

The Absinthe]. And a third of the waters turned into wormwood, and many of the men died from the waters, because these had been made bitter."—Revelation 8:10, 11.

Here not the salty sea, but the fresh waters, the rivers and the fountains of waters, were affected. The "great star" that plunged from heaven into these fresh waters evidently pictures a class of persons who enjoyed religious privileges like those of the symbolic "seven stars" but who fall from the high level of privilege and opportunity that the Bible assigns to religious "stars." True dedicated, baptized, spirit-begotten Christians are said to be raised up and seated together "in the heavenly places in union with Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:1-6) But this symbolic "great star" does not live up to its profession of being up there. Instead, by its course of action it falls and comes short of being on such a high spiritual elevation. It could have been a spiritual illuminator, but, as it drops from heaven, it is "burning as a lamp" or like a torch, ablaze, on fire to its own destruction. So its name is Wormwood, literally, Absinthe, that name of a bitter plant of which there are several varieties in the Middle East. Its effect upon the fresh waters into which it falls is not sweetening, but is embittering, turning them into wormwood.

In view of these features about it, what religious class of people could this blazing, falling "great star" picture but the apostate Christian clergy of Christendom, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant and otherwise sectarian? Especially since the days of Roman Emperor Constantine the Great of the fourth century C.E., the religious clergy of Christendom have pretended to offer to the people in their churches the fresh water of the truth that is life-giving, life-sustaining. But what has been the effect of the clergy's fall from true Christianity into apostasy upon the symbolic rivers and water springs of Christendom, the area of which has embraced a large section of the world's population? The people need fresh water from

rivers and fountains in order to live. But what should have been spiritual "water" to sustain the spiritual life of the peoples, the apostate Christian clergy have turned into undrinkable, deadly, bitter wormwood waters. How? By teaching their church members false, pagan, unchristian, unbiblical doctrines, such as eternal torment in hellfire, and by leading the peoples into unchristian practices such as bloody, carnal warfare.

How embittering, how death-dealing the doctrines and religious course of the apostate Christian clergy have been to the peoples of Christendom was specifically emphasized in the year 1924 C.E. As though it was designed to proclaim publicly the facts about this by an ear-splitting trumpet blast, the International Bible Students Association held a general convention in Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A., July 20-27, 1924. On Friday, July 25, the president of the Association delivered the address on "The Temptation—Fall and Victory." At its close he introduced a resolution designated "The Indictment," which was overwhelmingly adopted by the conventioners. The following Sunday, July 27, the president delivered the public address entitled "Civilization Doomed," this doomed civilization including outstandingly Christendom.

That resolution, which featured the Columbus convention—what an "indictment" indeed it was against the apostate religious clergy of all Christendom! How the section thereof under the subheading "Doctrines" exposed the false, God-defaming doctrines of the clergy. It showed the deadliness of the religious course in which the clergy, along with their comrades in politics, were leading the people of Christendom! The clergy were making the people drink what was religiously bitter to them, like wormwood, yes, drink what meant spiritual death to them now and, at Armageddon, eternal physical destruction.

The extent of the damage done by the starlike clergy was well portrayed by what the apostle John saw in the vision, namely, that "many of the men died from the waters, because these had been made