

# The Tarnished Prophet of the 16th Century

## THE LEGACY OF NOSTRADAMUS

by M. Kurt Goedelman

Although he was born and lived nearly five hundred years ago, Michel de Nostredame is considered to be one of the most esteemed visionaries of all time. His predictions are said to have "mystified scholars." The oracles of the 16th century French physician, scientist and astrologer, more commonly known as Nostradamus (the Latinized form of his surname), were used by Adolf Hitler during the Second World War as propaganda to encourage the success of his military campaigns. In turn, both Winston Churchill and the United States responded by publicizing other of his predictions which they claimed underscored Hitler's demise. MGM Studios produced a motion picture newsreel, *Nostradamus Says So*, which was shown in movie theaters across the country during the war-torn 1940s.

More recently, Nostradamus has gained a significant resurgence of popularity during the last half of the 20th century. A 1981 feature film narrated by Orson Welles titled *The Man Who Saw Tomorrow*,<sup>1</sup> a nationally broadcast television special in 1991 adapted from the movie and hosted by Charlton Heston,<sup>2</sup> numerous full-length books and smaller booklets containing his prophecies and their interpretations, a staple in supermarket tabloids which have found him useful for their prophecy articles, and

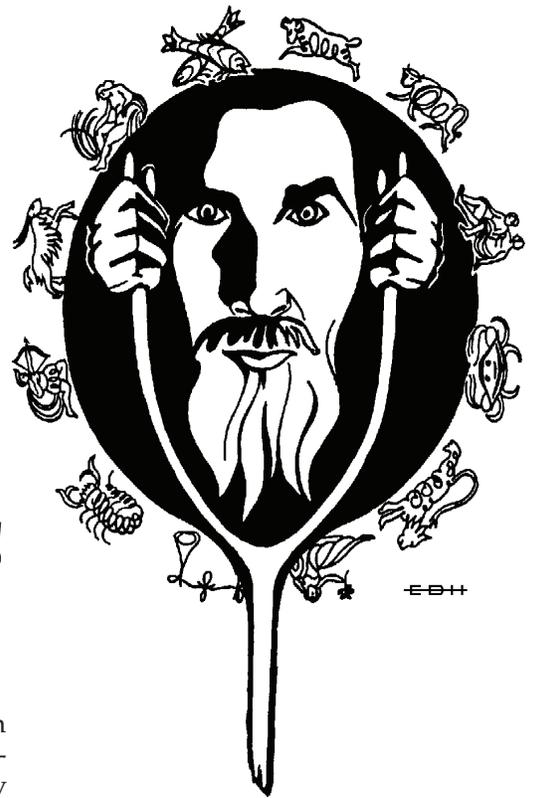
a quantum leap into cyberspace with several web sites posting his predictions<sup>3</sup> have all combined to amplify his reputation as a "prophet."

Despite his refreshed publicity and fame, the Christian's awareness and response is greatly lacking. Dr. Robert A. Morey, in his brief treatment of astrology, devoted slightly more than a page to Nostradamus.<sup>4</sup> Very little else, from a biblical perspective, has been written to evaluate this physician-turned-prophet.

In a 1983 newsletter, PFO briefly examined the ongoing fascination with the man and his predictions.<sup>5</sup> It is an article that has remained in demand and one, because of its brevity, needs to be revisited. Moreover, with the time and seasons of his "end-time visions" approaching, and as we settle into the next millennium, his celebrity status surely will only gain new life and increase dramatically.

### THE MAKING OF A PROPHET

Nostradamus, the oldest of five sons, was born Dec. 14, 1503, in the town of Saint Remy in Provence, France. His family is claimed to have been of Jewish descent and had been converted to Catholicism by the time Nostradamus turned nine years of age. Oxford scholar and Nostradamus



biographer, Erika Cheetham notes that "his parents are listed in 1512 as being part of the new Christian community."<sup>6</sup> His family claimed their Jewish ancestry to be from the "tribe of Issachar" (1 Chronicles 12:32) and this purported pedigree gave Nostradamus his gift of prophecy.

Yet, Cheetham emphasizes the significance of his exposure to Judaism: "It is important to remember the Jewish element of Nostradamus' childhood when trying to decipher the Prophecies, as he was greatly influenced by occult Jewish literature."<sup>7</sup> According to many of his biographers, an appetite for astrology, magic and the occult was constant and a lifelong force.

In his late teens, Nostradamus attended Montpellier, the most famous school of medicine in France, for education in philosophy and the medical arts. His career as a physician was accented when his country became plague-riddled in 1525. The young healer went from town to town treating the sick and dispensing some of his own cures. When he first married early in life, tragedy struck as

(continues on page 13)

his wife and two young children died in 1533. For the next decade, a despondent Nostradamus wandered throughout Europe. He remarried in 1544 and by his second wife had, according to one report, four children (another biographer says six).

Although he enjoyed a prominent and lifelong career as a doctor, what generates admiration for him today came for him late in life. It was not until 1555, at age 52, that he completed and published the initial part of his collection of prophecies. His recognition as an author was enjoyed for only a decade as he died of dropsy in 1566. Additionally, his acceptance as a healer seemed more tolerable than that of a soothsayer. Author Charles A. Ward observed:

“When the work made its appearance, it divided the public. Some called the prophet a simple visionary, or, in coarser phrase, a fool; others accused him of magic, and of being in too close treaty with the Devil to be honest. A few held their judgment in suspense, and would pronounce no opinion on the subject. A vast number of the grandees and of the learned, both at home and abroad, thought that he was endowed with a gift supernatural; and amongst these were Henri II. and Catherine de Medici. It remained to the *esprits forts* [i.e., strong spirits] and the ignorant public, who knew nothing of him but his name, to pronounce him a charlatan and impostor. There is one thing certain, he felt much hesitation as to publishing at all; and, when he took that step at last, he addressed the book to his infant son, and not to any public character, in the year 1555.”<sup>8</sup>

Yet by the next century most suspicion seemed to have completely ceased. The distinction, and even compulsory reading, of his writings became a reality. Ward further informs:

“Touching the prophecies of Nostradamus, Théophile de Garencières gives us an interesting fact, that, after the primer, it was the first book at school in which he learnt to read. It was the custom in France then (*i.e.* 1618) to initiate children by that book. They thought the crabbed and obsolete words, such as long survived in the English law, would give the scholars some idea of the old French language; so that the book got republished from year to year like an almanac.”<sup>9</sup>

Cheetham also adds that:

“Nostradamus is probably the only author who could claim that his work has never been out of print for over four hundred years, apart from the Bible. The interest he generated is extraordinary. On an average about thirty books, either editions of the Prophecies, or critical appreciations of them, have been published each century since his death.”<sup>10</sup>

The endurance of his revelations, some say, was itself foretold by the visionary himself. In his epistle to Henry the Second, King of France, Nostradamus wrote:

“Notwithstanding such as cannot be restrained from the exercise of the malignancy of the evil spirit, [there is hope that] *by the lapse of time, and after my extinction here on earth, my writings will be more valued than during my lifetime.*”<sup>11</sup>

### HIS CENTURIES OF PROPHECIES

Nostradamus’ illustrious legacy of prophecy is said to contain over 1000 predictions, half of which his proponents assert have already been fulfilled. His prophecies are said to know neither time nor geographic barriers. They claim to comprise numerous centuries and many dealt with his homeland of France. Others embrace the world. His prophetic utterances were published under the name, *Centuries of Prophecies*, but in fact have nothing to do with time.

The title is descriptive of his prophecies, which are delivered in one hundred sets of four-line verses (also called “quatrains”) in each book.

Today’s supermarket tabloid reader or movie viewer is likely unaware of the cumbersome and awkward verbiage contained in the quatrains of Nostradamus. The *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* describes:

“The vaticinations of Nostradamus which secured his fame are in verse, and are written in quatrains of rough, rude, unintelligible, and incorrigible French, in tottering and halting metre, with rugged, harsh, and often unmanageable rhymes, clattering or jingling at the ends of alternate lines. ... They remain for the most part incapable of comprehension, and are scarcely rendered more perspicuous by the English version.”<sup>12</sup>

In some cases, Nostradamus added to the complexity by confusing French with Latin and Greek words. Remarkably, it is because of the arduous and difficult wording of his prophecies that has given him an added measure of success. Moreover, these prophetic quatrains are quite vague and extremely general, which further warrants a great deal of success.

### WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET

Much of the good fortune as to the fulfillment of Nostradamus’ predictions lies solely in mind of the interpreter. There is no clearer example of this than the prophecies now attributed to the assassinations of brothers John F. Kennedy in 1963 and Robert F. Kennedy in 1968. In Century I, Quatrain 26, Nostradamus wrote:

“The great man will be struck down in the day by a thunderbolt.

An evil deed, foretold by the bearer of a petition.

According to the prediction, another falls at night time.

Conflict at Reims, London, and pestilence in Tuscany.”

To this quatrain, Cheetham in her 1973 volume ascribes this interpretation:

"The first three lines here may apply to the assassination of the two Kennedy brothers. John F. Kennedy was shot down (thunderbolt) in broad daylight at Dallas, Texas on 22nd November 1963 by the psychopath, Lee Harvey Oswald. The other man linked with him who is killed at night, was his brother Robert F. Kennedy who was shot down on 5th June 1968 in the early morning while celebrating his victory in the presidential primary elections at an hotel. Line 2, the fact that the assassination had been told by the bearer of a petition may refer to the many death threats John F. Kennedy and his brother received during their terms in office. The troubles in France, England and Italy would refer to the world repercussions to these assassinations."<sup>13</sup>

The Orson Welles-narrated movie concurs with Cheetham's interpretation and further stresses the understanding of the quatrain's second line by claiming that the late psychic Jeanne Dixon made several attempts to warn President Kennedy from making a trip to Texas prior to the fateful day in November.

Yet, it can be demonstrated that interpretation is in the eye of the beholder. And time can change the meanings and fulfillment of these prophecies. Consider the interpretation given to the very same quatrain and published just one year before the killing of the president:

"The taking over of Czechoslovakia by Hitler, the resignation of President Benes, the dissensions over the matter between France and England, and the dire warning of the consequences of this betrayal, are all remarkably outlined in this prophecy."<sup>14</sup>

Another of the prophecies said to apply to the elder Kennedy's assassination further shows just how open to interpretation the predictions really

are. In Century VI, Quatrain 37, the reader is informed:

"The ancient work will be accomplished,  
and from the roof evil ruin will fall on to the great man.  
Being dead, they will accuse an innocent of the deed,  
the guilty one hidden in the misty woods."

According to the understanding of this quatrain presented in the 1981 movie, it clearly speaks to the controversy which surrounded the president's death. It is strongly suggested that what Nostradamus wrote is a description of Lee Harvey Oswald. That is, that Oswald accomplished his deed from the roof, he himself being killed as an "innocent" man erroneously accused of the crime, all the while the true perpetrator of Kennedy's murder was "hidden in the misty woods" which is now said to be the infamous grassy knoll.

Before considering the way in which other Nostradamus researchers have interpreted this quatrain, it should be emphasized that accuracy of the historical facts evidently does not seem to matter. For example, Oswald did not take aim "from the roof," but shot from a window on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository building. Furthermore, this particular interpretation is itself self-contradictory as the "evil ruin" did *not* fall "from the roof," but is alleged to have been from the grassy knoll.

And then there's the complication that comes from the fact that other of Nostradamus' commentators do not even see this prophecy as having an Oswald-Kennedy connection. For example, Henry C. Roberts (writing prior to Kennedy's assassination) suggests the interpretation that "King Louis XVI attempted to escape from the rebels, but was apprehended in a forest hiding-place."<sup>15</sup> And Erika Cheetham (after Kennedy's assassination) offers, "Although this is a detailed prophecy and seems likely to have occurred, I do not know of its ever having been fulfilled."<sup>16</sup>

Occasionally the campaign of Nostradamus' readers may even help to form the interpretation. An illustration of this is from Century III, Quatrain 10:

"Of blood and famine, what a great calamity,  
Seven times is ready to come upon the sea coast,  
Monaco by hunger, the place taken captivity,  
The great one carried away, and shut up in a cage."

The understanding of this prediction is now suggested to be the fate of Princess Grace of Monaco who was killed in an automobile accident on Sept. 13, 1982. While some are convinced, others are not so sure. Biographer Cheetham writes:

"I have to admit that I am not really convinced by the interpretation I here offer to this quatrain. But since the death of the princess I have received such a remarkable number of letters from readers who were convinced of its meaning, that I include it for the readers' interest, if nothing else. Certainly the first line has relevance to any century. ... Princess Grace, of the golden movies, the golden hair and golden life died in the iron cage of her crashed car. However, whether she could really be described as 'great' I feel to be in question. Monaco, after all, is a very minor principality, and she achieved nothing that could be honestly called of international worth except for the few films she made in Hollywood."<sup>17</sup>

In her earlier volume, Cheetham remarked that "This general quatrain could refer to any disaster occurring to Monaco since [Nostradamus' time]. The last line is particularly difficult to translate."<sup>18</sup>

The declaration found on the concluding credits of the motion picture/television special collaborate that the interpretation is really up to the interpreter:

"The prophecies of Nostradamus can be interpreted many different

ways. This motion picture has presented only some of them. They are not the opinions, judgments or interpretations of the producers of this film."

### A ROUND PEG IN A SQUARE HOLE

As demonstrated above, it matters little if Nostradamus' complete four lines of his narration matches the facts, just as long as a word here or a word there can be applied. One of his earliest quatrains is most often translated to read:

"Of the human flock, nine shall be set aside,  
Being divided in judgment and counsel,  
Their destiny shall be to be divided,  
Kappa, Theta, Lambda, dead,  
banished, scattered."<sup>19</sup>

Former interpretations of the above verses include references to the Supreme Court of the United States<sup>20</sup> and the death of three Soviet cosmonauts.<sup>21</sup> This latter explanation is in line with an even more up-to-date rendering and meaning of the quatrain:

"From the human flock nine will be sent away,  
Separated from control and advice  
Their fate will be sealed on departure  
K-Th-L make an error; the dead banished."

And based upon this fresh translation, we are told this quatrain is a prediction of the Challenger Space Shuttle disaster in 1987. Consider the following offered commentary:

"...nine will be sent away — Actually, there were 7 crew members. Separated from control and advice — The ground controllers could do nothing. Contact was lost with the astronauts after the explosion. It is said that they may have survived for a period of time afterwards. *Their fate will be sealed on departure* — Videos show that flame was escaping while the rocket was still on the

pad. Their fate was sealed from the instant of departure. *K-Th-L* — ThioKoL - manufacturer of the defective rocket engine. Vowels are omitted and two consonants transposed."<sup>22</sup>

A revision of the translation, a disregard for historical details (nine instead of seven actual crew members), and transposed consonants and omitted vowels all work together to make this a more plausible, fascinating and consummated interpretation. With such contorting and tweaking rationalizations, the predictions of Nostradamus can be assured of an even greater success rate of fulfillment and, in fact, be made to say whatever the interpreter desires. Additionally, the assertion that Nostradamus had the ability "to see what others cannot see" is sacrificed of its impact, as all too often his words are only loosely used as perimeters to realize self-styled fulfilled prophetic utterances.

### FAILED PROPHECY

Even with all the adjustments, fine tuning and full-blown permutations of Nostradamus' predictions, he is unable to escape the actuality that there are those which have unmistakably failed. Dr. Robert Morey, who also points to the practice of fluctuating details, demonstrates that even this exercise cannot save him from the mark of a false prophet:

"The translator H. Roberts complicates matters by juggling facts and dates in an attempt to save Nostradamus from faulty predictions. But if one examines with care the few predictions where Nostradamus did give specific dates, one will find that Nostradamus failed to predict future events accurately."<sup>23</sup>

Morey then lists for his readers five failed prophecies of Nostradamus:

"1. He predicted that by 1792 Venice, Italy, would become a great power and influence in the world. Venice is still waiting for this to happen. 2. The downfall of the Catholic clergy in A.D. 1609 which he predicted never materialized. 3. Nostradamus

predicted that in A.D. 1792, persecution against the Catholic church would arise. It would be more severe than the persecution against the Church in North Africa. Because the Church in North Africa ceased to exist, the continued presence of the Catholic church seems to refute Nostradamus' prediction. 4. Astrologers were to be persecuted in A.D. 1607. This never happened. 5. By A.D. 1700, China 'would subdue the whole northern section' of the world."<sup>24</sup>

Those introduced to Nostradamus through the current swell of material will also be able to detect his failed oracles. In the 1981 film on his life and predictions, two very significant and fast approaching revelations were emphasized. The first applied Century VI, Quatrain 95 to Ted Kennedy:

"The youngest son shall be slandered by a detractor,  
When enormous and martial deeds shall be done,  
The least part shall be doubtful to the eldest,  
And soon after they shall both be equal in the government."

Orson Welles explained to the film's viewers that the "slandered by a detractor" referred to the 1969 incident at Chappaquiddick, Mass., where Mary Jo Kopechne was killed in the automobile driven by Ted Kennedy. Kennedy, it was claimed according to the prediction, would then make a successful run for the presidency in 1984, thereby fulfilling the "equal in government" verse. Although Kennedy made unsuccessful bids for the Democratic party's nomination for president, he never became "equal in government" with his elder brother — unless one would regard his already-held office of a Senator as such. This, however, clashes with the "soon after" expression. It is interesting to note that the 1991 NBC television special, which was an adaptation of the movie, avoided completely any attention of this originally stressed prediction.

Another example from the movie was the italicizing of a May 1988 date

for a great earthquake to occur in the United States. Century X, Quatrain 67 was used:

“The earthquake shall be so great  
in the month of May,  
Saturn, Caper, Jupiter, Mercury  
in Taurus,  
Venus also, Cancer, Mars in  
Zero,  
Then shall hail fall bigger than  
an egg.”

Welles informed viewers that this particular astrological configuration, said to be in the month of May, would occur in 1988. Yet May 1988 came and went with no such cataclysmic event taking place. Charlton Heston, on the more-recent television version, merely circumvented the false prophecy by claiming:

“The San Francisco earthquake occurred in 1989. For some, Nostradamus’s prediction as projected by Orson Welles in 1981 was remarkable, missing as it did by one calendar year. Others feel the prediction is for a future quake. That it was the interpretation of his prediction that was off.”

Heston further noted that Nostradamus’ predictions are indeed open to many interpretations. But as previously stated, by employing such unrestrained criterion there can really be no such thing as a false prophecy.

The pinnacle of Nostradamus’ predictions is no doubt his vision of the final conflict of mankind with the appearance of his third and final antichrist (his first two are said to be Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler). His interpreters are varied in their dates for the start of the Third World War, but all agree it would transpire in the early- to mid-1990s. Cheetham covers many bases by listing an eight-year period (1986-1993)<sup>25</sup> and even beyond with dates of 1995 and 1996.<sup>26</sup> The movie edition looked for its beginning in 1994.

While the date of the war’s commencement may be debated, all agree that by 1999 the conflict will be well under way based upon Century X, Quatrain 72:

“In the year 1999, and seven  
months,  
From the sky will come the great  
King of Terror.  
He will bring back to life the  
great king of the Mongols.  
Before and after War reigns hap-  
pily.”

Some even seek to bolster Nostradamus’ oracle with a correlation to inspired Holy Writ:

“A tremendous world revolution is foretold to take place in the year 1999, with a complete upheaval of existing social orders, preceded by worldwide wars. Nostradamus shows his mystic knowledge of the great secret of the book of revelations and solves for us the identity of the ‘Beast of the Apocalypse’ and the time of his arrival which John of Patmos (Rev. XIII:18) records ‘Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the Beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is 666.’ By a simple reversal of the numbers and turning 999 upside down we obtain 666.”<sup>27</sup>

### A SCRIPTURAL RESPONSE

In addition to all of the above confusion, Nostradamus’ methods of prophecy — even when most of his researchers agree on an interpretation — has a less than flawless success rate. These latter two factors alone should give Christians sufficient reason to pause before considering him in good faith as an authentic prophet. His use of astrology and a divining rod, readily acknowledged to by his patrons, are common occultic practices and scripturally condemned (Deuteronomy 18:10; Isaiah 47:13-14).

Moreover, the failure of some of his prophetic offerings further exclude him from any claim to be a prophet appointed and equipped by God (Deuteronomy 18:21). The advocates of Nostradamus emphasize that his “record for the past 400 years or so has been incredible” and “Anyone who doesn’t take Nostradamus seriously is a fool.”<sup>28</sup> Yet, Christians should not be disarmed or challenged

by such threatening words. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 instructs believers that:

“If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, ‘Let us follow other gods’ (gods you have not known) ‘and let us worship them,’ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Even some among those who support Nostradamus and his predictions admit to the crucial distinction. Biographer Charles A. Ward labels him a “superficial Christian, a Pagan perhaps at heart”<sup>29</sup> and further acknowledges:

“Still he is clearly no prophet in the old and Hebrew sense of the word — like Isaiah, Daniel, David, John, — a man who neither respects his own person as regards its safety, nor the person of other men as regards their position. You cannot say of him: ‘*Scimus quia verax es, non enim respicis personam hominum*’ [i.e., ‘(you) teach the way of truth, (you) do not regard the person of men’] (St. Matt. xxii. 16), which is the test-touch all the world over of a true prophet.”<sup>30</sup>

Christians need not be enticed by a desire to know the future apart from what God’s Word tells us. Therefore they should avoid Nostradamus and his prophecies. To look outside the boundary of Scripture is to deny that God has provided for us all that is needed for life and godliness (1 Peter 1:3).

The prophecies recorded in Scripture have stood and will stand the test of time. They are not transcendental nor do they have to be reworked or contorted. Moreover, God’s Word is the benchmark for all other prophets and prophecies.

“And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and

you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-21).

### Endnotes:

1. *The Man Who Saw Tomorrow* with Orson Welles, Warner Bros., Inc., 1981. The video version of this motion is available by Warner Home Video, 1986.
2. NBC Special, *The Man Who Saw Tomorrow* hosted by Charlton Heston. This program aired Wednesday, Feb. 20, 1991, tape on file.
3. While several web sites offer research and reference material on Nostradamus, the most thorough is "The Prophecies of Michel Nostradamus" web site located at: [www.telebyte.nl/~zaphod/nostra.html](http://www.telebyte.nl/~zaphod/nostra.html)
4. Robert A. Morey, *Horoscopes and the Christian*. Minneapolis: Bethany House

- Publishers, 1981, pp. 20-21.
5. "A 20th Century Look at Nostradamus - Was He God's Prophet During the 16th Century?", *PFO Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 5, 7.
6. Erika Cheetham, *The Prophecies of Nostradamus*. New York: Perigee Books, 1973, pg. 5.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Charles A. Ward, *Oracles of Nostradamus*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940, pg. 10.
9. *Ibid.*, pg. 26.
10. *The Prophecies of Nostradamus*, op. cit., pg. 13.
11. *Oracles of Nostradamus*, op. cit., pg. 58, brackets in original, emphasis added. This "prophecy" is highlighted by Gus Vandermeer in *Nostradamus and Other Amazing Experts' Amazing Predictions For The Year 2000 and Beyond*. Lantana, Fla.: Micro-Mags, 1998, pg. 11.
12. John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1894, Vol. VII, pg. 197.
13. *The Prophecies of Nostradamus*, op. cit., pg. 33.
14. Henry C. Roberts, *The Complete Prophecies of Nostradamus*. New York: Nostradamus, Inc., 1949, (Twelfth printing, 1962),

- pg. 17, emphasis added.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 191.
16. *The Prophecies of Nostradamus*, op. cit., pg. 262.
17. Erika Cheetham, *The Further Prophecies of Nostradamus - 1985 and Beyond*. New York: Perigee Books, 1985, pg. 76.
18. *The Prophecies of Nostradamus*, op. cit., pg. 124.
19. Century I, Quatrain 81.
20. *The Complete Prophecies of Nostradamus*, op. cit., pg. 36.
21. *The Prophecies of Nostradamus*, op. cit., pg. 60.
22. "Century 1, 81 — Space Shuttle Disaster," from [www.alumni.caltech.edu/~jamcsf/spacesh.html](http://www.alumni.caltech.edu/~jamcsf/spacesh.html). (Italic added to separate quatrain quotes from commentary.)
23. *Horoscopes and the Christian*, op. cit., pg. 20.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
25. *The Prophecies of Nostradamus*, op. cit., pp. 88-89.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.
27. *The Complete Prophecies of Nostradamus*, op. cit., pg. 336.
28. "Nostradamus Past, Present & Future," *Sun* magazine, Dec. 19, 1995, pg. 20.
29. *Oracles of Nostradamus*, op. cit., pg. 41.
30. *Ibid.*, pg. 39.



## SUPERSTITIOUS CHURCH

(continued from page 1)

of these new quirks are touted as the end time revival and people jump on the new bandwagon until they tire of it or a more exciting wagon rolls in.

We must come to grips not only with the reality of superstition in the Church but have a plan to resist that superstition. Let's look first at:

### THE REALITY OF SUPERSTITION IN THE CHURCH

Dr. Peter Jones, professor of New Testament at Westminster Seminary in Southern California, captures the large view as he surveys how our churches have moved toward experience-driven religion and eastern mysticism:

"Belief that the human is divine, and thus essentially good, helps explain the burgeoning quest for personal spiritual discovery, to

the detriment of doctrine and truth. Mysticism has replaced true spirituality. Companies in the West, seeing commercial value in such optimism, are using these ideas to produce better sales personnel. Madison Avenue and the gurus could be an unstoppable, unholy alliance feeding the machine of political correctness. As an expression of divinity, each self is a source of truth."<sup>2</sup>

If anyone doubts that this is an age of religious fadism, confusion and superstition, just visit a Christian bookstore. There you will find:

- Hannah Hurnard — New Age occultist and aura reader.
- Madame Guyon — a mystic heretic.
- Madeleine L'Engle — who says the God of the Old Testament is "a male chauvinistic pig."
- Many of the latest psycho-babble theories.

- Dream interpretation and prophetic words for the 1990s by Vineyard prophets.
- Alternative medicine and Bible Codes.
- So-called revival stories with people acting like crass fools or animals.
- Instructions on how to get rid of ancestral demons and curses and do spiritual mapping.
- And on and on, *ad nauseam, ad infinitum*.

Truly it is like Athens and like the second-century age of heresy described by Philip Schaff when he said of that era, "strange medleys of Christian and unchristian elements in chaotic ferment."<sup>3</sup>

Modern reformer Michael Horton has written to show that there are many religious trends in the world today alerting us to the reemerging heresy of Gnosticism. He lays it out clearly:

"So far, we have seen an emerging shape to this elusive heresy