Spiritual Suffering of the Maverick

Elijah is introduced to us, in the biblical narrative, as making a dramatic and sudden appearance before King Ahab (1 Kings 17:1), to whom he declared that there would be no rain except at the prophet's word. **The "outsider" status of the maverick is emphasised (and exemplified) by his adaptability to even the most harsh and extreme conditions – which he will inevitably have to suffer as a result of his character and message.**

Both Elijah and Jeremiah experienced such situations to such an extent that one became almost suicidal (1 Kings 19:4) and the other wished he had never been born (Jeremiah 15:10). Such spiritual dark nights of the soul are inevitable for the one who is a genuine maverick and not just a dilettante.

## The Usurpers in the Church Call the Maverick a 'Troublemaker'

A vivid illustration of the kind of treatment received by mavericks in the wake of their pronouncements against the religious establishment occurred when King Ahab had a meeting with Elijah prearranged by Obadiah. As the Word states: *"When Ahab saw Elijah, he said to him, 'Is that you, O troubler of Israel?'"* (1 Kings 18:17). **It is a singular fact that the establishment will always characterise the maverick as being the troublemaker, when the truth is that the need for the maverick has only been occasioned in the first instance by the trouble brought on the people of God by a corrupt religious establishment.**<sup>11</sup> This is an ironic inversion and projection under which the maverick will always have to suffer, and which is a source of great anguish to him. This is yet another hallmark of mavericks: Although they are always given great strength by the Lord to carry out their commission, they often suffer from the most crushing despair as a direct result of the understanding they have of the depths of human depravity and acute blindness even among their own people (e.g. Lamentations 2:11; Jeremiah 20:7-18).

In the repeated decay of the nation Israel, one can see the bedrock of religious establishmentarianism: **Conformity to the values of the world (the gods, the idols, and the morality of the surrounding heathen nations), acceptance of the outward traditions of men over and above the commandments of God, and a blurring of the biblical Antithesis enshrined in Genesis 3:15.**

One can also see exemplified in these two prophets (and, indeed, in many of the other Old Testament prophets) the classic responses of the religious establishment to the maverick: **Ridicule, defamation, persecution and liquidation.** In Elijah's case, although Jezebel attempted desperately to liquidate him (1 Kings 19:2), it never actually materialised. In the case of Jeremiah, not only was he thrown down a shaft in an unsuccessful

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<sup>11</sup> For a psycho-spiritual analysis of this "Troubler of Israel" phenomenon today, see my article, "[Who Are the Real Troublers of the Church?](#)" Click on that title to go there.

attempt to destroy him (Jeremiah 38:6) — although he was subsequently rescued — but, according to a couple of the early Church Fathers (Tertullian and Jerome), he was later stoned to death on the banks of the Nile after delivering his final devastating sermon to the recalcitrant Israelite mob who had determined to ride out the post-Babylonian captivity era in Egypt (Jeremiah 43:1 – 44:30; cf. Hebrews 11:37).

### **The Truth-Telling Disciple of Christ Will Always Be an Outcast**

**We see clearly that the prophet in the Old Testament was functioning as a real outsider — a maverick living close to the edge, an outcast with few friends (if any at all), rejected by family, destined to a life of loneliness, low personal kudos, bereft of any respect from the establishment of the day, and always forced to live in abject dependence on the Lord from one day to the other — all of which he will find exhilarating, despite the suffering and spiritual depression, for that is what suffering for God produces in those who reject human or demonic falsehood and embrace Divine truth. God’s word burns in them like a fire and “like a hammer that smashes a rock” (Jeremiah 23:29) and it can never be withheld. As Jeremiah declared:**

*“If I say, ‘I will not mention Him or speak any more in His name,’ His message becomes a fire burning in my heart, shut up in my bones, and I become weary of holding it in, and I cannot prevail” (Jeremiah 20:9).*

This is more of a model for the truth-telling disciple of the Lord of all ages than many would care to admit, having had our concept of discipleship spoiled by generations of establishment-church type of effeminate, “kitten-on-a-chocolate-box”, Helen Steiner Rice sentimentality and quasi-respectability. But truth-telling disciples — mavericks, in fact — are not among those who walk on the wide and spacious route but instead they resolutely remain on the strait and narrow one (Matthew 7:13).

### **2) The Maverick in the New Testament**

Without wishing to be disrespectful, I can assert that by far the greatest and most table-turning, provocative maverick that has ever been among the Lord’s people was none other than the Lord

Jesus Himself! Although the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ is recorded in the New Testament scriptures, as well as being the herald and inaugurator of the New Covenant, the fact is that He was really the last of the prophets living under the Old Covenant and, as such, He came to deliver the final promise of destruction of the Lord's ancient covenant people which would be fulfilled in AD.70. In other words He was the final prophetic word from the Lord (Hebrews 1:1-2) — the culmination of all that Elijah and Jeremiah had represented in their own day.

By the time of our Lord's incarnation, religious life in the hands of the officials had truly degenerated into a stale legalism and reliance on the outward symbols and ceremonies as being efficacious in themselves to purge sin (Romans 9:31-32; 10:3). The officials themselves were total hypocrites, and when the Son of God was born into the midst of this, the scene was set for a head-on confrontation. Jesus' preaching against this apostasy was so dynamic that many of the common people thought that He was actually a resurrected Elijah, Jeremiah or John the Baptist (Matthew 16:14)! Even His disciples thought they had another Elijah with them, as they demonstrated by asking Him to call down fire from heaven (Luke 9:54), just as Elijah had done on the bands of soldiers who came at the behest of Ahab to arrest him.

### **In John the Baptist all the Hallmarks of the Maverick are Manifest**

And before we deal at greater length with the Lord Jesus, we would do well to consider John the Baptist as yet another classic example of the biblical maverick: Living in extremely unorthodox conditions, with an equally unorthodox diet and mode of dress (those of a true prophet), he had no qualms speaking the stark truth to the Pharisees and other religious establishmentarians of the day who came out to the wilderness to hear what this extraordinary man had to say (Matthew 3:7-12; Luke 3:7-20). Jesus actually equated him with Elijah (Matthew 11:13-14). In the end, his outspokenness (Mark 6:17-18) cost him his head... literally (Matthew 14:3-12).

With John the Baptist all the hallmarks of the maverick at the hands of a religious establishment come right to the fore. He was

maliciously **defamed** (they actually said he was demon-possessed, Matthew 11:18), and he was **persecuted** (Matthew 14:3), and all by those who were the arch religious fundamentalists and state establishmentarians of the day! Eventually he was also **liquidated** by the latter (Matthew 14:10). It is true that John was defamed by the “religious fundamentalists of the day” and that it was Herod who persecuted and liquidated him. But let’s get this absolutely straight here. The architect of this sequence — ridicule, defamation, persecution and liquidation — no matter which humans are involved, is none other than Satan. For he simply uses human instruments to complete the process.

We may well wonder how many churches today — if John the Baptist were to reappear among them — would go to great lengths to ridicule, defame, persecute and even liquidate him, to ensure that this voice crying in the wilderness should no longer be heard among them. For, as a great prophet of God, he would have torn apart so much of what passes for church life today. **Vital truths which shine a light on people’s waywardness are never received well in the bland towers of respectable establishmentarianism.**

In John the Baptist, we have a model of Christian discipleship. For those who follow in the footsteps of Christ can only expect to suffer in their lives at the hands of the religious establishment. When the Lord Jesus appeared among men with the greatest ever spiritual message, the smug characters who formed the religious establishment of the day believed that they already knew all there was to be known, that they already did all there was to be done, in order to be right with God and His Word. And they were willing to go to any lengths to protect their interests and authority — even to destroy the One who came as the pinnacle of Old Testament spirituality, **their very own Messiah!** The situation has changed little even today. Dare to criticise the religious establishment — of whatever hue and colour — and you will pay dearly for the act. Believe me, I speak with experience.

### **The Lord Jesus was the Ultimate Maverick**

The Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate model of the maverick at the hands of the religious establishment. The Jewish doctors and

theologians of the time had conformed to the values of the world and had reduced the spiritual requirements of God and the essence of His Word to a theological and ethical *system* of rules and regulations, and had blurred the biblical Antithesis between the children of God and the children of the devil beyond recognition. In fact, they had blurred it to such an extent that the Lord Jesus accused the members of the religious establishment of being the devil's children (John 8:44)! When the Lord Jesus Christ exposed all this, they did what such men do to all mavericks: They "*laughed Him to scorn*" (ridicule), said He "*has Beelzebub*" and was "*a wine-bibber and a glutton*" (defamation), smote, bruised and wounded Him (persecution), and finally, when all this failed to stop Him speaking the Truth, they "*nailed Him to a tree*" (liquidation).

**Such will be the fate – in one way or another, figuratively or literally – of every child of God who dares to stand – I mean *really* stand – for the truth against the religious establishment of the day.** But, in imitation of their Master, they will endure His cross, scorning the shame, for the sake of the joy that is set before them in the age to come (cf. Hebrews 12:2). Religious establishmentarianism – although it still hypocritically pays lip service to it in its preaching – has taken that cross (which every true child of God should bear) out of the experience of the disciple of Christ. The apostolic directive to those who would be faithful to the Word tells us to "*go forth to Him, **outside the camp**, bearing His reproach*" (Hebrews 13:13) – a directive which the religious establishment has chosen to ignore by becoming part of the satanic world-system. If the Son of Man had nowhere to lay His head (Matthew 8:20), why should it be any different for us, figuratively speaking at least?

## VI. THE MAVERICK IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The real departure of the Church from the tortuous pathway which had been walked by all those faithful to Christ occurred with the melding of Church and state in the reign (AD.324-337) of the Roman Emperor Constantine. As the Church became part of the establishment it began a steady decline into the most appalling

corruption. The joyful proclamation of the Gospel and the regeneration which results from it were eclipsed by a new method of propagation: The power of the state. Dr. J.L. Mosheim, in his excellent ecclesiastical history, says of this period:

“There is no doubt but that the victories of Constantine the Great, the fear of punishment, and the desire of pleasing this mighty conqueror, and his imperial successors, were the weighty arguments that moved whole nations, as well as particular persons, to embrace Christianity”.<sup>12</sup>

The true *Ekklesia* — instead of being at the heart of the spiritual hub of Constantinianism — then became a real threat to the evolution of the Church-state idea. **This was really the moment when the manifestation of the *Ekklesia* on earth corrupted and ceased to represent Christ and instead began to represent the devil in all his malice.** In his brilliant analysis of this phenomenon in “The Grand Inquisitor” scene in his novel, “*The Brothers Karamazov*”, Fyodor Dostoevsky has the Roman Catholic Grand Inquisitor frankly admitting this to an imaginary Jesus who has “dropped in” on the Inquisition. The Grand Inquisitor says to the Lord Jesus:

“We have corrected your great work and have based it on *miracle, mystery, and authority*. And men rejoiced that they were once more led like sheep and that the terrible gift which had brought them so much suffering had at last been lifted from their hearts.....Why, then, have you come to meddle with us now?.....And would I conceal our secret from you?.....Well, then, listen. We are not with you but with *him* [i.e. Satan, AM]: that is our secret! It’s a long

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<sup>12</sup> F.L. Mosheim, *An Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern, from the Birth of Christ to the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century*, (Blackie, Fullarton & Co., 1827), Vol. I, p.91. This two-volume work is well worth obtaining, if it can be found in second-hand bookshops. Interestingly, Mosheim was R.L. Dabney’s favourite Church historian, and he recommended him to his students.

time — eight centuries — since we left you and went over to *him*. Exactly eight centuries ago we took from *him* what you rejected with scorn, the last gift he offered you, after having shown you all the kingdoms of the earth: we took from *him* Rome and the sword of Caesar and proclaimed ourselves the rulers of the earth, the sole rulers, though to this day we have not succeeded in bringing our work to total completion”.<sup>13</sup>

This whole scene in Dostoevsky’s book is a work of genius, in which the Vatican is said to have sided with Satan for its worldly progress (which is indeed true!), having taken on the mantle from the Roman empire (which never really finished but simply transmuted into the Roman Catholic state church). Jesus, in fact, firmly rejected the wielding of power through the state when He refused the kingdoms of the world from Satan (Matthew 4:8). **He knew only too well that there is a gulf fixed between the things which belong to Caesar and those which belong to God.** It is, therefore, very strange that the folly of Constantine’s state-Church has persisted to this day in the minds of men as something to be welcomed. **Any church body which becomes part of the establishment — the secular satanic world-system — automatically loses its right to be called the *Ekklesia*,**<sup>14</sup> **for then it will no longer be *counterculture* but *proculture*.**

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<sup>13</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, (Penguin Books, 1958), pp.301-302. The section on “The Grand Inquisitor” is one of the most brilliant pieces of writing ever to fall from the human pen, and will have you sitting on the edge of your seat gasping with amazement at Dostoyevsky’s genius and insight into the sheer corruption of human power — especially that wielded by the ‘dignitaries’ of the church. You can also see a short video performance of this superb piece, with Sir John Gielgud giving a mightily powerful performance as the Grand Inquisitor here: <https://youtu.be/om6HcUUa8DI>

<sup>14</sup> The word “secular” comes from the Latin *saeculum*, meaning literally “of this age”.

In fact, this merger of Church and state enabled heresies to be much more easily disseminated. **Accordingly, from the moment that the state-Church idea was embraced, there arose the urgent need for a continuing maverick – one who would take a firm stand against the religious establishment of the day for concerns which can be regarded as essential to the furtherance of truth, justice and the universal cause of Christ.**

#### Athanasius Contra Mundum

As one example of such a man, consider the case of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria (AD.c.296-373). It is no exaggeration to say that the stand that this man took against a heresy which threatened Christian truth – perhaps more than at any other time in history – ensured that there would still be a faith to teach (I speak from a human standpoint, of course). G.K. Chesterton wryly observed that *“The Church has gone to the dogs at least five times – but each time it was the dog that died!”*<sup>15</sup> This is the framework, the Church going to the dogs, in which we are operating today. It seems that what the vast majority of wayward professing ‘Christians’ think to be ‘the work of God’ today is regarded as nonsense by a considerably smaller number. And that considerably smaller number of quietly faithful souls could begin to doubt itself and even its own sanity, when faced by the fact that most of the “highly respected” and “internationally acclaimed” teachers and authors in the Christian scene today belong to that deluded majority.

The smaller number which I referred to above is mostly made up of insignificant little believers such as myself (and, I hope, you, dear reader), labouring away in obscurity, with hardly any influence at all in the wider Christian scene. My friends, we should not be deterred by that. This is the way it has always been. Just as the majority in Old Testament Israel were not the true people of God, so the majority in what presents itself to the world as the “church” today are not genuine disciples of Christ but are

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<sup>15</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, (Hodder & Stoughton, 1924), pp.294-295.

impostors and usurpers, just as had been prophesied: *“All who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and imposters go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived”* (2 Timothy 3:12-13).

### **Athanasius' Stand Against Arianism**

There have been many such “dogs” which died, as Chesterton put it. One of the first of those was Gnosticism. One only has to look at the way that Gnosticism spread through the churches in the second and third centuries after Christ. Church historian A.M. Renwick has noted that

“by the beginning of the third century A.D. most of the intellectual Christian congregations throughout the Roman empire were to some degree affected by Gnosticism”.<sup>16</sup>

If one wishes to look for a teaching which could “seduce the elect” (if that was possible), one need look no further than Gnosticism. Its main tenets have never had any difficulty seducing the vast numbers of professing Christians who, because of a reliance on inferior human judgement and subjective experience, find themselves unable to rest in the simplicity of the Gospel. As Robert Law says in his great commentary on 1 John:

“Of all the forces with which Christianity had to do battle for its career as the universal religion – whether Jewish legalism, pagan superstition, Greek speculation or Roman imperialism – none, perhaps, placed it in sharper hazard than Gnosticism, that strange, obscure movement, partly intellectual, partly fanatical, which, in the second century, spread with the swiftness of an epidemic over the Church from Syria to Gaul”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Writing in G.W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Eerdmans, 1982, Vol.2, p.484.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Law, *“The Tests of Life: A Study of the First Epistle of St. John”*, T. & T. Clark, 1909, p.26.

And today we have a New Gnosticism which has not only infected the world with its New Age philosophy (what is effectively witchcraft, let us not mince our words) but it has also “*spread with the swiftness of an epidemic over the Church*” from Korea to the U.S.A. in the form of “Prosperity Theology” and Charismatic shenanigans. That is the latest ‘dog’, which has not nearly died yet but, to the contrary, seems to have a new lease of life each day. In fact, the ‘dog’ of Gnosticism appeared to die but it simply morphed into many other occult manifestations – new ‘dogs’.<sup>18</sup>

But then we are in throes of a great apostasy so that should not surprise us. All the ‘dogs’ which plague the visible church will continue until the climax of that apostasy, morphing from one thing to another, after which all will be swiftly dealt a deathblow by the return of the Christ. Though none of this INfects the actual *Ekklesia*, it still Affects it through association as the outside world cannot distinguish between the false church and the true.

Arianism was one of the largest and most vicious of those ‘dogs’ but, due to the maverick stand of Athanasius *contra mundum* (Athanasius *against the world*), that particular ‘dog’ eventually did die. When the first General Council of the Catholic Churches was summoned by Constantine at Nicaea in Bithynia (AD.325), the principal question which was brought before it was that of the doctrine taught by Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria who maintained that the Son of God was a created being, not equal to the Father. Over 300 bishops were in attendance from all parts of the Empire, and the Council was opened in great state by Constantine. On this occasion, the Council decided that the teaching of Arius was false and the Nicene Creed was framed to express the truth of the real Divine Nature of the Son and His equality with the father.

Although this decision was correct, the way of reaching it – by the combined efforts of the Emperor and the Bishops, and

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<sup>18</sup> All of which were encyclopaedically documented in my almost 700-page book, *The Serpent and the Cross: Religious Corruption in an Evil Age*, K & M Books, 1994.

enforcing it by the power of the State, manifested a real departure of the Catholic Church from the doctrines of Scripture. Such arrangements place the Church at the whim of the state ruler. Athanasius was present at the First Council of Nicaea, and was a powerful force in defending the Truth against falsehood. But thereafter he became the target of considerable politicking as the Arian party attempted to reverse the decision made at the First Council. This Arian reaction was headed by Eusebius of Nicomedia who worked on the Emperor's sister, Constantia, and, two years after the Council of Nicaea, Constantine, altering his view, received Arius back from exile. **In the reign of his son Constantius, every single post of Bishop was filled with Arians.** Imagine that! The Government, having now become officially Arian, persecuted the Christians as it had formerly done to the Arians! **Such is the error of placing ecclesiastical authority in the hands of the state.**

Subsequently, through forty-six years and five exiles, Athanasius actively promoted the Truth in the spirit of Christ, in spite of the terrible calumnies which the corrupt religious establishment schemed against him. When one looks into this, one discovers that he was defamed in the most scurrilous fashion. The Meletans, for instance, concocted four ridiculous entirely false charges against him, including the claim that he was guilty of the murder of a certain Arsenius with the intent of obtaining Arsenius' severed hand for the practice of black magic!<sup>19</sup> There are no dishonest lengths too great or too preposterous to which a religious establishment under threat will go in order to destroy its enemy, the maverick in this corrupt world and church, the truth-teller, the genuine servant of Christ.

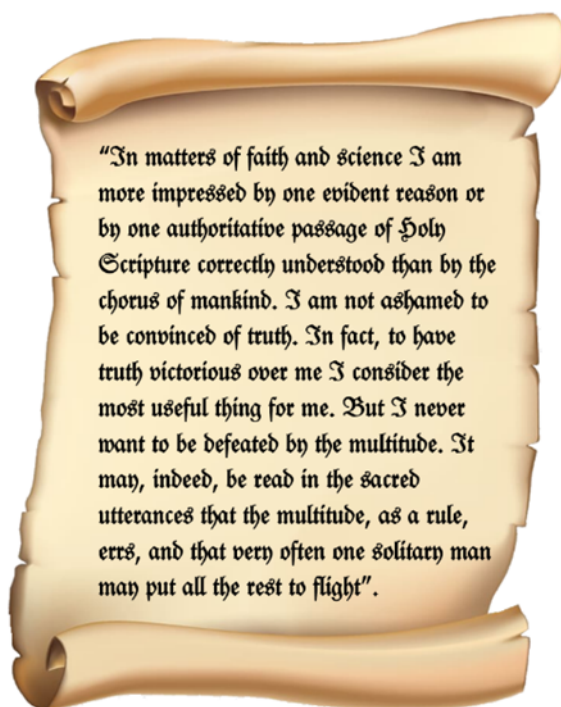
#### **Blessings are the Most Profound During the Darkest Nights of the Soul**

However, a marvellous fact is that Athanasius functioned at his best when in periods of persecution. So it has always been — both corporately in the Church and in the life of the individual believer.

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<sup>19</sup> J.P. Green (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, (N.F.C.E., 1964), Vol. I., p.457.

**Blessings are always at their most profound during and following the darkest nights of the soul.** This is one of the deep things of God manifesting in the lives of Christ's disciples. The more the early Church was persecuted, the more it flourished. The more the believer is persecuted, the more he or she grows. The six years of Athanasius' third exile (356-362) *"was the most stirring in spiritual and literary activity in the whole life of Athanasius"*.<sup>20</sup> While the imperial police scoured the country for him, he actually wrote more than half his extant writings. The Lord always achieves His purpose (Isaiah 55:11), in spite of the conniving of the hubristic religious or state establishment, which is always ignorant of the true workings of spiritual reality. Whenever I think of the situation in which Athanasius found himself, I always have these memorable words of William of Ockham (1285-1347) ringing in my ears:



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<sup>20</sup> A. Robertson, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, (Eerdmans, 1956), Vol. IV, p.lxxxv.

Athanasius was the true maverick among the Lord's people, finding himself in a situation where the Church had become a tool at the whim of the state, where the elders and other leaders had become part of this establishment, and where the faith was under threat. As a result of his stand, he was ridiculed, defamed and persecuted. Only by Divine providence did he avoid liquidation. It was Athanasius *contra mundum*, against the world. There must have been times when he wondered if perhaps he was wrong — that if so many people, including the state and the establishment Church, were opposing him, then there must be a weakness in his thinking. **But this merely goes to show that the true believer's Berean instinct, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, carries far more weight than the deceptive traditions of corrupted elders in the religious establishment.**

## VII. THE MAVERICK IN THE REFORMATION PERIOD

Mavericks abound in the Reformation period. First and foremost in this era was surely Martin Luther (1483-1546), who was prepared to take a stand against the Roman Catholic religious establishment for the furtherance of the truth and the universal cause of Christ. The nailing of his famous ninety-five theses to the church door at Wittenberg in 1517 represented an important and historical break with the ecclesiastical tradition and false teachings of the Roman Catholic church which had been built up over many centuries.

However, although it is widely acknowledged that Luther was a powerful force in the Reformation and was at first prepared to be a maverick in the cause of Christ, he, along with Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), Philip Melancthon (1497-1560) and John Calvin (1509-1564), never really shook off a number of aspects of the Romanism. For though they were willing to renounce Rome in the matters of theology and authority, they retained many vestiges of the Vatican, including the use of state power and law to enforce Christian faith and practice according to the flavour of the day. The heavy-duty authority-wielding had not really changed. They were even willing to execute heretics and others who simply did not go along with their church structure or teaching.

This deviation from New Testament principles resulted in the alienation of many believers who would otherwise have been a good party to the Protestant Reformation. Those believers were scattered around Europe and – although dedicated to severance from Rome – they became the objects of persecution by the newly founded Reformation state-churches because they would not go along with the teaching of the “magisterial” Reformers on such matters as Church order and baptism.

Such a process did not change whether the Romanists or the Calvinists were in power. Indeed, the “magisterial” Reformers were just as avid as their Roman predecessors in their desire to use the full force of civil law against those they regarded as enemies of the faith.

### **The Anabaptists as Mavericks**

The main objects of the new Reformation religious establishment’s persecution were the so-called Anabaptists. The primary stream of Anabaptism had its origins in Zurich, when – after a reformation by the city council under the guidance of Zwingli – some of Zwingli’s followers were dissatisfied with the pace and extent of the reforms and accused him of being too much guided by circumstance rather than New Testament practice. Under the leadership of Conrad Grebel, in conjunction with Felix Manz, Wilhelm Reublin, and Georg Blaurock, these dissidents concluded that Zwingli’s view of the Church was incompatible with the New Testament, insisting that the true Church is a fellowship only of those who believe in Christ and accept His call to discipleship. They rightly said that the whole idea of a state-church – as borrowed by the “magisterial” Reformers from the Vatican – was incompatible with the New Testament.

Part of the teaching of these Anabaptists, as they came to be known, involved a rejection of infant (unbelievers’) baptism. Although Zwingli initially agreed with them that this was primarily a sacral ritual practice which suited the Roman Catholic state-church ideal, he later did an about-turn and became a party to a spate of persecutions of these “Brethren”, as they called themselves. As one writer puts it:

“Zwingli feared that the spread of Anabaptist teaching, with its repudiation of infant baptism, would mean the disintegration of society; therefore he attempted to suppress the movement”.<sup>21</sup>

Imprisonments took place, and a short time later (5th January, 1527) Felix Manz was officially put to death by drowning by the authorities who decreed that such a death was fitting for one who believed already baptised infants should be rebaptised if they were regenerated. The following year at Speyer, the first imperial mandate against the Anabaptists was issued; it is highly significant that this indictment was based on the Roman Emperor Justinian’s Codex of AD.529, which, in seeking to combat the Donatists, had declared rebaptism a capital offence.



One can see clearly here how the mavericks among the Lord’s people will always find themselves in a head-on clash with the religious establishment which will brook *no* opposition. These simple people, who merely wished to be faithful to the New Testament, were ridiculed, had their characters and theology calumniated, became the objects of a fierce persecution which spread right across Europe, and were often liquidated in the process, usually by drowning, as you can see in the ancient image above, with an Anabaptist being thrown trussed-up into a river.

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<sup>21</sup> J.P. Green (ed.), op. cit., Vol. I., p.194.

**Although the magisterial Reformers found their model in Old Testament Israel's treatment of the surrounding nations, one would be hard pressed to show from Christ's example and the whole New Testament witness that they were justified from Scripture in this behaviour.**

It has to be said here that the ecclesiastical upheaval caused by the Reformation — by the very act of standing up against Romanist 'dominionism' — led to a widespread undertow of rebellion in the European scene. Consequently, a great many sects sprang up across the Continent which were heretical in doctrine and chaotic in church government. Unfortunately, these unorthodox, anarchic movements — such as the Peasants Revolt in 1524 led by Thomas Münzer (c.1490-1525) — tended to give a bad name to *all* the Anabaptist gatherings, however biblical and reasonable they were in faith and practice. This resulted in the writing of a great deal of defamatory material which unfairly tarred all Anabaptists with the same brush. Religious establishmentarians love to tar people with brushes. They positively thrive on it.

#### **Yet Another Example of Ridicule, Defamation, Persecution and Liquidation**

For example, even though I have enormous respect for John Calvin's theology and stance for the truth in the Reformation period, to read his violent blusterings against the Anabaptists in his *"Institutes of the Christian Religion"*, one cannot believe that he had any real acquaintance with the character and teachings of these gentle mavericks who were just as opposed to Rome as he.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, reading the assorted writings of the Anabaptists (those which managed to survive the deliberate destruction of most of their manuscripts), one forms a completely different impression to that of the *"frantic spirits"* referred to by the Reformer (another example of the kind of defamation indulged in by religious establishmentarians).

For those who believe so avidly that God's eternal moral law is enshrined in the Ten Commandments, it is most strange that they should have been so ready to *bear false witness* against their

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<sup>22</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, xvi.1-32.

neighbours (brothers) – and even murder them in cold blood – while compromising the Church at a vital part of its historical development. **This is one of the great unspoken anomalies of the Reformation – although we would surely have to acknowledge the hand of Satan in this in an attempt to undermine what started out as a good work.**

Many believers today may well ask what possible contribution the Anabaptists made to the corpus of Christian truth over the years. However, these mavericks, in common with so many others who have gone that pathway before them, serve to remind us of three things:

- The need to have the Bible as our final authority rather than the traditions, systems or politics of mere humans.
- The importance of maintaining a real distinguishing between the two seeds (cf. Gen.3:15) – the biblical Antithesis, as mentioned in Part 3, §3 above.
- That the disciple who tries to live simply and faithfully will always be persecuted for upholding the truth (2 Timothy 3:12-13).

One wonders what the Church as a whole would be like today if the “magisterial” Reformers had ‘gone the whole hog’, as it were, and thrown off completely those sacralist and authoritarian elements of the Roman yoke which they continued to wear. That we will never know; but it is a tantalising thought.

## VIII. THE NEED FOR MAVERICKS TODAY

Because of the perennial tendency of the visible church towards ossification and compromise with the world, the maverick has been a necessary protagonist and inspirer of true faith at all stages of history. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been no stranger to the need for the maverick and, as he or she consciously stands against the errant tide of history, there has been no shortage of dangerous currents for them to resist.

The past one hundred and twenty years of this fallen world and evil age have seen the gradual widespread acceptance – by a professing Church in the throes of a great apostasy – of every

heresy imaginable: an errant Bible, feminism, women ordained to a ruling/teaching ministry, interfaithism, false ecumenism, homosexuality, the 'enthusiasm' (in the old sense of the word) of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement,<sup>23</sup> so-called "Prosperity Theology", the effeminacy and wishy-washiness of the New Evangelicalism. Compromise on every side.



### The Superannuated Sleep of the Bishops

This is especially the case in the establishment Church of England. Where are the mavericks within that organisation who will publicly and credibly stand up to the evil among its leadership? When Gareth Bennett did so in 1987 (see page 21), he quickly wound-up dead in a hail of metaphorical bullets! Its archbishops

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<sup>23</sup> By 'enthusiasm' I am referring to "*religious extravagance*" (Chambers English Dictionary). The Puritans used the word "*enthusiasm*" to refer to utterances and physical manifestations which were claimed to be happening under the pretence of 'Divine inspiration'. Thus "*enthusiasts*" were those who readily gave vent to any religious feeling which was based on subjective sentiment rather than objective truth. Today these terms would encompass the extravagances of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements, including the bizarre manifestations which masqueraded under the title "*Toronto Blessing*" and the associated "*revivalism*" which was a watershed of evil in church history. Incidentally, the word "*enthusiasm*" has a very telling etymology, being derived from the Greek *enthousiazein*, a compound word meaning 'to be inspired by a god', which was derived from *en*, 'in', and *theos*, 'a god'.

and bishops are nothing more than politicians — and ‘woke’ *liberal* politicians at that! They can do what they like — even deny the truth of the Bible — and no one raises a word against it. While the world attacks the Church and its teaching and so much confusion abounds, the bishops enjoy a superannuated sleep in their palaces and mansions.

One of the more disturbing aspects of this modern smorgasbord of deviations from truth is the fact that multitudes who know that these things are harmful to the church never offer a protest. So tame have so many evangelicals become today that they lack the backbone to be “protestants” of any kind, preferring instead to kowtow to the idea of a phoney unity based on nothing of any importance. And this phoney unity is being engineered by people who should know better.

### **Who for Him will Go?**

This is why the true maverick, who understands the Christian duty of being a person of courage, is so necessary at this hour. As the hymn-writer, Frances Havergal, has put it:

“Who is on the Lord’s side? Who will serve the King?  
Who will be His helpers, other lives to bring?  
Who will leave the world’s side? Who will face the foe?  
Who is on the Lord’s side? Who for Him will go?  
By Thy call of mercy, by Thy grace divine,  
We are on the Lord’s side—Savior, we are Thine!

Not for weight of glory, nor for crown and palm,  
Enter we the army, raise the warrior psalm;  
But for love that claimeth lives for whom He died:  
He whom Jesus saveth marches on His side.  
By Thy love constraining, by Thy grace divine,  
We are on the Lord’s side—Savior, we are Thine!

Jesus, Thou hast bought us, not with gold or gem,  
But with Thine own lifeblood, for Thy diadem;  
With Thy blessing filling each who comes to Thee,  
Thou hast made us willing, Thou hast made us free.

By Thy grand redemption, by Thy grace divine,  
We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!

Fierce may be the conflict, strong may be the foe,  
But the King's own army none can overthrow;  
'Round His standard ranging, vict'ry is secure,  
For His truth unchanging makes the triumph sure.  
Joyfully enlisting, by Thy grace divine,  
We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!

Chosen to be soldiers, in an alien land,  
Chosen, called, and faithful, for our Captain's band;  
In the service royal, let us not grow cold,  
Let us be right loyal, noble, true and bold.  
Master, wilt Thou keep us, by Thy grace divine,  
Always on the Lord's side—Savior, always Thine!"

Why are hymns of such deep quality not being written today? Why are there so many effeminate and soppy ditties which are designed to create an altered state of consciousness in their hapless participants? Where are the heroes of the faith today who not only have such hymns in their hearts but who are also in the thick of the *real* spiritual battle? I'll tell you where they are. They are scattered evenly and relatively hidden among the people of God. The majority will not be 'big names'—for so many of the 'big names' have failed us; their pride prevents them from being counted as standing for truth when it may hurt them or when their hubristic status is under threat. But there are many unsung heroes beaver away quietly in the precious calling in which the Lord has placed them. Mavericks every one of them. Their work will one day be counted for what it is worth (Matthew 25:21 & 23; 1 Corinthians 3:12-13). But in this world, they beaver away unrecognized, and that is fine with them, for the Lord sees it all.

## EPILOGUE

Our brief study draws to a close. We have only drawn the skeleton of this phenomenon of the maverick among the Lord's people, for whom there has been a constant necessity for millennia due to the imperfect nature of humanity and the repeated tendency of the

professing Church to ossification and degeneracy. But we have the basis of a sociological and religious phenomenon which, with further study, can be traced through every era of human history as well as among the Lord's people: The presence of the ones who can *see and hear things that others know nothing about*.

Although some may baulk at the concept of a "maverick" in the Church today, we have seen that the Old Testament prophets themselves can rightly be called such — men raised up by God in the hour of need to recall His people from partaking in deadness, religious formalism, sorcery, idolatry, and a decline into worldly compromise with the contemporary civil and religious powers.

One of the principal reasons that such decline occurs is that people are so easily predisposed to falling in behind other people and being mesmerized by their notions and schemings. Perhaps that is the reason for the widespread denominational sectarianism into which the Protestant Reformation eventually faded. But we must have only one Master and Teacher, and be prepared to be mavericks in the cause of Christ, standing up — if faithfulness calls — against all the might and authority of the professing church of the day, and even that of the civil powers, if they hurl out commands which defy the Law of God.

#### **Dare to Be Your Own kind of Disciple as God Intended**

**So dare to be a Maverick!** Do not just fall in line with some church culture (with the accent on the first four letters of that word). So much of church CULTure has so many people using the same kinds of clichés, bodily gestures, buzz-words — even the same pseudo-pious inflections of the voice, and so on. **Dare to be your own kind of disciple, as God intended, rather than the clone which so many churches influence so many to become.** He made us as the individuals we are meant to be, under authority to Him. So ensure that God broke the mould with you! **Be counterculture.** Step outside the box of mere tradition and shibboleths. **Be courageous.** Stand up for those truths which others are fearfully avoiding. **Be unafraid of, and unfazed by, unpopularity.** Such unpopularity (especially in the wayward churches of today) 'goes with the territory' of discipleship to the God-Man, Jesus the Christ

who is your Master and whose Spirit indwells you and who Himself came into direct conflict with the many religious establishmentarians of His time. **Finally, find a fellowship where you can do all that and be like that, or make one.**

In truth, all genuine disciples of Christ are mavericks in this world and especially in terms of the all-pervasive false church which the world, under the powerful influence of the devil, has concocted. **Like the cows of the farmer, Samuel Maverick, the maverick among the Lord's people has no *mere man's* brand on him or her. For he has the very Name of God written on his forehead (Revelation 3:11-12) and, as the Lord promised all those who persevere in the face of persecution, he will eventually wear the crown of life.**

In heaven there will be no need for, nor any occurrence of, blind conformity to outward tradition or the pseudo-authority of humans. Neither, thankfully, will there be any need for mavericks. Even so, despite his or her rough edges, the maverick remains a necessary prick in the crusty conscience of the wayward 'Christian' scene of our time. Ω

**Email:** [diakrisis-project@outlook.com](mailto:diakrisis-project@outlook.com) — **Website:** <https://diakrisis-project.com>

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