Quickly Removing

Slowly Returning

A commentary on the church of Jesus Christ, its demise and restoration in America from 1800 to the present.

Joe Neil Clayton

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PREFACE

Joe Neil Clayton is a studious and thoughtful preacher of the gospel. Through the years, he has displayed a serious commitment to the study of history, an avocation that he explains in his introduction to this book.

It is no mean task to undertake an examination of the meaning of religious history over a period of thousands of years. Clayton understands the complexity of such a study, and he does not pretend to offer a definitive history of the Christian age. Rather, this book is an interpretation of Christian history, based on the author’s broad reading. Those who are familiar with the thinking of the Restoration Movement will readily recognize the outlines of Clayton’s scheme of a falling away and restoration of the church.

In effect, Clayton’s book is a biblical interpretation of history, rooted in his years of study of the scriptures. Much of his interpretation is original and will stimulate both a study of the historical record and the Bible.

In many ways, the most innovative sections of Clayton’s study are the topical chapters at the end of the book. In these chapters, the author traces the historical reappearance of a number of doctrinal and ecclesiastical issues that have divided Christians through the centuries. These recurring questions demand a new look in every generation, and we shall be well served if we view them with a historical eye.

David Edwin Harrell, Jr.
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AUTHOR’S PREFACE

My favorite subject in school was History. That preference did not end at the school door. The movies I went to see were always Westerns, or "costume" pictures, based on history (or on what Hollywood thought history should have been). When I took down a novel to read, (you guessed it) I nearly always chose historical narratives.

I am not partial to any period of history, be it ancient or modern. However, I know that many people do not like any history more ancient than yesterday's newspaper. When they were forced to study history in school, they hated it. They could not see what benefit came from it. They were bored to tears with dates, unpronounceable names, "wars and rumors of wars." Approaching history with such shallow concern, they could easily suppose that of all people involved in 15th-Century England's "War of the Roses," the greatest beneficiaries might have been the florists.

We have such people in the church of the Lord. Any sermon from the magnificent morality plays in the Old Testament often brings the outcry, "I don't like Old Testament history! Let's get back to the New Testament!" They forget that the events recorded in the New Testament are now over nineteen centuries behind us! They seem unimpressed by the fact that these events occurred during the dramatic days of that tremendous political prototype, Imperial Rome, with its tragic reigns of mad, immoral, tyrannical Caesars from Augustus to Domitian.

The "history haters" also forget that much of the credibility and validity of New Testament teaching rests on the even more ancient records found in the Old Testament! Hundreds of references to Old Testament events and prophecies occur in the New Testament. Matthew’s biography of Jesus would hardly show the legitimacy of His claim to be the Christ-King, without the rich Old Testament references that fill its chapters. The letter of Paul to the Romans would be less effective without its references to the faith of Abraham, the work of Moses, and the testimony of other famous Old Testament worthies. Apart from its Old Testament quotations, the Epistle to the Hebrews would scarcely help
its readers discern the New Covenant's many connections with the older one that came through Moses. The Revelation of John could not be easily decoded without a study of Old Testament phraseology.

The Bible is mostly history. Even the books of poetry were authored by men who walked its historic pages. Readers should always place the prophets in their historical surroundings to appreciate them better. No one who makes a diligent study of the Bible can dispute this truth. No one can really understand the Bible without accepting this fact.

It is true that people who say that they hate history often say they love the Bible. This is not really inconsistent, because they associate their love of being saved with the source of that salvation, the Word of God. Hatred of history must surely interfere with their study of the Bible in subtle ways, however, perhaps causing them to see little fruit in sorting out the gems of truth hidden in genealogies and chronologies, or causing them to forsake the examination of the historical causes of confrontations between prophets and kings. Such students become "surface" readers, never plunging deeply into the drama of Bible history, never seeking the root character lessons in Bible biography, never seeing the edifying ramifications of geographical and social data integrated into the divine text.

But to the lovers of history, biography, and geography, the Bible is a panorama of inspired and curious treasures, seen and appreciated through the stories of its heroes and cowards, its sinners and saints, its gentle servants and strong masters, its beautiful queens and hairy prophets. The emotional drama of their eventful lives spent in the shadow of God and His angels rivals all the innovations of Hollywood screenwriters. The Bible's historical accuracy exceeds that of all ancient secular recorders of the passing scene. Its geographical and geological accuracy has tutored modern scientists.

Nevertheless, with all my passion for history, especially for Bible history, I recognize the lack of that emotion in my fellow men. I weep for them. Yet, I am often so frustrated by their indifference that I would like to force them to be like me, so that they would feel what I feel. But, rejecting brute force, because it is contrary to my pacific nature (not to mention my lack of physical prowess), I have chosen instead the unlikely course of writing yet another "history book," different from others only in style and arrangement, in the hope of persuading them to be aware of our historical heritage.
Our hope in Christ has come through the work of men who were plucked from their secular background and pursuits to serve God. Divinely inspired lawgivers and judges, priests and prophets, fishermen and tax-collectors, and even a physician, set down the history of the Bible. Following them in the 2nd Century were fallible religious authors, who shared their uninspired thoughts with us, good and bad, true and false. The history of the next millennium and a half reveals scenes peopled with brooding ascetics, studious monks, practical patriarchs, theocratic princes, and powerful Popes. Finally, as the modern world begins to evolve from medieval stagnation, we discover daring dissidents emerging from the obscurity of sunny French pastoral lands, English marshes and Bohemian meadows, some to be seen only briefly on history's page. These first outcries against Papal and Roman tyranny are stifled, but new voices eventually rise from talented reformers in Alpine recesses and German universities. Controversies and councils mark the progression of time, like milestones. Only a taste of these historical landmarks can be served up in this short volume, but that small taste might be so delectable that it will tempt the reader to dig deeper into his religious past. If so, my goal will have been reached. I will employ all the wiles of readable style of which I may be capable to reach that goal. Both Bible and secular histories reveal the fascinating spiritual heritage of the modern Christian. When fully appreciated, the knowledge of that heritage should excite the Christian to greater, more faithful service to our God, and His Son Jesus, the Christ.

And what is my goal? As the title of this work implies, I hope to fill in the historical gaps that exist between the time when those professing Christianity as their religion in the early centuries of this age "quickly removed" from the precepts of the Apostles' doctrine, to the time when tentative attempts were made to "slowly return" to primitive Christianity. It is my best judgment that this return in principle first found credible fulfillment in the work of some early 19th Century reformers in America who grasped the idea of "restoration" and made it supersede "reformation." Their cause celebre was popularly known, because of this attitude, as the "Restoration Movement."

The biblical principles they applied to their return to Primitive Christianity have never been successfully challenged, even though some who were heirs of the movement have abandoned the principles in the same way that early Christians abandoned the doctrines
and traditions of the Apostles. To treat with these new apostasies, it is only necessary to apply again the biblical principles of interpretation embraced by those early 19th Century "restorationists," and whole-heartedly embrace the concept of practicing Primitive Christianity.

Several denominations today have within them cells of sentiment for a return to the teaching of the Apostles, but they often fail in their attempts to mold their churches in that direction. The reason for this is that they follow in the footsteps of the apostates of the past, retaining some traditional practices that are not authorized in Scripture. This is due to their ignorance of both the Bible and history. Some of them limit their goals, daunted by the tremendous challenge of uniting believers on the principle of complete and exclusive submission to the New Testament. Those who joyfully discover the divine scheme of redemption (free from the confusion of human doctrine and tradition), and the heavenly design of Christ's church, should never be persuaded to compromise their goal of contending for Primitive Christianity. There are too many warnings in Scripture against human failures. We should perceive and employ what God has precisely commanded, rather than allow for any compromise with modern religious error.

Finally, the form of this book will be designed to stimulate more study of the Bible than of history. Bible truths will simply be shown in the light of history. After a section which will generally describe (without tedious detail) the conditions which led to digressions from the truth, and the situations that contributed to the return from that abyss of error, we will devote another section to the discussion of some major religious controversies. The author writes from his perspective as an evangelist serving churches of Christ, and dares to be polemic in his discussion of historical issues. He offers no apology for doing this, even if it marks him as biased. His bias, it is hoped, will be seen, not as a propagator of a church, but as a seeker for truth. In this way, the author hopes that those few "history haters" whom he entices to read this book will be motivated, at least, to study the controversies by the Bible, even if they are cloaked in a historical context.

Joe Neil Clayton
INTRODUCTION

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope.”
Romans 15:4

A proverb says, "History repeats itself," and in spite of the alleged universal acceptance of this statement, many do not recognize its truth.

"Peoples and governments never have learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it." --G. W. F. Hegel

"Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe." --H. G. Wells

Though the Bible is mainly history, it is not like human products. Being "divine history," it does not suffer from the defects of secular history. In one of His last prayers before His death, Jesus said to God, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The errors of fallible human memory and prejudicial human manipulation do not materially afflict the Bible. Jesus promised his Apostles, "...The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26). A Spirit-assisted memory is a blessing that many might crave today, but it was promised only to those inspired men.
Another companion promise made by Jesus reads, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). The preservation of the words of Christ is enforced by the almighty power of God, so that human error cannot infiltrate them. This promise cannot fail, nor will it be rescinded.

The Bible's effectiveness as a "teaching history," however, depends on man's acceptance of its truthfulness. As an example of this, Stephen, after accurately rehearsing a number of Bible events before an angry mob of opponents, said, "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, You do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do you...you who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not" (Acts 7:51,53). We see, then, that even when words were "ordained by angels," and accurately reported the evils practiced by their fathers, some did not respect them, or obey them.

If we find Bible history "tedious," and consider forsaking the study of it, remember...human histories can be rejected as biased, or mistrusted as unreliable, but Bible history, being the revelation of a God "who cannot lie," demands acceptance. It is reliable and educational, even if it is referring to something that seems fantastic to the modern mind, such as miracles. Jesus, in whom we say we believe, and in whom we trust for salvation, confirmed the integrity of the miraculous "histories" of Noah's flood (Matthew 24:37-39), the sustaining of the widow of Zarephath, and the cure of the leprous Syrian, Naaman (Luke 4:25-27). Denying the truthfulness of Bible testimony regarding miracles is the same as rejecting the integrity of Christ who confirmed its truthfulness.

Though we can rely on the accuracy of Bible history, we must also make a study of the events of church history after the close of the New Testament, especially if we want to learn what happened during the periods of the "galloping" Apostasy and the "crawling" Reformation (which we propose to do). For this purpose, we will have to rely on the integrity of human, uninspired writers. We will expect them to be somewhat biased, and capable of error, for no human being is without a measure of these faults. However, many authors of religious histories have won reputations for integrity through the years, and we are willing to put a reasonable amount of trust in what they have recorded.

In this book, we will often quote Philip Schaff, a famous religious historian, who says...

"Finally, the history of the church has practical value for every Christian,
as a storehouse of warning and encouragement, of consolation and counsel. It is the philosophy of facts, Christianity in living examples. If history in general be...as Diodorus calls it, 'the handmaid of providence, the priestess of truth, and the mother of wisdom,' the history of the kingdom of heaven is all these in the highest degree." (History of the Christian Church, Vol. 1, p. 21.)

Mr. Schaff approaches his subject with a high degree of enthusiasm. We agree with him on his stated premise, but knowing the perversity of men in general, we will be more cautious and less enthusiastic in our approach to the subject, less quick to praise apostates, and we may frequently frown on the foolish foibles of men in religion. We will reserve our praise for those historical characters who contributed something valuable to the recovery of abandoned truth, and will shed a tear over every hindrance erected by man against it. Our standard of truth will be the Bible, especially the New Testament, and, following the rule of Romans 3:4, "Let God be found true and every man a liar," we will test every man's words by it.
"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd"  John 10:16

CHAPTER ONE
"BREAKING OUT"
(From Parochial Judaism to Universal Christianity)

The appearance of Christ on earth, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, was a moment in history so important and dramatic that this era in the history of the world has taken the approximate time of His birth in Bethlehem as its prime date. Very few historians today deny that Jesus actually lived. His person, His character, and His teaching have been corrupted through the perverse works of men, but it cannot be denied that His influence for good has survived all the attacks made on Him through the centuries.

The inspired biographers record few events of Jesus' life between His birth and the beginning of His public work at age 30. However, the three or four years that followed His appearance as a teacher were packed with events that have shaped all the subsequent centuries to the present time. From the time of His death (about 30-33 A. D.), to the death of the last of His fourteen Apostles (the original twelve plus Matthias and Paul), that short span of nearly 70 years has come to be known as the "Apostolic Age." It was a time of miracles. It was a time of divine revelation. It was a time which had a profound impact on both western and world history.

This apostolic epoch divided the Roman world into two classes, believers and unbelievers, just as Jesus had predicted. He said, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Families and friends would be estranged because of the intrusion of the Gospel. The believer class would be extremely small at first, but it would grow like the mustard seed of Jesus' parable into a tree of power. The gospel preached by Jesus' little band of disciples came to a world that was
ready to receive it. Their success provided a "breaking out" from the confinement of Parochial Judaism toward the distant horizons of Universal Christianity.

The Old Testament system (the “Law of Moses”) was limited and localized. It was applicable only to Jews, because Moses said to the people of Israel, "Jehovah our God made a covenant with us in Horeb (Mt. Sinai). Jehovah made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day" (Deuteronomy 5:1-3). The only way a Gentile could come under this covenant was to become a "proselyte," a Jew by choice, and many did.

Another parochial feature of Moses' Law was its requirement that all male adherents return to the Temple three times a year to attend feasts (Deuteronomy 16:16). We have an example of this duty being performed in the epic journey of the Ethiopian Eunuch, "who had come to Jerusalem to worship...and was returning" (Acts 8:26-28).

The New Testament system, in contrast, was to have a universal appeal, embracing believers in "every nation under heaven," Gentiles as well as Jews. The devotions of New Testament Christians would not be confined to a central location, but, as Jesus said to the woman of Samaria in John 4:21, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father."

The history of the rapid spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire is a source of amazement to all men, even to those who know it was the working of God. This growth was simply the fulfillment of the prophecies found in the Old Testament. The destiny of the kingdom of God was that it would be extended to the "ends of the earth." The prophet Isaiah said of Jesus, hundreds of years before his birth, "And now says Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, and that Israel be gathered unto him (for I am honorable in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God is become my strength); yes, he says, It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:5-6; compare Acts 13:45-47). Again, in David's Psalm about the suffering of the Christ, it is written, "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto Jehovah; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before you" (Psalms 22:27).
How did it all begin? At the end of His sojourn on earth, Jesus gave to His Apostles what is popularly called the "Great Commission," which revealed a universal Gospel. He said to His disciples, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). Matthew's version of this has Jesus saying, "Go and make disciples of all the nations..." (Matthew 28:19). This was to be accomplished by the Apostles in their generation. They were told by the Lord, "...You shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). That goal was reached in the lifetime of Paul, who said the gospel "was preached in all creation under heaven: whereof I Paul was made a minister" (Colossians 1:23).

Prophecy, which (because of the factual foreknowledge of God) is history in reverse, placed the coming kingdom of God in the Roman Empire. Daniel, God's faithful prophet in exile, interpreted a dream of the famous Nebuchadnezzar in which the king saw an image made of five substances. Daniel said that Nebuchadnezzar's empire was the "head of gold," to be succeeded by three other empires greedy of world-girdling power. The final "iron" empire of this vision has to be Rome, a kingdom "...partly strong, and partly broken." Though the legs of the image were of iron, its feet were composed of unmixed iron and clay, indicating that "they (the Romans) shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron does not mingle with clay." It would happen "in the days of those kings" that the "God of heaven" would "set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people (that is, no other kingdom would come after it)." This was the Kingdom which had Christ as its king (Daniel 2:36-45). It was also a part of God's plan that Jesus would come in that "fullness of time" (Galatians 4:3-5), and that the New Covenant would be revealed in that same "fullness of time" (Ephesians 1:7-10). Confident in these things, Jesus would say at the beginning of His ministry, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).

ROME WAS READY

Secular history shows that Rome found itself congenial to the coming of Christ. The Roman Empire consisted of a multitude of kingdoms, each under the "protection" and the domination of Roman rule. It became Christianity's breeding ground in both negative and
positive ways. In the negative sense, the things that were wrong with that ancient world opened opportunities to the evangelists of Christianity.

"Civil liberty and independence had been destroyed by internal discord and corruption. Philosophy had run down into skepticism and refined materialism. Art had been degraded to the service of levity and sensuality. Infidelity or superstition had supplanted sound religious sentiment. dishonesty and licentiousness reigned among high and low. This hopeless state of things could not but impress the more earnest and noble souls with the emptiness of all science and art, and the utter insufficiency of this natural culture to meet the deeper wants of the heart. It must fill them with longings for a new religion....The dark picture which St. Paul, in addressing the Romans, draws of the heathenism of his day, is fully sustained by Seneca, Tacitus, Juvenal, Persius, and other heathen writers of that age, and shows the absolute need of redemption. 'The world,' says Seneca, in a famous passage, 'is full of crimes and vices. More are committed than can be cured by force. There is an immense struggle for iniquity. Crimes are no longer hidden, but open before the eyes. Innocence is not only rare, but nowhere.'"

(Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 1, pp. 79, 83-84)

The New Testament confirms much of this. The Apostles of Jesus moved in a society rife with skepticism. When Paul proclaimed the resurrection of the dead to inquisitive Athenians, "some mocked, but others said, We will hear you concerning this yet again" (Acts 17:30-32). It was a materialistic world, as evidenced by the story of the silversmiths who seemed to be more concerned about their monetary losses than about the decline of Pagan religion. They complained that Paul, by his preaching, was destroying their trade of making "silver shrines of Diana" (Acts 19:23-28). Romans and other pagans of that time groped through the dark world of religious superstition. Paul and Barnabas barely avoided the attempt of some men to worship them as the gods Jupiter and Mercury (Acts 14:8-18), and Paul witnessed a dramatic about-face in those Melitan pagans who interpreted his chance snake bite first as a retribution of the gods, but who later called him a god for having survived it (Acts 28:1-6, and compare Mark 16:17-18). Roman society was a
cesspool of vice and sensuality. Paul described the Gentiles as ones who "being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:19).

But the Apostles saw a favorable opportunity in these negative conditions, and attempted to turn men from this sort of life. Peter would plead, "Wherefore, girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the time of your ignorance: but like as he who called you is holy, be yourselves also holy in all manner of living" (1 Peter 1:13-15). And Paul would say, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:12-13).

Apart from the negative challenges which Rome offered, there were many positive advantages in that corrupt world. These were derived from its culture and its commerce. Not the least of these was the universal use of the Greek language.

"Greece gave the Apostles the most copious and beautiful language to express the divine truth of the Gospel, and Providence had long before so ordered political movements as to spread that language over the world and to make it the organ of civilization and international intercourse... 'Greek,' says Cicero, 'is read in almost all nations.'" (Ibid., p. 77)

Commercial traffic had also been greatly facilitated during the time of the Roman Empire.

"The ends of the empire were brought into military, commercial, and literary communication by carefully constructed roads... The facilities and security of travel were greater in the reign of the Caesars than in any subsequent period before the nineteenth century. The Roman legions razed the partition-walls among the ancient nations, brought the extremes of the civilized world together in free intercourse, and united north and south and east and west in the bonds of a common language and culture, of common
laws and customs." (Ibid., pp. 81, 84)

Yet, with all this providential atmosphere for success, negative and positive, the potential for apostasy was also recognized. Jesus predicted both successes and failures. When He said to his Apostles, "You shall be my witnesses..........unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8)," He knew that divine power would assist them in this venture. However, he could predict possible failure just as confidently. He described what lurked in the future for his servants. "Then shall they deliver you up to tribulation, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all the nations for my name's sake. And then shall many stumble, and deliver up one another, and hate one another. Many false prophets shall arise, and lead many astray. And, because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold." Even with such adversity, the Lord gave them a view of hope. He said, "But he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations..." (Matthew 24:9-14).

The Apostles were not blind to this potential for success and failure. Paul told the Christians at Colossae that he could see the Gospel "in all the world bearing fruit and increasing," as it did in them (Colossians 1:3-6). Yet, he was also guided by the Spirit to look forward to the time when the "man of sin" would be revealed, "whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all powers and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

If we can consider that Rome was ripe for the preaching of the Gospel, we can certainly see a parallel in our world today. This present age of vice and corruption should excite our desire to spread the Word of God, and, just as Rome offered convenient means for that spreading, we should use today's even more powerful media to reach the "uttermost parts of the earth." However, there is the same potential for success and failure that existed then. To have the predicted success, we must duplicate all the spiritual conditions leading to it. To avoid the failures, we must eliminate all the human conditions that contribute to them. This is our "history lesson" from the beginning of the Christian Era. Do Christians today have enough courage to apply it? If they do, they may be able to "break out" of modern "parochialism," and begin to think in universal terms again!
CHAPTER TWO

"BREAKING AWAY"

(From Apostolic Authority and Doctrine)

"O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified? This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?" --Galatians 3:1-3

The glorious expansion of the kingdom of God in the short Apostolic Age was destined to make a permanent imprint on the world. The Spirit of God, working with men, made this destiny certain. The divine powers enjoyed by the Apostles and prophets of that day were not promised as a permanent fixture of the kingdom, however. When the revelation of the New Testament was complete, the promise of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 was fulfilled. Inspired knowledge, tongues, and prophecy, "in part," were combined in "that which was perfect." This "perfect" or complete thing (the full revelation) accomplished what intermittent prophecy aimed to establish. God, in all the Bible, consistently proclaims that the relationship of men with Himself should rest on His Word. The fate of the Children of Israel, whether a "blessing" or a "curse," depended on their response to the Word (see Deuteronomy 11:18-32). And the New Testament believer's own personal spiritual house would be secure, Jesus said, only if he came to Christ, heard His words, and performed them (Luke 6:47). The close of the Age of the Apostles would test whether men would hold to that Word of Faith or not.

The religious historian, Schaff, remarks on the post-apostolic age in a way that shows his awareness of the qualitative loss this world experienced when the Apostles had passed from the active scene. He said...
"We now descend from the primitive apostolic church to the Graeco-Roman; from the scene of creation to the work of preservation; from the fountain of divine revelation to the stream of human development; from the inspirations of the apostles and prophets to the productions of enlightened but fallible teachers. The hand of God has drawn a bold line of demarcation between the century of miracles and the succeeding ages, to show, by the abrupt transition and the striking contrast, the difference between the work of God and the work of man, and to impress us the more deeply with the supernatural origin of Christianity and the incomparable value of the New Testament. There is no other transition in history so radical and sudden, and yet so silent and secret..." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, p. 7.)

THE "FALLING AWAY"

The New Testament was written to create an age of hope, and to establish a presentiment of Christ's second coming. Thus, every generation of believers can be motivated by a present anticipation of the final advent of the Lord. However, during the life of the Apostle Paul, he was required by his divinely inspired insights to tell the saints at Thessalonica, "...touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that you be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed..." (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). No timetable is given by the Apostle, but it is apparent that he and his fellow prophets knew the signs of that "falling away."

By many warnings, the Apostles showed some potential causes for the great "falling away." The writer of Hebrews warned, "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God...lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-13). The "evil heart of unbelief" and "sin" could bring tragic results. Peter says, "...if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than
the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after
knowing, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them. It has happened
unto them according to the true proverb, the dog turning to his own vomit again, and the
sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire” (2 Peter 2:20-22).

The saints would always have to combat the appeal of the World. Paul said of one of
his closest companions, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2
Timothy 4:10a). The fear of secular authority would make cowards of many. Paul goes on
to say in this context, "At my first defense no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it
not be laid to their account" (2 Timothy 4:16). Paul was not discouraged by the failure of
other men, because he confidently affirmed in verse 18, "The Lord will deliver me from
every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom."

Not only would personal failures cause defections from the truth. There would be
doctrinal errors (deviations from truth). Peter warned that men would find "some things
hard to be understood" in the Scriptures credited to Paul, "which the ignorant and
unstedfast (would) wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction."
The advice of the Apostle is, "You therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand,
beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, you fall from your own
stedfastness." As a further solution, he advised, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of
our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:14-18).

Lastly, human pride and the search for prestige and power would lead many astray. Paul said, "But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be
lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents,
unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control,
fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than
lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these
also turn away." Such men would be "ever learning, and never able to come to the
knowledge of the truth." They would "withstand the truth; men corrupted in mind, reprobate
concerning the faith" (2 Timothy 3:1-8). In another place, Paul said to the Corinthians that
he set himself and Apollos as examples of faithful stewards, "that in us you might learn not
to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one
The Apostles also identified several specific seeds of apostasy that sprouted during the Apostolic Age, but which, we will see, bore fruit in the period of the "falling away."

**ENCROACHMENTS OF OLD TESTAMENT DOCTRINES**

The retention of Old Testament practices would be a basic error. One such practice germinated in Antioch of Syria. Jews came there from Jerusalem and began telling the Gentiles, "Except you be circumcised after the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas disputed this with them, and carried this dispute back to its source, Jerusalem, to show that this doctrine had no foundation. Falsehoods die hard, however. Paul was required later to tell the Christians in Galatia, "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if you receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. Yes, I testify again to every man that receives circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you are fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:2-4). He had already convinced them, through references to the Law of Moses, that all of its subjects "who continued not in all things that are written in the book of the Law, to do them," were accursed (Galatians 3:10). No one under the New Covenant, then, could apply any command of the Old Law to those who were "discharged" from it (Romans 7:6). If they kept one single selective obligation, they were obligated to "keep the whole law," an unproductive task, if one wishes to remain connected with Christ.

The temptation to go to the Old Testament for authority carried over into The "Ante-Nicene" period (100 AD to 325 AD). This age is called "Ante-Nicene," because it preceded the first general council of the corrupted church at Nicea in 325 AD.

Another case of returning to Old Testament principles involved the re-establishment of the "clergy." Though the Apostles had revealed no distinctions between Christians, declaring that collectively they comprised a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9), the beginnings of a "Sacerdotal Priesthood" like that of the Old Testament emerged. Early 2nd Century writers are credited with making the first distinctions between "clergy" and "laity," but the integrity of their writings has been seriously questioned, many scholars believing them to be corrupted. Tertullian (who lived 160 AD to 230 AD) speaks of its existence, though he says it was not universally accepted. However, Cyprian (who died in 258 AD) treats the
new priesthood as the legitimate successor to the obsolete Aaronic priesthood. Cyprian may have been a leader in trying to establish Old Testament practices in the post-apostolic church, since he also advocated the concept of a ritual "sacrifice" on an altar (a predecessor of the Roman Catholic "Sacrifice of the Mass.") Schaff says...

"The African Fathers, in the third century, who elsewhere incline to the symbolical interpretation of the words of the institution [the communion], are the first to approach on this point the later Roman Catholic idea of a sin-offering; especially Cyprian, the steadfast advocate of priesthood and of episcopal authority. The ideas of priesthood, sacrifice, and altar, are intimately connected, and a Judaizing or paganizing conception of one must extend to all." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, p. 246-247)

Infant baptism, which began as a custom in the Ante-Nicene age, was justified on the basis that it replaced the Jewish practice of circumcising infants (Ibid., p. 258)

In the period after the council of Nicea (325 AD), many other practices based on the precedents of the Old Testament, such as the use of instruments of music in the worship, appear. These encroachments of forms from an obsolete code would attest to the powerful influence of traditional Judaism among the early disciples, and the failure of the descendants of the apostolic age to distinguish between the legal force of the Old Testament and that of the New.

TRADITIONS OF MEN VS. TRADITIONS OF APOSTLES

The supposition that traditions carried authority also troubled the apostolic church. The Apostles were very combative against human tradition, as the Lord had been during His earthly ministry. Jesus opposed the "traditions of the elders" because they "made void the Word of God," and because men were inclined to "reject the commandment of God" in order to keep their traditions. The insidious effect of recognizing tradition on an equality with Scripture caused Jesus to quote the prophet who said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Matthew 15:1-9, Mark 7:7-9).

The Apostles, therefore, preached this same truth. Paul warned the disciples, "Take heed lest there shall be any one that makes spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for
in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in him you are made full..." (Colossians 2:8-9). Apostolic traditions, since they issued from divine revelation, were the only traditions the disciples were permitted to follow (1 Corinthians 11:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 3:6).

After the close of the First Century, in spite of these warnings, many traditions came into prominence. Men had very little concern regarding the long-range effect of their oft-repeated inventions and fictions. Fabrications about the movements of the Apostles, their deaths, and their teaching, infiltrated the church quickly, and fixed themselves in the collective conscience of the disciples. Some of these traditions dealt with matters that made them relatively harmless, while others were devastating. The most tragic result of their influence is that they finally gained the dubious reputation of having divine origin and authority.

DENIALS OF CHRIST

The Apostles warned that denials of Christ, symptomatic of a "spirit of anti-Christ," would extend into the future. John wrote, "Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that anti-Christ comes, even now have there arisen many anti-Christ; whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us..." (1 John 2:18-19). He identified the anti-Christ spirit in verses 22-23, when he said, "Who is a liar but he that denys that Jesus is the Christ? This is the anti-Christ, even he that denys the Father and the Son. Whosoever denys the Son, the same has not the Father: he that confesses the Son has the Father also." Later, He wrote about another aspect of this spirit, and said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesses not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the anti-Christ, whereof you have heard that it comes; and now it is in the world already" (1 John 4:1-3). Peter describes such things as "destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them..." (2 Peter 2:1).

In the "Ante-Nicene period," both of these anti-Christian denials surfaced. Matching John's description of the first kind of denial, Arianism (An early 4th Century heresy
conceived by Arius of Alexandria, Egypt) denied the full divinity of Christ. He was considered to be a created super-being, but not eternal. On the other end of speculative groups came the sect called the "Docetists" (2nd Century "Gnostics" [freely translated "know-it-alls"]). They followed a system which exalted human intellect, and considered human flesh to be inherently evil, a tenet of their pagan religion. This led them to deny that Christ came "in the flesh."

**ERRORS OF ESCHATOLOGY**

The Apostles also tried to fend off errors of eschatology (the study of final things). Some in Paul's day made the mistake of "saying that the resurrection is past already," which, because the resurrection was to occur at the final "coming of the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), tended to "overthrow the faith of some" (2 Timothy 2:16-18). We have already noted that Paul had to quash the concept that "The End" is "just at hand" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). The modern form of this might be called "numbers games," doubtful prognostications which try to set the time of the second coming of Christ. On the other end of the scale, some did not see the end close by, but far away, delayed. They asked, "where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4). This view that the future is governed by the constant past influences many today to put off spiritual preparations for the coming of the Lord.

Yet, in the face of apostolic reproofs, an Ante-Nicene form of "Chiliasm" (the view that Christ will reign in an earthly millennial paradise) developed, based on some of the obscure Scriptures in the book of Revelation (such as Revelation 20:1-6). Many had expected the quick return of Christ, because of the promises found in Scripture, and experienced disappointment when they presumed that the predictions had failed. They concluded that an alternate advent theory needed to be formed. In response, Justin Martyr, in the middle of the 2nd Century, taught a form of "millennialism," and was imitated by many subsequent writers. This hypothesis persisted in many places, Schaff says, until...

"Dionysius the Great (who died about 264 AD) checked the chiliastic movement when it was revived by Nepos in Egypt, and wrote an elaborate work against it, which is lost...But the crushing blow came from the great
change in the social condition and prospects of the church in the Nicene age. After Christianity, contrary to all expectation, triumphed in the Roman Empire, and was embraced by the Caesars themselves, the millennial reign, instead of being anxiously waited and prayed for, began to be dated either from the first appearance of Christ, or from the conversion of Constantine and the downfall of paganism..." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, p. 619.)

The millennial errors of that early apostate Christianity are based on the same presumptions as the modern varieties, and are therefore just as false.

ORGANIZATIONAL ERRORS

Errors of organization also troubled the church in the time of the Apostles. John rebuked the presumption of the congregational dictator, "Diotrephes, who loved to have the preeminence." In his self-exaltation, Diotrephes "prated against" apostolic authority "with wicked words," and would not receive John, or even the brethren sent from him. This local church tyrant "cast...out of the church" anyone who desired to receive John's emissaries (3 John 9-10). This situation violated the principles of Acts 20:28, which showed that the "bishops" of the local church in plurality, and together, were to be overseers, and "feed the church of the Lord." Peter applies the same instruction to elders (presbyters); "Tend the flock of God (local congregation) which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly...neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2-3). By the end of the 2nd Century, in spite of these clear divine instructions, distinctions were being made between "bishop" and "elder" by some of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers," such as Ignatius, the so-called "Bishop" of Antioch (105-115 AD). Bishops, in their minds, "presided" over the elders in local congregations. This deviation in church organization was the first step of many which led eventually to the papacy.

OTHER ERRORS

Even what might be called "minor" errors of doctrine were foreseen by the Apostles. In general they warned Christians, as Paul did the Romans, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Romans 16:17). But they also
specified some of these departures from the truth. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul said, "But the Spirit says expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith...forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth" (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

When the "falling away" came, there was a rise of the practice of celibacy in the clergy, and dietary laws were imposed on the adherents of the apostate church. Schaff summarizes both of these views. On the celibacy issue, he says,

"As the clergy were supposed to embody the moral ideal of Christianity, and to be in the full sense of the term the heritage of God, they were required to practice especially rigid sexual temperance after receiving their ordination. The virginity of the church of Christ, who was himself born of a virgin, seemed, in the ascetic spirit of the age, to recommend a virgin priesthood as coming nearest his example, and best calculated to promote the spiritual interests of the church." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, p. 404.)

Celibacy was voluntary at first, but by the 5th and 6th centuries, the western (Roman) clergy were prohibited marriage, though the eastern (Greek) clergy were less rigidly controlled. In view of the Apostle Paul's statement of 1 Corinthians 9:5, Schaff comments,

"It is also self-evident that, if marriage did not detract from the authority and dignity of an apostle, it cannot be inconsistent with the dignity and purity of any minister of Christ." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, p. 405.)

Fasting, also, was evidently a voluntary practice among the apostles and the church in New Testament times, rather than a compulsory activity (see Acts 13:2, 14:23). Schaff says, "The apostles themselves sometimes employed this wholesome discipline, though without infringing the gospel freedom by legal prescriptions." But he faithfully reports the rise of compulsory fasting in the Ante-Nicene Age with the statement,

"As the Pharisees were accustomed to fast twice in the week, on Monday and Thursday, the Christians appointed Wednesday and especially Friday, as days of half-fasting or abstinence from flesh, in commemoration of the passion and crucifixion of Jesus. They did this with reference to the Lord's words: 'When the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then will
they fast (Mt. 9:15)." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, p. 379.)

We see from this misapplication of Scripture that what had formerly been a voluntary practice, now, in the absence of Apostolic restraint, became an appointed practice. Many errors come into existence by this same process.

**EXALTATION OF MEN**

Errors rising from human exaltation were also predicted by the Apostles. The appearance of the "man of sin" who "exalted himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped...setting himself forth as God" would be the extreme example of this error (2 Thessalonians 2:3b-12). Yet, Paul said to some elders, "From among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). Sects would develop around certain men, causing some to say, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas..." (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

In the early apostasy, sects did arise that followed and called themselves after men. Montanism (which Schaff describes as a "gloomy and fanatical hyper-Christianity") was a sect named for Montanus. Arianism (which denied full deity to Christ) was a heresy named for Arius. Through the centuries that followed there would be many others.

**IMMORALITY**

Finally, errors generated by moral degeneracy would trouble the early church. Jude warned that men would "creep in privily," who were "ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness," and who could be detected by the fact that they "in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities" (see Jude 4, 8-19). The Apostle John records the Lord's hatred of the "Nicolaitans," who seem to be described as ones who would "commit fornication" (Revelation 2:6, 15). Of the Nicolaitans, Schaff quotes Irenaeus:

"They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence. That character of these men is very plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, where they are represented as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practice adultery, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, p. 464.)

The Rome of Paul's day was so degenerate that he warned the Christians there of this influence. He said, "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off
the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk becomingly, as in
the day; not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife
and jealousy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to
fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:12-14).

In spite of all these dire predictions of apostasy, however, the Apostles hoped and
prayed that righteousness would continue into the future of Christianity. Certainly, some
Christians gave them that hope by the way they conducted themselves. Paul writes to
some of these, saying, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren
beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in
sancification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our
gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand fast,
and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours" (see
2 Thessalonians 2:13-17).

The Apostle John wrote, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits,
whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1
John 4:1). The errors which the Apostles warned us about are with us today in
multitudinuous forms, yet, in the very warnings of the Apostles against apostasy, we
possess keys to facilitate our return to the apostolic order. Every error detectable today can
be corrected by a "thus saith the Lord!" This requires that we respect the Word as inspired,
sufficient, and therefore authoritative. This is not too much to ask of those who love the
truth, and it is shown in the writings of the New Testament to be essential to our ultimate
salvation.
CHAPTER THREE

"BREAKING DOWN"

(The Apostasy Completed)

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God." --Hebrews 3:12

After the first departures from Apostolic authority, it was predictable that a flood-tide of errors would follow. Paul told Timothy, "Give diligence to present yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth. But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will spread like a cancer" (2 Timothy 2:15-17a). He also said, "Evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13).

The "old timers" would say, "It’s too late to shut the gate after the horse is gone." Yet, in matters that touch on the eternal destiny of the soul, all "breakaways" from the truth are disastrous. The solution is to go out, round up the horse, get him back in the corral, and then shut the gate more securely. The time for doing this had not yet come, however, in the first few centuries after the Apostles were taken from the scene. Instead, we see a condition like that which followed the death of Joshua and his contemporaries fifteen or more centuries earlier. We are told that "the people served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of Jehovah that he had wrought for Israel." After these leaders died, however, "there arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel" (Judges 2:7-10). Therefore, we must devote a little part of this history to show how far the "horse" of error wandered, before any thought was given to recapturing him. The "breakdown" caused by error, we will see, became an avalanche.

It is not feasible, in a short history, to give space to the multitude of these errors, but
we should trace the general descent of our "avalanche" of error through the centuries until the seeds of reform began to germinate. The final chapters of this book will consider some important errors, and how they were corrected. All errors are fundamentally damaging to the security of the believer, yet some errors have a way of troubling believers again and again. We will consider doctrinal errors—especially those concerning the salvation of the sinner. Also we will discuss organizational errors—including those which obscured the nature and work of the church. In examination of these errors, we will study the manner in which each of them violates the authority of Scripture. We will also see that all such errors depend for their correction on ardent respect for Scripture.

In the first three centuries of the history of Christianity, tremendous expansion was experienced. There were many obstacles for it to overcome, but it still grew rapidly. One might call this territorial and political spread a success, and there were reasons for it. Schaff writes,

"...In spite of these extraordinary difficulties Christianity made a progress which furnished striking evidence of its divine origin and adaptation to the deeper wants of man.........Nay, the very hindrances became, in the hands of Providence, means of promotion. Persecution led to martyrdom, and martyrdom had not terrors alone, but also attractions, and stimulated the noblest and most unselfish form of ambition.....The moral earnestness of the Christians contrasted powerfully with the prevailing corruption of the age, and while it repelled the frivolous and voluptuous, it could not fail to impress most strongly the deepest and noblest minds. The predilection of the poor and oppressed for the gospel attested its comforting and redeeming power.

"...The chief positive cause of the rapid spread and ultimate triumph of Christianity is to be found in its own intrinsic worth...Its value could be seen in the truth and self-evidencing power of its doctrines; in the purity and sublimity of its precepts; in its regenerating and sanctifying effects on heart and life; in the elevation of woman and of home life over which she presides; in the amelioration of the condition of the poor and suffering; in the faith, the brotherly love, the beneficence, and the triumphant death of its confessors."
While these conditions remained prominent, Christianity was attractive. There were, however, serious problems. We have already noted the infant organizational error of elevating one of the elders in a local church to be a singular Bishop. Of course, the ambition inherent in human nature would not be satisfied with this single promotion. Some Bishops, once exalted above their fellow servants, would crave more and more power, until the Papacy would be firmly in place. The brotherly love that marked the age of the Apostles would fade slowly into the terror and hatred that revealed itself in the dark ages. Discipline of both the clergy and the laity would become severe, often involving torture and death at the hands of dictatorial clerical authority.

CHRISTIANITY BY COUNCIL

Controversies by the dozens would also fracture the believers in the early centuries. To suppress these debates, the hierarchical leadership used the device of regional and international councils to identify and condemn heresies, and to draw the elements of the fractured church into a unit again. From the first general council of Nicea in 325 AD, to the present day, these conclaves have had such a purpose.

The so-called "council" held in Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15, is cited by many as the scriptural precedent for the great ecumenical councils of the Roman Catholic Church. But the "Jerusalem Council" was basically different from those mounted in later times. The later councils met to debate divisive issues and to formulate creeds and legislate "canons" (church laws) to deal with them, but the Jerusalem meeting made no laws for the church that had not already been made by revelation of God. The Apostle Paul did not go to Jerusalem to learn anything about the subject under discussion. He said, regarding his teaching, "...It is not after man, for neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." Later, in the same context, he said, "They...who were of repute imparted nothing to me" (Galatians 1:11-12, 2:2-10). We notice also that he was instructed "by revelation" to go up to Jerusalem (no visitor to any of the later councils of the apostate church could say as much). The purpose of the meeting was the correction and discipline of those who came to Antioch from Jerusalem preaching a Judaizing corruption of the truth. They went out from the Jerusalem church, and were
therefore disciplined by the Jerusalem church. Peter said to them, "Now therefore why do you make trial of God, that you should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" That ended the matter. The autonomy and independence of the involved local churches was maintained. The "epistle" which issued from the meeting, unlike the "canons" of the later apostate councils, carried the authority of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:22-29), so it contained no "doctrines of men."

To give credibility to its actions today, the Roman Catholic Church maintains its right to have occasional ecumenical councils on the basis that the Pope is the "prime" successor to the Apostles, and that the Bishops assembled are also in that line of succession. No precedent for "Apostolic Succession" is found in the Scripture, however. The Apostles laid hands on others to "impair some spiritual gift," but had no right to impart their authority. Their powers had been obtained from Christ, by delegation, and a delegate has no intrinsic right to create another delegate. Jesus selected "The Twelve," personally (John 6:70-71). After the death of Judas, Matthias was not chosen by men, but was selected by divinely controlled "lot" (see Acts 1:15-26, and compare Proverbs 16:33). It was only coincidental that the Apostles viewed him as a valid candidate. But it must be remembered that two candidates were put forward, and the Lord chose only one! Before the death of the Apostle James (Acts 12:2), Paul was chosen directly by Christ to be an apostle (see Acts 9:10-16, 1 Corinthians 15:7-9, and Romans 1:1-5). We can find no evidence that the murdered James, nor any other Apostle, ever "laid hands" on Paul. We see from these facts that Apostles were not created by "succession." Therefore, the "bishops" who attended the councils of the apostate church assumed and exercised "apostolic" authority unlawfully.

The concept of placing Bishops over territories containing many congregations was unscriptural. As we have seen, in the New Testament there was no distinction between bishops and elders, and these men had no authority or duties, under either designation, outside their local congregation (see Acts 20:17, 28; and 1 Peter 5:1-3).

Such variants in organization set the precedent for variants of other sorts. The "Christianity" that resulted from this is treated by historians as the legitimate heir to Apostolic Christianity. They forget the strong principle enunciated by the inspired New Testament writer, James. In showing the guilt of some who committed the seemingly trivial
sin of showing partiality in their dealings with others, he said, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all" (James 2:10). The Apostle Paul showed that any deviation from the Gospel brought its promoter and those who adopted it under a curse. To the gullible Galatians, he said, "I marvel that you are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel, which is not another gospel, only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema" (Galatians 1:6-8). If a gospel is "different," it cannot be "another," Paul says. The only true gospel was the one which the Apostles preached to them. To believe a different gospel is to "remove from him that called," and the promoter of the false gospel is "anathema" (a curse of destruction).

In this history, therefore, we cannot treat the departures of early Christianity from New Testament authority as acceptable and legitimate. Despite the retention of good elements in the post-apostolic church, moral and otherwise, we must call its departures "apostate," for we have no other choice. As has already been said, in the "ante-Nicene" period (up to 325 AD) there were so many departures that we can make no room to discuss them all in a short history. We do need to consider, however, the forces which brought about these variants and deviations.

PAGAN PHILOSOPHY AND SUPERSTITION

One of the prime sources of perversion came from the heathen tendency to follow philosophy. The spearheads of Christianity had pierced into every corner of the Roman Empire, and even into the forests and deserts peopled by barbarians. Its appeal was strong enough to bring in vast numbers of converts, but who brought with them many of their former beliefs and superstitions. Schaff describes one of these flanking movements of heathenism, calling it "heretical asceticism." Ascetics are "given to strict self-denial, especially for the sake of spiritual or intellectual discipline" (Webster Dictionary). And Schaff says,

"The heretical asceticism, the beginnings of which are resisted in the New Testament itself (1 Timothy 4:3; Colossians 2:16 sqq.), meets us in the
Gnostic and Manichaean sects...It places God and the world at irreconcilable enmity, derives the creation from an inferior being, considers the human body substantially evil, a product of the devil or the demiurge (Look it up...in a big dictionary!), and makes it the great moral business of man to rid himself of the same, or gradually to annihilate it, whether by excessive abstinence or by unbridled indulgence...The heathen Gnostic principle of separation from the world and from the body, as a means of self-redemption, after being theoretically exterminated, stole into the church by a back door of practice, directly in face of the Christian doctrine of the high destiny of the body and perfect redemption through Christ." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, pp. 392-393.)

It is impossible to calculate the extent of the damage caused by this clandestine invasion of Gnostic philosophy into early Christianity. It seems to have influenced the thinking of the 4th Century scholar Augustine, whose views on predestination and hereditary sin were based on a strong revulsion against his own inclination to sinfulness (we will have much more to say about this man in a later chapter). The philosophical influence of Gnosticism revealed itself in many unscriptural practices and views (Infant Baptism, the "immaculate conception" of Mary, anti-trinitarianism, Arianism, etc.). It certainly influenced the rise of Monasticism (individuals and groups of men and women who withdrew from the world in varying degrees, and subjected themselves to rigorous work, or abstinence, or silence, or self-punishment, or all of these in combination). Paul foresaw this trend through the eyes of the Holy Spirit, and warned, "Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility...If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Colossians 2:18-23).

Paganism also influenced early Christianity through its idolatry. Jewish revulsion of idols was not shared by the multitude of Gentiles who came into the church. In direct contrast to the warnings of the Apostles against exaltations of men, Schaff says that the veneration
of martyrs led to the veneration of saints and relics.

"In thankful remembrance of the fidelity of this 'noble army of martyrs,' in recognition of the unbroken communion of saints, and in prospect of the resurrection of the body, the church paid to the martyrs, and even to their mortal remains, a veneration, which was in itself well-deserved and altogether natural, but which early exceeded the scriptural limit, and afterwards degenerated into the worship of saints and relics...Martyrdom was taken, after the end of the second century, not only as a higher grade of Christian virtue, but at the same time as a baptism of fire and blood, an ample substitution for the baptism of water, as purifying from sin, and as securing an entrance into heaven." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, pp. 82-83.)

DEVELOPMENT OF POLEMIC THEOLOGY

Yet another devastating influence in early apostate Christianity was the tendency to combat heresy by means that ignored and abandoned the powerful force of the unex-purgated Word of God. Early "apologists" (defenders of the church against heresy and secular opposition) used both their faulty concepts of Scripture, and philosophical polemics to fight this battle. The result was a body of literature that formed the "Sayings of the Fathers," and eventually evolved into "Canon Law" (Church rules and regulations). On this point, Schaff reveals,

"The church possessed the truth from the beginning, in the experience of faith, and in the holy scriptures, which she handed down with scrupulous fidelity from generation to generation. But now came the task of developing the substance of the Christian truth in theoretical form, fortifying it on all sides, and presenting it in clear light before the understanding. Thus the Christian polemic and dogmatic theology, or the church's logical apprehension of the doctrines of salvation, unfolded itself in this conflict with heresy...

From this time forth the distinction between catholic and heretical, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, the faith of the church and dissenting private opinion, became steadily more prominent. Every doctrine which agreed with the holy scriptures and the faith of the church, was received as catholic; that
is, universal, and exclusive. Whatever deviated materially from this standard, every arbitrary notion, framed by this or that individual, every distortion or corruption of the revealed doctrines of Christianity, every departure from the *public sentiment of the church*, was considered heresy." (Schaff, *History*, Vol. 2, pp. 509-510.)

This quotation not only reveals the early distinction that was drawn between "catholicity" and heresy, but also the acceptance of a dual standard of authority: "the revealed doctrines of Christianity" plus "the public sentiment of the church." This distinction was totally in opposition to the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, who said that human traditions and suppositions were forbidden to all who were faithful to the truth (Matthew 15:9, Mark 7:13, Colossians 2:8). Yet, the early apostates went on their oblivious way, forming human creeds, bodies of tradition, and "rules of faith" (summaries of Christian teaching).

**THE INFLUENCE OF JUDAISM**

Perhaps the most devastating intrusion of error came through the "Judaizers" in the early church. We noted in the previous chapter that the Apostles resisted the doctrine of certain Christian Jews (former Pharisees) requiring Gentiles to be circumcised, in order to be saved. Because of the presence of many Jews in the early church, and because of their status as "the chosen people," the Gentiles would have a natural tendency to defer to their opinions (and they proved to be very opinionated). Their influence was a probable factor in the establishment of the very early practices of infant baptism (as a substitute for circumcision), the "priesthood" (with its mosaic distinctions between clergy and laity), the development of "sacerdotal" functions for the priests, and many other like errors. During this period, if any error carried an overtone of Old Testament authority, we can be reasonably certain that Jewish converts were behind its introduction. Certainly, their thinking governed some of the early aesthetic departures from pure Christianity. One of the sects of this sort was that of the Ebionites. Schaff writes,

"The characteristic marks of Ebionism in all its forms are: degradation of Christianity to the level of Judaism; the principle of the universal and perpetual validity of the Mosaic law; and enmity to the apostle Paul" (Schaff, *History*, Vol. 2, pp. 432-433.)
In view of Paul's deadly opposition to Judaizing teachers, it is no wonder that such sects would hate that most worthy Apostle, and would resist his divinely ordained struggle to deliver Christianity from the "bondage" of the Law of Moses.

There were perhaps other forces at work to corrupt the truth as revealed by Christ and the Apostles, but these are sufficient to demonstrate that perverse human concepts were slowly infiltrating the church, apostatizing it and damning the souls of its adherents. The trickle of error in the Apostolic Age became a torrent in the Ante-Nicene Age, and it would take many generations before the first feeble reformers would be brushed aside by a tyrannical church, and stronger ones would find the means to succeed against the entrenched and formidable forces of apostasy. Similar forces work today to bring about a new apostasy, but a recognition of how these forces gained ground in the past can equip us to resist them in our own age (a wonderful and profitable benefit of the study of history).
"Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth. But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene." --2 Timothy 2:15-17a

In the reign of the Roman emperor Constantine I (who lived from about 280 to 337 AD), the church in its apostate form became the recognized "State Church" of the empire. At once, this rise in prestige became an additional temptation to the ambitious bishops of that entrenched perversion of the church of the Lord. By this time, the church had passed through several degenerative changes. The unscriptural organizational seeds sown in local congregations in the Second Century began now to bear bitter fruit. From those first intra-congregational “presiding bishops” had evolved an expanding system of diocesan and provincial bishops, followed by the elevation of five regional "Patriarchs." Presbyters and evangelists had assumed the position of priests. The single sacrifice of the cross had been voided, theoretically, by the installation of an "altar" and an early form of the ritual called the "sacrifice of the mass." Creeds and "Rules of Faith" had supplanted the Scripture. Monasticism began to displace evangelism.

Yet, this perverted organization still had sufficient moral and spiritual stamina to prove itself superior to the immoral and demonic state of paganism. Schaff says,

"Under a three hundred years' oppression, it had preserved its irrepressible moral vigor, and abundantly earned its new social position. It could not possibly continue a despised sect, a homeless child of the wilderness, but, like its divine founder on the third day of his crucifixion, it must rise again, take the reins of the world into its hands, and, as an all-transforming principle, take state, science, and art to itself, to breathe into them a higher
life and consecrate them to the service of God." (Schaff, History, Vol. 3, p. 92.)

This is an apt description of the power and principles found in the Roman Catholic church, today. It still maintains a vigor that amazes observers, "rising again" after each defeat, and seeming to be almost impregnable to attack. It still thrusts itself into every avenue of human endeavor. It has never repudiated its desire to dominate the state (especially in those nations where its members are in the majority), though its former dominance has been reduced by wars and revolutions in many places. However, at the time of Constantine's favor, there was still enough respect for Apostolic Tradition to cause much misgiving among its leaders about becoming an official state church.

The new position of the church sent shock waves throughout the world. In the minds of many of its adherents, especially those with memories of the great persecutions under Roman Emperors, the church and the state were incompatible, while those who saw advantage in the arrangement hailed it as a return to the combination of civil and religious authority seen in the Old Testament (another surrender to Judaism). They were supported in this view by the heathen tradition of letting religion serve the interests of the state. This shows that they did not understand Jesus fully, when he said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). Nor did they fully comprehend the instructions of Paul and Peter regarding the divinely appointed function of the state, and the Christian's submission to it (see Romans 13:1-7, and 1 Peter 2:13-17). Christ intended that the church should spread throughout the world, a world with a multitude of governments and political systems; that it should submit itself to them, as much as possible, and survive under these systems. The advice of Peter and Paul was not intended to govern Christians only while the church remained "un-recognized." The clear implication of the teaching of the New Testament is that the church should never even seek the recognition of the state! Christians were to continue to submit to secular authority, where it did not contradict the divine (see Acts 5:29). Divine approval would help them thrive under the principle of separation. The unhampered experience of religion in the free environment of the United States, where separation of church and state is firmly implanted, is ample proof of this principle.
The early defenders of the combination of church and state probably found their biblical precedent in a misapprehension of the predictions of the Old Testament prophets, such as Daniel 2:44-45, which promised the "destruction" of worldly kingdoms, and the ultimate victory of the kingdom of God. But the prophets were to be interpreted spiritually, or figuratively, and their prophecies spoke of the victorious reign of God over the hearts of men, not of the domination of secular powers by the church. Jesus confirms this by His testimony, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). The Kingdom of God poses no threat to temporal powers, nor does it "destroy" them, except in the sense that it takes precedence over earthly kingdoms in the hearts of its citizens.

Though Schaff says that the church achieved its new powerful victory over heathenism and the resistance of the state "without a stroke of sword or intrigue" (Vol. 3, p. 92), it is difficult to conceive that there was no political pressure exerted on Constantine by the presence in his empire of such a popular, powerful, and prolific religious body. His actions seem to be dominated by practical politics, and were calculated to win the loyalty of this movement. To add credibility to his recognition of the church, he claimed divine help in the winning of battles, and a dubious legend of royal visions and signs gained acceptance. With the support of the church, he hoped to achieve much more than he could against their passive resistance. His interest in the affairs of the church, even his calling of the great council of Nicea in 325 AD, was for political ends (mainly the suppression of worldwide strife over the theories of Arius). However, unknowingly, he had unleashed a force which would ultimately seek to undermine the rights of the state in later times, and which would develop into a tyrannical state within the state. Kings and Emperors would eventually be enthroned and dethroned through its powers, and the western world would know much bloodshed and desolation because of Constantine's surrender to expediency. Schaff says,

"With the union of the church and the state begins the long and tedious history of their collisions and their mutual struggles for the mastery: the state seeking to subject the church to the empire, the church to subject the state to the hierarchy......From the time of Constantine, therefore, the history of the church and that of the world in Europe are so closely interwoven, that neither can be understood without the other. On the one hand, the political rulers,
as the highest members and patrons of the church, claimed a right to a share in her government, and interfered in various ways in her external and internal affairs, either to her profit, or to her prejudice. On the other hand, the bishops and patriarchs, as the highest dignitaries and officers of the state religion, became involved in all sorts of secular matters and in the intrigues of the Byzantine court. This mutual intermixture, on the whole, was of more injury than benefit to the church, and to religion, and fettered her free and natural development." (Schaff, History, Vol. 3, p. 131.)

None of this could have come about without many years of preparation. The apostate church had inadvertently "adorned herself" as the bride of the state, instead of the "bride of Christ." She had imitated the centralized governmental structure of the Roman Empire, and could easily fit herself into its system. The key factor in her divorce from Christ was her abandonment of scriptural authority. The ease with which this abandonment took place is a source of amazement to many Christian observers today. We might ask, "Could not the early apostates see the consequences of their errors by reading the many scriptural examples showing the evils of despising the Word of God?" Careful students of the Bible should be impressed by the warnings of both Old and New Testament examples. They should recall the sin and fiery destruction of the priests Nadab and Abihu, who "offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them" (Leviticus 10:1-2). They can read of the confusion experienced by David because of the death of Uzza, until he realized that his procession was carrying the Ark of the Covenant in an unscriptural way (1 Chronicles 13 & 15). They are warned against presumptions like that of King Uzziah, who thought his position as King entitled him to enter the Temple and offer incense in the manner of a priest (2 Chronicles 26:16-21). And, they should be made cautious by reading of the mistake of Ananias and Sapphira, who "lied to the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5). Jesus had said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). From this precedent, the Apostle Paul could write, "If any man teacheth a different doctrine, and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about
questionings and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, supposing that godliness is a way of gain..." (1 Timothy 6:3-5). This description aptly fits the sordid history of the "falling away" predicted by the Apostles.

The Apostles knew that their delegated authority had its source in the inherent authority of Christ. Paul would say, If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37). In view of this truth, discipline could be based on whether a man obeyed an apostle's word. Paul said, "If any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed" (2 Thessalonians 3:14).

But The wrangling of men in the first few centuries after the death of Christ shows that they ignored these warnings. There were attempts to draw all men to certain views, but these views did not always coincide with scriptural truth. Ecumenical Councils (first regional, then universal) were used to try to stop the spread of views divergent from "catholic" doctrine. The tragic result of this trend was that Councils often enforced errors, instead of reinforcing truth, and thereby promoted a general drift toward pyramid type authority (district bishops, then regional, finally universal).

Authority began to reside in the church, not the Bible. Alignment of the church with the state enabled the church to apply extreme discipline to heretics by execution, and by the threat of dreaded "excommunications" (removing a member from the privilege of partaking in the so-called "sacraments" dispensed exclusively through the priests, and which came to be considered as a consignment to the wrath of God).

There was another factor which consolidated the apostasy, sealing it in concrete. Latin was adopted as the language of the Roman Church, and retained long after it ceased to be widely used. Most copies of the Bible were in Latin. The "Dark Ages" were marked by illiteracy. Only in scholastic circles was Latin prominent (to the advantage of the Roman Church, since uneducated men could seldom dispute what the church said about the Bible.) This enabled the church to claim to be the "depository" of truth with the sole right of interpretation.
People in the "Dark Ages" were also victimized by their superstitions and trust in traditions (mystic rituals, veneration of relics, and pseudo-miracles), just as Paul predicted in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10. Romanism took full advantage of this ignorance, and found many fraudulent ways to increase its wealth through these things.

As we mentioned before, the right to dispense the seven "sacraments," including baptism, communion, marriage, etc., was claimed by the church, and no man who had been excommunicated could enjoy these things, legally. In addition, Excommunication from the Church hindered a man's civil activities, since Church and State were bound together. Excommunication, therefore, was like the "Sword of Damocles," suspended threateningly over the heads of medieval Catholics.

In every way it could, the Roman Church capitalized on the ignorance of men. Even in the Renaissance of the 12th and 13th centuries, an age of the revival of education and intellectualism, the Roman Church did not swerve from keeping its "Dark Ages" policies. This was a fatal mistake, and fed the flames of religious insurrection throughout Europe.

At the height of its medieval power, the immorality of Popes and Bishops was brazenly displayed (influencing the lower echelons of priests to take them for "role models"). When the "laity" expressed doubt that spiritual functions could be performed legitimately in the hands of corrupt priests, the hierarchy, instead of correcting its moral failures, adopted the self-serving view that the person of the priest was separated from his function! Under this rule, the clergy could still practice immoralities, while they continued to claim apostolic succession and authority.

Luxury and pride was very prominent in the church. Papal opulence was legendary. Monasteries (supposedly dedicated to poverty and chastity) often became luxurious and licentious. Though the church was rich, it remained greedy. It demanded fees for every service (baptisms, weddings, funerals, masses for the dead, etc.) The Pope appointed bishops, and rewarded himself by claiming the new Bishop's income for the first year. Bishop candidates competed for the best "stipends" (incomes), so that Popes often "sold" bishoprics to the highest bidder. Churches often owned the best lands, and rental of these lands added to the Bishops' wealth. In England, thirty per cent of the productive land was in the hands of the Church, arousing great resentment among the people, and igniting the
Peasant Revolt of the 13th Century.

The greedy innovation that finally aroused the 16th Century Reformers to action was the "sale" of indulgences. Indulgences had been a tradition of the apostate church for a long time. It was a complicated doctrine fabricated out of the fantasies of the early apostates. The Catholic could reduce his future time in purgatory, or gain forgiveness of the temporal punishment for sin, by performing various works commanded by the Church, such as being a soldier in a Crusade, or in making ample gifts toward it. The "selling of indulgence" was not really new, since Popes had sometimes granted special indulgences to wealthy people and princes, for a fee (Schaff, History, Vol. 6, p. 93.). In the 16th Century, however, to raise funds for the enlargement of St. Peter's Cathedral in the Vatican, indulgences were being offered at "bargain prices." This new brand of cheap forgiveness was naturally attractive both to the rich and to the poor. Even the poorest of people were told they could purchase a large release from the punishment of their sins with a small "coin of the realm." The claim that one could escape the normal consequences of his sins by simply "buying" a document from a priest offended many faithful Catholics, but the Protestant Reformers were much more vigorous in opposition to the abuses connected with it. As the Pope's need for gold grew, abuses also grew, causing some of the priestly salesmen, under pressure from their superiors to produce more cash, to advertise that one could even buy the "right" to commit a damning sin in the future. A story is told, whether apocryphal or not, that one Lutheran sympathizer is reported to have taken advantage of such an offer by buying an indulgence, then proceeding with his purchased impunity to beat up the priest who sold it to him.

All of these things about the apostate church, in the ages between the Council of Nicea and the Protestant Reformation, repeatedly offended the sensibilities and consciences of simple folk, and humble men of every order. The situation became intolerable, and dissidents began to show their resentment against an institution which preached righteousness, but practiced unrighteousness. Resistance movements might swell and be crushed for a season, but resistance was the wave of the future, as we will see in the next phase of our brief study.
CHAPTER FIVE

"BREAKING THROUGH"

(From the Tyranny of Romanism)

"I exHORT thee...that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith. But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned; from which things some having swerved have turned aside unto vain talking; desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm." --1 Timothy 1:3-7

The "breakaway" of the church in doctrine and organization began in the 2nd Century, followed by its "breakdown,". Early errors bred many more through the centuries, until the Apostasy matured at the time of the elevation of the first true Roman Pope, Gregory I, in the early 7th Century. That period was also filled with efforts to consolidate the church through a pyramid type structure. As bishops grew more powerful, they grew more ambitious, also. Contests for domination developed between the bishops of the Eastern (Byzantine) Church, and those of the Western (Roman) Church. Rival claims were made to the mystical office of "Universal Bishop," or Pope. The succession of Roman bishops claimed supremacy over others, based on the popular fiction that Constantine I had granted them both secular and religious authority when the Emperor moved the capital city of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople. Gregory's claim finally seemed to establish itself in the West, but Eastern Church sensibilities continued to be offended by several developments in the Roman wing of the church. Eventually, the Byzantine rite would follow an independent course, more conservative in some ways than the Roman, but Gregory, for the time, was victorious. From his "primacy," we mark a period of dominance for the Roman apostate church over Western Europe.
For the next 500 years, due to the general ignorance of the "Dark Ages", dissent was virtually unknown (or, at least, unreported). But Schaff says,

"In the second half of the eleventh century here and there, in Milan, Orleans, Strasbourg, Cologne, and Mainz, little flames of heresy shot forth; but they were quickly put out and the Church went on its way again in peace." (Schaff, History, Vol. 5, p. 461-462.)

By his use of the word "Church," Schaff has in mind the Roman Catholic concept of the hierarchial organism, the ministration of the priests. By the word "heresy," he means those "who dissented from the dogmatic beliefs of the Catholic Church." (Ibid., p. 465.) In this age, the punishment of heretics was ruthless. Schaff says,

"The principle of toleration was unknown...The opinion came to prevail, that what disease is to the body that heresy is to the Church, and the most merciful procedure was to cut off the heretic. No distinction was made between the man and the error...The civil codes adopted and pronounced death as the heretic's 'merited reward'..." (Ibid. p. 467.)

The ultimate Catholic device against what it called heresy was the establishment of the "Holy Office," better known as the "Inquisition," in the 12th century. Though its methods were arbitrary and vicious, causing the deaths of thousands, the Inquisition and its predecessors never did silence all dissent. The thirst for truth was so strong that various sects of dissidents still rose from time to time, in spite of these methods. We could wish that more information was available regarding these courageous sects, but Schaff warns us that "Our knowledge of the mediaeval sectaries and their practices is drawn almost wholly from the testimonies of those who were arrayed against them." (Ibid., p. 462.) As each sect of dissenters was decimated, the persecutors tried to erase the memory of the principles for which they stood, in order to keep them from inciting other people to resistance.

The causes which Schaff assigns to these earlier futile dissent are interesting to us, in the light of later attempts to restore primitive Christianity. He says,

"The exciting cause of this religious revolt is to be looked for in the worldliness and arrogance of the clergy, the formalism of the Church's ritual,
and the worldly ambitions of the papal policy...Underneath all this discontent was the spiritual hunger of the masses. The Bible was not an altogether forgotten book. The people remembered it. Popular preachers......quoted its precepts and relied upon its authority. There was a hankering after the Gospel which the Church did not set forth. The people wanted to get behind the clergy and the ritual of the sacraments to Christ himself, and, in doing so, a large body of the sectaries went to the extreme of abandoning the outward celebration of the sacraments, and withdrew themselves altogether from priestly offices. The aim of all the sects was moral and religious reformation." (Ibid., p. 463)

"The matters in which the heretical sects differed from the Catholic Church concerned doctrine, ritual, and the organization of the church." (Ibid., p. 465.)

Since the leaders of these "heresies" were mostly of the common people, he writes,

"Their ignorance was a constant subject of gibe and derision as they stood for trial before the ecclesiastical tribunals. The heresy of a later period, the fifteenth century, differs in this regard, having scholars among its advocates." (Ibid., p. 462.)

"A prominent charge made against the dissenters was that they put their own interpretations upon the Gospels and Epistles and employed these interpretations to establish their own systems and rebuke the Catholic Hierarchy." (Ibid., p. 463-464.)

Again, we must take note that the Catholic Church reserved to itself the exclusive right to interpret the Scripture. This "right" had been so successfully instilled that when the church charged dissenters with practicing "private interpretation," it had the instant effect of turning many faithful Catholics against them. Ignorance of the truths of God's Word prevailed on both sides, of course, but it hurt the cause of dissent more. The Roman Church, immersed in Mysticism, and full of ignorance, had the political reins of power, and the dissenters were at a distinct disadvantage. Being numerically inferior, they could only fight with arguments, and those were often faulty and weak. To illustrate the point, Schaff
describes some of the trivial arguments used by the dissenters:

"The doctrine of transubstantiation was denied on the ground that, if Christ's body had been as large as the largest mountain, it would have been consumed long before that time. As for adoring the cross, thorns and spears might with equal propriety be worshiped, for Christ's body was wounded by a crown of thorns and a lance" (Ibid., p. 465.)

The mystical Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation proclaimed that when the priest uttered the formula that hallowed the bread and fruit of the vine in the communion, they became the actual body and blood of the Lord. So, thinking in material terms, the unlearned sectaries had trouble envisioning a body big enough to feed the thousands who partook of it daily in masses throughout the world. Also, the idolatrous use of the Cross, which offended them, caused them to argue sarcastically that equal reverence be given to thorns and spears. Schaff comments on these arguments, "The depositions of the victims of the Inquisition are the simple statements of unlettered men." But he says, in sympathetic defense of these simple men, "In the thousands of reports of judicial cases, which are preserved, charges of immoral conduct are rare" (Ibid.)

THE MEDIEVAL SECTS

Though one list of these "heretical" sects numbers 130, there were only a few prominent large ones, and their teaching contained seeds that would bear fruit in later, more successful reformatory movements (Schaff, History, Vol. 5, p. 470ff.).

The CATHARI (Called ALBIGENSES in Southern France) comprised the largest of the sects (one estimate: 4 million). They thrived in the 12th Century. Pointing to the tokens of Romanism, they showed that it was not the true church. They said, "The true church endures persecution," they said, "(it) does not prescribe it...The true church teaches first. The Roman church baptizes first" (Ibid., p. 475.) The latter part of this statement indicates a rejection of Infant Baptism by the Cathari, and a possible knowledge of such passages as John 6:45, in which Jesus, showing how Isaiah 54:13 and Jeremiah 31:34 would be fulfilled, said, "Everyone that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me." Schaff goes on to say, "The Cathari also renounced priestly vestments, altars, and crosses as idolatrous" (Ibid., p. 480), and, "They also rejected...the doctrines of purgatory
and indulgences" (Ibid.). Along with these views, they held many others that were unscriptural. But Schaff says,

"Serious as some of the errors were which they held, nevertheless their effort to cultivate piety, by other methods than the (Roman) Church was offering, calls for sympathy. Their rupture with the established organization can be to a Protestant no reason for condemnation; and their dependence upon the Scriptures and their moral tendencies must awaken within him a feeling of kinship. He cannot follow them in their rejection of baptism and the eucharist. In the repudiation of judicial oaths and war, they anticipated some of the later Christian bodies, such as the Quakers and Mennonites" (Ibid., p. 481).

In spite of its reputation for piety, this sect was too large, and too independent, to be ignored by the Roman hierarchy. If allowed to continue its growth, too much money and prestige would have been drained away from the greedy Vatican. Therefore, Rome persecuted them for many years, finally subduing them by cruel "crusades" led by Simon de Montfort and others in the 13th century. This was but one instance in many where the Roman Church destroyed heretics by war.

Another sect that was prominent in the same period was the WALDENSES (The name comes from Peter Waldo, who died in 1218).

"The Waldenses, leaning upon the Scriptures, sought to revive the simple precepts of the Apostolic age. They were the strictly biblical sect of the Middle Ages." (Ibid., p. 493.)

"...(Waldo) employed Bernard Ydros and Stephen of Ansa to translate into the vernacular the Gospels and other parts of the Scriptures, together with the sayings of the Fathers...Waldo made it (the Bible) a living book and the vernacular translation was diligently taught." (Ibid., p. 493, 502.)

"(They did not) repudiate the sacramental system of the established Church...(but) they held to the universal priesthood of believers." (Ibid., p. 501.)

Like the CATHARI, crusades against these "heretics" scattered them, and a great many

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died, but they survive in small pockets of Europe, today.

The LOLLARDS and HUSSITES present a more intellectual revulsion against Romanism. John Wyclif, an English theologian ("called the Morning Star of the Reformation"), was the inspirational godfather of the Lollards. Through the fortunate marriage of an English prince to a Bohemian princess, Wyclif's followers opened lines of communication that created the European disciple, John Huss of Bohemia. Huss took great delight in the fresh views of Wyclif, and brought this reform movement into the 15th century.

Thirst for Bible knowledge had fueled the dissent of the Cathari, Waldenses, and Lollards. Bibles, and portions of Scripture were widely distributed. Because of this clamor for knowledge, and its reformatory results, the Roman Church took the public position that the reading of the Bible brought "harm" to the readers. Historians suspect that the real reason for this proclamation was that the Church had suffered too many setbacks from the "free course" of the Word among the followers of Waldo and Wyclif. Toward the close of his life, Wyclif organized a group to translate and publish an English version. He was certain that an English Bible in the hands of an English parish priest would carry his message of reform to the person in the pew. By the time that this "harm" had been done, and too late to turn back the tide of reform, translations of Scripture were being forbidden by the Roman Church for reading by the common people.

In Wyclif's other writings, which were widely distributed even though the printing press was many decades in the future, he challenged the traditions and secular policies of the Church. Schaff says,

"In looking over the career and opinions of John Wyclif, it becomes evident that in almost every doctrinal particular did this man anticipate the Reformers (of the 16th century). The more his utterances are studied, the stronger becomes this conviction. He exalted preaching; he insisted upon the circulation of the Scriptures among the laity; he demanded purity and fidelity of the clergy; he denied infallibility to the papal utterances, and went so far as to declare that the papacy is not essential to the being of the Church. He defined the Church as the congregation of the elect; he showed the unscriptural and unreasonable character of the doctrine of transubstantiation;
he pronounced priestly absolution a declarative act." (Schaff, History, Vol. 6, p. 346.)

The wit and common sense of Wyclif served him well in his lonely campaign against all that was evil in Romanism. Some of his close collaborators wilted under the threats of the inquisition, revealing that they were controversial only because of a fascination for controversy. Wyclif, with more depth of conviction, continued until his death to oppose every thing that his study revealed to him was unscriptural. Historians have probably misunderstood the depth of some of his stands against Rome. They have thought that he favored the Papacy, because he said he could if a Pope could be found like the Apostle Peter. What he intended to convey (to those perceptive enough to read between the lines) was that no such man could be found in the hierarchy of the medieval church! He decided that no Pope was better than a bad one.

The serious student of religious history can find much to admire in the work of Wyclif and his Bohemian disciple, Huss. The Inquisition, however, hated the outspoken Wyclif so much that nearly 20 years after his death in 1384 AD, it ordered his books to be burned, and exhumed his bones out of "holy ground" to be "cast at a distance from the sepulchre of the church." The Papists did not succeed in destroying Wyclif's writings. They surfaced again and again, emerging from the secret caches of daring dissidents until the dawning of the 16th Century Reformation. Huss championed Wyclif's teaching in Bohemia, differing from it only in a few points. In the celebration of communion, the cup had been withheld from the laity, but Huss and his fellow reformers restored it. This became especially offensive to the Catholic authorities. For this practice, and others, Huss was charged with heresy by the Council of Constance (1414-1418). It denied him ample opportunity to defend himself, confined him in dungeons for seven months, and burned him at the stake on the same day he was formally condemned, in 1415 AD. All the injustices of medieval Romanism were practiced on him, and many Lollards and Hussites eventually shared in this fiery persecution.

After Huss' death, his followers rose in rebellion against the Church. He had many admirers among the Nobles, and over four hundred fifty of them signed a complaint to the council about the condemnation of Huss. On the main issue of maintaining the distribution
of the cup to the laity, they were prepared to fight to the bitter end. The Pope called for a "crusade" against them, promising the usual "indulgences" to those who participated, and collected 150,000 men for the purpose. Several times, however, the armies of the Pope were defeated. The Hussites went on the offensive, and the Church was forced into some temporary compromises. War broke out regularly in Bohemia over the next century, well into the time of Luther's Reformation, forcing peace-loving dissenters to use physical violence to maintain their freedom of conscience during that period.

Toward the end of the 15th century, reform movements multiplied, and reformers were less persecuted. Even some high officials in the Roman Church caught the spirit. Cardinal Jimenes of Spain (1436-1517), offended by the dishonorable actions of many Bishops, rose to prominence through honorable actions, and published the Bible in Spanish to combat abuses in the clergy. The Dutch scholar Erasmus (1466-1536), among others in Europe, revived interest in studying the original biblical languages by publishing a printed Greek New Testament. He encouraged a spirit of objective scholarship through his comments on the Scripture.

The Roman Church sought to keep its scholastic endeavors tied to the Latin language, but in the East, under the stimulus of the Greek Church centered in Constantinople, the New Testament had been preserved in its original language. Schaff says of the Eastern Church,

"It preserved the knowledge of the Greek language and literature through the middle ages; and after the invasion of the Turks it kindled by its fugitive scholars the enthusiasm of classic studies in the Latin church, till Greece rose from the dead with the New Testament in her hand, and held the torch for the Reformation." (Schaff, History, Vol. 3, p. 286.)

Finally, the day dawned for the rise of Protestantism. Certain conditions provided a "breakthrough" to give it success. The fortunate invention of "moveable-type" printing in the 15th century greatly increased the reproduction of Scripture texts, and put ownership of Bibles within the reach of many more people. Reproduction by laborious hand copying was no longer necessary. But even printed Bibles in that period were still in effete Latin. The scholarly work of Erasmus stimulated in others the desire to translate the Bible into the
language of the common people, the "vernacular." When translations began to appear, the Reformation was in full swing, and they helped people to study the issues involved. In the reformation controversies, appeals were made to the authority of Scripture over the authority of the church, so people began to clamor for Bibles. The printers labored manfully to supply the demand. If we can characterize it by no better terms, the 16th Century reformation was an attempt to return to the Bible, and the printing press was a magnificent tool to complement this effort.

The people happily turned to the Word of God, and the beneficent result of these popular Scripture studies was that the many errors of Catholicism were unveiled. Using their common sense, the peasant and the tradesman were amazed to discover how much the Church differed from the Word of God. It was clearly seen that the Bible must be the guide to settle all controversies. Martin Luther considered it impossible to reform the church by the "fathers" (uninspired post-apostolic religious writers); it could only be done by the "Word of God." (Hailey, Attitudes and Consequences, p. 25)

The Reformers recognized that the Bible was, first-of-all, efficient. They could read that the Apostle Paul said to the elders of the church in Ephesus, "I commend you to God, and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). Secondly, it was sufficient (as Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16-17) to "furnish completely unto every good work." And, finally, the Bible was authoritative, especially the New Testament, the "Perfect law of liberty" in which each person must "continue...being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh"(James 1:25). From these foundations, the reformers felt they could build a completely new spiritual edifice.

Yet, so many errors prevailed while the world was in spiritual darkness that the numerous corrections needed were almost overwhelming. To lighten the burden, some tried to establish priorities by declaring some things important, and other things unimportant, or essential and nonessential. Others realized that all things wrong must be corrected, or else there was no meaningful reformation (See Chapter 14). This controversy over applying the authority of the Bible divided the major actors in the Reformation, but also separated them from a host of ultra-reformers who were inspired by their example.
LUTHER AND ZWINGLI

Working in Germany, Martin Luther (1483-1546) has much of the credit for inventing, leading, and securing the 16th Century Reformation. However, he owed much to Erasmus, who inspired him to study and master the original languages of the Bible (It is said, "Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched"). Luther used his newly acquired knowledge to translate the Bible into German, and to help him form his revolutionary concepts.

Luther's attitude toward his work was always as a "reformer." He looked toward the improvement of the Catholic church, not the creation of a new church. He retained many Catholic views, some of which were eventually included in the Augsburg Confession, the creed of Lutheranism (formulated 1530 AD). He did forsake the principle of "Church Authority" when he learned the importance of Bible authority. After leaving his Augustinian monastery, at the beginning of his secular career, he was assigned the task of teaching the Bible in the University at Wittenberg. He had never studied the Bible in this way, and he discovered the Word with both joy and apprehension. Luther's conscientious approach to all tasks caused him to take his teaching seriously. It is said of him,

"Luther did not appeal to his conscience alone, but first and last to the Scripture as he understood it after the most earnest study. His conscience, as he said, was bound in the word of God, who cannot err. There and there alone, he recognized infallibility" (Hailey, Attitudes and Consequences, p. 29).

Luther, however, identifies with that class of reformers who graded issues into categories of "essential" and "nonessential." He treated ceremonies, robes, candles, and such like, as matters of indifference, even though their origin was "Romish," and their authority questionable.

Luther found his greatest source of leverage for promoting the Reformation in his version of the doctrine of salvation by faith, which he arrayed against Catholic insistence on "works of merit." His emphasis on faith is the chief principle of "Protestantism." Luther's concepts, however, were still influenced by his background as a Monk of the Augustinian Order. He retained the Augustinian concept of the inherent corruption of mankind through original sin, and of man's consequent lack of spiritual initiative, which can only be "enabled"
by the "irresistible grace" of God acting through the principle of "particular predestination."

This blending of saving faith and Augustinian theory became the classic "Evangelical" concept. Faith must be "planted" in the heart of a predestined person by what some today call a "direct operation of the Holy Spirit," or by some such gracious action of God. There are many forms of this "evangelical concept of faith" in existence today, though they differ in proportion only to the relative commitment of "Evangelical" churches to pure Augustinianism or Calvinism. Thus, under Luther's leadership, the watchwords of Protestantism became "Sola Gratia, Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide" (Grace Only, Scripture Only, Faith Only).

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), the Swiss reformer, pursued a more complete reformation than Luther.

"Luther was desirous of retaining in the Church all that was not expressly contradicted by Scripture, while Zwingli was intent on abolishing all that could not be proved by Scripture. The German Reformer wished to remain united to the Church of all preceding ages, and sought only to purify it from everything that was repugnant to the word of God. The Reformer of Zurich passed back over every intervening age till he reached the times of the apostles; and, subjecting the Church to an entire transformation, labored to restore it to its primitive condition." (D'Aubigne, History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century in Germany, Switzerland, etc., p. 342)

As an example of this contrast, Luther often criticized as excessive the gangs of "iconoclasts" who rampaged through cathedrals and church buildings, breaking down images, while Zwingli supported and encouraged them. Following Luther's attitude, Lutherans retained instruments of music, though congregational singing replaced choirs for a while. Zwingli, on the other hand, found no authority for the use of organs, and they were silenced or removed from the churches.

Zwingli's attitude toward Bible authority was very similar to that of some 19th Century Reformers (Thomas Campbell, Barton W. Stone, etc.) He was an "exclusivist". One historian says,

"While Luther was disposed to leave untouched what the Bible did not prohibit, Zwingli was more inclined to reject what the Bible did not enjoin"

He treated the "silence" of the Scripture as prohibitive, rather than permissive. In the "Berne Disputation," resulting from the actions of a council called to examine Zwingli's reformation principles, he applied the rule to two Catholic postulations. In his fourth thesis, Zwingli said, "It is impossible to prove the doctrine of transubstantiation from Holy Scripture" (that is, "You cannot speak where the Bible is silent"). In the seventh thesis, he said, "Scripture is silent about a purgatory after this life" (Rilliet, Zwingli, Third Man of the Reformation, p. 189-190). In both cases, he rejected the doctrines as false.

Zwingli's deep respect for the Scripture made him a "proof-text" preacher. His sermon on "The Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God" includes 128 references from the Bible. Because of his reliance on proofs of Scripture, he filled his audiences with men and women who had a genuine hunger for the Word of God.

He did not completely form a true concept of the plan of salvation, however, relying on prevailing Lutheran (mainly Augustinian) ideas, which were later solidified by John Calvin (1509-1564). Because of these views, Zwingli's followers later joined with Calvin's in 1566 AD, several years after Zwingli's death.

Ultra-reformers found the principles of both Luther and Zwingli inadequate, however. The Anabaptists (re-baptizers) were a spinoff of Zwingli-ism, and went further than he, adopting adult immersion, thereby rejecting infant baptism. Zwingli fought their defection only with words, not with violence. Moderation in the persecution of "heresies" was gaining ground, slowly.

Zwingli's concepts of Bible authority were fresh and "restorative," not "reformative." Yet, he was hindered from having an enduring influence by his early, violent death. Much of Zwingli's reformatory effort was directed toward preventing the use of Swiss soldiers as mercenaries in the armies of Europe (especially for the benefit of the Roman Catholic Church). He was partially successful in this, but Swiss Guards still form the constabulary force of the Vatican. His successes in this cause prompted wars between the Catholic and Protestant Cantons of Switzerland. In the Battle of Cappel, October 11, 1531, Zwingli was killed, then his body was "drawn, quartered and burned" by his Catholic enemies. After his death, Zwingli's work was patiently stabilized by his successor, Heinrich Bullinger, but
"Zwingli-ism" never attained the broad moral impact of "Lutheranism."

Schaff compares Zwingli and Luther in this way:

"Zwingli broke easily and rapidly with the papal system, but Luther only step by step, and after a severe struggle of conscience. Zwingli was more radical than Luther, but always within the limits of law and order, and without a taint of fanaticism; Luther was more conservative, and yet the chief champion of freedom in Christ." (Schaff, History, Vol. 8, p. 35.)

Schaff's use of the terms "radical" and "conservative" in this statement actually refer to the two reformer's views toward Catholicism, not toward the Bible.

Under the influence of these dynamic yet humble 16th Century Reformers, and their disciples, the tottering edifice of the Roman Catholic church began to crumble. It was already weakened by corruption, internal strife, and arrogant pride. Its Popes, in the main, were worldly, indecisive and uninspiring. Its weakness was magnified by the fact that an eloquent monk teaching in an obscure German university, and a popular preacher in the inaccessible confines of the Swiss Alps, could undermine it so successfully. Of course, there were many providential factors (such as fortunate events, sympathetic rulers, and eager printers) which helped them to rattle Romanism to its foundation.

One key to Luther's success was the political turmoil of the time. In 1521, Charles V, Emperor of the so-called "Holy Roman Empire," outlawed Luther at a conference called the Diet of Worms. While returning to his home under a safe conduct, Luther was "kidnapped" by the soldiers of Frederick, Elector of Saxony, who nominated himself as his protector. Luther was secluded in a remote castle to save him from the vengeful wrath of the Pope and the Emperor. He spent his time there translating the New Testament into German. Shortly after, in 1525, Charles V was embroiled in a territorial dispute with Francis I of France over the control of certain sections of Italy. In 1527 Charles' forces sacked Rome, with his secret approval, and confined Pope Clement VII for a time, because he was sympathetic to France. By 1529, the Turks under the powerful leadership of Suleyman the Magnificent had invaded Europe, captured Constantinople, and began a siege of Vienna. Charles V was forced to turn his attention away from the suppression of Protestantism toward the defeat of the growing empire of the great Muslim prince (National Geographic
Meanwhile, Luther and his compatriots continued in cozy security, spreading their Protestant leaven throughout Northern Europe. The Low Countries were infiltrated, as well as England, dividing Europe into two warring camps. The Reformation in Switzerland, surrounded by Catholic enemies, depended for its protection on the natural bastions of the Alps and the martial reputations of Swiss soldiers.

To its credit, perhaps, the Roman church recognized its weakness, following the trauma of the Reformation, and attempted to renew its strength by a "Counter-reformation," correcting as best it could the things which caused its vulnerability. The drastic actions it took saved it from complete collapse, but it had lost forever its control over large segments of the Northern European landscape, and over millions of its former members.

In spite of its many defeats, Romanism could count among its few victories the fact that Protestant churches retained much of the religious refuse that had been developed in Rome through centuries of ecclesiasticism. Protestants copied the organization of Catholicism, but the Papacy was either rejected or discredited. Lutherans in general did not reject the principle of the Papacy, but only its abuses. In Switzerland, however, Zwingli took a stronger stand in his treatise called the "67 conclusions" (perhaps imitating the famous "95 Theses" which Luther nailed to the church door in Wittenburg to signal the start of the Reformation). In his document, Zwingli dared to go much further than Luther in the direction of separation from Rome. Some of the more significant positions he took are:

1. All who say that the gospel is nothing without the approbation of the church, err and cast reproach upon God.
7. Christ is the head of all believers who are his body; but without him the body is dead.
8. All who live in this Head are his members and children of God. And this is the Church, the communion of saints, the bride of Christ, the *Ecclesia catholica*.
16. From the gospel we learn that the doctrines and traditions of men are of no use to salvation.
17. Christ is the one eternal high-priest. Those who pretend to be high
priests resist, yea, set aside, the honor and dignity of Christ.

18. Christ, who offered himself once on the cross, is the sufficient and perpetual sacrifice for the sins of all believers. Therefore the mass is no sacrifice, but a commemoration of the one sacrifice of the cross, and a seal of redemption through Christ.

34. The spiritual (hierarchical) power, so called, has no foundation in the Holy Scriptures and the teaching of Christ.

50. God alone forgives sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord alone.

(Schaff, History, Vol. 8, p. 52-53)

In these few statements we can see that Zwingli was aiming his arrows at the very heart of Catholicism. They strike down the Roman doctrines of the right of the church to explain the Scripture; the concept that the Pope is the "head" of the church; that the church is composed of the priesthood; that traditions have the same weight as Scripture; that the Pope and the Cardinals of the church are "high-priests;" that the Catholic "Mass" is a sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ (his contention that it is a simple "commemoration" also put Zwingli at odds with Luther); and that priests have the power of "absolving" sinners. Several of these statements show the influence of the work and writing of Wyclif and Huss. Perhaps the most direct attack in Zwingli's list is No. 66, in which he says, "All spiritual superiors should repent without delay, and set up the cross of Christ alone, or they will perish. The axe is laid at the root."

Indeed, the first deep cuts had been made to clear away the choking growth of human doctrines and traditions which hid the true Gospel and the true church of Christ from the view of the 16th Century Reformers. However, It would be left to subsequent reformations to "restore" a proper concept of primitive church organization based on the New Testament, and a recovery of the true doctrine of salvation.

We owe a debt to the 16th Century Reformers for their return to the Bible for divine authority, even though they used its teaching imperfectly, and incompletely. We are indebted to them, also, for their victory over Roman Catholic tyranny through a restructuring of church organization, limited in scope though it was. Finally, we honor them for their assertion of "salvation by faith," even though they were still captive to "evangelical"
concepts of salvation. Everything that subsequent reformers did was built on these imperfect foundations, but the day would come when "reformation" would no longer seem feasible, and the call would go out for the "restoration of all things."
CHAPTER SIX

"BREAKING UP"

(The Disintegration of Protestantism)

"For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you."

--1 Corinthians 11:18-19

Before the 16th Century Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church, as we have seen, brutally enforced its "catholicity," persecuting and waging war against those who would not be persuaded to be loyal to it. The alliance of church and state had a tendency to elevate political considerations above the spiritual, and secular politics surely influenced the Roman Church's decision to maintain its monopoly against the Protestant Reformation by the use of savage and unscriptural devices. It is difficult to learn from historians if any of the motivation to maintain the unity of the church was based on the Scripture (perhaps in respect to Ephesians 4:1-6), but it is certain that Rome had a vested interest in retaining the power of the church in world affairs.

Political necessity was thrust upon the Protestants, also, once they had gained independence from Rome. Even though the 16th Century Reformation finally broke the monopoly of the Roman church, it did not succeed in maintaining its separation without war. Religious passions had been inflamed on both sides. Protestants knew what they faced, in view of former Catholic examples of violent persecution. Catholics generally welcomed the call to join a "Crusade" against heretics, since it gave them opportunity for

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obtaining a coveted Papal Indulgence, as well as an opportunity to indulge their baser vices. In what they considered to be a justified response, the Protestants exchanged the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17) for the sword of steel.

The Peasants in Germany and elsewhere had long been restless under the feudal system endorsed by Catholicism, and, seeing an opportunity to ally their social cause with the cause of Christ, rebelled against the continuance of their miserable existence in an attempt to overthrow Catholic landlords and princes in the "Peasant's War." Though he was of peasant stock himself, and sympathetic to their plight, Luther condemned their excesses, reminding them of their obligation of civil obedience (Romans 13:1). His opposition to their use of force caused him to lose prestige among them, and his strident call for their suppression gratified both Protestant and Catholic princes, neither of which cherished the prospect of having a restless peasantry in their domains. In the war, over 100,000 lives were lost and much valuable property was destroyed. Through the years that followed this episode, Protestants and Catholics often fought each other. Skirmishes, massacres and atrocities multiplied, culminating in the "Thirty Years War (1618-1648)." Many wars in the centuries to follow would carry these same religious overtones. (Strife between Protestants and Catholics continues today in North Ireland.)

In England, religious strife did not degenerate into war in the early period of the Reformation, but persecution was often practiced. The struggle for supremacy depended on who was on the throne. At the time of the Lutheran convulsion in Germany, Henry VIII (1509-1547) was on the throne. He was a Catholic, married to a Catholic princess, Catherine of Aragon (Spain), but she bore him no male heir (only a daughter, Mary). For this reason he desired to divorce Catherine, but his appeal to the Pope was denied. Politics influenced this Papal decision, but it offered a benefit to the reform-minded clergy in England. To get what he wanted, Henry broke with Rome and established the Church of England. He was threatened with "Holy War," but the English church was protected from the vengeance of Rome by its formidable moat, the English channel.

The reform movement in Germany had gained many sympathizers among the clergymen in England, and they saw a chance to break with Rome by accepting Henry as the "head of the church." After Henry's death, the boy king, Edward VI (1547-53),
maintained the Protestant cause. Many Catholics were persecuted during his short reign, but Edward was a sickly boy, and died childless, making way for his half-sister to claim the throne. Mary the first (1553-58), the daughter of Henry's abandoned Catholic wife, was determined to re-establish the Roman Church as the state religion. She earned the name "Bloody Mary" for her many executions of Protestants during her campaign of persecution. Despite her political efforts to establish a Catholic succession on the English throne, she died childless, providing powerful Protestants the opportunity to place Elizabeth the first (1558-1603), another daughter of Henry, in power. She restored Protestantism and relative peace to England, guaranteeing its continuity for a while by naming King James of Scotland, a Protestant, as her successor (he was the promoter of the King James Version of the Bible). A study of this period of English history provides the careful student with a rich dramatic tapestry of intrigues and heroism, cynicism and sincerity, and genuine progress in the struggle for religious reformation and freedom.

THE WAR OF WORDS

The war of words between the religious combatants was also hard-fought. The Pope issued a "Bull (bulletin) of Condemnation" against Luther in 1520, after it became clear to Rome that it was dealing with a potent revolution. Luther promptly burned the document, publicly, in a dramatic gesture of contempt. He justified his act in a treatise with the copious title, "Why the Books of the Pope and His Disciples were Burned by Dr. Martin Luther."

The next year, Luther was given a chance to recant his views before the famous Diet of Worms, but the literary mold of Protestantism was already cast. Luther refused to take back what he had written concerning the evils of the Papacy and the false doctrines of the Roman Church. He would have been forced to stand trial for his views, if the Pope's minions had been able to arrest him, but he had come to Worms with "safe conducts" from Emperor Charles the fifth, and from the ruler of Saxony, the province where Luther lived. This latter Prince further guaranteed his safety on his return by staging a "friendly" kidnapping, followed by protective seclusion in Wartburg Castle.

Luther's revolt was powerful because of his words, and his words were plentiful. At the Diet, he confessed to having written at least twenty five books, or pamphlets. Many of these were simply devotional in character, but there was no denial from Luther that some
of the writings offended the See of Rome. He might apologize for any unseemly language in the books, but he would not repudiate the rest. He challenged his inquisitors to show him any part of his writings which did not agree with Scripture.

Rome, by resorting to its medieval methods of dealing with heresy, miscalculated the spirit of the age in which these events were happening, and they greatly underestimated the polemic genius of Luther. Schaff says of him,

"He was by far the most original, fertile, and effective controversialist and pamphleteer of his age. He commanded the resources of genius, learning, courage, eloquence, wit, humor, irony, and ridicule, and had...an astounding power of work." (Schaff, History, Vol. 7, pp. 321-322.)

Luther's style and argumentation encouraged many imitators. The Roman Church prepared itself for battle against heretics with swords and spears, but the pens of Luther and his contemporaries proved to be just as pointed. Rough and ready verbal combat was needed for survival, and Luther was equal to the task. Schaff says,

"He felt himself called to the rough work...He thoroughly understood the wants and tastes of his countrymen who preferred force to elegance, and the club to the dagger (Ibid.)."

The words of the reformers enjoyed ready distribution from the printing houses of Europe, and, like some of the effective "underground" presses of our own age, the Reformation gained strength from the bold pamphlets that issued from willing and able printers.

"Among the most potent causes which...helped the triumph of Protestantism, was the teeming ephemeral literature which appeared between 1521 and 1524, and did the work of the periodical newspaper press of our days, in seasons of public excitement. In spite of prohibition of unauthorized printing by the edict of Worms, Germany was inundated by a flood of books, pamphlets, and leaflets in favor of true and false freedom. They created a public opinion which prevented the execution of the law." (Ibid.)

"The newness and freshness of this fugitive popular literature called out by the Reformation, and especially by the edict of Worms, made it all the
more effective. The people were hungry for intellectual and spiritual food, and the appetite grew with the supply." (Ibid., p. 325.)

The Roman Church tried energetically to stifle the flow of tracts and pamphlets which came from a growing number of printing presses, but it failed. The same potent force which had gained the victory for Protestantism, however, became the means for its eventual "breakup" into sects and denominations.

Once the gates of dissent had been opened, and a convenient means of "word processing" had emerged, courageous ultra-reformers, unsatisfied with the slow progress of the Reformation, demanded further changes based on their continual research in the Scriptures, and by bold publication of their views. In the Reformation, emphasis had changed from Church authority to Bible authority and the satisfaction of individual conscience. Those who allowed their consciences to be educated by the word of God contributed to these reforms in a positive way. Unfortunately, some men possessed uneducated consciences, and excesses of "radicalism" were the result. The chief Reformers, such as Luther and Zwingli, treated those who wanted to run beyond them as radicals rather than reformers. They perceived in this movement a threat to the stability of the Reformation rather than progress in restoring the Apostolic order. Schaff tells us that when Luther returned home from his Wartburg confinement,

"He now raised his protest against the abuse of liberty in his own camp. A sifting process was necessary. Division and confusion broke out among his friends and followers. Many of them exceeded all bounds of wisdom and moderation; while others, frightened by the excesses, returned to the fold of the mother church." (Schaff, History, vol. 7, p. 329.)

"While Luther was confined on the Wartburg, his followers were like children out of school, like soldiers without a captain. Some of them thought that he had stopped half way, and that they must complete what he had begun. They took the work of destruction and reconstruction into their own inexperienced and unskillful hands. Order gave way to confusion, and the Reformation was threatened with disastrous failure." (Ibid., p. 376).

It is true that the fresh atmosphere of freedom of thought led some to unwarranted
excesses in those times. On the other hand, the freedom to think for oneself, and to be free from the tyranny and discipline of Rome, caused many good men to search for deeper, broader, and more cogent truths. The presumed failures of one reformation would therefore generate desire for another, with the result that another sect would come into being. In spite of valiant attempts to conserve the unity of the Reformed Church, the precedent had been established that one can follow his conscience out of one existing body into another, and courageous men would let no one deny them their newfound freedom, in spite of the charge of being "radicals."

HOLDOVER HINDRANCES

Some tragic holdovers from Catholicism plagued the process of reformation for centuries, however. Augustinian theology (Original sin, Predestination, etc.) was so deeply entrenched that it was still considered applicable to any doctrine of salvation, and was accepted by most Protestants. Though many reforms of government and polity were developed in the next few generations of reformers, Augustinian concepts still colored the gospel. The 16th Century Reformers were as conscious of the need for discipline as their Romanist forebears, but were motivated less by politics than by Scripture, which undeniably calls for the unity of all believers in "one body." Unfortunately, they attempted to use the "state church" principle and other devices found in Catholicism to establish a Protestant version of "catholicity," and retained a great measure of the Roman Church's intolerant spirit, as well. This is amply documented in many examples of religious persecution by Protestantism against its dissidents. These policies greatly hindered the progress of later reformations, making their leaders realize that they must work harder to decentralize church authority in accordance with the Scripture, a movement that finally culminated in pure congregationalism and the drive for separation of church and state. The concept of maintaining "Catholicity" by tying church to state, and exercising discipline through a civil magistracy, eventually suffered severe blows from these fresh scriptural views.

At first, Roman-style discipline and intolerance were not applied by Luther against the "radical" elements which rose during his absence in Wartburg Castle. The force of his personality and the power of his preaching were sufficient to call many back to the
semi-Catholicism of his movement. However, Carstadt, one of Luther's earliest co-reformers, was full of zeal to end all the traditional forms of Rome. Schaff says,

"Carstadt preached and wrote, during Luther's absence, against celibacy, monastic vows, and the mass. At Christmas, 1521, he omitted in the service the most objectionable parts of the canon (laws) of the mass, and the elevation of the host, and distributed both wine and bread to a large congregation. He announced at the same time that he would lay aside the priestly dress and other ceremonies...He also denounced pictures and images as dumb idols, which were plainly forbidden in the second commandment, and should be burnt rather than tolerated in the house of God."

(Schaff, History, Vol. 7, p. 379.)

Carstadt's views anticipated the sober reforms to be found in the future of Protestantism, and would have won honored fame from those who would later benefit from them, if he had been content to go only this far. His work was fanaticized by the arrival in Wittenberg of two self-proclaimed "prophets" from Zwickau, who "boasted of visions, dreams, and direct communications with God and the Angel Gabriel" (Ibid., p. 380-381). This new radical influence carried Carstadt away, persuading him that he was guided in his work in some mystical fashion, and "he lost himself in the clouds of a confused mysticism, and spiritualism, and appealed, like the Zwickau Prophets, to immediate inspirations" (Ibid., p. 380).

The returning Luther, in order to oppose this radicalism, became an example of "conservatism" (that is, the retention of all Roman forms and concepts which he thought to be in the realm of "things indifferent"). For a while, he even returned to the monastery, and kept his priestly vestments and lifestyle. He was sympathetic to Carstadt's views on the Mass, but rebuked his "iconoclasm," and "spiritualism." Schaff says,

"As to the pretended revelations of the new prophets, he despised them, and maintained that an inspired prophet must either be ordinarily called by church authority, or prove his divine commission by miracles" (Ibid., p. 382).

Luther contended that radicalism created a tyranny which would force the conscience to rise in full rebellion against what he thought were inoffensive traditional forms, just as
the tyranny of Roman traditions forced the conscience in the opposite direction. He stood for the "middle ground" between two "extremes," declaring himself on the one hand against tyranny, but also against too much freedom. His moderate treatment of the radicals at this time was somewhat out of character. Ordinarily, Luther attacked his opponents with invective and ridicule. Historians show that this was the only period of his life where he really practiced a moderate spirit, but it was successful in carrying the day against the "radicals." Carlstadt submitted to the force of Luther's personality, "silently, but sullenly," Schaff says, but secretly nursed his "mystical speculations and imaginary inspirations" (Ibid., pp. 390-391).

Though Luther successfully stifled this movement, aided by public reaction to its inconsistent and unprovable "revelations," the result was tragic, since it limited the scope of his reformation effort. He was caught in the trap of refusing to accept reforms clearly based on Scripture, simply because they were being promoted by men who claimed the gift of prophecy. In later times, other reformers would appear in more sober dress who would push the reformation concept to larger horizons than those dreamed of by Luther and his disciples, but for many years the German Reformation remained relatively stagnant.

The Swiss reformation, under Zwingli, also had its problems with those who wanted to go beyond its concepts. From the beginning, Zwingli, as we have already noted, had a desire to return all the way to the Apostles' doctrine and practice. It is said of Luther that while the Roman church appealed to the "Fathers" (early theologians), he appealed to the "Grandfathers" (the Apostles). This is a better description of Zwingli and the Swiss Reformers, because they went further in the spirit of "restoration" than Luther. Most of the program of Carlstadt was borrowed from Zwingli, except for the claim of personal inspiration. The Swiss treated nothing as a "matter of indifference." All images had been removed from their churches, and instruments of music were rejected in the worship.

But Zwingli, having to face problems similar to those in Germany, also retreated to a more austere and autocratic stance. He had points of reference beyond which even he would not go, and there were those of his adherents who craved further progress toward apostolic Christianity. Balthasar Hubmaier, who first assisted Zwingli, later dissented from
him on the matter of infant baptism. All of the leading reformers still accepted the Catholic view on this, though they might argue mildly for immersion rather than pouring. Hubmaier said, in opposition, that an infant could not believe, and could not pledge his faith to God. This dispute resulted in driving him from Zurich, and he met an unfortunate end, being burned to death for alleged complicity in the "Peasant's War."

Hubmaier's program survived, however, in the sect called the Anabaptists (re-baptizers). They carried the reformation concept far beyond Zwingli, and aroused his opposition. Schaff writes, more in sympathy with Zwingli than with the Anabaptists,

'The Swiss Reformation, like the German, was disturbed and checked by the radical excesses. It was placed between the two fires of Romanism and Ultra-Protestantism. It was attacked in the front and the rear, from without and within,—by the Romanists on the ground of tradition, by the Radicals on the ground of the Bible. In some respects the danger from the latter was greater. Liberty has more to fear from the abuses of its friends than from the opposition of its foes. The Reformation would have failed if it had identified itself with the revolution." (Schaff, History, Vol. 8, p. 71.)

Schaff's inordinate veneration of the chief reformers of the 16th Century blinds him to the lost opportunity caused by their opposition to the so-called "radicals." The radicals, for all their faults, had a hunger for Bible truth. To their credit, they saw the need to return to the ancient order in everything. They restored immersion as the scriptural form of baptism; they rejected the concept of clergy vs. laity; they rejected infant baptism; they restored much of the primitive order in worship and government. Contrary to Schaff's opinion, these reforms were not a threat to the success of the Reformation. Rather, they could have carried it to greater success! Left alone, without persecution, the "radicals" might have rediscovered such great truths as the complete abrogation of the Law of Moses, salvation by freewill acceptance and belief of the Gospel, and other "quantum leaps" over the trash of Romanism all the way back to the Apostles of Christ. Being driven underground, however, and harried from place to place by both rabid Catholics and cautious Protestant Reformers, their influence waned and almost disappeared for a season.

However, Schaff reveals some things about the Anabaptists that evoke our sympathy,
in spite of his bias in favor of the concept of limited reformation, and toward its "men of repute." He says,

"The Reformers aimed to reform the old Church by the Bible; The Radicals attempted to build a new Church from the Bible. The former maintained the historic continuity; the latter went directly to the apostolic age, and ignored the intervening centuries as an apostasy. The Reformers founded a popular state-church, including all citizens with their families; the Anabaptists organized on the voluntary principle select congregations of baptized believers, separated from the world and from the State. Nothing is more characteristic of radicalism and sectarianism than an utter want of historical sense and respect for the past. In its extreme form it rejects even the Bible as an external authority, and relies on inward inspiration. This was the case with the Zwickau Prophets who threatened to break up Luther's work at Wittenberg." (Ibid.)

Like Schaff, many confess no empathy with those who claim inner inspiration, and who thereby tend to forsake the sufficient revelation of God, but we see no justice in his charge that "radicals" lack a "historical sense" that robs them of the approbation of the world at large. (Here is a possible instance where his profession as a historian colors his objectivity.) Rather, those who want to be "separate from the world and from the State" also want to be separate from any destructive precedents of post-apostolic history! History can influence men either positively, or negatively. Zwingli and Luther let their sense of "historic continuity" limit their reformations. "Restorationists" have a different sense of history. They see only the long destructive litany of errors which proceeded from the Great Apostasy, and want to be free from every one. They ask, "Can the history of an Apostasy contribute any positive thing to church regeneration and the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity?" The answer, of course, is "No," unless you consider the fact that negative reaction to historical errors often produces a desire to build more positively on the undefiled truth of the New Testament. In the Preface to the "revised" edition of The Christian Baptist, Alexander Campbell's first periodical journal (1823-1830), D. S. Burnet wrote that the 19th Century reformation, of which he was an advocate...
"...differs from others in this important respect; it contemplates not the change of any one sect or system, nor the amalgamation of any number or all of them; but it claims as a right, and labors to attain as its object, the reformation of society by a restoration of primitive Christianity, i.e. Christianity itself, in its gospel, institutions and laws. A creed reformed is a dividing barrier patched, and a sect remodeled is but a daughter of the mother of abominations in a new dress. This reformation aims at the demolition of the creed and the sect, genera and species, reformed and unreformed, as purity is incompatible with corruption." (Christian Baptist, one-volume reprint revised c.1835, College Press, 1983, p. iii.)

But Burnet's view of "restoration," which was designed to "count as refuse" all the historical heritage of apostasy, was still three hundred years in the future beyond Luther and Zwingli. Even so, the tantalizing appeal of speculating on "what might have been," if the "radical" search for apostolic truth in the 16th Century had been left unopposed to succeed in its day, leaves many of us breathless with a sigh of regret.

In spite of severe opposition and persecution, the Anabaptists left a heritage which others later followed. They...

"...made use of the right of protest against the Reformation, which the Reformers so effectually exercised against popery. They raised a protest against Protestantism. They charged the Reformers with inconsistency and semi-popy; yea, with the worst kind of popery. They denounced the state-church as worldly and corrupt, and its ministers as mercenaries. They were charged in turn with pharisaical pride, with revolutionary and socialistic tendencies. They were cruelly persecuted by imprisonment, exile, torture, fire and sword, and almost totally suppressed in Protestant as well as in Roman Catholic countries. The age was not ripe for unlimited religious liberty and congregational self-government. The Anabaptists perished bravely as martyrs of conscience." (Schaff, History, Vol. 8, p. 72.)

These "Radicals" were made to suffer the same reputation as Pelagius, who clashed with the mighty Augustine in the 4th Century, and was thereafter branded as a heretic
(Both Protestant and Catholic commentators, who embrace the principle of Evangelicalism, universally refer to his freewill ideas as "The Pelagian Heresy."). Because we are much further down the "time-line" of reformations, we find more affinity with the teaching of the Anabaptists, Hussites, Waldenses, and Pelagians than with Lutherans and Calvinists, even though they were all branded as heretics in their time, and we only find traces of their heirs and survivors today in the shadows of religious history. Later reformations revived and clarified much of what they espoused, but in the 16th and 17th Centuries, their names were slandered, and their bodies burned by both Catholics and Protestants. They ("of whom the world was not worthy," perhaps) wanted too much, too soon.

**THE RISE OF CALVINISM**

Luther and Zwingli had John Calvin (1509-1564) to build on their foundation, and his remarkable persuasive genius has exerted more permanent influence on Evangelical Protestantism than either of them. What they conceived in embryo he hatched and nourished into a monumental system that retained all of their errors, yet making them sound feasible through his bold polemic skill. He developed his systematic predestinarian views to such a degree that, today, many denominations borrow from his teaching, in whole or in part, to the detriment of millions of souls.

Formidable opposition to pure Calvinism eventually came from Jacob Arminius, who converted from the classic predestinarian theories of Calvin to a concept of "free will." In a later chapter, we will discuss the views of Arminius more thoroughly.

In spite of the dominance of Calvinism in the Reformed Church, new branches sprouted from the root of the 16th Century Reformation over the next three centuries. Huguenots in France, Arminians in the Low Countries, Separatists and Congregationalists and Quakers and Methodists in England, sprang up. Each sect had its own tragic and inspiring story. Most of their trials and triumphs were limited, however, to 16th Century issues. As the number of sects grew, in their wake came the problem of "fellowship." As we have seen, intolerance in the Protestant camp was notoriously abusive. Yet, there were some voices of moderation. The concept gained favor that the Universal Church was made up of all the "elect," no matter what denomination they were in. This concept was offered in the hope of ending violent strife among Protestants, and succeeded so well that today the de-
nominations extend broad fellowship, and often join others in common work, in spite of their many doctrinal differences.

As reformations multiplied toward the time of the 19th Century "Restoration Movement," men began to see that denominational diversity, posing collectively as the true church of Christ, was a mockery of Christ's original intent. A more complete reformation needed to occur, one as daring and zealous and thorough as that of the great King of Judah, Hezekiah, who destroyed even the brazen serpent made by Moses when he saw that men had made a sacred relic of it, offering incense to it long after its original purpose was fulfilled (Numbers 21:8-9, 2 Kings 18:1-6).

THE RESTORATION SPIRIT

In Scotland, in the late 18th Century, events were happening that would effect the proponents of the Restoration Movement in America. Doubts about Calvin's concept of election led to internal strife in the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). Robert and Alexander Haldane, feeling that the commands in the Scripture to "preach the Gospel" implied a freewill response, organized a "Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home." Harassed by criticism from the established clergy, the Haldane brothers formed their first independent church in 1799. They were successful in winning many followers, but they were treated as heretics by the Calvinists, who steadfastly held to the concept of selective predestination by the intruding grace of God as the only means of salvation.

Those who formed the Free Church in Scotland, another sectarian movement contemporary with that of the Haldanes, likewise moved toward an emphasis on Free Will. These parallel movements shared the following convictions:


   Each church had a plurality of elders. Thus, organizational questions were settled by the New Testament.

b. The Lord's Supper every "first day."

c. No Infant Sprinkling.

d. "Optional" adult immersion. (Baptism was not considered essential to salvation, showing that they retained a measure of Calvinistic thought.)

Thomas and Alexander Campbell, before coming from Scotland to America, knew of
these popular reformatory movements, and agreed with most of their goals. They came to a land where, in the heady atmosphere of religious freedom, other reformations multiplied. Religious alienation of American Methodists from the Church of England had been generated by the American Revolution. The English "divine," John Wesley, came to America and organized the Methodist Episcopal Church, then returned to England and remained in the fellowship of the Anglican Church. Methodism in America, though separate from Anglican Church control, adopted its "episcopal" form of government. James O'Kelley opposed this system, unsuccessfully, and finally concluded that he must break with his intransigent opponents to start a new church. At first called "Republican Methodists," O'Kelley's followers later adopted the name "Christian" only, and were called the Christian Church (not to be confused with the modern "Christian Churches--Disciples of Christ"). They rejected all creeds, and stood for liberty of conscience, and private judgment (West, Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 1, p. 8-10).

About the same time, Calvinism's contradictions of Scripture convinced Elias Smith and Abner Jones, Baptists, to forsake those errors. They stood for no creed but the New Testament. They also preferred only the name "Christian" (Ibid., p. 17).

So, the atmosphere was well-charged for men like Thomas Campbell, his son Alexander, and Barton W. Stone, to "search for the ancient order," and attempt its "restoration." The history of this "movement" is well documented in many other works, chiefly those of Earl I. West, Robert Richardson, James DeForest Murch and others. So, in the final chapters of this book we will only present the role which these reformers played in electing to follow the Scripture regarding the historical issues there discussed.
CHAPTER SIX

"BREAKING UP"

(The Disintegration of Protestantism)

“For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you.”

--1 Corinthians 11:18-19

Before the 16th Century Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church, as we have seen, brutally enforced its "catholicity," persecuting and waging war against those who would not be persuaded to be loyal to it. The alliance of church and state had a tendency to elevate political considerations above the spiritual, and secular politics surely influenced the Roman Church's decision to maintain its monopoly against the Protestant Reformation by the use of savage and unscriptural devices. It is difficult to learn from historians if any of the motivation to maintain the unity of the church was based on the Scripture (perhaps in respect to Ephesians 4:1-6), but it is certain that Rome had a vested interest in retaining the power of the church in world affairs.

Political necessity was thrust upon the Protestants, also, once they had gained independence from Rome. Even though the 16th Century Reformation finally broke the monopoly of the Roman church, it did not succeed in maintaining its separation without war. Religious passions had been inflamed on both sides. Protestants knew what they faced, in view of former Catholic examples of violent persecution. Catholics generally welcomed the call to join a "Crusade" against heretics, since it gave them opportunity for
obtaining a coveted Papal Indulgence, as well as an opportunity to indulge their baser vices. In what they considered to be a justified response, the Protestants exchanged the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17) for the sword of steel.

The Peasants in Germany and elsewhere had long been restless under the feudal system endorsed by Catholicism, and, seeing an opportunity to ally their social cause with the cause of Christ, rebelled against the continuance of their miserable existence in an attempt to overthrow Catholic landlords and princes in the "Peasant's War." Though he was of peasant stock himself, and sympathetic to their plight, Luther condemned their excesses, reminding them of their obligation of civil obedience (Romans 13:1). His opposition to their use of force caused him to lose prestige among them, and his strident call for their suppression gratified both Protestant and Catholic princes, neither of which cherished the prospect of having a restless peasantry in their domains. In the war, over 100,000 lives were lost and much valuable property was destroyed. Through the years that followed this episode, Protestants and Catholics often fought each other. Skirmishes, massacres and atrocities multiplied, culminating in the "Thirty Years War (1618-1648)." Many wars in the centuries to follow would carry these same religious overtones. (Strife between Protestants and Catholics continues today in North Ireland.)

In England, religious strife did not degenerate into war in the early period of the Reformation, but persecution was often practiced. The struggle for supremacy depended on who was on the throne. At the time of the Lutheran convulsion in Germany, Henry VIII (1509-1547) was on the throne. He was a Catholic, married to a Catholic princess, Catherine of Aragon (Spain), but she bore him no male heir (only a daughter, Mary). For this reason he desired to divorce Catherine, but his appeal to the Pope was denied. Politics influenced this Papal decision, but it offered a benefit to the reform-minded clergy in England. To get what he wanted, Henry broke with Rome and established the Church of England. He was threatened with "Holy War," but the English church was protected from the vengeance of Rome by its formidable moat, the English channel.

The reform movement in Germany had gained many sympathizers among the clergymen in England, and they saw a chance to break with Rome by accepting Henry as the "head of the church." After Henry's death, the boy king, Edward VI (1547-53),
maintained the Protestant cause. Many Catholics were persecuted during his short reign, but Edward was a sickly boy, and died childless, making way for his half-sister to claim the throne. Mary the first (1553-58), the daughter of Henry's abandoned Catholic wife, was determined to re-establish the Roman Church as the state religion. She earned the name "Bloody Mary" for her many executions of Protestants during her campaign of persecution. Despite her political efforts to establish a Catholic succession on the English throne, she died childless, providing powerful Protestants the opportunity to place Elizabeth the first (1558-1603), another daughter of Henry, in power. She restored Protestantism and relative peace to England, guaranteeing its continuity for a while by naming King James of Scotland, a Protestant, as her successor (he was the promoter of the King James Version of the Bible). A study of this period of English history provides the careful student with a rich dramatic tapestry of intrigues and heroism, cynicism and sincerity, and genuine progress in the struggle for religious reformation and freedom.

THE WAR OF WORDS

The war of words between the religious combatants was also hard-fought. The Pope issued a "Bull (bulletin) of Condemnation" against Luther in 1520, after it became clear to Rome that it was dealing with a potent revolution. Luther promptly burned the document, publicly, in a dramatic gesture of contempt. He justified his act in a treatise with the copious title, "Why the Books of the Pope and His Disciples were Burned by Dr. Martin Luther."

The next year, Luther was given a chance to recant his views before the famous Diet of Worms, but the literary mold of Protestantism was already cast. Luther refused to take back what he had written concerning the evils of the Papacy and the false doctrines of the Roman Church. He would have been forced to stand trial for his views, if the Pope's minions had been able to arrest him, but he had come to Worms with "safe conducts" from Emperor Charles the fifth, and from the ruler of Saxony, the province where Luther lived. This latter Prince further guaranteed his safety on his return by staging a "friendly" kidnaping, followed by protective seclusion in Wartburg Castle.

Luther's revolt was powerful because of his words, and his words were plentiful. At the Diet, he confessed to having written at least twenty five books, or pamphlets. Many of these were simply devotional in character, but there was no denial from Luther that some
of the writings offended the See of Rome. He might apologize for any unseemly language in the books, but he would not repudiate the rest. He challenged his inquisitors to show him any part of his writings which did not agree with Scripture.

Rome, by resorting to its medieval methods of dealing with heresy, miscalculated the spirit of the age in which these events were happening, and they greatly underestimated the polemic genius of Luther. Schaff says of him,

"He was by far the most original, fertile, and effective controversialist and pamphleteer of his age. He commanded the resources of genius, learning, courage, eloquence, wit, humor, irony, and ridicule, and had...an astounding power of work." (Schaff, History, Vol. 7, pp. 321-322.)

Luther's style and argumentation encouraged many imitators. The Roman Church prepared itself for battle against heretics with swords and spears, but the pens of Luther and his contemporaries proved to be just as pointed. Rough and ready verbal combat was needed for survival, and Luther was equal to the task. Schaff says,

"He felt himself called to the rough work...He thoroughly understood the wants and tastes of his countrymen who preferred force to elegance, and the club to the dagger (Ibid.)."

The words of the reformers enjoyed ready distribution from the printing houses of Europe, and, like some of the effective "underground" presses of our own age, the Reformation gained strength from the bold pamphlets that issued from willing and able printers.

"Among the most potent causes which...helped the triumph of Protestantism, was the teeming ephemeral literature which appeared between 1521 and 1524, and did the work of the periodical newspaper press of our days, in seasons of public excitement. In spite of prohibition of unauthorized printing by the edict of Worms, Germany was inundated by a flood of books, pamphlets, and leaflets in favor of true and false freedom. They created a public opinion which prevented the execution of the law." (Ibid.)

"The newness and freshness of this fugitive popular literature called out by the Reformation, and especially by the edict of Worms, made it all the
more effective. The people were hungry for intellectual and spiritual food, and the appetite grew with the supply." (Ibid., p. 325.)

The Roman Church tried energetically to stifle the flow of tracts and pamphlets which came from a growing number of printing presses, but it failed. The same potent force which had gained the victory for Protestantism, however, became the means for its eventual "breakup" into sects and denominations.

Once the gates of dissent had been opened, and a convenient means of "word processing" had emerged, courageous ultra-reformers, unsatisfied with the slow progress of the Reformation, demanded further changes based on their continual research in the Scriptures, and by bold publication of their views. In the Reformation, emphasis had changed from Church authority to Bible authority and the satisfaction of individual conscience. Those who allowed their consciences to be educated by the word of God contributed to these reforms in a positive way. Unfortunately, some men possessed uneducated consciences, and excesses of "radicalism" were the result. The chief Reformers, such as Luther and Zwingli, treated those who wanted to run beyond them as radicals rather than reformers. They perceived in this movement a threat to the stability of the Reformation rather than progress in restoring the Apostolic order. Schaff tells us that when Luther returned home from his Wartburg confinement,

"He now raised his protest against the abuse of liberty in his own camp. A sifting process was necessary. Division and confusion broke out among his friends and followers. Many of them exceeded all bounds of wisdom and moderation; while others, frightened by the excesses, returned to the fold of the mother church." (Schaff, History, vol. 7, p. 329.)

"While Luther was confined on the Wartburg, his followers were like children out of school, like soldiers without a captain. Some of them thought that he had stopped half way, and that they must complete what he had begun. They took the work of destruction and reconstruction into their own inexperienced and unskillful hands. Order gave way to confusion, and the Reformation was threatened with disastrous failure." (Ibid., p. 376).

It is true that the fresh atmosphere of freedom of thought led some to unwarranted
excesses in those times. On the other hand, the freedom to think for oneself, and to be
free from the tyranny and discipline of Rome, caused many good men to search for
deeper, broader, and more cogent truths. The presumed failures of one reformation would
therefore generate desire for another, with the result that another sect would come into
being. In spite of valiant attempts to conserve the unity of the Reformed Church, the
precedent had been established that one can follow his conscience out of one existing
body into another, and courageous men would let no one deny them their newfound
freedom, in spite of the charge of being "radicals."

HOLDOVER HINDRANCES

Some tragic holdovers from Catholicism plagued the process of reformation for
centuries, however. Augustinian theology (Original sin, Predestination, etc.) was so deeply
entrenched that it was still considered applicable to any doctrine of salvation, and was
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Luther contended that radicalism created a tyranny which would force the conscience to rise in full rebellion against what he thought were inoffensive traditional forms, just as
the tyranny of Roman traditions forced the conscience in the opposite direction. He stood for the "middle ground" between two "extremes," declaring himself on the one hand against tyranny, but also against too much freedom. His moderate treatment of the radicals at this time was somewhat out of character. Ordinarily, Luther attacked his opponents with invective and ridicule. Historians show that this was the only period of his life where he really practiced a moderate spirit, but it was successful in carrying the day against the "radicals." Carlstadt submitted to the force of Luther's personality, "silently, but sullenly," Schaff says, but secretly nursed his "mystical speculations and imaginary inspirations" (Ibid., pp. 390-391).

Though Luther successfully stifled this movement, aided by public reaction to its inconsistent and unprovable "revelations," the result was tragic, since it limited the scope of his reformation effort. He was caught in the trap of refusing to accept reforms clearly based on Scripture, simply because they were being promoted by men who claimed the gift of prophecy. In later times, other reformers would appear in more sober dress who would push the reformation concept to larger horizons than those dreamed of by Luther and his disciples, but for many years the German Reformation remained relatively stagnant.

The Swiss reformation, under Zwingli, also had its problems with those who wanted to go beyond its concepts. From the beginning, Zwingli, as we have already noted, had a desire to return all the way to the Apostles' doctrine and practice. It is said of Luther that while the Roman church appealed to the "Fathers" (early theologians), he appealed to the "Grandfathers" (the Apostles). This is a better description of Zwingli and the Swiss Reformers, because they went further in the spirit of "restoration" than Luther. Most of the program of Carlstadt was borrowed from Zwingli, except for the claim of personal inspiration. The Swiss treated nothing as a "matter of indifference." All images had been removed from their churches, and instruments of music were rejected in the worship.

But Zwingli, having to face problems similar to those in Germany, also retreated to a more austere and autocratic stance. He had points of reference beyond which even he would not go, and there were those of his adherents who craved further progress toward apostolic Christianity. Balthasar Hubmaier, who first assisted Zwingli, later dissented from
him on the matter of infant baptism. All of the leading reformers still accepted the Catholic view on this, though they might argue mildly for immersion rather than pouring. Hubmaier said, in opposition, that an infant could not believe, and could not pledge his faith to God. This dispute resulted in driving him from Zurich, and he met an unfortunate end, being burned to death for alleged complicity in the "Peasant's War."

Hubmaier's program survived, however, in the sect called the Anabaptists (re-baptizers). They carried the reformation concept far beyond Zwingli, and aroused his opposition. Schaff writes, more in sympathy with Zwingli than with the Anabaptists,

'The Swiss Reformation, like the German, was disturbed and checked by the radical excesses. It was placed between the two fires of Romanism and Ultra-Protestantism. It was attacked in the front and the rear, from without and within,--by the Romanists on the ground of tradition, by the Radicals on the ground of the Bible. In some respects the danger from the latter was greater. Liberty has more to fear from the abuses of its friends than from the opposition of its foes. The Reformation would have failed if it had identified itself with the revolution." (Schaff, History, Vol. 8, p. 71.)

Schaff's inordinate veneration of the chief reformers of the 16th Century blinds him to the lost opportunity caused by their opposition to the so-called "radicals." The radicals, for all their faults, had a hunger for Bible truth. To their credit, they saw the need to return to the ancient order in everything. They restored immersion as the scriptural form of baptism; they rejected the concept of clergy vs. laity; they rejected infant baptism; they restored much of the primitive order in worship and government. Contrary to Schaff's opinion, these reforms were not a threat to the success of the Reformation. Rather, they could have carried it to greater success! Left alone, without persecution, the "radicals" might have rediscovered such great truths as the complete abrogation of the Law of Moses, salvation by freewill acceptance and belief of the Gospel, and other "quantum leaps" over the trash of Romanism all the way back to the Apostles of Christ. Being driven underground, however, and harried from place to place by both rabid Catholics and cautious Protestant Reformers, their influence waned and almost disappeared for a season.

However, Schaff reveals some things about the Anabaptists that evoke our sympathy,
in spite of his bias in favor of the concept of limited reformation, and toward its "men of repute." He says,

"The Reformers aimed to reform the old Church by the Bible; The Radicals attempted to build a new Church from the Bible. The former maintained the historic continuity; the latter went directly to the apostolic age, and ignored the intervening centuries as an apostasy. The Reformers founded a popular state-church, including all citizens with their families; the Anabaptists organized on the voluntary principle select congregations of baptized believers, separated from the world and from the State. Nothing is more characteristic of radicalism and sectarianism than an utter want of historical sense and respect for the past. In its extreme form it rejects even the Bible as an external authority, and relies on inward inspiration. This was the case with the Zwickau Prophets who threatened to break up Luther's work at Wittenberg." (Ibid.)

Like Schaff, many confess no empathy with those who claim inner inspiration, and who thereby tend to forsake the sufficient revelation of God, but we see no justice in his charge that "radicals" lack a "historical sense" that robs them of the approbation of the world at large. (Here is a possible instance where his profession as a historian colors his objectivity.) Rather, those who want to be "separate from the world and from the State" also want to be separate from any destructive precedents of post-apostolic history! History can influence men either positively, or negatively. Zwingli and Luther let their sense of "historic continuity" limit their reformation. "Restorationists" have a different sense of history. They see only the long destructive litany of errors which proceeded from the Great Apostasy, and want to be free from every one. They ask, "Can the history of an Apostasy contribute any positive thing to church regeneration and the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity?" The answer, of course, is "No," unless you consider the fact that negative reaction to historical errors often produces a desire to build more positively on the undefiled truth of the New Testament. In the Preface to the "revised" edition of The Christian Baptist, Alexander Campbell's first periodical journal (1823-1830), D. S. Burnet wrote that the 19th Century reformation, of which he was an advocate...

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"...differs from others in this important respect; it contemplates not the change of any one sect or system, nor the amalgamation of any number or all of them; but it claims as a right, and labors to attain as its object, the reformation of society by a restoration of primitive Christianity, i.e. Christianity itself, in its gospel, institutions and laws. A creed reformed is a dividing barrier patched, and a sect remodeled is but a daughter of the mother of abominations in a new dress. This reformation aims at the demolition of the creed and the sect, genera and species, reformed and unreformed, as purity is incompatible with corruption." (Christian Baptist, one-volume reprint revised c.1835, College Press, 1983, p. iii.)

But Burnet's view of "restoration," which was designed to "count as refuse" all the historical heritage of apostasy, was still three hundred years in the future beyond Luther and Zwingli. Even so, the tantalizing appeal of speculating on "what might have been," if the "radical" search for apostolic truth in the 16th Century had been left unopposed to succeed in its day, leaves many of us breathless with a sigh of regret.

In spite of severe opposition and persecution, the Anabaptists left a heritage which others later followed. They...

"...made use of the right of protest against the Reformation, which the Reformers so effectually exercised against popery. They raised a protest against Protestantism. They charged the Reformers with inconsistency and semi-popery; yea, with the worst kind of popery. They denounced the state-church as worldly and corrupt, and its ministers as mercenaries. They were charged in turn with pharisaical pride, with revolutionary and socialistic tendencies. They were cruelly persecuted by imprisonment, exile, torture, fire and sword, and almost totally suppressed in Protestant as well as in Roman Catholic countries. The age was not ripe for unlimited religious liberty and congregational self-government. The Anabaptists perished bravely as martyrs of conscience." (Schaff, History, Vol. 8, p. 72.)

These "Radicals" were made to suffer the same reputation as Pelagius, who clashed with the mighty Augustine in the 4th Century, and was thereafter branded as a heretic
(Both Protestant and Catholic commentators, who embrace the principle of Evangelicalism, universally refer to his freewill ideas as "The Pelagian Heresy."). Because we are much further down the "time-line" of reformations, we find more affinity with the teaching of the Anabaptists, Hussites, Waldenses, and Pelagians than with Lutherans and Calvinists, even though they were all branded as heretics in their time, and we only find traces of their heirs and survivors today in the shadows of religious history. Later reformations revived and clarified much of what they espoused, but in the 16th and 17th Centuries, their names were slandered, and their bodies burned by both Catholics and Protestants. They ("of whom the world was not worthy," perhaps) wanted too much, too soon.

THE RISE OF CALVINISM

Luther and Zwingli had John Calvin (1509-1564) to build on their foundation, and his remarkable persuasive genius has exerted more permanent influence on Evangelical Protestantism than either of them. What they conceived in embryo he hatched and nourished into a monumental system that retained all of their errors, yet making them sound feasible through his bold polemic skill. He developed his systematic predestinarian views to such a degree that, today, many denominations borrow from his teaching, in whole or in part, to the detriment of millions of souls.

Formidable opposition to pure Calvinism eventually came from Jacob Arminius, who converted from the classic predestinarian theories of Calvin to a concept of "free will." In a later chapter, we will discuss the views of Arminius more thoroughly.

In spite of the dominance of Calvinism in the Reformed Church, new branches sprouted from the root of the 16th Century Reformation over the next three centuries. Huguenots in France, Arminians in the Low Countries, Separatists and Congregationalists and Quakers and Methodists in England, sprang up. Each sect had its own tragic and inspiring story. Most of their trials and triumphs were limited, however, to 16th Century issues. As the number of sects grew, in their wake came the problem of "fellowship." As we have seen, intolerance in the Protestant camp was notoriously abusive. Yet, there were some voices of moderation. The concept gained favor that the Universal Church was made up of all the "elect," no matter what denomination they were in. This concept was offered in the hope of ending violent strife among Protestants, and succeeded so well that today the de-
nominations extend broad fellowship, and often join others in common work, in spite of their many doctrinal differences.

As reformations multiplied toward the time of the 19th Century "Restoration Movement," men began to see that denominational diversity, posing collectively as the true church of Christ, was a mockery of Christ's original intent. A more complete reformation needed to occur, one as daring and zealous and thorough as that of the great King of Judah, Hezekiah, who destroyed even the brazen serpent made by Moses when he saw that men had made a sacred relic of it, offering incense to it long after its original purpose was fulfilled (Numbers 21:8-9, 2 Kings 18:1-6).

THE RESTORATION SPIRIT

In Scotland, in the late 18th Century, events were happening that would effect the proponents of the Restoration Movement in America. Doubts about Calvin's concept of election led to internal strife in the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). Robert and Alexander Haldane, feeling that the commands in the Scripture to "preach the Gospel" implied a freewill response, organized a "Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home." Harassed by criticism from the established clergy, the Haldane brothers formed their first independent church in 1799. They were successful in winning many followers, but they were treated as heretics by the Calvinists, who steadfastly held to the concept of selective predestination by the intruding grace of God as the only means of salvation.

Those who formed the Free Church in Scotland, another sectarian movement contemporary with that of the Haldanes, likewise moved toward an emphasis on Free Will. These parallel movements shared the following convictions:

a. Congregational Independence. No extra-congregational government. Each church had a plurality of elders. Thus, organizational questions were settled by the New Testament.

b. The Lord's Supper every "first day."

c. No Infant Sprinkling.

d. "Optional" adult immersion. (Baptism was not considered essential to salvation, showing that they retained a measure of Calvinistic thought.)

Thomas and Alexander Campbell, before coming from Scotland to America, knew of
these popular reformatory movements, and agreed with most of their goals. They came to a land where, in the heady atmosphere of religious freedom, other reformations multiplied. Religious alienation of American Methodists from the Church of England had been generated by the American Revolution. The English "divine," John Wesley, came to America and organized the Methodist Episcopal Church, then returned to England and remained in the fellowship of the Anglican Church. Methodism in America, though separate from Anglican Church control, adopted its "episcopal" form of government. James O'Kelley opposed this system, unsuccessfully, and finally concluded that he must break with his intransigent opponents to start a new church. At first called "Republican Methodists," O'Kelley's followers later adopted the name "Christian" only, and were called the Christian Church (not to be confused with the modern "Christian Churches--Disciples of Christ"). They rejected all creeds, and stood for liberty of conscience, and private judgment (West, Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 1, p. 8-10).

About the same time, Calvinism's contradictions of Scripture convinced Elias Smith and Abner Jones, Baptists, to forsake those errors. They stood for no creed but the New Testament. They also preferred only the name "Christian" (Ibid., p. 17).

So, the atmosphere was well-charged for men like Thomas Campbell, his son Alexander, and Barton W. Stone, to "search for the ancient order," and attempt its "restoration." The history of this “movement” is well documented in many other works, chiefly those of Earl I. West, Robert Richardson, James DeForest Murch and others. So, in the final chapters of this book we will only present the role which these reformers played in electing to follow the Scripture regarding the historical issues there discussed.
CHAPTER SEVEN
THE LEGACY OF APOSTASY

"Whosoever goeth onward, and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son..." -- 2 John 9-10

Many New Testament practices were corrupted in the libertine atmosphere which led to Roman Catholicism. Many centuries would pass before there was any success on the part of reformers to return to the "ancient order." It would be in order here, before we speak of theoretical religious controversies, to trace the development of some controversies we might call "technical," for want of a better designation. These involve matters of interest to those who have a "19th Century Restoration Movement" heritage. They are important, because they effect the salvation of men, either directly or indirectly, and from them we can unfold some facts that will help us to understand the restless spirit of apostasy, and perhaps help us to appreciate the kindred spirits of reformation and restoration, also.

BAPTISM-- the "Form"

Biblical scholars of every age have almost universally confirmed the fact that New Testament water baptism was by immersion, based on the meaning of the word in the original language. The circumstantial evidence for immersion is abundant. Both the Lord and the Ethiopian eunuch were led into the water, and out of it, to be immersed (Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:36-39). John was immersing "in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there" (John 3:23). Immersion, of course, is the only definition of baptism that fits the repeated figure of a "burial" into the death of Christ, and a "resurrection" to a new life (Romans 6:3-4, Colossians 2:12).

In the "great apostasy," and even through much of the history of the Roman Catholic church, immersion was practiced almost exclusively. Exceptions from immersion were allowed only in cases where people were very sick, but these converts were urged to be
immersed when they returned to good health. Many would not comply, however, and were called *clinici*, in derision. They were often prohibited from being priests. However, where man has introduced an exception to a divine rule, a spirit of tolerance will automatically build on the exception until the original form and manner of the practice is thought to have no authority. We can see a beginning of this tolerance in a famous ancient document called the "Teaching Of The Apostles" (sometimes called the "Didache" in Bible reference books), which suggests that early interpreters of apostolic teaching were indifferent to the purity of baptismal form. It commanded,

"Baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost in living (running) water. But if thou hast not living water, baptize in other water; and if thou canst not in cold, then in warm. But if thou hast neither, pour water upon the head thrice, into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" (Schaff, Vol. 2, p. 247).

The "Didache," though mentioned and sometimes quoted by early writers from about 100 AD, was not found in manuscript form for modern examination until 1875. The Roman Catholic Church has a bad reputation of trying to undergird its claims as the "true" and "apostolic" church through fraudulent literature, dated spuriously from apostolic times (or from the period just following it). This leads many scholars to doubt the historical reliability of statements such as the one quoted above. We can learn from it, however, that in the last version before its discovery in 1875 immersion was still preferred over "pouring." Also, it is tempting to interpret the *triple* pouring advised in it as a means of compensating for the *single* immersion of New Testament example.

However, there is evidence to show that triple immersion was also practiced in early days. This practice paralleled early controversies over the number of "persons" in the Godhead. Several heresies concerning the divinity of Christ, and the status of the Holy Spirit came up in the Ante-Nicene Age. Arius, the founder of Arianism, accepted many of these errors, and from 318 AD taught that Jesus was a created God, inferior to God the Father, and that the Holy Spirit was inferior to both the Father and the Son. Therefore, he was charged with believing in more than one God (polytheism). The "Trinitarians," on the other hand, believed in a common *substance* and equality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
in a single "godhead." Growing emphasis on the Trinity, and the rejection of Arianism and kindred heresies certainly colored the thinking of many, so that when Jesus commanded the Apostles to baptize disciples "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19)," many misapprehended its meaning, and presumed that he was commanding three immersions, one for each person in the Godhead! This presumption, unfortunately, was not in agreement with divine revelation, because New Testament references in both English and Greek indicate that baptism was a singular act (see the use of singular verbs in Acts 8:38, 1 Corinthians 1:14, etc., where only one person is baptized, but note that the word is in the plural when speaking of the immersion of several people, 1 Corinthians 1:15). Hebrews 6:2 mentions plural baptisms, but cannot be soundly construed to suggest the concept of triune water immersion, since the early Christians were familiar with Holy Spirit baptism, and other symbolic "baptisms."

It is strange, however, to observe how views change "with every wind of doctrine." The tradition of triple baptism, which was thought by many to be in honor of the Trinity, was made a "test of fellowship." The single immersion of the Eunomians, an early sect that did not hold to the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, was rejected by the "council of Constanti-nople in 381, in its seventh canon." (Schaff, History, Vol. 3, p. 485). However, in a later time, Gregory the Great, who was bishop of Rome from 590 to 604 AD "permitted also the single immersion, which was customary in Spain as a testimony against the Arian polytheism" (Ibid., p. 486). We see, then, that the custom of some early trinitarians was to immerse three times in honor of the equal partners in the deity, while other trinitarians in Spain followed the custom of single immersion to demonstrate a devotion to the unity of the Godhead. The fact that both were accepted, at the same time, suggests that triune immersion was truly a tradition, and not authorized by the language of the New Testament.

Later, the contentions between the Roman and Greek churches in the 11th Century raised charge and counter-charge regarding the propriety of triune or single immersions, but eventually the custom of multiple immersions lost ground to the growing practice of pouring.

The so-called "fathers" of the period before the Council of Nicea (325 AD) often referred to baptism as immersion, even when using a language other than Greek. Justin Martyr, in
Greek, calls it the "water bath," and Tertullian used the Latin phrase "ter mergitamur," which, because of its similarity to a number of English words suggesting immersion, is easy to interpret.

Effusionists (sprinklers and pourers) attempt to escape from this mass of evidence supporting immersion by pointing to the ancient crude pictures found on the walls of the catacombs under the city of Rome, some of which are said to date from the 2nd Century. These illuminations seem to depict the pouring of water from vessels on the subject. However, the catacomb illustrations all show the candidates standing in water, only sparsely dressed as for immersion. Schaff notes that static pictures can only represent a part of an action (History, Vol. 2, p. 249), while the literary descriptions of the same period consistently speak of immersion.

Immersion remained the accepted rule through many centuries (The cathedral at Pisa, Italy, the location of the "Leaning Tower," has a pool used for immersion in a separate building called the "Baptistry," built in the 12th Century.) Peter the Lombard (1100?-1160?), a 12th Century Schoolman, "declared without qualification for immersion as the proper form," and such famous 13th Century Catholic scholastics as Duns Scotus (1265?-1308?) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) thought it was "safer." Duns Scotus said, "Baptism ought to be given by dipping; so as that it is not lawful to give it otherwise, unless for some necessary or creditable and reasonable cause" (Rowe, John F., A History of Reformatory Movements, p. 455). Aquinas is on record as affirming that immersion was "the more general practice of his day" (Schaff, History, Vol. 5, pp. 711-712).

However, during the most disreputable period of the Papacy, when there were three competing "Papal Thrones," the Roman Catholic Council of Ravenna (1311 AD), of which there is very sparse mention in historical writings, and which was apparently attended by only a handful of bishops, pronounced pouring to be as acceptable in form as immersion in all cases. This council's questionable credentials caused many to consider its "canons" to be suspect, because "Synods, as late as the synod of Tarragona, 1391, spoke of the submersion of children in baptism" (Ibid.). Rowe also adds this point:

"That infant baptism and sprinkling are sinful and inexcusable innovations upon the ancient order of things, are facts that are not only made
manifest by the absolute silence of the Scriptures, but facts that are made
doubly manifest by the apologies and excuses of the innovators, as well as
by those who support the innovators" (History of Reformatory Movements,
p. 456.)

The ultimate corruption of apostolic doctrine by the unlettered medieval Roman Church
finally succeeded in causing men to abandon immersion for the easier, more convenient
act of pouring (late 14th Century). Immersion probably did not totally disappear in Europe
even in this period, because when certain early Protestant sects, such as the Anabaptists,
returned to the practice of immersion, there seemed to be less objection to their preference
of form than to the concept that men who received pouring as infants should be "re-
baptized" (the meaning of the term "Anabaptist"). Anabaptists rejected "Infant Salvation,"
and taught "believer's baptism." or immersion. Therefore, Catholic opposition centered
around this teaching, and not on the practice of immersion.

The pragmatic Reformation Movement attitude toward many troublesome issues was
to ignore them in favor of contending against the "greater" errors. They said that some
matters, such as the "form" of baptism, were "unimportant." This attitude caused most
leaders to ignore this issue, so that they inadvertently fastened the prevailing practice of
effusion on their followers by default. Luther preferred immersion, and sought to restore
it (Schaff, Vol. 7, p. 607, and Vol. 2, p. 251), but did not think it was an issue worthy of
great contention. John Calvin admitted the validity of immersion from the definition of the
Greek word, but was also one of those who thought it was an "indifferent matter"
(Institutes, Book IV, p. 524).

Sprinkling and Pouring were not accepted in isolated England until the middle of the
17th century (Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth I were all immersed, though probably
as infants. Schaff, History, Vol. 8, p. 78, note 3.). The establishment of a reformed Church
of England (which is called the Episcopal Church in America) set the stage for several
changes in doctrine and liturgy, one of which was the form of baptism. In a council of
Anglican Bishops, the Church of England voted to change its practice from immersion to
effusion by a very narrow margin. Most of the "reformed" churches eventually accepted
sprinkling or pouring, but as men began to put increasing emphasis on New Testament
authority (especially among the early Baptists in England and America), The spirit of continual reformation caused another return to the practice of immersion.

In spite of this historical "seesaw" shifting on the "form" of baptism, the desire to return to Apostolic practice in all things, supported by modern scholarship, caused the adherents of the 19th Century Campbell-Stone reformation to reject all forms but immersion, even though most of them were formerly effusionists. In consequence of this stand, Alexander Campbell was willing to debate effusionists on the subject (Campbell-Rice), and heartily endorsed the "Living Oracles," a translation of the New Testament by another man with the same surname, which used noun or verb forms of the word immersion in every place that the corresponding Greek word for baptism appeared in the King James Version.

Campbell's influence was great, but it did not supersede the authority of the New Testament in the minds of the men who heard and respected him. The force of his arguments persisted, and because they were Scriptural, the practice in modern churches of Christ is apostolic, not Campbellian, and they will not accept the traditional substitutions of men, even though they are said to have the same force as the revelation of God.

BAPTISM—the "Purpose"

From the beginning of the Christian Age there was little misapprehension of the purpose of baptism. It was for the salvation of the sinner. In the New Testament, baptism is connected with several "purposes," but all of them have the same general end of saving the sinner. They are...

(1) To have sins washed away. Acts 22:16
   (In the blood of Christ. Revelation 1:5)
(2) To get "into Christ." Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27
   ("In none other is there salvation," Acts 4:12)
(3) To get into the "one body" of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13
   (Christ is the "savior of the Body," Ephesians 5:23)
(4) To get into the "name of Christ." Matthew 28:19-20
   ("Neither is there any other name..wherein we must be saved," Acts 4:12)
(5) To be "saved." Mark 16:16, 1 Peter 3:21
(6) To gain the figurative death of the "old man, that the body of sin might be
done away," and to be a "new man.........in Christ Jesus." Romans 6:5-6,
2 Corinthians 5:17

Schaff tells us that in the "Ante-Nicene" age, baptism was "regarded...as the sacrament of the new birth or regeneration...the old man being buried, and the new man arising from the watery grave." He says that Justin Martyr (100?-165? AD) "calls baptism 'the water-bath for the forgiveness of sins and regeneration.'" The historian also says that Tertullian (160?-230? AD) "argued the necessity of baptism to salvation" from John 3:5 and Mark 16:16. (History, Vol. 2, p. 253.)

In spite of this teaching, which was certainly compatible with the plain teaching of the New Testament, Tertullian and others held a strange view regarding the forgiveness of sins committed after baptism. They supposed correctly that baptism was "to extend only to sins committed before receiving it," but had such a limited understanding of how men received forgiveness after conversion that they often recommended postponement of the act to those who doubted their ability to live above sin after baptism. Schaff says,

"Many, like Constantine the Great, put it off to the bed of sickness and of death. They preferred the risk of dying unbaptized to that of forfeiting forever the baptismal grace. Death-bed baptisms were then what death-bed repentances are now.

But then the question arose, how the forgiveness of sins committed after baptism could be obtained? This is the starting point of the Roman doctrine of the sacrament of penance. Tertullian and Cyprian were the first to suggest that satisfaction must be made for such sins by self-imposed penitential exercises and good works, such as prayers and almsgiving." (History, Vol. 2, p. 254)

Tertullian's view was based on "the impossibility of having mortal sins forgiven in the church after baptism" (Ibid., p. 261). He "held seven gross sins, which he denoted mortal sins, to be unpardonable after baptism" (Ibid., p. 254). We stand amazed at the ignorance of men who could be right on the purpose of baptism, but who could not understand that the same mercy that forgives the penitent sinner through a simple act like baptism extended also to the penitent praying sinner who had already been baptized. The baptized
believer who, like Simon the sorcerer, ignorantly sinned again, could have deliverance from a "heart not right with God" by sincerely repenting and praying that the thought of his heart be forgiven (Acts 8:9-24). Works of penance were no more valid for forgiveness after baptism than before baptism. This doctrine contradicted the promise of 1 John 1:9, which says of God, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There are scriptural warnings, of course, regarding the "worse" condition and the difficulty of repentance extending to those who are "overcome" by transgressions, or who "fell away" after enjoying many blessings of the kingdom, or who "sin wilfully" (2 Peter 2:20-21, Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-31), and it may have been these passages which influenced the early Ante-Nicene "fathers" to suppose that sins beyond baptism were so hard to forgive that they must be accompanied with works of supererogation (that is, deeds sufficiently righteous to compensate for, and overcome, the guilt of the sin). But God is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Any sin from which men turn away in repentance is forgivable, and there is no New Testament distinction between "mortal" and "venial" sin. The common sentence for all sins is spiritual death, making us realize that sin of any kind must be considered "exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:7-13). So, whether the sin is coveting or murder, the sentence is the same, the necessity for repentance is the same, and the mercy of God is extended to the same.

The prevailing notion in the early church of the necessity of baptism for salvation had an evil side-effect, because the early Christians did not limit baptism to qualified subjects. In very early times following the age of the Apostles, mention of the practice of infant baptism is found in a few of the writings of the "fathers." Justin Martyr speaks of "old men and women of sixty and seventy years of age (who) have been from childhood disciples of Christ" (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, p. 258).

The practice of infant baptism is not mentioned in the New Testament either by command or example. However, Schaff, because he himself felt the necessity of justifying infant baptism, attempts to establish it as an apostolic institution. He says,

"...It seems an almost certain fact, though by many disputed, that, with the baptism of converts, the optional baptism of the children of Christian
parents in established congregations, comes down from the apostolic age. Pious parents would naturally feel a desire to consecrate their offspring from the very beginning to the service of the Redeemer, and find a precedent in the ordinance of circumcision. This desire would also be strengthened in cases of sickness by the prevailing notion of the necessity of baptism for salvation." (Ibid. pp. 258-259)

This statement reveals how a man's sentiment combined with bias can seek to justify the alteration of God's Word, and also how Old Testament laws wielded a Judaizing influence on the early church, in spite of the Apostle Paul's dire warning of Galatians 5:2-4. Even Schaff admits his premise that the baptism of infants was of apostolic origin "is not capable of positive proof, but rests on strong probabilities" (Ibid.).

When the practice of infant baptism was established, early in post-apostolic church history, the concept of "baptismal regeneration" was born. Infants were incapable of meeting any of the Scriptural prerequisites of baptism (faith, confession, repentance), so they were presumed to be regenerated (born again) by baptism alone.

It is true that "Newness of life" (another way of saying "regeneration") comes from being "buried therefore with him through baptism," then being "raised with him through faith in the working of God..." (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12). But other things are involved in the regeneration process, such as "Obedience to the truth...(or) having been begotten again...of incorruptible seed...by the word of God..." (1 Peter 1:22-25). Being persuaded by the Word is therefore a factor in "regeneration." Also, Jesus taught the new birth "...of water and the Spirit..." (John 3:5). So, Baptism combines the "washing of regeneration" with the "renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Infant baptism, which had begun as a sentimental custom, eventually became a requirement during the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-567 AD). This evolution advanced alongside the emerging doctrine of "original sin." Augustine, in the 4th Century, took some confused speculations about human nature and the source of sin from the age preceding his own, and congealed them into a system which has persisted in varying forms ever since. He taught that the sin of Adam passed down through generations to all his offspring, causing them to be "born in sin."
Augustine’s struggle to master his own evil tendencies led him to conclude that all men were like himself (and he presumed also like the Apostle Paul), "sold under sin." Evil was inherent in mankind, unconquerable, and devastating. Man could not help himself, but had to wait for the enabling and "creative" grace of God. It was easy for Augustine to conclude that sin was inherited, since his personal experience helped him to perceive a measure of logic in the vague musings on this subject by his predecessors. It followed that if infants were born in sin, they needed to be immersed immediately for salvation. What had begun as a sentimental dedication of children by pious parents resulted in a theological system demanding infant baptism for their salvation from inherited sin.

The New Testament mentions no case of infant baptism, and provides no command for it, yet men firmly believe it. This "belief" cannot not rest on the "word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Infant depravity is the false foundation of infant salvation, but is refuted by Ezekiel 18:1-20, and Matthew 18:3. Yet, to establish a case for Infant Baptism, early promoters claimed to find examples in so-called "household baptisms," citing Acts 16:15 (Lydia’s), 16:33 (the Jailor’s), and 18:8 (Crispus’).

To find infants in these "households" they must presume much. Lydia’s case shows no conditions being met prior to baptism, except "hearing" Paul’s lesson (16:14). Yet, to find Infant Baptism, its proponents must— 1. Presume she was a married woman; 2. Presume that she had children, if she was married; 3. Presume that some of her children were infants; and 4. Presume that her infant children were with her in Philippi, though her home was in Thyatira. In the cases of the Jailor, and Crispus, we see that the prerequisite of "believing" was required. Can infants "believe the gospel?" some have objected. The infant-baptizers answer, "They were saved on the faith of their parents," but there is no Bible precedent for such a transposing of faith. Martin Luther, who believed in Infant Salvation, did not accept this concept. He claimed that infants had their own faith (see his argument below). If we can presume that these households contained infants to be baptized, we must also presume that infants can "set themselves to minister to the saints" (1 Corinthians 16:15). We cannot be consistent, if we include infants in the baptized "house of Crispus," and do not also include them in the ministering "house of Stephanus."

The question, "Who is legitimately baptized?", was also obscured by the attitude of the
Catholic church toward "heretical baptism." They discussed the question, "When heretics baptized someone, did that baptism accomplish remission of sins?" This question was addressed by Cyprian, who died in the middle of the 3rd Century. He is one of the Ante-Nicene "fathers" whose concepts set so many precedents for the apostate Catholic church. His view was...

"As the one Catholic church is the sole repository of all grace, there can be no forgiveness of sins, no regeneration or communication of the Spirit, no salvation, and therefore no valid sacraments, out of her bosom." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2. p. 262)

Some of his contemporaries were opposed to this view, yet his views prevailed in future generations, so that baptism became a sacrament to be administered only by the authority of the Church.

Another circumstance which sprang from the development of infant baptism was the compulsory baptism of conquered enemies. The famous King Charlemagne (742-814 AD) used military force to baptize conquered Saxons, since he believed "that people become Christians by water baptism, though baptized against their will" (Schaff, History, Vol. 4, p. 103). Schaff admits that "it was a radical departure from the apostolic method, and diametrically opposed to the spirit of the gospel" (Ibid.). He comments that "this superficial, wholesale conversion to a nominal Christianity must be regarded in the light of a national infant-baptism" (Ibid., p. 18). We can consider this statement to be an oblique criticism of the involuntary nature of infant baptism. As proof that Charlemagne's act was not the ignorant design of a political leader, without the approval of the church in that age, Schaff also tells us that Pope Leo III (716-741 AD), "In the sixth year of his reign...ordered the forcible baptism of Jews and Montanists (or Manichaeans)." He adds that "the former submitted hypocritically and mocked at the ceremony; the latter preferred to set fire to their meeting-houses and to perish in the flames" (Ibid., pp. 455-456).

During the medieval period, when "Scholasticism" was the most prominent force, there was both a liberal and conservative spirit in the Roman Church. It is said of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 AD),

"In his views on baptism he was as liberal as the most liberal of his age
in declaring that baptism was not indispensable to salvation when the opportunity is not afforded." (Schaff, *History*, Vol. 5, p. 355)

In opposition, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), in his attempt to re-establish the conservative view in rebuttal to a rising sentiment against Infant Baptism, returned to the premise of Augustine (4th Century). Schaff says,

"Scarcely any teaching of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas arouses so much revolt in the Christian theology of this age as the teaching about the future estate of unbaptized children dying in infancy. These theologians agree in denying to them all hope of future bliss. They are detained in hell for the sin of Adam..." (History, Vol. 5, p. 670.)

This Catholic teaching paralleled the false doctrine of the "probable" existence of a place called in Latin *limbus infantum*. Schaff describes the theory in this way:

"The *limbus puerorum* or *infantum* is the abode of children dying in infancy without having been baptized. They are there for original sin which only baptism can wash away...These children are free from pain, but are like the lost in being deprived of the vision of God and physical light. Theirs is the punishment of eternal death--*supplicium mortis oeternoe*,--but their damnation is the lightest of all---*omnium levissima*. They have no hope of beatitude. God, in His justice, provides that they never make any advance nor go back, that they neither have joy nor grief. They remain forever unchanged." (History, Vol. 5, p. 758-9.)

This theory consoled the parents of dying unbaptized infants that their children were not in Hell, while at the same time warning parents against delays in bringing their children to the baptistry. Such an offensive invention would never have been developed, if the traditional custom of baptizing children had not been introduced into the apostate church, and accompanied by the false doctrine of original sin. Schaff, who accepted the doctrine of Infant Baptism, says that in the doctrine of *limbus infantum*...

"The doctrine of original sin and the doctrine of the necessity of water baptism for salvation were carried to their extreme logical conclusions without regard for the superabounding grace of God." (Ibid.)
What Schaff failed to learn is that neither Infant Baptism nor Original Sin have any foundation in Scripture, even though "water baptism for salvation" has abundant Scriptural support. Modern prejudice against the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins causes many to level the charge that its practitioners (like Roman Catholics) believe in "baptismal regeneration," even if they reject the Roman doctrines of Infant Baptism and Original Sin. The truth is veiled from those who have this prejudice, causing them to misunderstand the clear teaching of the New Testament on baptism, which teaches a voluntary, adult, believer immersion for the remission of sins.

In the 16th Century Protestant Reformation, negative reaction to all things “Romish” influenced the view of many on the subject of baptism. Governed by reactionary sentiment, men eagerly turned from the Catholic doctrine of saving works to that of saving faith apart from works, and this caused many to suppose that the "work" of baptism was either unimportant, or must have a purpose different from that taught by Rome. Among the ultra-reformers, the Anabaptists and others, infant baptism, with its purpose, was abandoned. Like modern baptists, they thought that...

"A new church required a new baptism...The Radicals could find no trace of infant baptism in the Bible, and denounced it as an invention of the pope and the devil. Baptism, they reasoned, presupposes instruction, faith, and conversion, which is impossible in the case of infants. Voluntary baptism of adult and responsible converts is, therefore, the only valid baptism. They denied that baptism is necessary for salvation, and maintained that infants are or may be saved by the blood of Christ without water-baptism. But baptism is necessary for church membership as a sign and seal of conversion." (Schaff, History, Vol. 8, p. 76.)

Martin Luther tried to answer these objections to Infant Baptism by claiming that infants had their own faith. He said,

"In Baptism children themselves believe and have faith of their own. God works this within them through the intercession of the sponsors who bring the child to the font in the faith of the Christian Church...we say that the children are not baptized in the faith of the sponsors or of the church; but the faith of
the sponsors and of Christendom asks and obtains a faith of their own for them. In this they are baptized and believe for themselves. For this position we have strong and sound passages (Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-16).” (Plass, What Luther says, Vol. 1, p. 53.)

His "proof-texts" actually have little strength to prove his point, as we can see, but his supposition that God plants a personal faith in the infant is consistent with his Augustinian background. He believed that we are incapable of faith, until God, who has predestined us to salvation, opens our hearts and implants in us the ability to have faith. However, one may be consistent, and still be wrong! (See the later chapter on Freewill vs. Predestination.)

The Catholic and Protestant views of the purpose of infant baptism remained fixed for centuries after the Reformation, but when, in the early 19th Century, Thomas Campbell began to promote the view that "nothing be inculcated...for which there cannot be expressly produced a 'Thus saith the Lord'" (Campbell, Declaration and Address, pp. 27-28), he was challenged to produce a "Thus saith the Lord" for his traditional support of Infant Baptism. Failing to find New Testament authority for the practice, and consistent with his promise to "be silent where the Scripture is silent," he abandoned the practice. This cleared the way for a new consideration of the purpose of baptism, and its proper subjects. As a result of their study, Campbell, his son Alexander, and a number of those associated with them, were immersed, but they had not come to a full realization that immersion in the Name of Christ was for the remission of sins.

By the time Alexander Campbell came to debate N. L. Rice, a Presbyterian, he demonstrated how far he had come from his own Presbyterian and effusionist roots by affirming the proposition that "Christian baptism is for the remission of past sins." He also rebutted the proposition that "The infant of a believing parent is a scriptural subject of baptism" (Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, p. 502) The followers of Barton W. Stone had come to these views even earlier than the Campbells, and their discovery that they were in agreement on this subject helped to bring the two groups together.

We see in this objective acceptance of New Testament doctrine a complete "restoration" of apostolic teaching on this subject, not a mere "reformation" of human doctrines.
This position on baptism in modern churches of Christ is rooted in the teachings of the inspired apostles, not on the opinions of Campbell and Stone, and rejects all the corrupting doctrines of men which have been added to it or subtracted from it over the centuries.

There are other doctrinal matters that are held over from the age of apostasy which will be considered in the next chapter.
CHAPTER EIGHT
THE LEGACY OF APOSTASY (2)

?Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. but in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.'"

– Matthew 15:7-9

COMMUNION--The Lord's Supper

The unique tradition of the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper in present-day churches of Christ is proclaimed as "apostolic." The institution of the supper by Jesus at the Passover meal with His disciples, just before he was tried and crucified, is presented in the New Testament in very simple language (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20). Later, when the Apostle Paul rehearses what he had "received" of the Lord, the simple details remained (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Yet, shortly after the close of the Apostolic Age, the Supper began to change in form and purpose.

One of the earliest uninspired records of the Lord's Supper after the time of the Apostles is that of Justin Martyr (100?-165? AD). He wrote,

"After the prayers...we greet one another with the brotherly kiss. Then bread and a cup with water and wine are handed to the president (bishop) of the brethren. He receives them, and offers praise, glory, and thanks to the Father of all, through the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit, for these his gifts. When he has ended the prayers and thanksgiving, the whole congregation responds: 'Amen.' For 'Amen' in the Hebrew tongue means: 'Be it so.' Upon this the deacons, as we call them, give to each of those present some of the blessed bread, and of the wine mingled with water, and carry it to the absent in their dwellings. This food is called with us the eucharist, of which none can partake, but the believing and baptized, who live according to the commands of Christ. For we use these not as common bread and common
drink; but like as Jesus Christ our Redeemer was made flesh through the word of God, and took upon him flesh and blood for our redemption; so are we taught, that the nourishment blessed by the word of prayer, by which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation (assimilation), is the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, pp. 235-236.)

A conservative interpreter of the New Testament might read this statement and find it very similar to the descriptions of the Gospels, but he must also recognize some differences. No command or example in Scripture ever mentions or requires the presiding of a bishop at the table, or prayers through the name of the Holy Spirit, or mingling the wine with water, or carrying the emblems to the homes of the absent, or of assimilating the flesh and blood of Jesus (except in a spiritual sense, John 6:53-56, 63).

On the other hand, the liberal interpreter could find in Justin's description many precedents for departing from the stark descriptions of the New Testament text. He can use them to "romance" the institution, and build on its foundation a superstructure of liturgy and ritual. The seeds of "episcopacy" are found in Justin's statement, and suggestions of other additions to the Word. The Ante-Nicene "fathers" were quick to abandon the authority of Scripture to make way for the acceptance of innovation. Many unscriptural forms would come into practice in the centuries that followed, until the simple supper of the "upper room" would lose most of its primitive appeal and become a festival of pomp and circumstance. However, Schaff says,

"We are not warranted in carrying back to this period the full liturgical service, which we find prevailing with striking uniformity in essentials, though with many variations in minor points, in all quarters of the church in the Nicene age (from 325 AD forward). A certain simplicity and freedom characterized the period before us." (Ibid.)

It was this innovative "freedom" to add human touches to the Word which compromised the supper's apostolical form. No liturgical formulas for the "eucharist" were in place in the 2nd, and perhaps even into the 3rd century. Little "germs" of ritual are seen, germs which were later incubated into the epidemic infection of apostasy, but this is all. Schaff comments further,
"From scattered statements of the ante-Nicene fathers we may gather the following view of the eucharistic service as it may have stood in the middle of the third century, if not earlier.

The communion was a regular and the most solemn part of the Sunday worship; or it was the worship of God in the stricter sense, in which none but full members of the church could engage. In many places and by many Christians it was celebrated even daily, after apostolic precedent, and according to the very common mystical interpretation of the fourth petition of the Lord's prayer." (Ibid.)

The observance of the Supper on Sunday (the "first day of the week") has its precedent in Acts 20:7, but the presumption that apostolic precedent ordained a "daily" supper probably rested on the language of Acts 2:46. However, this verse speaks of "breaking bread at home," while apostolic teaching shows the Lord's Supper being taken in assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:17-20, 33-34). When Schaff says that the practice of daily communion was based on the "fourth petition of the Lord's prayer" ("Give us this day our daily bread"), he says it was a "mystical" interpretation. The mystical method of interpreting Scripture has led to hundreds of errors in Christianity, or has been used to justify those errors, and must be rejected as a sound method of exegesis. In the medieval Roman church, mystical interpretation was so extremely popular that its absurdities clouded all knowledge of truth. (One medieval preacher found source material for eighty seven allegorical sermons in the first three of the eight chapters of Song of Solomon! Schaff, History, Vol. 5, p. 641.) Mysticism eventually surrounded the figurative language of Scripture, transforming the Lord's Supper into a "sacrament." Schaff says,

"Ignatius speaks of this sacrament in two passages, only by way of allusion, but in very strong, mystical terms, calling it the flesh of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, and the consecrated bread a medicine of immortality and an antidote of spiritual death. This view, closely connected with his high-churchly tendency in general, no doubt involves belief in the real presence, and ascribes to the holy Supper an effect on spirit and body at once, with reference to the future resurrection, but is still somewhat
obscure, and rather an expression of elevated feeling, than a logical definition." (History, Vol. 2, p. 242.)

Schaff says that Justin Martyr and Irenaeus held similar views, but that even their language tended to be figurative rather than literal. He says that we cannot safely interpret their words as suggesting an early belief in either the later Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (the miraculous change of the bread and wine to the flesh and blood of Christ), or the even later Lutheran concept of consubstantiation (The presence of the flesh and blood in an ill-defined mystical sense).

Tertullian and Cyprian, in contrast to these early writers, held more closely to the biblical principle of a symbolic presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and the fruit of the vine, or an "emblematic representation" (Ibid., p. 243). These contrasting views set the pattern for the extended, and often heated disputes over the "eucharist" in the centuries that followed.

We can be certain that Christ intended for the bread and the cup to serve as simple reminders of His body and blood, rather than as elements destined to be substantially transformed. It is true that when he instituted the supper, he used the expressions "This is my body...this is my blood," but he was standing before them in physical flesh and blood. Therefore, he was suggesting that the bread and the fruit of the vine were to be, figuratively, "representations" of his body and blood sacrificed on the cross for our sins.

As the concept of transubstantiation gained popularity, however, medieval Catholic schoolmen, who were fond of debating questions until every detail of the subject was exhausted, raised serious questions about whether the Apostles at the last supper ate of the real body and blood of Jesus, or only emblems. Some, basing their contentions on reason, argued that it was impossible that the living flesh and blood of Jesus was present in the bread and wine used at the Last Supper. However, some of their contemporaries "boldly affirmed" that not only did the Apostles eat of the literal flesh and blood of Christ at the Last Supper, but "that Christ partook of his own body and blood" (Ibid.)! Thomas Aquinas quoted with approval the lines;

"The King, seated with the twelve at the table, Holds Himself in His hands. He, the Food, feeds upon himself." (Ibid.)
This final development of the Catholic doctrine of *Transubstantiation* took many years, and had to pass through the preceding conceptual stages of *mutation, translation, transfiguration,* and *transformation.* But Schaff says of these earlier concepts,

"But closely as these and similar expressions verge upon the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, they seem to contain at most a *dynamic,* not a substantial change of the elements into the body and blood of Christ. For, in the first place, it must be remembered there is a great difference between the half-poetic, enthusiastic, glowing language of devotion, in which the fathers, and especially the liturgies, speak of the eucharistic sacrifice, and the clear, calm, and cool language of logic and doctrinal definition." (History, Vol. 3, p. 495.)

Transubstantiation could not claim strong support among such famous Catholic scholars as the 4th Century Augustine, but in the 9th Century, and again in the 11th Century, the controversy came to a head. The principle 11th Century controversialists were Berengar (advocating a "spiritual" view of the supper), and Lanfranc de Bec, one of his students who forsook the teaching of his mentor in this matter (perhaps to be on the "popular" side of the issue). Under fire for his views, Berengar's courage waned, causing him to yield to the angry fulminations of a synod of bishops in 1059, but he later exclaimed, "Human wickedness extorted from human weakness a different *confession,* but a change of *conviction* can be effected only by the agency of Almighty God" (Schaff, History, Vol. 4, pp. 557-558.) After escaping from the threats of the Council, he persisted in his opposition to the concept of transubstantiation, until Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII), who had been steering the church toward a rigid, doctrinaire, monarchial papacy, withdrew his protection in order to establish his own reputation for "orthodoxy." Berengar faded from the scene, but his writings were preserved, and influenced later reformers, such as Wyclif.

Sentiment in the hierarchy was now ready for the declaration of transubstantiation as the doctrine of the Roman Church, and this was done officially under Pope Innocent III, and the 4th Lateran Council, in 1215 AD. The decision left no room for dissent. The famous 13th Century scholar, Duns Scotus, was forced to compromise. Though he declared that the doctrine of transubstantiation could not be proved from Scripture, or even
from reason, He said he would accept it on the "authority of the Church" (Schaff, History, Vol. 5, p. 689). When challenged to justify this inconsistent stance, he answered that an invisible change of substance is possible, because "God can do what to us seems to be most unreasonable" (Ibid., p. 718). It should not surprise us that teachers of that day often displayed a readiness to accept church authority over Scripture and reason, since the probing eyes and ears of the Inquisition were everywhere, enforcing the false traditions of Catholicism with fire and sword.

With superstition firmly in the saddle, and using sharp spurs, Romanism went to extreme in the practice of the eucharist. As early as the 5th century, mystical treatment of the fruit of the vine had prompted some priests to withhold the cup from the laity. This was denounced by the Roman bishop, Gelasius I (492-496 AD). However, by the 13th Century, when mysticism reigned triumphant, it became the rule to withhold the cup, "due to the fear of profanation by spilling the consecrated blood of Christ" (Ibid., p. 724.) Councils and Popes, each claiming to be infallible, contradicted each other, but they eventually denied to the people the right to partake of its reputed "mystical" benefits.

When the reformers, Wyclif and Huss, made their appearance in the 14th Century, the sentiment among their followers was that the cup should be shared by the laity. Huss agreed, and complied in Bohemia, though this brought him under indictment by the hierarchy. Even after the trial and burning of Huss, the Bohemian church continued in the practice, until their "heresy" was violently crushed by Catholic "crusaders." Thus war settled the issue in the Roman Church, and today, in order to maintain the superstitious tradition of transubstantiation, strict rules are enforced among Catholics. The "host" (bread) must not be chewed when placed in the mouth by the priest, and the "wine" is cautiously offered only to communicants who would like to receive it. Other options are receiving the "host" alone, or dipped in the wine. These rules allegedly keep Catholics from "desecrating" the flesh and blood of Jesus.

In the 16th Century Reformation, Luther and Zwingli rejected transubstantiation, but found themselves holding slightly different views. In a search for unity among the leaders of the Reformation, they met and debated their differences at Marburg (1529 AD). Luther contended for the "mystical" view of "Consubstantiation," the "presence" of the flesh and
blood "with" the bread and wine. Zwingli repeatedly pointed to John 6:63 to show that the "eating of flesh and drinking of blood" in the context were to be understood spiritually, not literally, and that the Supper was therefore only a spiritual act, a commemoration of the death of Christ. As we have shown, the Scriptures support this "spiritual" interpretation of Zwingli, when interpreted logically, objectively, and as literally as the language of the text permits.

The cup was restored to the laity among the Protestants, when they escaped from Romish tyranny. Many earnest students returned to the Scripture and discerned the lesson in the words of the Lord, when He said He would "not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until" He would "drink it new" with the disciples in the "kingdom." This showed that at the last supper, the cup was "fruit of the vine," not actual blood, and that when the Lord's Supper would be eaten in the kingdom, the cup would still be "fruit of the vine," No change in "substance" was intended or destined to occur.

The Anabaptists of the 16th Century led the way in simplifying the observance of the Supper even more. Schaff tells us,

"The Lord's Supper was administered by the Baptists in the simplest manner, after a plain supper (in imitation of the original institution and the Agape), by a recital of the words of the institution, and the distribution of bread and wine. They reduced it to a mere commemoration." (History, Vol. 8, p. 79.)

The so-called "Agape" was a traditional communal supper, based on a literal interpretation of Jude 11, and drawing inferences from other verses. But Anabaptists were also influenced in their conclusions by the speculative writings of the Ante-Nicene "fathers." The Anabaptists had come far in restoring the New Testament practice, but still needed to learn two things: that the Apostles taught the early Christians to eat "at home," if they were "hungry" (Acts 2:46, 1 Corinthians 11:22, 34), and that the post-apostolic "fathers" often taught error.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

Another Catholic concept that was rejected by the 16th Century Reformers was that the "Eucharist" was a "sacrifice." Schaff says that early in the history of Christianity, men
began to inject a sacrificial element into the service:

"The consecrated elements were regarded...as representing at once the natural and the spiritual gifts of God, which culminated in the self-sacrifice of Christ on the cross...Upon this followed the idea of the self-sacrifice of the worshipper himself, the sacrifice of renewed self-consecration to Christ in return for his sacrifice on the cross, and also the sacrifice of charity to the poor. Down to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the eucharistic elements were presented as a thank-offering by the members of the congregation themselves, and the remnants went to the clergy and the poor....In later times the priest alone offered the sacrifice." (History, Vol. 2, pp. 245-246.)

He says, further,

"This subjective offering of the whole congregation on the ground of the objective atoning sacrifice of Christ is the real centre of the ancient Christian worship, and particularly of the communion. It thus differed both from the later Catholic mass, which has changed the thank-offering into a sin-offering, the congregational offering into a priest offering; and from the common Protestant cultus, which, in opposition to the Roman mass, has almost entirely banished the idea of sacrifice from the celebration of the Lord's Supper..." (Ibid., p. 246)

He could have said, also, that this "Ante-Nicene" version of the Lord's Supper differed greatly from the Apostolic teaching; a simple service of remembrance and fellowship with Christ and his body, the church (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

It is evident from Scripture that Christ certainly never intended to be "sacrificed" on an altar on any regular basis. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus, "through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12). His sacrifice was made "one time for all time," differing from those of the Old Testament. If this difference had not been established, the Hebrew writer says, "then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26). This single sacrifice is to be remembered each Lord's Day (Acts 20:7), in the assemblies
of the church (1 Corinthians 11:33).

The development of the "Sacrifice of the Mass," Schaff says, was tied to other evolving apostate elements in the early church. There was a persistent tendency to look back into the Old Testament at the precedents found there. The Gentiles also carried their pagan customs into the church. Both systems had literal altars, sacrifices and priests. So, Schaff says that in early Christianity "The ideas of priesthood, sacrifice, and altar, are intimately connected, and a Judaizing or paganizing conception of one must extend to all" (Ibid., p. 247).

The 16th Century Reformers rejected the regular sacrificial element in the Roman Eucharist. In an attempt to purge themselves of the daily eucharistic observance of Romanism, the Lord's Supper was held irregularly among most Protestant churches, or on specified traditional feast days. By the last part of the 18th Century, those associated with the Haldane brothers of Scotland began to teach the people in their independent churches to commune every Lord's Day (Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, p. 179). They saw that the Scriptural examples of taking it the "first day of the week" (Acts 20:7), or on the day of "assembly" (1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33), suggested no formula for selecting or excluding any certain "first day." Their view of Scripture, though imperfect, still permitted very little innovative freedom. Therefore, communion on every first day was considered the only practice acceptable in the sight of God, and the "safe course."

Thomas and Alexander Campbell, who were strongly impressed by the scriptural arguments of the Haldanes and other independents, adopted many of them in their own battle for a return to "Ancient Order." The consequence of this return is that the Lord's Supper is again observed as the simple and beautiful commemoration of the death of Christ, unencumbered with mystical, allegorical, and sensual traditions. Christians should be wary of any modern revival of similar interpretations and descriptions of the supper, opposing them as destructive of the "traditions of the Apostles."

WORSHIP--Instruments of Music

The early church worshipped in a simple manner. It is very strange that its music was not influenced by Judaism, since nearly every other aspect of the formation of the apostate church was influenced in various ways and measures by Jewish tradition and Mosaical
legal concepts. The custom of Judaism since the reign of King David (about 1000 BC) had been to use all sorts of instruments of music in the worship, because they were authorized by God through the prophets (see 2 Chronicles 29:25-28). Yet, for hundreds of years after the close of the Apostolic Era, no reference to instrumental music is found in the contemporary histories and the writings of the early "church fathers."

To account for the lack of their use in the early church, we must remember that the worship of Christianity was very different from that of Judaism. Where the Jews congregated for their ritual worship in great convocations before the Temple in Jerusalem, the Christians were scattered in smaller conclaves (local churches) throughout the whole world (compare John 4:19-21). Their worship was not in pomp and ceremony, but in quiet assemblies of the faithful, where joint prayer, communion, and singing were the rule. They followed the teaching of the Apostles regarding musical worship (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16), using their own hearts as the divinely prescribed instruments of music.

Roman Catholicism began to use musical instruments about 658 AD, under the influence of Pope Vitalian I (657-672). However, Schaff says that the Eastern and Western churches had differing views:

"The attitude of the churches toward the organ varies....The Greek church disapproves the use of organs. The Latin church introduced it pretty generally, but not without the protest of eminent men, so that even in the Council of Trent [16th Century] a motion was made, though not carried, to prohibit the organ at least in the mass. The Lutheran church retained, the Calvinistic churches rejected it, especially in Switzerland and Scotland; but in recent times the opposition has largely ceased." (History, Vol. 4, p. 439.)

The introduction of instrumental music into the Latin church became one reason for the final breach between it and the Greek church in 1054 AD. (The tradition of A Cappella music persists today in some branches of the Greek Orthodox Church, especially in Russia.) Yet, even after this major schism, some Roman Catholic scholars, like Thomas Aquinas (1225-74 AD) opposed its use. He is reported to have said, "Our church does not use musical instruments...that she may not seem to Judaize." (Bingham, Antiquities of the Christian Church, Vol. 3, p. 137. Quoted by M. C. Kurfees in his book on Instrumental
Music, p. 176.) On the same basis, Thomas Aquinas should have opposed Roman sacerdotalism and all its trappings, but he was a hostage to the inquisition, just as much as others in his day, and dared to oppose the authority of the Roman Church only in those things which it treated as of little consequence.

We have already noted the differing attitudes of Luther and Zwingli in chapter five. Luther was willing to retain certain practices of Romanism because he treated them as matters of indifference, but Zwingli's reformation went deeper, and was therefore more "radical." He was unwilling to retain anything that did not find its precedent in Scripture, so he caused the removal of all vestiges of Roman Catholic style worship, including instruments of music from the reformed churches of Switzerland. Schaff says,

"The churches of the city were purged of pictures, relics, crucifixes, altars, candles, and all ornaments, the frescoes effaced, and the walls white-washed, so that nothing remained but the bare building to be filled by a worshiping congregation. The pictures were broken and burnt, some given to those who had claim, a few preserved as antiquities. The bones of the saints were buried. Even the organs were removed, and the Latin singing of the choir abolished, but fortunately afterwards replaced by congregational singing of psalms and hymns in the vernacular." (History, Vol. 8, p. 58)

Free from the tyranny of the Inquisition, Protestants struggled against many other entrenched traditions of Rome, succeeding in some, and failing in others. Several reformers (such as Beza, Wesley, etc.) followed Zwingli in speaking against instrumental music as a discardable trapping of Rome, but their voices were not respected enough, nor was there sufficient respect for God's Word, to keep it from gradually returning to use in all the Protestant churches.

The 19th Century "Restorationists," however, driven by the concept that no revelation from God can be treated indifferently, and loyal to the biblical principle of treating God's silence as prohibitive, studied the issue again, returned to apostolic authority, and practiced only vocal music until the lively spirit of restoration gave way to the destructive spirit of digression. As the more "visible" secondary cause of the major division over the Missionary Societies in the middle of the 19th Century, instruments of music were carried into the
meeting houses of churches of Christ, beginning in Kentucky about 1860. A decade before this, however, there was a flurry of articles on the subject in journals published by the brethren. When Alexander Campbell declared that instruments of music in worship were as out of place as "a cowbell in a concert," the controversy quieted down for a while. By the 1870's, however, the new apostasy was in progress, and those churches which accepted the Missionary Society as a "human addition to divine work" also accepted the organ as a "human addition to divine worship" (see West, Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 2, p. 80).

The more conservative brethren, falling back again on the principle of rejecting anything that cannot be proved by Scripture, as Zwingli had done, withdrew from the "organ brethren," later identified as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

This historic controversy is not quieted, yet. The more liberal members of churches of Christ today often express the opinion that the use of instruments of music in the worship should be consigned to the realm of "expediency" rather than of "faith." However, any such decision destroys the authoritative fabric of Scripture, allowing loopholes through which many other innovations can enter the church. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is the ultimate example of this process. Its unchecked dash toward liberalism has caused it to become indistinguishable from other denominations that have little or no concern about divine approval of their organization, work, and worship.

This controversy serves an end far beyond determining the content of worship in the Lord's church. It has to do with the proper interpretation of the word of God. For this reason, it needs to be discussed frequently, so that the principles of "rightly dividing the word" can be kept before the hearers, especially God's people
"For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you."

--1 Corinthians 11:18-19

Before the 16th Century Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church, as we have seen, brutally enforced its "catholicity," persecuting and waging war against those who would not be persuaded to be loyal to it. The alliance of church and state had a tendency to elevate political considerations above the spiritual, and secular politics surely influenced the Roman Church's decision to maintain its monopoly against the Protestant Reformation by the use of savage and unscriptural devices. It is difficult to learn from historians if any of the motivation to maintain the unity of the church was based on the Scripture (perhaps in respect to Ephesians 4:1-6), but it is certain that Rome had a vested interest in retaining the power of the church in world affairs.

Political necessity was thrust upon the Protestants, also, once they had gained independence from Rome. Even though the 16th Century Reformation finally broke the monopoly of the Roman church, it did not succeed in maintaining its separation without war. Religious passions had been inflamed on both sides. Protestants knew what they faced, in view of former Catholic examples of violent persecution. Catholics generally welcomed the call to join a "Crusade" against heretics, since it gave them opportunity for
obtaining a coveted Papal Indulgence, as well as an opportunity to indulge their baser vices. In what they considered to be a justified response, the Protestants exchanged the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17) for the sword of steel.

The Peasants in Germany and elsewhere had long been restless under the feudal system endorsed by Catholicism, and, seeing an opportunity to ally their social cause with the cause of Christ, rebelled against the continuance of their miserable existence in an attempt to overthrow Catholic landlords and princes in the "Peasant's War." Though he was of peasant stock himself, and sympathetic to their plight, Luther condemned their excesses, reminding them of their obligation of civil obedience (Romans 13:1). His opposition to their use of force caused him to lose prestige among them, and his strident call for their suppression gratified both Protestant and Catholic princes, neither of which cherished the prospect of having a restless peasantry in their domains. In the war, over 100,000 lives were lost and much valuable property was destroyed. Through the years that followed this episode, Protestants and Catholics often fought each other. Skirmishes, massacres and atrocities multiplied, culminating in the "Thirty Years War (1618-1648)." Many wars in the centuries to follow would carry these same religious overtones. (Strife between Protestants and Catholics continues today in North Ireland.)

In England, religious strife did not degenerate into war in the early period of the Reformation, but persecution was often practiced. The struggle for supremacy depended on who was on the throne. At the time of the Lutheran convulsion in Germany, Henry VIII (1509-1547) was on the throne. He was a Catholic, married to a Catholic princess, Catherine of Aragon (Spain), but she bore him no male heir (only a daughter, Mary). For this reason he desired to divorce Catherine, but his appeal to the Pope was denied. Politics influenced this Papal decision, but it offered a benefit to the reform-minded clergy in England. To get what he wanted, Henry broke with Rome and established the Church of England. He was threatened with "Holy War," but the English church was protected from the vengeance of Rome by its formidable moat, the English channel.

The reform movement in Germany had gained many sympathizers among the clergymen in England, and they saw a chance to break with Rome by accepting Henry as the "head of the church." After Henry's death, the boy king, Edward VI (1547-53),
maintained the Protestant cause. Many Catholics were persecuted during his short reign, but Edward was a sickly boy, and died childless, making way for his half-sister to claim the throne. Mary the first (1553-58), the daughter of Henry's abandoned Catholic wife, was determined to re-establish the Roman Church as the state religion. She earned the name "Bloody Mary" for her many executions of Protestants during her campaign of persecution. Despite her political efforts to establish a Catholic succession on the English throne, she died childless, providing powerful Protestants the opportunity to place Elizabeth the first (1558-1603), another daughter of Henry, in power. She restored Protestantism and relative peace to England, guaranteeing its continuity for a while by naming King James of Scotland, a Protestant, as her successor (he was the promoter of the King James Version of the Bible). A study of this period of English history provides the careful student with a rich dramatic tapestry of intrigues and heroism, cynicism and sincerity, and genuine progress in the struggle for religious reformation and freedom.

THE WAR OF WORDS

The war of words between the religious combatants was also hard-fought. The Pope issued a "Bull (bulletin) of Condemnation" against Luther in 1520, after it became clear to Rome that it was dealing with a potent revolution. Luther promptly burned the document, publicly, in a dramatic gesture of contempt. He justified his act in a treatise with the copious title, "Why the Books of the Pope and His Disciples were Burned by Dr. Martin Luther."

The next year, Luther was given a chance to recant his views before the famous Diet of Worms, but the literary mold of Protestantism was already cast. Luther refused to take back what he had written concerning the evils of the Papacy and the false doctrines of the Roman Church. He would have been forced to stand trial for his views, if the Pope's minions had been able to arrest him, but he had come to Worms with "safe conducts" from Emperor Charles the fifth, and from the ruler of Saxony, the province where Luther lived. This latter Prince further guaranteed his safety on his return by staging a "friendly" kidnaping, followed by protective seclusion in Wartburg Castle.

Luther's revolt was powerful because of his words, and his words were plentiful. At the Diet, he confessed to having written at least twenty five books, or pamphlets. Many of these were simply devotional in character, but there was no denial from Luther that some
of the writings offended the See of Rome. He might apologize for any unseemly language in the books, but he would not repudiate the rest. He challenged his inquisitors to show him any part of his writings which did not agree with Scripture.

Rome, by resorting to its medieval methods of dealing with heresy, miscalculated the spirit of the age in which these events were happening, and they greatly underestimated the polemic genius of Luther. Schaff says of him,

"He was by far the most original, fertile, and effective controversialist and pamphleteer of his age. He commanded the resources of genius, learning, courage, eloquence, wit, humor, irony, and ridicule, and had...an astounding power of work." (Schaff, History, Vol. 7, pp. 321-322.)

Luther's style and argumentation encouraged many imitators. The Roman Church prepared itself for battle against heretics with swords and spears, but the pens of Luther and his contemporaries proved to be just as pointed. Rough and ready verbal combat was needed for survival, and Luther was equal to the task. Schaff says,

"He felt himself called to the rough work...He thoroughly understood the wants and tastes of his countrymen who preferred force to elegance, and the club to the dagger (Ibid.)."

The words of the reformers enjoyed ready distribution from the printing houses of Europe, and, like some of the effective "underground" presses of our own age, the Reformation gained strength from the bold pamphlets that issued from willing and able printers.

"Among the most potent causes which...helped the triumph of Protestantism, was the teeming ephemeral literature which appeared between 1521 and 1524, and did the work of the periodical newspaper press of our days, in seasons of public excitement. In spite of prohibition of unauthorized printing by the edict of Worms, Germany was inundated by a flood of books, pamphlets, and leaflets in favor of true and false freedom. They created a public opinion which prevented the execution of the law." (Ibid.)

"The newness and freshness of this fugitive popular literature called out by the Reformation, and especially by the edict of Worms, made it all the
more effective. The people were hungry for intellectual and spiritual food, and the appetite grew with the supply." (Ibid., p. 325.)

The Roman Church tried energetically to stifle the flow of tracts and pamphlets which came from a growing number of printing presses, but it failed. The same potent force which had gained the victory for Protestantism, however, became the means for its eventual "breakup" into sects and denominations.

Once the gates of dissent had been opened, and a convenient means of "word processing" had emerged, courageous ultra-reformers, unsatisfied with the slow progress of the Reformation, demanded further changes based on their continual research in the Scriptures, and by bold publication of their views. In the Reformation, emphasis had changed from Church authority to Bible authority and the satisfaction of individual conscience. Those who allowed their consciences to be educated by the word of God contributed to these reforms in a positive way. Unfortunately, some men possessed uneducated consciences, and excesses of "radicalism" were the result. The chief Reformers, such as Luther and Zwingli, treated those who wanted to run beyond them as radicals rather than reformers. They perceived in this movement a threat to the stability of the Reformation rather than progress in restoring the Apostolic order. Schaff tells us that when Luther returned home from his Wartburg confinement,

"He now raised his protest against the abuse of liberty in his own camp. A sifting process was necessary. Division and confusion broke out among his friends and followers. Many of them exceeded all bounds of wisdom and moderation; while others, frightened by the excesses, returned to the fold of the mother church." (Schaff, History, vol. 7, p. 329.)

"While Luther was confined on the Wartburg, his followers were like children out of school, like soldiers without a captain. Some of them thought that he had stopped half way, and that they must complete what he had begun. They took the work of destruction and reconstruction into their own inexperienced and unskillful hands. Order gave way to confusion, and the Reformation was threatened with disastrous failure." (Ibid., p. 376).

It is true that the fresh atmosphere of freedom of thought led some to unwarranted
excesses in those times. On the other hand, the freedom to think for oneself, and to be free from the tyranny and discipline of Rome, caused many good men to search for deeper, broader, and more cogent truths. The presumed failures of one reformation would therefore generate desire for another, with the result that another sect would come into being. In spite of valiant attempts to conserve the unity of the Reformed Church, the precedent had been established that one can follow his conscience out of one existing body into another, and courageous men would let no one deny them their newfound freedom, in spite of the charge of being "radicals."

HOLDOVER HINDRANCES

Some tragic holdovers from Catholicism plagued the process of reformation for centuries, however. Augustinian theology (Original sin, Predestination, etc.) was so deeply entrenched that it was still considered applicable to any doctrine of salvation, and was accepted by most Protestants. Though many reforms of government and polity were developed in the next few generations of reformers, Augustinian concepts still colored the gospel. The 16th Century Reformers were as conscious of the need for discipline as their Romanist forebears, but were motivated less by politics than by Scripture, which undeniably calls for the unity of all believers in "one body." Unfortunately, they attempted to use the "state church" principle and other devices found in Catholicism to establish a Protestant version of "catholicity," and retained a great measure of the Roman Church's intolerant spirit, as well. This is amply documented in many examples of religious persecution by Protestantism against its dissidents. These policies greatly hindered the progress of later reformations, making their leaders realize that they must work harder to decentralize church authority in accordance with the Scripture, a movement that finally culminated in pure congregationalism and the drive for separation of church and state. The concept of maintaining "Catholicity" by tying church to state, and exercising discipline through a civil magistracy, eventually suffered severe blows from these fresh scriptural views.

At first, Roman-style discipline and intolerance were not applied by Luther against the "radical" elements which rose during his absence in Wartburg Castle. The force of his personality and the power of his preaching were sufficient to call many back to the
semi-Catholicism of his movement. However, Carlstadt, one of Luther's earliest co-reformers, was full of zeal to end all the traditional forms of Rome. Schaff says,

"Carlstadt preached and wrote, during Luther's absence, against celibacy, monastic vows, and the mass. At Christmas, 1521, he omitted in the service the most objectionable parts of the canon (laws) of the mass, and the elevation of the host, and distributed both wine and bread to a large congregation. He announced at the same time that he would lay aside the priestly dress and other ceremonies...He also denounced pictures and images as dumb idols, which were plainly forbidden in the second commandment, and should be burnt rather than tolerated in the house of God."

(Schaff, History, Vol. 7, p. 379.)

Carlstadt's views anticipated the sober reforms to be found in the future of Protestantism, and would have won honored fame from those who would later benefit from them, if he had been content to go only this far. His work was fanaticized by the arrival in Wittenberg of two self-proclaimed "prophets" from Zwickau, who "boasted of visions, dreams, and direct communications with God and the Angel Gabriel" (Ibid., p. 380-381). This new radical influence carried Carlstadt away, persuading him that he was guided in his work in some mystical fashion, and "he lost himself in the clouds of a confused mysticism, and spiritualism, and appealed, like the Zwickau Prophets, to immediate inspirations" (Ibid., p. 380).

The returning Luther, in order to oppose this radicalism, became an example of "conservatism" (that is, the retention of all Roman forms and concepts which he thought to be in the realm of "things indifferent"). For a while, he even returned to the monastery, and kept his priestly vestments and lifestyle. He was sympathetic to Carlstadt's views on the Mass, but rebuked his "iconoclasm," and "spiritualism." Schaff says,

"As to the pretended revelations of the new prophets, he despised them, and maintained that an inspired prophet must either be ordinarily called by church authority, or prove his divine commission by miracles" (Ibid., p. 382).

Luther contended that radicalism created a tyranny which would force the conscience to rise in full rebellion against what he thought were inoffensive traditional forms, just as
the tyranny of Roman traditions forced the conscience in the opposite direction. He stood for the "middle ground" between two "extremes," declaring himself on the one hand against tyranny, but also against too much freedom. His moderate treatment of the radicals at this time was somewhat out of character. Ordinarily, Luther attacked his opponents with invective and ridicule. Historians show that this was the only period of his life where he really practiced a moderate spirit, but it was successful in carrying the day against the "radicals." Carlstadt submitted to the force of Luther's personality, "silently, but sullenly," Schaff says, but secretly nursed his "mystical speculations and imaginary inspirations" (Ibid., pp. 390-391).

Though Luther successfully stifled this movement, aided by public reaction to its inconsistent and unprovable "revelations," the result was tragic, since it limited the scope of his reformation effort. He was caught in the trap of refusing to accept reforms clearly based on Scripture, simply because they were being promoted by men who claimed the gift of prophecy. In later times, other reformers would appear in more sober dress who would push the reformation concept to larger horizons than those dreamed of by Luther and his disciples, but for many years the German Reformation remained relatively stagnant.

The Swiss reformation, under Zwingli, also had its problems with those who wanted to go beyond its concepts. From the beginning, Zwingli, as we have already noted, had a desire to return all the way to the Apostles' doctrine and practice. It is said of Luther that while the Roman church appealed to the "Fathers" (early theologians), he appealed to the "Grandfathers" (the Apostles). This is a better description of Zwingli and the Swiss Reformers, because they went further in the spirit of "restoration" than Luther. Most of the program of Carlstadt was borrowed from Zwingli, except for the claim of personal inspiration. The Swiss treated nothing as a "matter of indifference." All images had been removed from their churches, and instruments of music were rejected in the worship.

But Zwingli, having to face problems similar to those in Germany, also retreated to a more austere and autocratic stance. He had points of reference beyond which even he would not go, and there were those of his adherents who craved further progress toward apostolic Christianity. Balthasar Hubmaier, who first assisted Zwingli, later dissented from
him on the matter of infant baptism. All of the leading reformers still accepted the Catholic view on this, though they might argue mildly for immersion rather than pouring. Hubmaier said, in opposition, that an infant could not believe, and could not pledge his faith to God. This dispute resulted in driving him from Zurich, and he met an unfortunate end, being burned to death for alleged complicity in the "Peasant's War."

Hubmaier's program survived, however, in the sect called the Anabaptists (re-baptizers). They carried the reformation concept far beyond Zwingli, and aroused his opposition. Schaff writes, more in sympathy with Zwingli than with the Anabaptists,

'The Swiss Reformation, like the German, was disturbed and checked by the radical excesses. It was placed between the two fires of Romanism and Ultra-Protestantism. It was attacked in the front and the rear, from without and within,—by the Romanists on the ground of tradition, by the Radicals on the ground of the Bible. In some respects the danger from the latter was greater. Liberty has more to fear from the abuses of its friends than from the opposition of its foes. The Reformation would have failed if it had identified itself with the revolution." (Schaff, History, Vol. 8, p. 71.)

Schaff's inordinate veneration of the chief reformers of the 16th Century blinds him to the lost opportunity caused by their opposition to the so-called "radicals." The radicals, for all their faults, had a hunger for Bible truth. To their credit, they saw the need to return to the ancient order in everything. They restored immersion as the scriptural form of baptism; they rejected the concept of clergy vs. laity; they rejected infant baptism; they restored much of the primitive order in worship and government. Contrary to Schaff's opinion, these reforms were not a threat to the success of the Reformation. Rather, they could have carried it to greater success! Left alone, without persecution, the "radicals" might have rediscovered such great truths as the complete abrogation of the Law of Moses, salvation by freewill acceptance and belief of the Gospel, and other "quantum leaps" over the trash of Romanism all the way back to the Apostles of Christ. Being driven underground, however, and harried from place to place by both rabid Catholics and cautious Protestant Reformers, their influence waned and almost disappeared for a season.

However, Schaff reveals some things about the Anabaptists that evoke our sympathy,
in spite of his bias in favor of the concept of limited reformation, and toward its "men of repute." He says,

"The Reformers aimed to reform the old Church by the Bible; The Radicals attempted to build a new Church from the Bible. The former maintained the historic continuity; the latter went directly to the apostolic age, and ignored the intervening centuries as an apostasy. The Reformers founded a popular state-church, including all citizens with their families; the Anabaptists organized on the voluntary principle select congregations of baptized believers, separated from the world and from the State. Nothing is more characteristic of radicalism and sectarianism than an utter want of historical sense and respect for the past. In its extreme form it rejects even the Bible as an external authority, and relies on inward inspiration. This was the case with the Zwickau Prophets who threatened to break up Luther's work at Wittenberg." (Ibid.)

Like Schaff, many confess no empathy with those who claim inner inspiration, and who thereby tend to forsake the sufficient revelation of God, but we see no justice in his charge that "radicals" lack a "historical sense" that robs them of the approbation of the world at large. (Here is a possible instance where his profession as a historian colors his objectivity.) Rather, those who want to be "separate from the world and from the State" also want to be separate from any destructive precedents of post-apostolic history! History can influence men either positively, or negatively. Zwingli and Luther let their sense of "historic continuity" limit their reformation. "Restorationists" have a different sense of history. They see only the long destructive litany of errors which proceeded from the Great Apostasy, and want to be free from every one. They ask, "Can the history of an Apostasy contribute any positive thing to church regeneration and the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity?" The answer, of course, is "No," unless you consider the fact that negative reaction to historical errors often produces a desire to build more positively on the undefiled truth of the New Testament. In the Preface to the "revised" edition of The Christian Baptist, Alexander Campbell's first periodical journal (1823-1830), D. S. Burnet wrote that the 19th Century reformation, of which he was an advocate...
"...differs from others in this important respect; it contemplates not the change of any one sect or system, nor the amalgamation of any number or all of them; but it claims as a right, and labors to attain as its object, the reformation of society by a restoration of primitive Christianity, I. e. Christianity itself, in its gospel, institutions and laws. A creed reformed is a dividing barrier patched, and a sect remodeled is but a daughter of the mother of abominations in a new dress. This reformation aims at the demolition of the creed and the sect, genera and species, reformed and unreformed, as purity is incompatible with corruption." (Christian Baptist, one-volume reprint revised c.1835, College Press, 1983, p. iii.)

But Burnet's view of "restoration," which was designed to "count as refuse" all the historical heritage of apostasy, was still three hundred years in the future beyond Luther and Zwingli. Even so, the tantalizing appeal of speculating on "what might have been," if the "radical" search for apostolic truth in the 16th Century had been left unopposed to succeed in its day, leaves many of us breathless with a sigh of regret.

In spite of severe opposition and persecution, the Anabaptists left a heritage which others later followed. They...

"...made use of the right of protest against the Reformation, which the Reformers so effectually exercised against popery. They raised a protest against Protestantism. They charged the Reformers with inconsistency and semi-popery; yea, with the worst kind of popery. They denounced the state-church as worldly and corrupt, and its ministers as mercenaries. They were charged in turn with pharisaical pride, with revolutionary and socialistic tendencies. They were cruelly persecuted by imprisonment, exile, torture, fire and sword, and almost totally suppressed in Protestant as well as in Roman Catholic countries. The age was not ripe for unlimited religious liberty and congregational self-government. The Anabaptists perished bravely as martyrs of conscience." (Schaff, history, Vol. 8, p. 72.)

These "Radicals" were made to suffer the same reputation as Pelagius, who clashed with the mighty Augustine in the 4th Century, and was thereafter branded as a heretic
(Both Protestant and Catholic commentators, who embrace the principle of Evangelicalism, universally refer to his freewill ideas as "The Pelagian Heresy."). Because we are much further down the "time-line" of reformations, we find more affinity with the teaching of the Anabaptists, Hussites, Waldenses, and Pelagians than with Lutherans and Calvinists, even though they were all branded as heretics in their time, and we only find traces of their heirs and survivors today in the shadows of religious history. Later reformations revived and clarified much of what they espoused, but in the 16th and 17th Centuries, their names were slandered, and their bodies burned by both Catholics and Protestants. They ("of whom the world was not worthy," perhaps) wanted too much, too soon.

THE RISE OF CALVINISM

Luther and Zwingli had John Calvin (1509-1564) to build on their foundation, and his remarkable persuasive genius has exerted more permanent influence on Evangelical Protestantism than either of them. What they conceived in embryo he hatched and nourished into a monumental system that retained all of their errors, yet making them sound feasible through his bold polemic skill. He developed his systematic predestinarian views to such a degree that, today, many denominations borrow from his teaching, in whole or in part, to the detriment of millions of souls.

Formidable opposition to pure Calvinism eventually came from Jacob Arminius, who converted from the classic predestinarian theories of Calvin to a concept of "free will." In a later chapter, we will discuss the views of Arminius more thoroughly.

In spite of the dominance of Calvinism in the Reformed Church, new branches sprouted from the root of the 16th Century Reformation over the next three centuries. Huguenots in France, Arminians in the Low Countries, Separatists and Congregationalists and Quakers and Methodists in England, sprang up. Each sect had its own tragic and inspiring story. Most of their trials and triumphs were limited, however, to 16th Century issues. As the number of sects grew, in their wake came the problem of "fellowship." As we have seen, intolerance in the Protestant camp was notoriously abusive. Yet, there were some voices of moderation. The concept gained favor that the Universal Church was made up of all the "elect," no matter what denomination they were in. This concept was offered in the hope of ending violent strife among Protestants, and succeeded so well that today the de-
nominations extend broad fellowship, and often join others in common work, in spite of their many doctrinal differences.

As reformations multiplied toward the time of the 19th Century "Restoration Movement," men began to see that denominational diversity, posing collectively as the true church of Christ, was a mockery of Christ's original intent. A more complete reformation needed to occur, one as daring and zealous and thorough as that of the great King of Judah, Hezekiah, who destroyed even the brazen serpent made by Moses when he saw that men had made a sacred relic of it, offering incense to it long after its original purpose was fulfilled (Numbers 21:8-9, 2 Kings 18:1-6).

THE RESTORATION SPIRIT

In Scotland, in the late 18th Century, events were happening that would effect the proponents of the Restoration Movement in America. Doubts about Calvin's concept of election led to internal strife in the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). Robert and Alexander Haldane, feeling that the commands in the Scripture to "preach the Gospel" implied a freewill response, organized a "Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home." Harassed by criticism from the established clergy, the Haldane brothers formed their first independent church in 1799. They were successful in winning many followers, but they were treated as heretics by the Calvinists, who steadfastly held to the concept of selective predestination by the intruding grace of God as the only means of salvation.

Those who formed the Free Church in Scotland, another sectarian movement contemporary with that of the Haldanes, likewise moved toward an emphasis on Free Will. These parallel movements shared the following convictions:

   Each church had a plurality of elders. Thus, organizational questions were settled by the New Testament.

b. The Lord's Supper every "first day."

c. No Infant Sprinkling.

d. "Optional" adult immersion. (Baptism was not considered essential to salvation, showing that they retained a measure of Calvinistic thought.)

Thomas and Alexander Campbell, before coming from Scotland to America, knew of
these popular reformatory movements, and agreed with most of their goals. They came to a land where, in the heady atmosphere of religious freedom, other reformations multiplied. Religious alienation of American Methodists from the Church of England had been generated by the American Revolution. The English "divine," John Wesley, came to America and organized the Methodist Episcopal Church, then returned to England and remained in the fellowship of the Anglican Church. Methodism in America, though separate from Anglican Church control, adopted its "episcopal" form of government. James O'Kelley opposed this system, unsuccessfully, and finally concluded that he must break with his intransigent opponents to start a new church. At first called "Republican Methodists," O'Kelley's followers later adopted the name "Christian" only, and were called the Christian Church (not to be confused with the modern "Christian Churches--Disciples of Christ"). They rejected all creeds, and stood for liberty of conscience, and private judgment (West, Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 1, p. 8-10).

About the same time, Calvinism's contradictions of Scripture convinced Elias Smith and Abner Jones, Baptists, to forsake those errors. They stood for no creed but the New Testament. They also preferred only the name "Christian" (Ibid., p. 17).

So, the atmosphere was well-charged for men like Thomas Campbell, his son Alexander, and Barton W. Stone, to "search for the ancient order," and attempt its "restoration." The history of this "movement" is well documented in many other works, chiefly those of Earl I. West, Robert Richardson, James DeForest Murch and others. So, in the final chapters of this book we will only present the role which these reformers played in electing to follow the Scripture regarding the historical issues there discussed.
"Whosoever goeth onward, and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son..." -- 2 John 9-10

Many New Testament practices were corrupted in the libertine atmosphere which led to Roman Catholicism. Many centuries would pass before there was any success on the part of reformers to return to the "ancient order." It would be in order here, before we speak of theoretical religious controversies, to trace the development of some controversies we might call "technical," for want of a better designation. These involve matters of interest to those who have a "19th Century Restoration Movement" heritage. They are important, because they effect the salvation of men, either directly or indirectly, and from them we can unfold some facts that will help us to understand the restless spirit of apostasy, and perhaps help us to appreciate the kindred spirits of reformation and restoration, also.

BAPTISM-- the "Form"

Biblical scholars of every age have almost universally confirmed the fact that New Testament water baptism was by immersion, based on the meaning of the word in the original language. The circumstantial evidence for immersion is abundant. Both the Lord and the Ethiopian eunuch were led into the water, and out of it, to be immersed (Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:36-39). John was immersing "in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there" (John 3:23). Immersion, of course, is the only definition of baptism that fits the repeated figure of a "burial" into the death of Christ, and a "resurrection" to a new life (Romans 6:3-4, Colossians 2:12).

In the "great apostasy," and even through much of the history of the Roman Catholic church, immersion was practiced almost exclusively. Exceptions from immersion were allowed only in cases where people were very sick, but these converts were urged to be
immersed when they returned to good health. Many would not comply, however, and were called *clinici*, in derision. They were often prohibited from being priests. However, where man has introduced an exception to a divine rule, a spirit of tolerance will automatically build on the exception until the original form and manner of the practice is thought to have no authority. We can see a beginning of this tolerance in a famous ancient document called the "Teaching Of The Apostles" (sometimes called the "Didache" in Bible reference books), which suggests that early interpreters of apostolic teaching were indifferent to the purity of baptismal form. It commanded,

"Baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost in living (running) water. But if thou hast not living water, baptize in other water; and if thou canst not in cold, then in warm. But if thou hast neither, pour water upon the head thrice, into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" (Schaff, Vol. 2, p. 247).

The "Didache," though mentioned and sometimes quoted by early writers from about 100 AD, was not found in manuscript form for modern examination until 1875. The Roman Catholic Church has a bad reputation of trying to undergird its claims as the "true" and "apostolic" church through fraudulent literature, dated spuriously from apostolic times (or from the period just following it). This leads many scholars to doubt the historical reliability of statements such as the one quoted above. We can learn from it, however, that in the last version before its discovery in 1875 immersion was still preferred over "pouring." Also, it is tempting to interpret the *triple* pouring advised in it as a means of compensating for the *single* immersion of New Testament example.

However, there is evidence to show that triple immersion was also practiced in early days. This practice paralleled early controversies over the number of "persons" in the Godhead. Several heresies concerning the divinity of Christ, and the status of the Holy Spirit came up in the Ante-Nicene Age. Arius, the founder of Arianism, accepted many of these errors, and from 318 AD taught that Jesus was a created God, inferior to God the Father, and that the Holy Spirit was inferior to both the Father and the Son. Therefore, he was charged with believing in more than one God (polytheism). The "Trinitarians," on the other hand, believed in a common *substance* and equality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
in a single "godhead." Growing emphasis on the Trinity, and the rejection of Arianism and kindred heresies certainly colored the thinking of many, so that when Jesus commanded the Apostles to baptize disciples "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19), many misapprehended its meaning, and presumed that he was commanding three immersions, one for each person in the Godhead! This presumption, unfortunately, was not in agreement with divine revelation, because New Testament references in both English and Greek indicate that baptism was a singular act (see the use of singular verbs in Acts 8:38, 1 Corinthians 1:14, etc., where only one person is baptized, but note that the word is in the plural when speaking of the immersion of several people, 1 Corinthians 1:15). Hebrews 6:2 mentions plural baptisms, but cannot be soundly construed to suggest the concept of triune water immersion, since the early Christians were familiar with Holy Spirit baptism, and other symbolic "baptisms."

It is strange, however, to observe how views change "with every wind of doctrine." The tradition of triple baptism, which was thought by many to be in honor of the Trinity, was made a "test of fellowship." The single immersion of the Eunomians, an early sect that did not hold to the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, was rejected by the "council of Constantinople in 381, in its seventh canon." (Schaff, History, Vol. 3, p. 485). However, in a later time, Gregory the Great, who was bishop of Rome from 590 to 604 AD "permitted also the single immersion, which was customary in Spain as a testimony against the Arian polytheism" (Ibid., p. 486). We see, then, that the custom of some early trinitarians was to immerse three times in honor of the equal partners in the deity, while other trinitarians in Spain followed the custom of single immersion to demonstrate a devotion to the unity of the Godhead. The fact that both were accepted, at the same time, suggests that triune immersion was truly a tradition, and not authorized by the language of the New Testament.

Later, the contentions between the Roman and Greek churches in the 11th Century raised charge and counter-charge regarding the propriety of triune or single immersions, but eventually the custom of multiple immersions lost ground to the growing practice of pouring.

The so-called "fathers" of the period before the Council of Nicea (325 AD) often referred to baptism as immersion, even when using a language other than Greek. Justin Martyr, in
Greek, calls it the "water bath," and Tertullian used the Latin phrase "ter mergitamur," which, because of its similarity to a number of English words suggesting immersion, is easy to interpret.

Effusionists (sprinklers and pourers) attempt to escape from this mass of evidence supporting immersion by pointing to the ancient crude pictures found on the walls of the catacombs under the city of Rome, some of which are said to date from the 2nd Century. These illuminations seem to depict the pouring of water from vessels on the subject. However, the catacomb illustrations all show the candidates standing in water, only sparsely dressed as for immersion. Schaff notes that static pictures can only represent a part of an action (History, Vol. 2, p. 249), while the literary descriptions of the same period consistently speak of immersion.

Immersion remained the accepted rule through many centuries (The cathedral at Pisa, Italy, the location of the "Leaning Tower," has a pool used for immersion in a separate building called the "Baptistry," built in the 12th Century.) Peter the Lombard (1100?-1160?), a 12th Century Schoolman, "declared without qualification for immersion as the proper form," and such famous 13th Century Catholic scholastics as Duns Scotus (1265?-1308?) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) thought it was "safer." Duns Scotus said, "Baptism ought to be given by dipping; so as that it is not lawful to give it otherwise, unless for some necessary or creditable and reasonable cause" (Rowe, John F., A History of Reformatory Movements, p. 455). Aquinas is on record as affirming that immersion was "the more general practice of his day" (Schaff, History, Vol. 5, pp. 711-712).

However, during the most disreputable period of the Papacy, when there were three competing "Papal Thrones," the Roman Catholic Council of Ravenna (1311 AD), of which there is very sparse mention in historical writings, and which was apparently attended by only a handful of bishops, pronounced pouring to be as acceptable in form as immersion in all cases. This council's questionable credentials caused many to consider its "canons" to be suspect, because "Synods, as late as the synod of Tarragona, 1391, spoke of the submersion of children in baptism" (Ibid.). Rowe also adds this point:

"That infant baptism and sprinkling are sinful and inexcusable innovations upon the ancient order of things, are facts that are not only made
manifest by the absolute silence of the Scriptures, but facts that are made doubly manifest by the apologies and excuses of the innovators, as well as by those who support the innovators" (History of Reformatory Movements, p. 456.)

The ultimate corruption of apostolic doctrine by the unlettered medieval Roman Church finally succeeded in causing men to abandon immersion for the easier, more convenient act of pouring (late 14th Century). Immersion probably did not totally disappear in Europe even in this period, because when certain early Protestant sects, such as the Anabaptists, returned to the practice of immersion, there seemed to be less objection to their preference of form than to the concept that men who received pouring as infants should be "re-baptized" (the meaning of the term "Anabaptist"). Anabaptists rejected "Infant Salvation," and taught "believer's baptism." or immersion. Therefore, Catholic opposition centered around this teaching, and not on the practice of immersion.

The pragmatic Reformation Movement attitude toward many troublesome issues was to ignore them in favor of contending against the "greater" errors. They said that some matters, such as the "form" of baptism, were "unimportant." This attitude caused most leaders to ignore this issue, so that they inadvertently fastened the prevailing practice of effusion on their followers by default. Luther preferred immersion, and sought to restore it (Schaff, Vol. 7, p. 607, and Vol. 2, p. 251), but did not think it was an issue worthy of great contention. John Calvin admitted the validity of immersion from the definition of the Greek word, but was also one of those who thought it was an "indifferent matter" (Institutes, Book IV, p. 524).

Sprinkling and Pouring were not accepted in isolated England until the middle of the 17th century (Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth I were all immersed, though probably as infants. Schaff, History, Vol. 8, p. 78, note 3.). The establishment of a reformed Church of England (which is called the Episcopal Church in America) set the stage for several changes in doctrine and liturgy, one of which was the form of baptism. In a council of Anglican Bishops, the Church of England voted to change its practice from immersion to effusion by a very narrow margin. Most of the "reformed" churches eventually accepted sprinkling or pouring, but as men began to put increasing emphasis on New Testament
authority (especially among the early Baptists in England and America), The spirit of continual reformation caused another return to the practice of immersion.

In spite of this historical "seesaw" shifting on the "form" of baptism, the desire to return to Apostolic practice in all things, supported by modern scholarship, caused the adherents of the 19th Century Campbell-Stone reformation to reject all forms but immersion, even though most of them were formerly effusionists. In consequence of this stand, Alexander Campbell was willing to debate effusionists on the subject (Campbell-Rice), and heartily endorsed the "Living Oracles," a translation of the New Testament by another man with the same surname, which used noun or verb forms of the word immersion in every place that the corresponding Greek word for baptism appeared in the King James Version.

Campbell's influence was great, but it did not supersede the authority of the New Testament in the minds of the men who heard and respected him. The force of his arguments persisted, and because they were Scriptural, the practice in modern churches of Christ is apostolic, not Campbellian, and they will not accept the traditional substitutions of men, even though they are said to have the same force as the revelation of God.

BAPTISM--the "Purpose"

From the beginning of the Christian Age there was little misapprehension of the purpose of baptism. It was for the salvation of the sinner. In the New Testament, baptism is connected with several "purposes," but all of them have the same general end of saving the sinner. They are...

(1) To have sins washed away. Acts 22:16
   (In the blood of Christ. Revelation 1:5)
(2) To get "into Christ." Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27
   ("In none other is there salvation," Acts 4:12)
(3) To get into the "one body" of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13
   (Christ is the "savior of the Body," Ephesians 5:23)
(4) To get into the "name of Christ." Matthew 28:19-20
   ("Neither is there any other name..wherein we must be saved," Acts 4:12)
(5) To be "saved." Mark 16:16, 1 Peter 3:21
(6) To gain the figurative death of the "old man, that the body of sin might be
done away," and to be a "new man.........in Christ Jesus." Romans 6:5-6, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Schaff tells us that in the "Ante-Nicene" age, baptism was "regarded...as the sacrament of the new birth or regeneration...the old man being buried, and the new man arising from the watery grave." He says that Justin Martyr (100?-165? AD) "calls baptism 'the water-bath for the forgiveness of sins and regeneration.'" The historian also says that Tertullian (160?-230? AD) "argued the necessity of baptism to salvation" from John 3:5 and Mark 16:16. (History, Vol. 2, p. 253.)

In spite of this teaching, which was certainly compatible with the plain teaching of the New Testament, Tertullian and others held a strange view regarding the forgiveness of sins committed after baptism. They supposed correctly that baptism was "to extend only to sins committed before receiving it," but had such a limited understanding of how men received forgiveness after conversion that they often recommended postponement of the act to those who doubted their ability to live above sin after baptism. Schaff says,

"Many, like Constantine the Great, put it off to the bed of sickness and of death. They preferred the risk of dying unbaptized to that of forfeiting forever the baptismal grace. Death-bed baptisms were then what death-bed repentances are now.

But then the question arose, how the forgiveness of sins committed after baptism could be obtained? This is the starting point of the Roman doctrine of the sacrament of penance. Tertullian and Cyprian were the first to suggest that satisfaction must be made for such sins by self-imposed penitential exercises and good works, such as prayers and almsgiving." (History, Vol. 2, p. 254)

Tertullian's view was based on "the impossibility of having mortal sins forgiven in the church after baptism" (Ibid., p. 261). He "held seven gross sins, which he denoted mortal sins, to be unpardonable after baptism" (Ibid., p. 254). We stand amazed at the ignorance of men who could be right on the purpose of baptism, but who could not understand that the same mercy that forgives the penitent sinner through a simple act like baptism extended also to the penitent praying sinner who had already been baptized. The baptized
believer who, like Simon the sorcerer, ignorantly sinned again, could have deliverance from a "heart not right with God" by sincerely repenting and praying that the thought of his heart be forgiven (Acts 8:9-24). Works of penance were no more valid for forgiveness after baptism than before baptism. This doctrine contradicted the promise of 1 John 1:9, which says of God, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There are scriptural warnings, of course, regarding the "worse" condition and the difficulty of repentance extending to those who are "overcome" by transgressions, or who "fell away" after enjoying many blessings of the kingdom, or who "sin wilfully" (2 Peter 2:20-21, Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-31), and it may have been these passages which influenced the early Ante-Nicene "fathers" to suppose that sins beyond baptism were so hard to forgive that they must be accompanied with works of supererogation (that is, deeds sufficiently righteous to compensate for, and overcome, the guilt of the sin). But God is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Any sin from which men turn away in repentance is forgivable, and there is no New Testament distinction between "mortal" and "venial" sin. The common sentence for all sins is spiritual death, making us realize that sin of any kind must be considered "exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:7-13). So, whether the sin is coveting or murder, the sentence is the same, the necessity for repentance is the same, and the mercy of God is extended to the same.

The prevailing notion in the early church of the necessity of baptism for salvation had an evil side-effect, because the early Christians did not limit baptism to qualified subjects. In very early times following the age of the Apostles, mention of the practice of infant baptism is found in a few of the writings of the "fathers." Justin Martyr speaks of "old men and women of sixty and seventy years of age (who) have been from childhood disciples of Christ" (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, p. 258).

The practice of infant baptism is not mentioned in the New Testament either by command or example. However, Schaff, because he himself felt the necessity of justifying infant baptism, attempts to establish it as an apostolic institution. He says,

"...It seems an almost certain fact, though by many disputed, that, with the baptism of converts, the optional baptism of the children of Christian
parents in established congregations, comes down from the apostolic age. Pious parents would naturally feel a desire to consecrate their offspring from the very beginning to the service of the Redeemer, and find a precedent in the ordinance of circumcision. This desire would also be strengthened in cases of sickness by the prevailing notion of the necessity of baptism for salvation." (Ibid. pp. 258-259)

This statement reveals how a man's sentiment combined with bias can seek to justify the alteration of God's Word, and also how Old Testament laws wielded a Judaizing influence on the early church, in spite of the Apostle Paul's dire warning of Galatians 5:2-4. Even Schaff admits his premise that the baptism of infants was of apostolic origin "is not capable of positive proof, but rests on strong probabilities" (Ibid.).

When the practice of infant baptism was established, early in post-apostolic church history, the concept of "baptismal regeneration" was born. Infants were incapable of meeting any of the Scriptural prerequisites of baptism (faith, confession, repentance), so they were presumed to be regenerated (born again) by baptism alone.

It is true that "Newness of life" (another way of saying "regeneration") comes from being "buried therefore with him through baptism," then being "raised with him through faith in the working of God..." (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12). But other things are involved in the regeneration process, such as "Obedience to the truth...(or) having been begotten again...of incorruptible seed...by the word of God..." (1 Peter 1:22-25). Being persuaded by the Word is therefore a factor in "regeneration." Also, Jesus taught the new birth "...of water and the Spirit..." (John 3:5). So, Baptism combines the "washing of regeneration" with the "renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Infant baptism, which had begun as a sentimental custom, eventually became a requirement during the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-567 AD). This evolution advanced alongside the emerging doctrine of "original sin." Augustine, in the 4th Century, took some confused speculations about human nature and the source of sin from the age preceding his own, and congealed them into a system which has persisted in varying forms ever since. He taught that the sin of Adam passed down through generations to all his offspring, causing them to be "born in sin."
Augustine’s struggle to master his own evil tendencies led him to conclude that all men were like himself (and he presumed also like the Apostle Paul), "sold under sin." Evil was inherent in mankind, unconquerable, and devastating. Man could not help himself, but had to wait for the enabling and "creative" grace of God. It was easy for Augustine to conclude that sin was inherited, since his personal experience helped him to perceive a measure of logic in the vague musings on this subject by his predecessors. It followed that if infants were born in sin, they needed to be immersed immediately for salvation. What had begun as a sentimental dedication of children by pious parents resulted in a theological system demanding infant baptism for their salvation from inherited sin.

The New Testament mentions no case of infant baptism, and provides no command for it, yet men firmly believe it. This "belief" cannot not rest on the "word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Infant depravity is the false foundation of infant salvation, but is refuted by Ezekiel 18:1-20, and Matthew 18:3. Yet, to establish a case for Infant Baptism, early promoters claimed to find examples in so-called "household baptisms," citing Acts 16:15 (Lydia’s), 16:33 (the Jailor’s), and 18:8 (Crispus’).

To find infants in these "households" they must presume much. Lydia’s case shows no conditions being met prior to baptism, except "hearing" Paul’s lesson (16:14). Yet, to find Infant Baptism, its proponents must-- 1. Presume she was a married woman; 2. Presume that she had children, if she was married; 3. Presume that some of her children were infants; and 4. Presume that her infant children were with her in Philippi, though her home was in Thyatira. In the cases of the Jailor, and Crispus, we see that the prerequisite of "believing" was required. Can infants "believe the gospel?" some have objected. The infant-baptizers answer, "They were saved on the faith of their parents," but there is no Bible precedent for such a transposing of faith. Martin Luther, who believed in Infant Salvation, did not accept this concept. He claimed that infants had their own faith (see his argument below). If we can presume that these households contained infants to be baptized, we must also presume that infants can "set themselves to minister to the saints" (1 Corinthians 16:15). We cannot be consistent, if we include infants in the baptized "house of Crispus," and do not also include them in the ministering "house of Stephanus."

The question, "Who is legitimately baptized?", was also obscured by the attitude of the
Catholic church toward "heretical baptism." They discussed the question, "When heretics baptized someone, did that baptism accomplish remission of sins?" This question was addressed by Cyprian, who died in the middle of the 3rd Century. He is one of the Ante-Nicene "fathers" whose concepts set so many precedents for the apostate Catholic church. His view was...

"As the one Catholic church is the sole repository of all grace, there can be no forgiveness of sins, no regeneration or communication of the Spirit, no salvation, and therefore no valid sacraments, out of her bosom." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2. p. 262)

Some of his contemporaries were opposed to this view, yet his views prevailed in future generations, so that baptism became a sacrament to be administered only by the authority of the Church.

Another circumstance which sprang from the development of infant baptism was the compulsory baptism of conquered enemies. The famous King Charlemagne (742-814 AD) used military force to baptize conquered Saxons, since he believed "that people become Christians by water baptism, though baptized against their will" (Schaff, History, Vol. 4, p. 103). Schaff admits that "it was a radical departure from the apostolic method, and diametrically opposed to the spirit of the gospel" (Ibid.). He comments that "this superficial, wholesale conversion to a nominal Christianity must be regarded in the light of a national infant-baptism" (Ibid., p. 18). We can consider this statement to be an oblique criticism of the involuntary nature of infant baptism. As proof that Charlemagne’s act was not the ignorant design of a political leader, without the approval of the church in that age, Schaff also tells us that Pope Leo III (716-741 AD), "In the sixth year of his reign...ordered the forcible baptism of Jews and Montanists (or Manichaeans)." He adds that "the former submitted hypocritically and mocked at the ceremony; the latter preferred to set fire to their meeting-houses and to perish in the flames" (Ibid., pp. 455-456).

During the medieval period, when "Scholasticism" was the most prominent force, there was both a liberal and conservative spirit in the Roman Church. It is said of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 AD),

"In his views on baptism he was as liberal as the most liberal of his age
in declaring that baptism was not indispensable to salvation when the opportunity is not afforded." (Schaff, History, Vol. 5, p. 355)

In opposition, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), in his attempt to re-establish the conservative view in rebuttal to a rising sentiment against Infant Baptism, returned to the premise of Augustine (4th Century). Schaff says,

"Scarcely any teaching of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas arouses so much revolt in the Christian theology of this age as the teaching about the future estate of unbaptized children dying in infancy. These theologians agree in denying to them all hope of future bliss. They are detained in hell for the sin of Adam..." (History, Vol. 5, p. 670.)

This Catholic teaching paralleled the false doctrine of the "probable" existence of a place called in Latin *limbus infantum*. Schaff describes the theory in this way:

"The *limbus puerorum* or *infantum* is the abode of children dying in infancy without having been baptized. They are there for original sin which only baptism can wash away...These children are free from pain, but are like the lost in being deprived of the vision of God and physical light. Theirs is the punishment of eternal death--*supplicum mortis oeternoe*--but their damnation is the lightest of all---*omnium levissima*. They have no hope of beatitude. God, in His justice, provides that they never make any advance nor go back, that they neither have joy nor grief. They remain forever unchanged." (History, Vol. 5, p. 758-9.)

This theory consoled the parents of dying unbaptized infants that their children were not in Hell, while at the same time warning parents against delays in bringing their children to the baptistry. Such an offensive invention would never have been developed, if the traditional custom of baptizing children had not been introduced into the apostate church, and accompanied by the false doctrine of original sin. Schaff, who accepted the doctrine of Infant Baptism, says that in the doctrine of *limbus infantum*...

"The doctrine of original sin and the doctrine of the necessity of water baptism for salvation were carried to their extreme logical conclusions without regard for the superabounding grace of God." (Ibid.)
What Schaff failed to learn is that neither Infant Baptism nor Original Sin have any foundation in Scripture, even though "water baptism for salvation" has abundant Scriptural support. Modern prejudice against the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins causes many to level the charge that its practitioners (like Roman Catholics) believe in "baptismal regeneration," even if they reject the Roman doctrines of Infant Baptism and Original Sin. The truth is veiled from those who have this prejudice, causing them to misunderstand the clear teaching of the New Testament on baptism, which teaches a voluntary, adult, believer immersion for the remission of sins.

In the 16th Century Protestant Reformation, negative reaction to all things “Romish” influenced the view of many on the subject of baptism. Governed by reactionary sentiment, men eagerly turned from the Catholic doctrine of saving works to that of saving faith apart from works, and this caused many to suppose that the "work" of baptism was either unimportant, or must have a purpose different from that taught by Rome. Among the ultra-reformers, the Anabaptists and others, infant baptism, with its purpose, was abandoned. Like modern baptists, they thought that...

"A new church required a new baptism...The Radicals could find no trace of infant baptism in the Bible, and denounced it as an invention of the pope and the devil. Baptism, they reasoned, presupposes instruction, faith, and conversion, which is impossible in the case of infants. Voluntary baptism of adult and responsible converts is, therefore, the only valid baptism. They denied that baptism is necessary for salvation, and maintained that infants are or may be saved by the blood of Christ without water-baptism. But baptism is necessary for church membership as a sign and seal of conversion." (Schaff, History, Vol. 8, p. 76.)

Martin Luther tried to answer these objections to Infant Baptism by claiming that infants had their own faith. He said,

"In Baptism children themselves believe and have faith of their own. God works this within them through the intercession of the sponsors who bring the child to the font in the faith of the Christian Church...we say that the children are not baptized in the faith of the sponsors or of the church; but the faith of
the sponsors and of Christendom asks and obtains a faith of their own for them. In this they are baptized and believe for themselves. For this position we have strong and sound passages (Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-16)." (Plass, What Luther says, Vol. 1, p. 53.)

His "proof-texts" actually have little strength to prove his point, as we can see, but his supposition that God plants a personal faith in the infant is consistent with his Augustinian background. He believed that we are incapable of faith, until God, who has predestined us to salvation, opens our hearts and implants in us the ability to have faith. However, one may be consistent, and still be wrong! (See the later chapter on Freewill vs. Predestination.)

The Catholic and Protestant views of the purpose of infant baptism remained fixed for centuries after the Reformation, but when, in the early 19th Century, Thomas Campbell began to promote the view that "nothing be inculcated...for which there cannot be expressly produced a 'Thus saith the Lord'" (Campbell, Declaration and Address, pp. 27-28), he was challenged to produce a "Thus saith the Lord" for his traditional support of Infant Baptism. Failing to find New Testament authority for the practice, and consistent with his promise to "be silent where the Scripture is silent," he abandoned the practice. This cleared the way for a new consideration of the purpose of baptism, and its proper subjects. As a result of their study, Campbell, his son Alexander, and a number of those associated with them, were immersed, but they had not come to a full realization that immersion in the Name of Christ was for the remission of sins.

By the time Alexander Campbell came to debate N. L. Rice, a Presbyterian, he demonstrated how far he had come from his own Presbyterian and effusionist roots by affirming the proposition that "Christian baptism is for the remission of past sins." He also rebutted the proposition that "The infant of a believing parent is a scriptural subject of baptism" (Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, p. 502) The followers of Barton W. Stone had come to these views even earlier than the Campbells, and their discovery that they were in agreement on this subject helped to bring the two groups together.

We see in this objective acceptance of New Testament doctrine a complete "restoration" of apostolic teaching on this subject, not a mere "reformation" of human doctrines.
This position on baptism in modern churches of Christ is rooted in the teachings of the inspired apostles, not on the opinions of Campbell and Stone, and rejects all the corrupting doctrines of men which have been added to it or subtracted from it over the centuries.

There are other doctrinal matters that are held over from the age of apostasy which will be considered in the next chapter.
PREFACE

Joe Neil Clayton is a studious and thoughtful preacher of the gospel. Through the years, he has displayed a serious commitment to the study of history, an avocation that he explains in his introduction to this book.

It is no mean task to undertake an examination of the meaning of religious history over a period of thousands of years. Clayton understands the complexity of such a study, and he does not pretend to offer a definitive history of the Christian age. Rather, this book is an interpretation of Christian history, based on the author’s broad reading. Those who are familiar with the thinking of the Restoration Movement will readily recognize the outlines of Clayton’s scheme of a falling away and restoration of the church.

In effect, Clayton’s book is a biblical interpretation of history, rooted in his years of study of the scriptures. Much of his interpretation is original and will stimulate both a study of the historical record and the Bible.

In many ways, the most innovative sections of Clayton’s study are the topical chapters at the end of the book. In these chapters, the author traces the historical reappearance of a number of doctrinal and ecclesiastical issues that have divided Christians through the centuries. These recurring questions demand a new look in every generation, and we shall be well served if we view them with a historical eye.

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Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, "This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. but in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."

– Matthew 15:7-9

COMMUNION--The Lord's Supper

The unique tradition of the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper in present-day churches of Christ is proclaimed as "apostolic." The institution of the supper by Jesus at the Passover meal with His disciples, just before he was tried and crucified, is presented in the New Testament in very simple language (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20). Later, when the Apostle Paul rehearses what he had "received" of the Lord, the simple details remained (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Yet, shortly after the close of the Apostolic Age, the Supper began to change in form and purpose.

One of the earliest uninspired records of the Lord's Supper after the time of the Apostles is that of Justin Martyr (100?-165? AD). He wrote,

"After the prayers...we greet one another with the brotherly kiss. Then bread and a cup with water and wine are handed to the president (bishop) of the brethren. He receives them, and offers praise, glory, and thanks to the Father of all, through the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit, for these his gifts. When he has ended the prayers and thanksgiving, the whole congregation responds: 'Amen.' For 'Amen' in the Hebrew tongue means: 'Be it so.' Upon this the deacons, as we call them, give to each of those present some of the blessed bread, and of the wine mingled with water, and carry it to the absent in their dwellings. This food is called with us the eucharist, of which none can partake, but the believing and baptized, who live according to the commands of Christ. For we use these not as common bread and common
drink; but like as Jesus Christ our Redeemer was made flesh through the word of God, and took upon him flesh and blood for our redemption; so are we taught, that the nourishment blessed by the word of prayer, by which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation (assimilation), is the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, pp. 235-236.)

A conservative interpreter of the New Testament might read this statement and find it very similar to the descriptions of the Gospels, but he must also recognize some differences. No command or example in Scripture ever mentions or requires the presiding of a bishop at the table, or prayers through the name of the Holy Spirit, or mingling the wine with water, or carrying the emblems to the homes of the absent, or of assimilating the flesh and blood of Jesus (except in a spiritual sense, John 6:53-56, 63).

On the other hand, the liberal interpreter could find in Justin's description many precedents for departing from the stark descriptions of the New Testament text. He can use them to "romance" the institution, and build on its foundation a superstructure of liturgy and ritual. The seeds of "episcopacy" are found in Justin's statement, and suggestions of other additions to the Word. The Ante-Nicene "fathers" were quick to abandon the authority of Scripture to make way for the acceptance of innovation. Many unscriptural forms would come into practice in the centuries that followed, until the simple supper of the "upper room" would lose most of its primitive appeal and become a festival of pomp and circumstance. However, Schaff says,

"We are not warranted in carrying back to this period the full liturgical service, which we find prevailing with striking uniformity in essentials, though with many variations in minor points, in all quarters of the church in the Nicene age (from 325 AD forward). A certain simplicity and freedom characterized the period before us." (Ibid.)

It was this innovative "freedom" to add human touches to the Word which compromised the supper's apostolical form. No liturgical formulas for the "eucharist" were in place in the 2nd, and perhaps even into the 3rd century. Little "germs" of ritual are seen, germs which were later incubated into the epidemic infection of apostasy, but this is all. Schaff comments further,
"From scattered statements of the ante-Nicene fathers we may gather the following view of the eucharistic service as it may have stood in the middle of the third century, if not earlier.

The communion was a regular and the most solemn part of the Sunday worship; or it was the worship of God in the stricter sense, in which none but full members of the church could engage. In many places and by many Christians it was celebrated even daily, after apostolic precedent, and according to the very common mystical interpretation of the fourth petition of the Lord's prayer." (Ibid.)

The observance of the Supper on Sunday (the "first day of the week") has its precedent in Acts 20:7, but the presumption that apostolic precedent ordained a "daily" supper probably rested on the language of Acts 2:46. However, this verse speaks of "breaking bread at home," while apostolic teaching shows the Lord's Supper being taken in assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:17-20, 33-34). When Schaff says that the practice of daily communion was based on the "fourth petition of the Lord's prayer" ("Give us this day our daily bread"), he says it was a "mystical" interpretation. The mystical method of interpreting Scripture has led to hundreds of errors in Christianity, or has been used to justify those errors, and must be rejected as a sound method of exegesis. In the medieval Roman church, mystical interpretation was so extremely popular that its absurdities clouded all knowledge of truth. (One medieval preacher found source material for eighty seven allegorical sermons in the first three of the eight chapters of Song of Solomon! Schaff, History, Vol. 5, p. 641.) Mysticism eventually surrounded the figurative language of Scripture, transforming the Lord's Supper into a "sacrament." Schaff says,

"Ignatius speaks of this sacrament in two passages, only by way of allusion, but in very strong, mystical terms, calling it the flesh of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, and the consecrated bread a medicine of immortality and an antidote of spiritual death. This view, closely connected with his high-churchly tendency in general, no doubt involves belief in the real presence, and ascribes to the holy Supper an effect on spirit and body at once, with reference to the future resurrection, but is still somewhat
obscure, and rather an expression of elevated feeling, than a logical definition." (History, Vol. 2, p. 242.)

Schaff says that Justin Martyr and Irenaeus held similar views, but that even their language tended to be figurative rather than literal. He says that we cannot safely interpret their words as suggesting an early belief in either the later Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (the miraculous change of the bread and wine to the flesh and blood of Christ), or the even later Lutheran concept of consubstantiation (The presence of the flesh and blood in an ill-defined mystical sense).

Tertullian and Cyprian, in contrast to these early writers, held more closely to the biblical principle of a symbolic presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and the fruit of the vine, or an "emblematic representation" (Ibid., p. 243). These contrasting views set the pattern for the extended, and often heated disputes over the "eucharist" in the centuries that followed.

We can be certain that Christ intended for the bread and the cup to serve as simple reminders of His body and blood, rather than as elements destined to be substantially transformed. It is true that when he instituted the supper, he used the expressions "This is my body...this is my blood," but he was standing before them in physical flesh and blood. Therefore, he was suggesting that the bread and the fruit of the vine were to be, figuratively, "representations" of his body and blood sacrificed on the cross for our sins.

As the concept of transubstantiation gained popularity, however, medieval Catholic schoolmen, who were fond of debating questions until every detail of the subject was exhausted, raised serious questions about whether the Apostles at the last supper ate of the real body and blood of Jesus, or only emblems. Some, basing their contentions on reason, argued that it was impossible that the living flesh and blood of Jesus was present in the bread and wine used at the Last Supper. However, some of their contemporaries "boldly affirmed" that not only did the Apostles eat of the literal flesh and blood of Christ at the Last Supper, but "that Christ partook of his own body and blood" (Ibid.)! Thomas Aquinas quoted with approval the lines;

"The King, seated with the twelve at the table, Holds Himself in His hands. He, the Food, feeds upon himself." (Ibid.)
This final development of the Catholic doctrine of *Transubstantiation* took many years, and had to pass through the preceding conceptual stages of *mutation*, *translation*, *transfiguration*, and *transformation*. But Schaff says of these earlier concepts,

"But closely as these and similar expressions verge upon the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, they seem to contain at most a *dynamic*, not a substantial change of the elements into the body and blood of Christ. For, in the first place, it must be remembered there is a great difference between the half-poetic, enthusiastic, glowing language of devotion, in which the fathers, and especially the liturgies, speak of the eucharistic sacrifice, and the clear, calm, and cool language of logic and doctrinal definition." (History, Vol. 3, p. 495.)

Transubstantiation could not claim strong support among such famous Catholic scholars as the 4th Century Augustine, but in the 9th Century, and again in the 11th Century, the controversy came to a head. The principle 11th Century controversialists were Berengar (advocating a "spiritual" view of the supper), and Lanfranc de Bec, one of his students who forsook the teaching of his mentor in this matter (perhaps to be on the "popular" side of the issue). Under fire for his views, Berengar's courage waned, causing him to yield to the angry fulminations of a synod of bishops in 1059, but he later exclaimed, "Human wickedness extorted from human weakness a different *confession*, but a change of *conviction* can be effected only by the agency of Almighty God" (Schaff, History, Vol. 4, pp. 557-558.) After escaping from the threats of the Council, he persisted in his opposition to the concept of transubstantiation, until Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII), who had been steering the church toward a rigid, doctrinaire, monarchical papacy, withdrew his protection in order to establish his own reputation for "orthodoxy." Berengar faded from the scene, but his writings were preserved, and influenced later reformers, such as Wyclif.

Sentiment in the hierarchy was now ready for the declaration of transubstantiation as the doctrine of the Roman Church, and this was done officially under Pope Innocent III, and the 4th Lateran Council, in 1215 AD. The decision left no room for dissent. The famous 13th Century scholar, Duns Scotus, was forced to compromise. Though he declared that the doctrine of transubstantiation could not be proved from Scripture, or even
from reason, He said he would accept it on the "authority of the Church" (Schaff, History, Vol. 5, p. 689). When challenged to justify this inconsistent stance, he answered that an invisible change of substance is possible, because "God can do what to us seems to be most unreasonable" (Ibid., p. 718). It should not surprise us that teachers of that day often displayed a readiness to accept church authority over Scripture and reason, since the probing eyes and ears of the Inquisition were everywhere, enforcing the false traditions of Catholicism with fire and sword.

With superstition firmly in the saddle, and using sharp spurs, Romanism went to extreme in the practice of the eucharist. As early as the 5th century, mystical treatment of the fruit of the vine had prompted some priests to withhold the cup from the laity. This was denounced by the Roman bishop, Gelasius I (492-496 AD). However, by the 13th Century, when mysticism reigned triumphant, it became the rule to withhold the cup, "due to the fear of profanation by spilling the consecrated blood of Christ" (Ibid., p. 724.) Councils and Popes, each claiming to be infallible, contradicted each other, but they eventually denied to the people the right to partake of its reputed "mystical" benefits.

When the reformers, Wyclif and Huss, made their appearance in the 14th Century, the sentiment among their followers was that the cup should be shared by the laity. Huss agreed, and complied in Bohemia, though this brought him under indictment by the hierarchy. Even after the trial and burning of Huss, the Bohemian church continued in the practice, until their "heresy" was violently crushed by Catholic "crusaders." Thus war settled the issue in the Roman Church, and today, in order to maintain the superstitious tradition of transubstantiation, strict rules are enforced among Catholics. The "host" (bread) must not be chewed when placed in the mouth by the priest, and the "wine" is cautiously offered only to communicants who would like to receive it. Other options are receiving the “host” alone, or dipped in the wine. These rules allegedly keep Catholics from "desecrating" the flesh and blood of Jesus.

In the 16th Century Reformation, Luther and Zwingli rejected transubstantiation, but found themselves holding slightly different views. In a search for unity among the leaders of the Reformation, they met and debated their differences at Marburg (1529 AD). Luther contended for the "mystical" view of "Consubstantiation," the "presence" of the flesh and
blood "with" the bread and wine. Zwingli repeatedly pointed to John 6:63 to show that the "eating of flesh and drinking of blood" in the context were to be understood spiritually, not literally, and that the Supper was therefore only a spiritual act, a commemoration of the death of Christ. As we have shown, the Scriptures support this "spiritual" interpretation of Zwingli, when interpreted logically, objectively, and as literally as the language of the text permits.

The cup was restored to the laity among the Protestants, when they escaped from Romish tyranny. Many earnest students returned to the Scripture and discerned the lesson in the words of the Lord, when He said He would "not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until" He would "drink it new" with the disciples in the "kingdom." This showed that at the last supper, the cup was "fruit of the vine," not actual blood, and that when the Lord's Supper would be eaten in the kingdom, the cup would still be "fruit of the vine," No change in "substance" was intended or destined to occur.

The Anabaptists of the 16th Century led the way in simplifying the observance of the Supper even more. Schaff tells us,

"The Lord's Supper was administered by the Baptists in the simplest manner, after a plain supper (in imitation of the original institution and the Agape), by a recital of the words of the institution, and the distribution of bread and wine. They reduced it to a mere commemoration." (History, Vol. 8, p. 79.)

The so-called "Agape" was a traditional communal supper, based on a literal interpretation of Jude 11, and drawing inferences from other verses. But Anabaptists were also influenced in their conclusions by the speculative writings of the Ante-Nicene "fathers." The Anabaptists had come far in restoring the New Testament practice, but still needed to learn two things: that the Apostles taught the early Christians to eat "at home," if they were "hungry" (Acts 2:46, 1 Corinthians 11:22, 34), and that the post-apostolic "fathers" often taught error.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

Another Catholic concept that was rejected by the 16th Century Reformers was that the "Eucharist" was a "sacrifice." Schaff says that early in the history of Christianity, men
began to inject a sacrificial element into the service:

"The consecrated elements were regarded...as representing at once the natural and the spiritual gifts of God, which culminated in the self-sacrifice of Christ on the cross...Upon this followed the idea of the self-sacrifice of the worshipper himself, the sacrifice of renewed self-consecration to Christ in return for his sacrifice on the cross, and also the sacrifice of charity to the poor. Down to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the eucharistic elements were presented as a thank-offering by the members of the congregation themselves, and the remnants went to the clergy and the poor....In later times the priest alone offered the sacrifice." (History, Vol. 2, pp. 245-246.)

He says, further,

"This subjective offering of the whole congregation on the ground of the objective atoning sacrifice of Christ is the real centre of the ancient Christian worship, and particularly of the communion. It thus differed both from the later Catholic mass, which has changed the thank-offering into a sin-offering, the congregational offering into a priest offering; and from the common Protestant cultus, which, in opposition to the Roman mass, has almost entirely banished the idea of sacrifice from the celebration of the Lord's Supper..." (Ibid., p. 246)

He could have said, also, that this "Ante-Nicene" version of the Lord's Supper differed greatly from the Apostolic teaching; a simple service of remembrance and fellowship with Christ and his body, the church (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

It is evident from Scripture that Christ certainly never intended to be "sacrificed" on an altar on any regular basis. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus, "through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12). His sacrifice was made "one time for all time," differing from those of the Old Testament. If this difference had not been established, the Hebrew writer says, "then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26). This single sacrifice is to be remembered each Lord's Day (Acts 20:7), in the assemblies
of the church (1 Corinthians 11:33).

The development of the "Sacrifice of the Mass," Schaff says, was tied to other evolving apostate elements in the early church. There was a persistent tendency to look back into the Old Testament at the precedents found there. The Gentiles also carried their pagan customs into the church. Both systems had literal altars, sacrifices and priests. So, Schaff says that in early Christianity "The ideas of priesthood, sacrifice, and altar, are intimately connected, and a Judaizing or paganizing conception of one must extend to all" (Ibid., p. 247).

The 16th Century Reformers rejected the regular sacrificial element in the Roman Eucharist. In an attempt to purge themselves of the daily eucharistic observance of Romanism, the Lord's Supper was held irregularly among most Protestant churches, or on specified traditional feast days. By the last part of the 18th Century, those associated with the Haldane brothers of Scotland began to teach the people in their independent churches to commune every Lord's Day (Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, p. 179). They saw that the Scriptural examples of taking it the "first day of the week" (Acts 20:7), or on the day of "assembly" (1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33), suggested no formula for selecting or excluding any certain "first day." Their view of Scripture, though imperfect, still permitted very little innovative freedom. Therefore, communion on every first day was considered the only practice acceptable in the sight of God, and the "safe course."

Thomas and Alexander Campbell, who were strongly impressed by the scriptural arguments of the Haldanes and other independents, adopted many of them in their own battle for a return to "Ancient Order." The consequence of this return is that the Lord's Supper is again observed as the simple and beautiful commemoration of the death of Christ, unencumbered with mystical, allegorical, and sensual traditions. Christians should be wary of any modern revival of similar interpretations and descriptions of the supper, opposing them as destructive of the "traditions of the Apostles."

WORSHIP--Instruments of Music

The early church worshipped in a simple manner. It is very strange that its music was not influenced by Judaism, since nearly every other aspect of the formation of the apostate church was influenced in various ways and measures by Jewish tradition and Mosaical
legal concepts. The custom of Judaism since the reign of King David (about 1000 BC) had been to use all sorts of instruments of music in the worship, because they were authorized by God through the prophets (see 2 Chronicles 29:25-28). Yet, for hundreds of years after the close of the Apostolic Era, no reference to instrumental music is found in the contemporary histories and the writings of the early "church fathers."

To account for the lack of their use in the early church, we must remember that the worship of Christianity was very different from that of Judaism. Where the Jews congregated for their ritual worship in great convocations before the Temple in Jerusalem, the Christians were scattered in smaller conclaves (local churches) throughout the whole world (compare John 4:19-21). Their worship was not in pomp and ceremony, but in quiet assemblies of the faithful, where joint prayer, communion, and singing were the rule. They followed the teaching of the Apostles regarding musical worship (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16), using their own hearts as the divinely prescribed instruments of music.

Roman Catholicism began to use musical instruments about 658 AD, under the influence of Pope Vitalian I (657-672). However, Schaff says that the Eastern and Western churches had differing views:

"The attitude of the churches toward the organ varies....The Greek church disapproves the use of organs. The Latin church introduced it pretty generally, but not without the protest of eminent men, so that even in the Council of Trent [16th Century] a motion was made, though not carried, to prohibit the organ at least in the mass. The Lutheran church retained, the Calvinistic churches rejected it, especially in Switzerland and Scotland; but in recent times the opposition has largely ceased." (History, Vol. 4, p. 439.)

The introduction of instrumental music into the Latin church became one reason for the final breach between it and the Greek church in 1054 AD. (The tradition of A Cappella music persists today in some branches of the Greek Orthodox Church, especially in Russia.) Yet, even after this major schism, some Roman Catholic scholars, like Thomas Aquinas (1225-74 AD) opposed its use. He is reported to have said, "Our church does not use musical instruments...that she may not seem to Judaize." (Bingham, Antiquities of the Christian Church, Vol. 3, p. 137. Quoted by M. C. Kurfees in his book on Instrumental
Music, p. 176.) On the same basis, Thomas Aquinas should have opposed Roman sacerdotalism and all its trappings, but he was a hostage to the inquisition, just as much as others in his day, and dared to oppose the authority of the Roman Church only in those things which it treated as of little consequence.

We have already noted the differing attitudes of Luther and Zwingli in chapter five. Luther was willing to retain certain practices of Romanism because he treated them as matters of indifference, but Zwingli’s reformation went deeper, and was therefore more "radical." He was unwilling to retain anything that did not find its precedent in Scripture, so he caused the removal of all vestiges of Roman Catholic style worship, including instruments of music from the reformed churches of Switzerland. Schaff says,

"The churches of the city were purged of pictures, relics, crucifixes, altars, candles, and all ornaments, the frescoes effaced, and the walls whitewashed, so that nothing remained but the bare building to be filled by a worshiping congregation. The pictures were broken and burnt, some given to those who had claim, a few preserved as antiquities. The bones of the saints were buried. Even the organs were removed, and the Latin singing of the choir abolished, but fortunately afterwards replaced by congregational singing of psalms and hymns in the vernacular." (History, Vol. 8, p. 58)

Free from the tyranny of the Inquisition, Protestants struggled against many other entrenched traditions of Rome, succeeding in some, and failing in others. Several reformers (such as Beza, Wesley, etc.) followed Zwingli in speaking against instrumental music as a discardable trapping of Rome, but their voices were not respected enough, nor was there sufficient respect for God’s Word, to keep it from gradually returning to use in all the Protestant churches.

The 19th Century "Restorationists," however, driven by the concept that no revelation from God can be treated indifferently, and loyal to the biblical principle of treating God's silence as prohibitive, studied the issue again, returned to apostolic authority, and practiced only vocal music until the lively spirit of restoration gave way to the destructive spirit of digression. As the more "visible" secondary cause of the major division over the Missionary Societies in the middle of the 19th Century, instruments of music were carried into the
meeting houses of churches of Christ, beginning in Kentucky about 1860. A decade before this, however, there was a flurry of articles on the subject in journals published by the brethren. When Alexander Campbell declared that instruments of music in worship were as out of place as "a cowbell in a concert," the controversy quieted down for a while. By the 1870's, however, the new apostasy was in progress, and those churches which accepted the Missionary Society as a "human addition to divine work" also accepted the organ as a "human addition to divine worship" (see West, Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 2, p. 80).

The more conservative brethren, falling back again on the principle of rejecting anything that cannot be proved by Scripture, as Zwingli had done, withdrew from the "organ brethren," later identified as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

This historic controversy is not quieted, yet. The more liberal members of churches of Christ today often express the opinion that the use of instruments of music in the worship should be consigned to the realm of "expediency" rather than of "faith." However, any such decision destroys the authoritative fabric of Scripture, allowing loopholes through which many other innovations can enter the church. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is the ultimate example of this process. Its unchecked dash toward liberalism has caused it to become indistinguishable from other denominations that have little or no concern about divine approval of their organization, work, and worship.

This controversy serves an end far beyond determining the content of worship in the Lord's church. It has to do with the proper interpretation of the word of God. For this reason, it needs to be discussed frequently, so that the principles of "rightly dividing the word" can be kept before the hearers, especially God's people.
CHAPTER NINE

BIBLE AUTHORITY VERSUS CHURCH AUTHORITY

“And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.” -- Matthew 28:18

Much of the warp and woof in the tapestry of the Great Apostasy must be attributed to the broad acceptance of the principle of "Church Authority." Many threads of apostasy had to be woven together to clothe the church with the presumptive right to make canon laws governing its people. The trend toward vested authority in the church eventually contributed to ignorance of the Bible, because church laws were applied in its discipline more often than the doctrine of Christ, even though Canon Law often contradicted Scripture. It is sad that such devastating things can happen in spite of the fact that Jesus taught in Matthew 15:9 that the acceptance of doctrine evolving from the commandments of men makes our worship void.

Many passages of Scripture emphasize the supremacy of God's revelation over the teachings of men. In Galatians 1:6-9, Paul showed the authority of the New Testament by placing an anathema on anyone who preaches a gospel other than the one originally preached by, and received from the Apostles. According to Colossians 2:8-10, Paul advised Christians, "Take heed lest there shall be any one that makes spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in him you are made full, who is the head of all principality and power." As specifics of this principle, Paul names in verses 16-23 various unauthorized human demands; for compliance with the Law of Moses (vss. 16-17); for mystical views (vss. 18-19); and for asceticism (vss. 20-23). However, in the apostate church we find laws being made and enforced which proceeded from all three of these sources.

God is jealous of His Word. The subjects of the Law of Moses were warned against
additions to and subtractions from the revelation of God (Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 12:32). In context (Deuteronomy 13:1-5), Moses shows that no addition or deviation from the Word should be accepted, even if that word comes from a prophet who gives a "sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass!" "The words of Agur" in the book of Proverbs tell us, "Every word of God is tried: he is a shield unto them that take refuge in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6).

The Scripture is both efficient and sufficient to guide men. Paul affirms in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that the "God-breathed" Scripture is able to provide instruction and direction in "every good work." Paul also asserted that God, through "the word of his grace," can "build up, and give the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). But Paul is not the only Apostle to contend that the Word of God, of itself, is sufficient. Peter says that God, by "his divine power has granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:2-4). To these divinely inspired assertions could be added the many Bible examples of the evil consequences of additions, subtractions, and corruptions of the revelation of God, all of which demonstrate how closely God guards His Word. But men in the early days of the church apparently found it easy to disregard this teaching, and to ignore the examples in which it was applied with divine thoroughness.

Several things contributed to the rise of "church authority." Schaff tells us that the Greek "fathers" in the eastern portion of the Roman Empire were given to philosophy and speculation, while the western Latin theologians concentrated on realistic and practical concerns (Schaff, History, vol. 2, pp. 510-511), a situation which ignited geographic conflicts at a very early stage in the Apostasy. Each party strove to assert its authority over the other. Heresies multiplied while this struggle went on, in spite of a search for authoritative ways to squelch them.

To this must be added the opposition of Paganism. In polemic defense of Christianity, against both "friend" and foe, early apologists, like Irenaeus (late 2nd Century), began to appeal to "catholic (universal) tradition" as well as the Scripture. Yet, traditions were not as universal as he might represent. Schaff says,
"The leading effort in this polemic literature was, of course, to develop and establish positively the Christian truth...The object was, particularly, to settle the doctrines of the rule of faith, the incarnation, and the true divinity and true humanity of Christ. In this effort the mind of the church, under the constant guidance of the divine word and the apostolic tradition, steered with unerring instinct between the threatening cliffs. Yet no little indefiniteness and obscurity still prevailed in the scientific apprehension and statement of these points. In this stormy time, too, there were as yet no general councils to settle doctrinal controversy by the voice of the whole church." (Ibid., p. 512.)

The presumption that "Christian truth" needs "development" and "settlement" denies the sufficiency of the Word. Psalm 119:89 says, "For ever, O Jehovah, thy word is settled in heaven." Also, when we read in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18 that "whatsoever" the apostles bound on earth "shall be bound in heaven," we should realize that the sense of the Greek construction is really "having been bound in heaven." The power to "bind and loose" was not inherent in the Apostles, or in those who presumed that they were their "successors!" The Apostles were "revealers" of what had already been "developed" and "settled" in heaven "before the foundation of the world."

However, when men began to presume the right to speculate upon and amplify the explicit information of Scripture, it was inevitable that someone would draw the conclusion that they needed a "general council to settle doctrinal controversy by the voice of the whole church."

Irenaeus, who was willing to use "catholic tradition" in his defense of Christianity against Paganism, "might conceive of a Christianity without scripture, but he could not imagine a Christianity without living tradition" (Ibid., p. 526). Tertullian, his contemporary, compounded the problem. Not only does he exalt tradition, but he also "cuts off heretics, at the outset, from every right of appeal to the holy scriptures, on the ground, that the holy scriptures arose in the church of Christ, were given to her, and only in her and by her can be rightly understood" (Ibid.). In these two positions, we see the precedents for the growth of much error in Christianity. Tradition finally came to equal Scripture in authority, and the
"Church" nominated itself as the organism with exclusive right to interpret the Scripture.

Being infant apostates, indifferent to the eventual consequences of their ideas, neither Irenaeus nor Tertullian carried their conclusions to the ultimate notion of unlimited "church authority." They presumed that their arguments from tradition strengthened their case against the opponents of Christianity, but they were not so far removed from Bible authority. They declared that "the thing to be regarded, especially in matters of religion, is not custom but truth." Even Cyprian, who was one of the earliest champions of the basic errors which later characterized the Roman Catholic church, can still be found agreeing "that custom without truth was only time-honored error" (Ibid.).

Yet, the church had become so dependent on the authority of tradition that it often surrendered to the compulsion to persecute anyone who pleaded for the authority of Scripture. A case in point is found in Jovinian's 4th Century treatise against the growing tradition of celibacy for the clergy. The venerable Jerome had praised the principle so extravagantly that Jovinian, who himself was celibate, argued that God's institution of marriage in Genesis 2:24, confirmed by Christ in Matthew 19:5, establishes the moral excellence of marriage. He then proceeded to cite the marital examples of both Old Testament priests, and New Testament apostles, ending with Paul's command that bishops be the "husband of one wife." His arguments impressed Augustine with their power, but a council headed by another Roman bishop excommunicated and banished Jovinian in 390 AD for being a radical nuisance (Schaff, History, Vol. 3, pp. 227-230). The precedent of this council would be imitated in many future ones, until all knowledge and respect for the Word of God was buried under ecclesiastical rubbish.

THE EPISCOPATE

The Apostolic Age was not without those who desired to have "preeminence" in the local church, ruling with an iron hand (3 John 9-11). Yet, we have already noted in Chapter Two that very early in the history of Christianity, men sought to establish authority in the "Episcopate," singular bishops that elevated themselves above their fellow presbyters in various local churches. Apostolic teaching condemned this trend (Acts 20:17, 28-29; and 1 Peter 5:1-3). Far from making any distinction between elders and bishops, these same passages placed identical responsibilities on them.
Gibbon, the great secular historian, says of the origin of this distinction that the two titles, Bishop and Presbyter,

"...in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office and the same order of persons...(but) A regard for the public tranquility,...induced the primitive Christians to constitute an honorable and perpetual magistracy, and to choose one of the wisest and most holy among the presbyters to execute, during his life, the duties of their ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that the lofty title of Bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellation of Presbyter..." (Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. 1, p. 554.)

Gibbon's assertion that the episcopate evolved into a sort of "magistracy" in regard for "public tranquility" is confirmed by Schaff and many other church historians. A weak trust in the sufficiency of the word of God caused many to presume the need for an official with vested authority to make decisions regarding both doctrine and polity, in order to unify the church.

Ignatius, self-styled "Bishop" of Antioch (105-115 AD) seems to be the first to imply this distinction. He says, perhaps in a self-serving way, "Do nothing without the bishop. And be ye subject also to the presbytery---the bishop is the representative of the Father in all things, and the presbyters are the sanhedrin of God." (Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, p. 66-67.)

By the end of the 2nd Century, in several places, distinctions grew between "bishops" and "elders". Schaff says,

"The most important and also the most difficult phenomenon of our period in the department of church organization is the rise and development of the episcopate as distinct from the presbyterate. This institution comes to view in the second century as the supreme spiritual office...A form of government so ancient and so widely adopted, can be satisfactorily accounted for only on the supposition of a religious need, namely, the need of a tangible outward representation and centralization..." (History, Vol. 2, p. 133.)

Schaff is honest enough in this statement to state that the new office of "Bishop"
satisfied the "supposition of a religious need," but it also revealed that the suppositions of apostates deny that God was wise enough to anticipate the supposed "need," and to provide for it in His word. Schaff further says that in distinguishing bishops above presbyters,

"...the church provided an extremely simple but compact and freely expansible organization.....yet unquestionably she thus incurred also the danger of a secularization which reached its height just when the hierarchy became complete in the Roman church, and which finally necessitated a reformation on the basis of apostolical Christianity." (Ibid., p. 134.)

Schaff also shows the connection of the development of the "episcopate" with other trends.

"Episcopacy in the full sense of the term requires for its base the idea of a real priesthood and real sacrifice, and an essential distinction between clergy and laity. Divested of these associations, it resolves itself into a mere superintendency." (Ibid., p. 133.)

This "superintendency" was exactly what the Apostles taught for the officers of the local church, as we have seen. There were no precedents in the New Testament for a sacrificial priesthood in the pattern of the Old Testament, nor any distinction between bishop and elder, or between clergy and laity, so no 1st Century bishop "reigned" in the regal authority which was characteristic of later ages. With the wide acceptance in the 2nd Century of the principle of a sacerdotal priesthood, however, this error was firmly rooted in religion. Yet another historian says...

"Emphasis on the monarchal bishop who, it was believed, derived his authority by apostolic succession, led many to think of him as a center of unity, the depository of truth and the dispenser of the means of grace... through the sacraments..." (Cairns, Christianity Through the Centuries, p. 129.)

This is but one example of how men think they may improve on the arrangements conceived and distilled in the inscrutable mind of an all-wise God! What haughty presumption!
This basic error, which implied authority in the Bishop, led eventually to the concept of an "infallible Pope," or "universal bishop" presiding over the legislative body of the church. In theory and concept, the Roman Catholic Church is not defined as a "body of believers," but a body composed only of the "hierarchy" (priesthood). Therefore, Papal authority became synonymous with "Church" authority!

In spite of the fact that the principle of "episcopacy" took firm hold on the church after the 2nd Century, with its distinction between elders and bishops, Schaff says,

"...yet the memory of their primitive identity lingered. Jerome, at the end of the fourth century, reminds the bishops that they owe their elevation above the presbyters, not so much to Divine institution as to ecclesiastical usage; for before the outbreak of controversies in the church there was no distinction between the two, except that presbyter is a term of age, and bishop a term of official dignity; but when men, at the instigation of Satan, erected parties and sects......all agreed to put one of the presbyters at the head of the rest, that by his universal supervision of the churches, he might kill the seeds of division. The great commentators of the Greek church agree with Jerome in maintaining the original identity of bishops and presbyters in the New Testament." (History, vol. 3, pp. 257-258.)

The threads of error found in the concepts of priesthood, sacerdotalism, apostolic succession, tradition, and continual "development" of doctrine all come together in the final garment of "church authority." Men were ambitious to share authority with Paul and Peter, whom they presumed to have inherent legislative power. They were mistaken in this, since apostolic teaching was "not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches" (1 Corinthians 2:13). To be equal in authority with Apostles, bishops must also be equal in credentials. However, no one after the 1st Century was privileged to share in apostolic powers; therefore, the apostate bishops were devoid of apostolic authority (see the later chapter on Continual Revelation).

ENFORCEMENT OF CHURCH AUTHORITY

With the Church's presumption of legislative authority goes the companion presumption of the right to enforce legislation. Before Constantine The Great made Christianity the
"State Religion" early in the 4th Century, thereby releasing it from the threat of state persecution, most church leaders retained the view that it should use persuasion rather than compulsion. Constantine, whose political orientation was empirical, was willing to use civil punishments to enforce conformity to religious creeds. However, Athanasius, whose voice was the most vehement in opposition to Arianism, is still found saying,

"Satan, because there is no truth in him, breaks with axe and sword. But the Saviour is gentle, and forces no one, to whom he comes, but knocks and speaks to the soul: Open to me, my sister. If we open to him, he enters; but if we will not, he departs. For the truth is not preached by sword and dungeon, by the might of an army, but by persuasion and exhortation. How can there be persuasion where fear of the emperor is uppermost?" (Ibid., p. 39.)

Had he lived only a while longer, Athanasius would have observed how, in combination with the views of a totalitarian state, the church could become just as ruthless as its civil sponsor. Schaff says,

"After the Nicene age all departures from the reigning state-church faith were not only abhorred and excommunicated as religious errors, but were treated also as crimes against the Christian state, and hence were punished with civil penalties; at first with deposition, banishment, confiscation, and, after Theodosius, even with death." (Ibid., p. 139.)

The first instance of the use of the death penalty for heretics was against a Spanish Bishop, and some of his adherents, in 385 AD (Ibid., pp. 142-143). After the principle of violent subjugation of heresy was established, Schaff says that "the propriety of violent measures against heresy was henceforth vindicated by the best fathers of the church" (Ibid., p. 143). Jerome seems to appeal to Deuteronomy 13:6-10 to justify the penalty of death, and Augustine goes to Luke 14:23, as the basis of his statement,

"It is, indeed, better that men should be brought to serve God by instruction than by fear of punishment or by pain. But because the former means are better, the latter must not therefore be neglected...Many must often be brought back to their Lord, like wicked servants, by the rod of
temporal suffering, before they attain the highest grade of religious development...The Lord himself orders that the guests be first invited, then compelled, to his great supper." (Ibid., p. 145.)

Augustine did not realize, perhaps, the extended implications of his remarks. By condoning the principle of compulsion, his disciples understood that the threat of death need not only be applied to heretics, but it could also become a tool of evangelism. Using the argument of the mighty Augustine as their authority, armies of the faithful could force Christianity on conquered pagans, who converted in a wholesale manner, when given the dubious option, "Convert or die!"

CANON LAW

The Bishops of the apostate church were now considered not only the lawgivers for the Church ("in congress assembled"), but also the magistrates of state religious policy, and the judges who condemned offenders. Needing a "body of law" by which to govern, the historic decisions of Bishops and Councils were compiled into "Canon Law." These human laws were often considered "inspired by the Holy Ghost," as Leo I, Bishop of Rome from 440 to 461 AD, dubbed the canons of the Council of Nicea (Ibid., p. 282). It is no wonder that these church laws were given such profound respect in a church ignorant of the sufficiency of New Testament authority.

The first major collection of Canon Law was done by Gratian, a scholarly monk, in the 12th Century. This collection included rules imposed by Bishops and Councils going back many centuries. Schaff says,

"Canon Law attempted the task of legislating in detail for all phases of human life--clerical, ecclesiastical, social, domestic...(it attempted) to do for the individual action of the Christian world what the Pharisees attempted to do for Jewish life (in the Talmud, that is)...The Canon law also gave its sanction to the devilish principle of ecclesiastical compulsion...to coerce ecclesiastical dissidents." (Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 768-769.)

Later, in the 16th Century, Gratian's collection was "largely superseded by the canons of the Council of Trent (1545-1563 AD)" (Ibid, p. 770). The Council of Trent was held to oppose Protestantism and to begin a moral and doctrinal reformation of the Catholic
Church. One of its pronouncements, which revealed how much the Roman Church derived authority from Canon Law, "condemned the Protestant doctrine of the supremacy of the Bible" (Ibid, Vol. 8, p. 600). Contemporary Protestants answered this decree by exalting the Bible even more! John Calvin said, "The proclamation of the Council is entitled to no more weight than the cry of an auctioneer" (Ibid., p. 601). However, there was really not much difference between Catholic and Protestant treatment of the Bible. One of the most respected of Catholic theologians, Thomas Aquinas, ranked Scripture above the "fathers," though he used both as "authorities" (Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 667). The Protestant Reformers, though relying more heavily on Scripture authority, still quoted the “Fathers,” and called councils and synods for legislative purposes. Schaff illustrates the stronger emphasis on church authority in Catholicism, by saying,

"The jurisdiction of the ecumenical councils covered the entire legislation of the church, all matters of Christian faith and practice (fidei et morum), and all matters of organization and worship. The doctrinal decrees were called dogmata or symbola; the disciplinary, canones...The authority of these councils in the decision of all points of controversy was supreme and final."

As church authority increased in proportion to the ambitions of men, respect for the authority of the Bible suffered a corresponding decline. The Bible text most commonly used was Jerome’s, in Latin, dating from the 4th Century. It was gradually corrupted through the errors of copiers, and through general neglect. Knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, the original languages of the Bible, declined in proportion to the general ignorance of the "dark ages." The Bible was not widely copied and distributed, so that even the clergy were ignorant of much of its content.

Canon Law often contradicted the Bible, and the sentiment grew that the less that was known of the Bible, the more secure would be the legal position of the Church. The reading of the Bible was not prohibited, only discouraged, until popular reformers agitated for a return to Bible study by the common people. The church then became alarmed by the outcries of those who began to see the disparity between the doctrine of the Church and that of the Bible.
PAPAL SUPREMACY

The ultimate result of the evolution of church authority was the establishment of a universal bishop, and to the Roman Church this meant the papacy. Schaff tells us that...

"The papacy is undeniably the result of a long process of history. Centuries were employed in building it, and centuries have already been engaged upon its partial destruction. Lust of honor and of power, and even open fraud, have contributed to its development; for human nature lies hidden under episcopal robes, with its steadfast inclination to abuse the power intrusted to it; and the greater the power, the stronger is the temptation, and the worse the abuse." (Ibid., pp. 288-289)

The "open fraud" used to develop the papacy involved interpolations of ancient ecclesiastical authors, enlargements of the canons of certain councils, and other such forgeries.

Leo I, who reigned from 440 to 461 AD, was one of the most ambitious of the Roman bishops, using every sort of device to exalt himself. He often referred to himself as the successor to the Apostle Peter, whom he presumed to have the "primacy" over the other Apostles, based on the language of Matthew 16:18-19. But Schaff comments,

"While Peter himself passes over his prerogative in silence, and expressly warns against hierarchial assumption (1 Peter 5:3), Leo cannot speak frequently and emphatically enough of his authority. While Peter in Antioch meekly submits to the rebuke of the junior apostle Paul (Galatians 2:11), Leo pronounces resistance to his authority to be impious pride and the sure way to hell." (Ibid., p. 319)

Many popes after Leo coveted the power to dictate to the whole church, and to the secular power as well. This ambition was based on an allegorical application of the incident in which Jesus advised his disciples to sell their cloaks and buy swords. When He was answered, "Lord, behold, here are two swords," he said, "It is enough" (Luke 22:35-38). The plural swords of this passage were meant only to fulfil the Old Testament prophecy that the Christ would be "reckoned with transgressors (plural)," but the image was transformed by mystical interpretation to represent the twin swords of church power,
"temporal" and "spiritual." The ambition to impose clerical rule over kings began as early as the late 5th Century. Gelasius I (492-496 AD)... "...Clearly announced the principle, that the priestly power is above the kingly and the imperial, and that from the decisions of the chair of Peter there is no appeal." (Ibid., p. 324)

Papal supremacy over church and state was nearly realized a few times in ecclesiastical history, when weak rulers did not have the moral stamina to stand up to strong Popes.

There was also the companion struggle for supremacy between Constantinople and Rome, the greatest of the five patriarchates of the apostate church. At the peak of this struggle, it was to Rome's advantage to find a man such as Gregory I to fill its episcopal office. He was a remarkable man for his time. Without seeming to be inconsistent, he rebuked the Patriarch of Constantinople for claiming to be the "universal bishop," saying, "Whosoever calls himself universal priest, or desires to be called so, was the forerunner of Antichrist" (Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 220), while at the same time claiming for himself, as the successor to Peter, "The care and principality of the whole church" (Ibid.)! It might be fair to say he did this more to promote the ancient tradition of the preeminence of the Roman See than to promote his own power. We must properly date the modern Papacy from his reign (590-604 AD).

The Popes that followed Gregory I longed for some credible credentials to support their fantastic claims. About the "middle of the ninth century, a mysterious book made its appearance, which seemed to give legal sanction to the current popular opinion of the papacy" (Ibid., p. 268). Based on an earlier collection of religious documents dated in the 6th Century, and claiming to be authored by Bishop Isidor of Seville (Spain), it altered and corrupted many of the statements of early bishops so that they seemed to give ancient authority to the See of Rome. This forgery is now known as the "Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals." The validity of this document was never questioned during the Middle Ages, but Schaff says that "the object of this forgery was to antedate by five centuries the temporal power of the papacy" (Ibid., p. 271). These fictitious documents claimed that "the privileges of the priesthood culminate in the episcopacy, and the episcopal dignity culminates in the
papacy," and finally proclaiming, "The cathedra Petri is the fountain of all power" (Ibid., p. 269). These "false decretals" were only some of the fictions published by "pious frauds" to give legal support to the Catholic system, as it was promoted under the successors to Gregory I.

From this time on, there was a gradual evolution of the doctrine of "Papal Infallibility." Speculation on this doctrine was early instigated from a decision of an Ecumenical Council held in 680 AD. A controversy had raged regarding whether Christ had two wills, human and divine, or only one, a combination of both. The Council decided for two, in order to reconcile the matter with former decisions on the dual "nature" of Christ. Pope Agatho was quick to see that he could transfer this principle to the novel idea of Papal Infallibility, saying that, like Christ, he might have a human will subject to sin, but that he could not be mistaken when exercising his divine office as Pope (Ibid., pp. 499-500). Agatho's claim was ignored at the time, but the discussion continued until the fully developed doctrine of Papal Infallibility was formally announced much later in the modern ecumenical council of 1870 (Vatican I). One man who contributed much to this development was Hildebrand, who was called Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085 AD). He exceeded the Popes before him in "lofty pretensions." Schaff says that...

"in him papal absolutism assumed flesh and blood...He anticipated the Vatican system of 1870...He did not claim infallibility in theory, though he assumed it in fact; but he did claim and exercise, as far as he could, an absolute authority over the temporal powers of Christendom, which the popes have long since lost, and can never regain" (Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 29).

The Roman church now had two weapons arrayed against the authority of the Bible, Canon Law and an infallible Pope, but these were only practical extensions of the early claim that the church had the exclusive right to interpret Scripture.

REFORMATION AND THE RETURN TO BIBLE AUTHORITY

The tyranny of both Canon Law and the claim of an infallible Pope reigned until John Wyclif (the 14th Century "reformer before the Reformation") began his revolution against Papal and church authority. He said the Pope "has no more power in binding and loosing than any priest" (Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 316). Of his attitude toward the authority of the Bible,
Schaff says,

"The most important of Wyclif's theological treatises, the Trialogus... lays down the principle that, where the Bible and the Church do not agree, we must obey the Bible, and, where conscience and human authority are in conflict, we must follow conscience." (Ibid., p. 323)

"In his treatise on the value and authority of the Scriptures, with 1000 printed pages, more is said about the Bible as the Church's appointed guide-book than was said by all the mediaeval theologians together. And none of the Schoolmen, from Anselm and Abaelard to Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, exalted it to such a position of preeminence as did he. With one accord they limited its authority by coordinating with its contents tradition, that is, the teachings of the Church. This man, with unexcelled precision and cogency, affirmed its final jurisdictions, as the law of God, above all authorities, papal, decretist or patristic." (Ibid., p. 338)

Wyclif also proclaimed that...

"Every syllable of the two Testaments is true, and the authors were nothing more than scribes or heralds. If any error seem to be found in them, the error is due to human ignorance and perverseness. Nothing is to be believed that is not founded upon this book, and to its teachings nothing is to be added." (Ibid., p. 340)

Schaff also tells us that Wyclif departed from the medieval scholastic trend of interpreting the Scriptures by the "false principles of the Fathers." He was strongly in favor of relying on the "literal verbal sense," and on "the etymological meaning of words." He rejected allegorical and mystical interpretations, unless "based upon the literal meaning." With this view, he could proclaim that "heresy is the contradiction of Scripture," not of the teachings of the Church (Ibid.). Wyclif filled his writings with quotations of men, "But with increasing emphasis, as the years went on, he made his final appeal to the Scriptures" (Ibid., p. 326).

He also rejected the false claims of the hierarchy, and said that "the pope is neither necessary to the church, nor is he infallible...(and) has no exclusive right to declare what
the Scriptures teach, or proclaim what is the supreme law" (Ibid., p. 332). He applied his rule not only to the pope, but to all the hierarchy of the Roman church, saying that "by disregarding Peter's injunction not to lord it over God's heritage (1 Peter 5:3), he and all his sect--*tota secta*--prove themselves hardened heretics" (Ibid., p. 333).

While the Roman church resisted giving the English Bible to the laity, comparing it to "casting pearls before swine," Wyclif argued in his antique English,

"Christen men and women, olde and young, shulden study fast in the New Testament, and no simple man of wit shulde be aferde unmeasurably to study in the text of holy Writ. Pride and covetise of clerks is cause of their blyndness and heresie and priveth them fro verie understanding of holy Writ. The New Testament is of ful autorite and open to understanding of simple men, as to the pynts that ben most needful to salvation." (Ibid., pp. 341-342)

To supplement his argument, Wyclif led the way in making a translation of the Bible into English. The Roman church responded in 1414 (long after Wyclif's death) by forbidding the reading of the English Bible under severe economic penalties, and as late as 1816, Pope Pius VII fulminated against the 19th Century Bible Societies by calling them "fiendish institutions for the undermining of the foundation of religion" (Ibid., p. 344).

Wyclif's disciple, John Hus, took up the attack on Church Authority by refuting the traditional interpretation of Matthew 16:18-19 made by Leo I and many others. They claimed that the language of this passage established the "primacy" of Peter over the other apostles, making him "head of the church." By right of "apostolic succession," the Popes claimed Peter's rights. Schaff says,

"This passage was at all times taken as an immovable exegetical rock for the papacy. The popes themselves appealed to it, times without number, as the great proof of the divine institution of a visible and infallible central authority in the church." (Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 301)

In response to this, Huss said,

"the Roman pontiff and the cardinals are not the church. The church can exist without cardinals and a pope, and in fact for hundreds of years there were no cardinals. As for the position Christ assigned to Peter, Huss affirmed
that Christ called himself the Rock, and the Church is founded on him by virtue of predestination. In view of Peter's clear and positive confession, 'the Rock--Petra--said to Peter--Petro--'I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, that is, a confessor of the true Rock which Rock I am.' And upon this Rock, that is, myself, I will build this church'...Peter never was the head of the Holy Catholic Church." (Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 368)

Huss' interpretation of Matthew 16 shows an honest, objective, scholarly view of Scripture. He agreed with his mentor on the ultimate authority of Scripture in matters of religion. Like Wyclif, he would have pronounced that "faith (is) the supreme theology...and that only by the study of the Scriptures is it possible to become a Christian" (Ibid., p. 346), but also like Wyclif, unfortunately, his voice was muted for a while by the near monopoly of Rome over the thoughts of men, and by its readiness to banish "heresy" with fire and sword.

A century later, Erasmus (1466-1536 AD), who greatly influenced Luther, helped the spirit of reformation along by reviving the interest of his contemporaries in the serious study of the Bible in its original languages. However, he had a liberal view of its authority because of his orientation in classical studies. His view of inspiration is revealed, when he says,

"The Scriptures deserve, indeed, the highest authority, but I find also in the writings of the ancient heathen so much that is pure, holy and divine, that I must believe that their hearts were divinely moved" (Ibid., Vol. 7, p. 414)

The more conservative Wyclif would not have agreed with this view. Speaking in his behalf, Schaff says,

"As for the philosophy of the pagan world, whatever it offers that is in accord with the Scriptures is true. The religious philosophy which the Christian learns from Aristotle he learns because it was taught by the authors of Scripture." (Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 339)

Luther, though influenced by Erasmus, neither shared his tolerant appreciation of the pagan philosophers, nor did he have respect for either the writings of the ancient Church Fathers, or for Catholic scholars contemporary with him. Being more radical than Erasmus,
his public opposition to church authority caused him to be pronounced a heretic, and he was "excommunicated" by the Pope. To show his attitude toward the Pope, and toward Church authority, Schaff says,

"On the tenth day of December, 1520, at nine o'clock in the morning, in the presence of a large number of professors and students, he solemnly committed the bull of excommunication, together with the papal decretals, the canon law, and several writings of Eck and Emser, to the flames, with these words (borrowed from Joshua's judgment of Achan the thief, Joshua 7:25): 'As thou [the Pope] has vexed the Holy One of the Lord, may the eternal fire vex thee!'" (Ibid., Vol. 7, p. 248)

At the diet of Worms, where he had been called to recant his teaching, he said,

"Unless I am refuted and convicted by testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear arguments (since I believe neither the Pope nor the councils alone: it being evident that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am conquered by the Holy Scriptures quoted by me, and my conscience is bound in the word of God." (Ibid., p. 304)

Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer of the 16th Century, likewise "reverently bowed before the divine authority of the inspired word of God, and had no idea of setting reason over it" (Ibid., p. 32).

Protestantism, then, was marked by a belief in the supreme authority of the Bible, and the right of all men to interpret it for themselves. Imperfect interpretations led to doctrinal differences, however, and Catholics tried to show that the sectarian divisions that proliferated in Protestantism were the result of giving the Bible into the hands of people unqualified to interpret it. The Protestants were also disturbed by their inability to remain united, but would not return to a system which frequently produced error, set it in concrete, and then eagerly punished any who disagreed with it. Protestants were also intolerant at times, but their reformation efforts eventually produced a system in which the punishment of heresy was left to God.

The Bible was not the root of the problem of sectarianism. The real problem was that its interpreters did not always follow proper scriptural rules of interpretation coupled with
sound reasoning. Traditional ties to Catholic methods of exegesis created false doctrines for Protestants as easily as they did for Catholics.

Another failure of the Protestant Reformation is seen in its continued trust in creeds and councils to bind practices and beliefs on its adherents. Each new reformation brought a new creed, differing from its predecessor. Zwingli's "Sixty-seven articles" of 1523 was followed by The Lutheran Augsburg Confession of 1530, and 15 other documents during the next 100 years. These creeds were formed by councils, which also set the practices, disciplines, and rituals of the various Protestant churches. As a solution for disunity among Protestants, creeds were a dismal failure, since they only served to congeal false doctrines around which sectarian parties could form. And, the system by which they were formulated was only a duplication of Catholicism on a limited scale. It differed from it only by the absence of the Papacy, and in its stronger emphasis on Bible authority.

By retaining much of the structure of Rome, the Reformed Church still held to the distinction between the clergy and the laity. Yet, their proclamation of the Bible as the supreme authority in faith and practice created a problem for them. Ultra-reformers, like the 16th Century Anabaptists, read in their Bibles that anyone who had been saved by Christ was made a "priest" (Revelation 5:9-10), and they read that the body of Christians could be classed "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Peter 2:9). For them, then, the sole authority of the Bible struck a death-blow to clericalism, and its distinction between the "ordained" minister and his flock.

John Calvin and other later reformers "rejected the Roman Catholic idea of ordination as a divinely instituted sacrament, which can only be performed by bishops, and which confers priestly powers" on the recipients" (Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 314.), but they still retained the system of ordination and of ecclesiasticism for their own purposes.

Nothing much changed in this system, until the early 19th Century, when men like James O'Kelley (an early American dissenter from Methodism) rejected the episcopal rule of the church, and preached the sole authority of the Bible, including both "Old and New Testaments" as the "creed" and "sufficient rule of faith and practice" (West, The Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 1, p. 10). His chief mistake was the inclusion of the obsolescent Old Testament as a source for his "rule of faith and practice." The binding of Old
Testament "rules" would hinder his reform effort.

Only one final step was needed after this, the step which recognized the New Testament as the supreme and exclusive authority in the Christian age. This was provided by Thomas Campbell, in his pamphlet, *The Declaration and Address*, 1809. He said,

"A uniform agreement, would be infinitely preferable to our contentions and divisions: nay, that such a uniformity is the very thing that the Lord requires, if the New Testament be a perfect model--a sufficient formula for the worship, discipline and government of the Christian church. But what avails a promise to be governed by this book, unless this promise be faithfully fulfilled? Why promise to submit to the constitution, laws, institutions, and rules of discipline found in the volume, and afterwards require submission to institutions and usages wholly human?"

He further states that...

"nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion; but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them, in the word of God. Nor ought any things be admitted, as of divine obligation, in their church constitution and managements, but what is expressly enjoined by the Authority of our Lord Jesus and his Apostles upon the New Testament church; either in expressed terms, or by approved precedent." (Compare 1 Timothy 6:13-14, and Philippians 4:9)

This statement conformed, at last, to the teaching of the Apostles. All Old Testament laws and legal practices are void of force, according to Paul's teaching in Galatians 3:10-12, and 5:2-4. In the first reference, he showed that all who would be under law are "under a curse," because Moses said, "Cursed is every one that does not continue in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Deuteronomy 27:26). If, as the prophet says, "The righteous shall live by faith," then it is evident that "no man is justified by the law before God." To illustrate these truths, he tells the Galatians in the second reference that if they "receive circumcision," a work of the law of Moses, then Christ does not profit them, and they are obligated by Moses' command to "do the whole law." Therefore, no action taken in obedience to the Law of Moses is valid, or profitable. In fact,
such will "sever" us from Christ, and we are "fallen away from grace."

Christ took away the Old Covenant to establish the New, according to such passages as 2 Corinthians 3:12-14, Ephesians 2:14-16, Colossians 2:14, and Hebrews 10:8-10. The Old Testament, therefore, has no importance as Law, or as a "rule of faith," but only for what we can learn from its examples and principles (Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:11). Therefore, we should be New Testament Christians. No practice or command of the Old Testament must bind itself on us, today. To avoid repeating the early historic apostasy of the church, we must keep to the New Testament, and accept no other authority. If we "go onward, and do not abide in the teaching of Christ," we "have not God" (2 John 9-11). This is a tragedy we cannot afford to bring on ourselves.

Since the triumph of New Testament authority in the church, many Christians have sadly forsaken the principle, contending for such Old Testament practices as the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship, and have therefore repeated the errors which eventually led to the elevation of Church authority over Bible authority. If we have any appreciation for the struggles of our forefathers to regain the truth, and if we have any respect for "handling aright the word of God," we should contribute nothing toward a reprise of the historical error of abandoning Bible authority.
CHAPTER TEN

REVELATION-FINISHED OR CONTINUAL?

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth.” -- John 16:13

This controversy is properly a continuation of the discussion begun in the previous chapter, but considers another aspect of "authority." Church authority in the Roman Catholic system has rested mostly on the broad and severe imposition of human opinion and time-honored tradition on the consciences of believers. However, the sentiment was frequently expressed that such human dogmas and customs came by some form of "divine revelation."

Hand in hand with the presumption that God will continue to guide His people by special revelation, even after the New Testament is finished, is the presumption that there is a continuation of the "gift of prophecy," given to the early church. In 1 Corinthians 12:10, Paul tells us that in Apostolic times some were given the gift of prophecy "to profit withal." A prophet is one who speaks for another, just as Aaron was said to be the "prophet" of Moses (Exodus 7:1). In the Bible, revelation manifested itself to men through both literary and nonliterary prophets, but Peter says that "no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). As an example, King David was also called a prophet (Acts 2:29-30), and he said of himself, "The Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me, and his word was upon my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2).

So many men covet this gift today that there are many claims of "continual revelation." The Pope of the Catholic Church claims apostolic powers, among which is the gift of speaking for God, infallibly (that is, without error). This was officially declared a doctrine of the church in the Vatican Council of 1870, after centuries of development. The founders of some unconventional religious bodies, and their heirs (Mormon, Christian Science, Adventist, etc.) have also claimed inspiration as prophets. Among Pentecostals, almost
anyone claiming the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" also claims by this the Spirit's personal guidance, and special revelations.

Those who contend for modern "continual revelation" naturally hope they can find strong support for this presumption in the Scriptures. In fact, God did have a system of continual revelation from the beginning of time, as evidenced by many Scriptures! Moses' Law (God's Law spoken through the prophet Moses, Deuteronomy 5:23-31) was structured in a way that caused later generations to infer that it was not the final revelation. However, it contained many warnings against additions to, and subtractions from the Law, and against following self-proclaimed prophets into error, even if their confirming "signs" were fulfilled (Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32-13:3). Even so, the New Testament tells us that the Law of Moses was "faulty," requiring improvement. The writer of Hebrews reasons, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second" (Hebrews 8:6-13). The New Covenant required a new revelation. The prophet Jeremiah predicted this change in Jeremiah 31:31-34, telling his generation that the new covenant would be unlike the old, and specifying certain changes to be made.

David also prophesied that the Messiah would be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4), which prompted the writer of Hebrews in the New Testament to say, "The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Hebrews 7:12). While the Old Law was in force, its provision that the priests must come from the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron could not be violated with impunity. With a change of the law, however, a priest from a different order and tribe could be installed (see Numbers 3:1-4, and Hebrews 7:11-14).

Even Moses spoke of another prophet who was to succeed him in the future, to which the people were to "give heed" (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). Peter identifies this prophet as Jesus Christ (see Acts 3:19-23). But prophets later than Moses, and before the coming of "the prophet" identified in Deuteronomy 18, also appeared to guide the children of Israel into divine additions to the Law. Two examples will prove this. First, Gad the Seer and Nathan the prophet were moved by God to authorize the use of instruments of music in the Temple worship (2 Chronicles 29:25). Formerly, no musical instrument was found in the Law of Moses except trumpets, used to call assemblies together, and to announce events
(Leviticus 23:24, 25:8-9). They were not used for musical praise. However, the instruments authorized by Gad and Nathan were "added" in David's time for this purpose. In the second example, also in David's reign, the enhanced pattern of the Temple, which was to replace the former pattern for the fabric Tabernacle (Exodus, chapters 25-30), was given to David "in writing from the hand of Jehovah" (1 Chronicles 28:11, 19). David was a prophet, and received a "special revelation" from God!

John the Baptist, one of the last prophets appearing during the Old Testament age, participated in the process of continual revelation by introducing a new practice, BAPTISM. Jesus confirmed (by implication) that John's baptism was from heaven, when he asked the Jews, "The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven or from men?" (Matthew 21:23-27). The very fact that Jesus submitted to that baptism, and called it an act of "righteousness," proved that he knew it was "from heaven" (see Matthew 3:13-17). Therefore, the warnings against changes in the Law of Moses were against human changes, not divine changes.

But continual revelation was the rule even after the New Testament age began. Jesus promised the apostles continual guidance by the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-13). Though this passage speaks of revelations to come after the ascension of Christ, it also says that the Holy Spirit would reveal "all the truth" to the apostles. Someone might ask, "Does this phrase, 'all the truth,' mean 'complete, unalterable truth,' or 'all the truth that would be revealed during the lives of the Apostles' (with more truth to be given to their successors)?" This is the great historical controversy! Yet, sufficient evidence can be collected to show that the Lord intended for the New Testament to be completed in the age of the Apostles, in spite of this "strong case" for continual revelation up to and through their time!

The Apostles proclaimed the existence of only "one faith" (Ephesians 4:1-6). This is the faith "once for all delivered to the Saints," for which we are to "contend" (Jude 3). The phrase "once for all" means "one time--for all time." When the Bible says that Christ died "once for all," this meant "no more dying" (see Hebrews 7:26-27, 10:9-10). Therefore, a faith delivered "once for all" means "no more delivering!" We are told to "stand fast in the faith" (1 Corinthians 16:13). It would be difficult to "stand fast" in something that is constantly changing! We are to "try ourselves, whether we are in the faith" (2 Corinthians 10:1, 121
13:5), but a changeable faith would require a constant re-examination. We are to "stop the mouths" of those who "teach things that they ought not" by "reproving them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (Titus 1:11-13). Such a faith requires a complete "standard." Having a constant standard "once for all delivered," we can more easily discern its commands, and all men can obey in agreement.

Some statements in the Scripture plainly speak of the sufficiency of revelation. Paul said that the "inspired" word can guide the "man of God...completely unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Peter said that God and Jesus have "granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of Him that called us," and that through His promises we "become partakers of the divine nature," and "escape from the corruption that is in the world by lust" (2 Peter 1:3-4). James 1:25 calls the revelation of the New Testament "the perfect (complete) law of liberty."

We can know that the Scripture is complete by what it is able to accomplish. Paul said that the Word of God's grace can "build you up, and give you the inheritance" (Acts 20:32). He also testifies, along with James, that it can "save" us (1 Corinthians 15:1-2, James 1:18, 21). Peter says we are "begotten again...through the Word of God" (1 Peter 1:22-25). The Apostles, in saying these things, were only confirming what had been spoken by the Lord. Jesus said He came into this world to "bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37). Of Himself, He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Of His words, He said, "He that rejects me, and receives not my sayings, has one that judges him: the word that I spake, THE SAME shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). The word finished by Jesus will therefore be the word by which we shall ultimately be judged, without addition or subtraction.

But is there any evidence that God intended to end prophecy with the testimony of the Apostles? As the prophets of the Old Testament predicted the changes which led to the New, at least one of them pointed to an end of prophecy. In Zechariah 13:2, the prophet speaks of a day to come in which God "will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land." One commentator on this passage says that in the "land of Messiah's rule"...

"True prophets would pass out of the land but false prophets would not,
for these may ever plague the church. True prophets would cease, for there would no longer be need for them. Prophets were inspired teachers, often identified in the New Testament with the apostles, assisting in the laying of the foundation of the church and the completing of revelation (Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; 4:11). Once the foundation was laid and the new revelation was complete, the need for prophets would cease...In the time under consideration in these two chapters (clearly Messianic), when revelation would be complete and true prophecy would cease, anyone who would be so presumptuous as to claim the power of prophecy would be a false prophet."

(Hailey, Homer, *The Minor Prophets*, p. 392)

Knowing that the end of prophecy in all its forms was at hand, the Apostle Paul wrote, "...whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). The prophecy, tongues and knowledge of this passage refer to the gifts of the Holy Spirit listed (with others) in the beginning of this context (12:4-11). Paul sorts out these three prophetic gifts to show their end and their replacement by that which is "perfect." This "perfect" or complete thing has to be of the same class and order of that which is incomplete, or "in part," namely, prophetic revelation.

Those who yearn for special revelations, and the continuation of prophecy, try to interpret this "perfect" replacement of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge to be heaven, so that the passage will seem to imply that these gifts will not end until the saved enter into heaven at the end of the age. Though this interpretation fits their goal, it is inconsistent with the context of the passage, and must be rejected by those who perceive the truth.

Therefore, the warning against additions and subtractions to finished prophecy in Revelation 22:18-19 has more force than that of Deuteronomy 4:2, because God has finished it; no more will be revealed.

In total disregard for this mass of evidence that the word was finished and complete in Apostolic times, men in the early days of Christianity were anxious to appear as prophets of God. Their powers of deception would be great. Jesus gave the first warnings against
the blandishments of false prophets (Matthew 7:15, 24:11, 24), and Peter shows his readers that as "there arose false prophets also among the people (of Israel)...among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies" (2 Peter 2:1). John and Paul also add their warnings to that of their brother apostle (1 John 4:1; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

The historian, Schaff, tells us that Montanism, a late 2nd Century sect,

"asserted, above all, the continuance of prophecy, and hence it went generally under the name of the nova prophetia...Ecstatic oracular utterances were mistaken for divine inspirations...As to its matter, the Montanistic prophecy related to the approaching heavy judgments of God, the persecutions, the millennium, fasting, and other ascetic exercises, which were to be enforced as laws of the church." (History, Vol. 2, p. 423)

He also says that...

"The Catholic church did not deny, in theory, the continuance of prophecy and the other miraculous gifts, but was disposed to derive the Montanistic revelations from satanic inspirations, and mistrusted them all the more for their proceeding not from the regular clergy, but in great part from unauthorized laymen and fanatical women." (Ibid.)

The jealous guardianship of the apostate church regarding its presumed right as the sole fountain of truth certainly motivated its condemnation of the Montanists, and several other sects which claimed the spirit of prophecy. We noted in the previous chapter, however, that the 5th Century Roman bishop, Leo I, thought the canons of the Council of Nicea were "inspired by the Holy Ghost." After this, Catholics developed a strong tendency to attribute inspired genius to the utterances of fallible men. Even Schaff, a Protestant, declares the 4th Century Apostle's Creed to be, "in its contents and spirit, truly apostolic...the product of a secondary inspiration" (Ibid., p. 533).

Much of this desire to retain prophecy springs from Pagan superstitions which had infiltrated the church in the early days. Cyprian (born 200 AD), after converting from paganism, still "believed, like Tertullian and others, in visions and dreams" (Ibid., p. 843). Constantine's legendary vision of the cross, under which "sign" he was to conquer his
enemies, is treated by Catholic sources as a true revelation from God to the pagan Emperor. These traditions, plus a multitude of similar apocryphal stories have been used to excite the imaginations of men through the ages, causing them to suppose that they could have similar providential or prophetic dreams and visions. These subjective conceits draw on the accounts of dreams and visions in the New Testament (Acts 10:9ff, 16:9f, etc.), but they can produce no new revelation, if the New Testament furnishes the "man of God," completely, "unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). Against their validity, also, can be arrayed a multitude of claims for similar guidance by false gods. Julian the Apostate, who was Emperor of Rome from 361 to 363 AD, claimed to have...

"...intimate personal intercourse with Jupiter, Minerva, Apollo, Hercules, who paid their nocturnal visits to his heated fancy, and assured him of their special protection." (Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 43)

The dreams of Julian, we can be certain, were as real to him as those of Cyprian, but would certainly produce conflicting instruction. But this is true even of those who claim inspiration from the same Spirit. Latter day revelations are plentiful, but they do not agree. The proliferation of conflicting doctrines claiming to rest on "continual revelation" leads many people, eventually, to reject the whole concept of modern revelation.

The Age of Apostasy produced many claims to special revelations, both in Papal palace and monastery cell, and in both men and women (Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 108). The "prophecies" of Brigitta of Sweden (1303-1373 AD) came at the time when popes and anti-popes struggled for recognition of their legitimacy. There was also much political turmoil and war during this time. In order to re-establish the Papacy in Rome, Brigitta told one of the rival popes that he would "die prematurely if he kept away from the residence divinely appointed for the supreme pontiff (that is, Rome)" (Ibid., p. 109). She did not live, however, to see her false prophecy fulfilled. In 1376, Catherine of Sienna, another self-proclaimed prophetess, urged Pope Gregory to return to Rome. He followed her advice, but survived his entrance into Rome by only a year. His return triggered war and rebellion. Thousands were slaughtered by papal troops, and when Gregory died, he expressed regret at having listened to "prophecies," and advised his successors to reject them (Ibid., pp. 110-113).

From at least one of the theologians of the Middle Ages, John Gerson (1363-1429), we
have a rejection of special revelations. Though he was an effective advocate of the practices of Roman Catholicism, he was also eloquent (by medieval standards) in his opposition to the pseudo-prophets of his time. Schaff writes,

"He was far from being a religious visionary and wrote treatises against the dangers of delusion from dreams and revelations. As coins must be tested by their weight, hardness, color, shape and stamp, so visions are to be tested by the humility and honesty of those who profess to have them and their readiness to teach and be taught...

When the negotiations were going on at the Council of Constance for the confirmation of the canonization of St. Brigitta (the prophetess mentioned above), Gerson laid down the principle that, if visions reveal what is already in the Scriptures, then they are false, for God does not repeat Himself, Job 33:14. People have itching ears for revelations because they do not study the Bible. Later he warned against the revelations of women, as women are more open to deception than men." (Ibid., p. 215)

We would agree with some of Gerson's views, but reject others. We know that visions need to be "tested," but by the Scriptures, not the sincerity and humility of the visionary. Also, he erred in his view that prophecies are not repeated. An example of this is found in Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3. It would have been better for him to say that when visions reveal something that is not in the unchangeable and completed Scripture, they are false. His assertion that women visionaries are more deluded than men cannot be proved. In spite of these criticisms of his views, we have in Gerson's writings evidence confirming the fact that some in the medieval Church opposed the principle of continual revelation.

But the Roman Church was still the captive of mysticism, and Schaff is correct in pointing out one of the evil side effects of the claim to special revelation, when he says,

"The mystics, in seeking to hear the voice of God speaking in their own hearts, ran (the) peril of magnifying individualism to the disparagement of what was common to all and of mistaking states of the overwrought imagination for revelations from God." (Ibid., p. 240)

Even Protestants were not immune to the appeal of inner guidance. We have already
mentioned in chapter six that Luther struggled to stifle claims of special revelations among his followers, without complete success. This situation continued through the degeneration of the Protestant Reformation in varying degrees, and was the source of fascination to many unschooled and unstable men. Little excitements having to do with outbreaks of ecstatic speech and claims of prophetic utterances continued down to the 19th Century.

The "Restoration" pioneers of the early 1800's were disturbed as much by contradictory modern revelations as they were by contradictory creeds. They devoted themselves to prove from the written word that the Word itself must be treated as the only means of discovering what God has revealed. One application of the principle of special revelation which the pioneers opposed most vehemently was the concept that God would reveal to the "elect," through a sign or message apart from the word, that they were saved. Though many of these "Restorationists" were formerly Calvinists, and had at one time embraced this concept, they saw an inconsistency in the claims of such "regenerations," since they were alleged to occur in various warring denominations. In his debate with N. L. Rice, under the proposition, "In conversion and sanctification, the Spirit of God operates on persons only through the Word," Alexander Campbell said,

"Some amongst us, through the ignorance that is in them on this grand theme, ascribe to the human mind the powers of the Holy Spirit. They represent the human mind as possessing some sort of innate power of originating spiritual ideas; to arrive at the knowledge of God by the mere contemplation of nature. They...adorn human reason with a very splendid plagiarism, called natural religion. While at variance on almost everything else, the mental philosopher and the Deist, the Romanist and the Protestant, the Calvinist and the Arminian admirably coalesce and harmonize in this self-congratulatory assumption." (Campbell-Rice Debate, p. 623)

This, of course, is the test of all subjective claims to special revelation. The question is not, "Do all those who claim to be receivers of revelations 'coalesce and harmonize' on the conception that they can receive them," but it is rather, "Do the revelations harmonize with each other, and with the Bible?" If they do not, the claims are fraudulent.

The breeding ground both of special revelation and unlawful religious invention is found
in the rebellious rejection of the truth that the New Testament is the sum total of all that God wishes to reveal in the Christian Dispensation. Confinement to the obvious limitations imposed on its pages is intolerable to those who yearn to innovate and pervert the divine message. There were similar innovators in Paul’s time (Galatians 1:6-7).

Though it can be conceded that "continual revelation" was valid in Bible times, the plain teaching of the New Testament shows that revelations ceased with the Apostolic prophets. Also, thorough examination reveals that "latter day revelations" do not agree, either with Scripture, or with other revelations. So, to avoid being led astray, we must be convinced that the concept of continual revelation is a farce, and protect ourselves through knowledge (2 Peter 3:15-18). If we are not convinced that continual revelation is no longer valid, we deserve to be led astray into false teaching by self-proclaimed and wonder-working "prophets!" The "signs and lying wonders" of the "man of sin" can seduce those who "receive not a love of the truth." But God, whose patience is severely taxed by such dupes, will also "send them a working of error, that they should believe a lie," and be "condemned" (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12).
CHAPTER ELEVEN

INDEPENDENCE VERSUS CENTRALIZATION

Yet another historical development adjunctive to the controversy regarding Bible Authority vs. Church Authority is the destruction and revival of congregationalism. Congregational independence is implied by necessity in the New Testament. In selecting its "messenger" for the work of carrying its "bounty unto Jerusalem," the church at Corinth was commanded by the Apostle Paul to exercise independent action (1 Corinthians 16:1-4). The need for independent action at Corinth must have applied also to the "churches of Galatia," since they received the same apostolic "order." Churches in Macedonia also had the "good pleasure...to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints" at Jerusalem (Romans 15:26-27). The independent deliberation of the disciples in the church at Antioch to "send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea" was not commanded by the Apostle, according to the record, but was prompted spontaneously by a spirit of compassion in response to the revelation of a prophet (Acts 11:25-30). The church at Philippi sent its "messenger and minister" to provide for Paul's needs (Philippians 2:25). The Church at Corinth exercised internal discipline by Paul's authority, but in his absence, without any extra-congregational authority (1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11). Beyond these and other examples stands the inhibiting silence of God. We must charge those who are not inhibited by that silence with the responsibility for introducing any destructive trend toward centralization, the historical path for establishing "church authority" (see Chapter 9).

In the Apostolic Age, elders (also called bishops, Acts 20:17, 28) were only shepherds over the flock (local church) of which they were members (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2). No multi-congregational officer is described in the New Testament. Some who wish to justify denominational traditions of church polity suggest that the Apostles were officers holding a sort of overseership in the church universal. They might point to Galatians 2, citing Paul's division of the Apostleship of the Circumcision (Jews) from the Apostleship of the Uncir-
cumcision (Gentiles). Yet, by Paul's own rule, he could not serve as a bishop, being unmarried (1 Timothy 3:1-2). He had his "apostleship" from the Lord, but "elders in every church" were "appointed" by him and others (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5).

Paul's "care of all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28) is sometimes described by sectarian commentators as a "pastoral" responsibility, but again, this is not specifically stated in Scripture. We have made the point previously in chapter three that as delegates created by Jesus, the Apostles did not have the authority to make other delegates. Neither did they ever authorize any bishop to rise above his duties in the local congregation to reign in authority over several churches. Any bishop doing so was a violator of the specific limitations in the writings of the Apostles, which must be treated as the "commandment of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37).

But as the unlawful superstructure of the apostate church evolved toward full-grown Roman Catholicism, it passed through all the human innovations of local and extra-local organization now recognized in modern Denominationalism. At first, even when distinctions grew between bishops and elders, these offices existed only in local congregations. However, when bishops began to meet in synods and councils, the first level of the authoritative pyramid was laid, to be capped finally by the papacy.

Schaff, an heir of the tradition of religious synods, considers councils to be important for unity, and acceptable, if they follow the precedent of the so-called Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). The exceptions to this view have also been stated in chapter three. But his view is that...

"Councils or Synods were an important means of maintaining and promoting ecclesiastical unity, and deciding questions of faith and discipline. They had a precedent and sanction in the apostolic Conference of Jerusalem for the settlement of the circumcision controversy. They were suggested moreover by the deliberative political assemblies of the provinces of the Roman empire, which met every year in the chief towns. But we have no distinct trace of Councils before the middle of the second century,...when they first appear..." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, p. 176)

Schaff admits in this statement that Councils had their beginning half a century after the
demise of the last Apostle, and yet he attempts to connect them with the apostolic era. He says, in the same context,

"There are several kinds of Synods according to their size, DIOCESAN, PROVINCIAL (or METROPOLITAN), NATIONAL, PATRIARCHAL, and OECUMENICAL (or UNIVERSAL). Our period (ante-Nicene) knows only the first three. Diocesan synods consist of the bishop and his presbyters and deacons with the people assisting, and were probably held from the beginning, but are not mentioned before the third century. Provincial synods appear first in Greece, where the spirit of association had continued strong... They were found to be useful, and hence became institutions.

The synodical meetings were public, and the people of the community around sometimes made their influence felt. In the time of Cyprian, presbyters, confessors, and laymen took an active part..." (Ibid., pp. 176-177)

Cyprian, who claimed to be a district "bishop" through the middle years of the 3rd Century, was the initiator, or at least the promoter, of some of the heretical ideas that led toward the Roman-style apostasy. Schaff says that...

"Out of this empirical orthodox church, episcopally organized and centralized in Rome, Cyprian can imagine no Christianity at all!" (Ibid., p. 173).

What Cyprian calls "orthodox" should be called "apostate," since it is removed in form from that which was established by the Apostles, but we can see that centralization for the sake of unity and discipline became an urgent goal for Cyprian's contemporaries, and finally led to the great ecumenical councils, beginning with Nicea (325 AD). As the synods and councils multiplied, they did not continue to be the cosmopolitan gatherings that characterized the early days. Schaff reveals that...

"...the Roman clergy, in their letter to Cyprian, speak of a common synodical consultation of the bishops with the priests, deacons, confessors, and laymen in good standing.

But with the advance of the hierarchical spirit, this republican feature gradually vanished. After the council of Nicea (325) bishops alone had seat and voice, and the priests appear hereafter merely as secretaries, or ad-
visers, or representatives of their bishops. The bishops, moreover, did not act as representatives of their churches, nor in the name of the body of believers, as formerly, but in their own right as successors of the apostles...At all events, their decrees at that time had only moral power, and could lay no claim to universal validity. Even Cyprian emphatically asserts absolute independence for each bishop in his own diocese. 'To each shepherd,' he says, 'a portion of the Lord's flock has been assigned, and his account must be rendered to his Master.'" (Ibid., p. 178)

In this statement we have hints of the process of change in the apostate church. Nothing was stable at this point. Ignoring the silent prohibitions of the word of God, they rushed forward to embrace the organizational concepts of the Empire, thereby enabling the church to blend with the Roman political system when it became the state church. Churches where bishops presided became the focal points of government for diocese and district. These were later recognized as Cathedral Churches, to distinguish them from ordinary "parish churches." When archbishops were developed, they reigned over bishops. Eventually the five great Patriarchates were established. Having accomplished this, the Patriarchal seats of power, especially Rome and Constantinople, competed for supremacy, until the Greek church took its independent course, leaving Rome to establish and develop the Papacy in its final form.

In the three hundred years after the Council of Nicea, a few milestones were laid in the progress toward centralization. First, the laymen were eliminated from the "election of bishops." Schaff says that...

"...the consent of the people in the choice of presbyters, and especially of bishops, long remained, at least in outward form, in memory of the custom of the apostles and the primitive church...The influence of the people in this period appears most prominently in the election of bishops. The Roman bishop Leo, in spite of his (belief in) papal absolutism, asserted the thoroughly democratic principle, long since abandoned by his successors: 'He who is to preside over all, should be elected by all.' Oftentimes the popular will decided before the provincial bishops and the clergy assembled
and the regular election could be held. Ambrose of Milan and Nectarius of Constantinople were appointed to the bishopric even before they were baptized!" (Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 239-240)

As the church corrupted itself, and that corruption transferred itself to the laymen, elections of this sort sometimes resulted in riots and violence. There are recorded incidents where such fighting claimed many lives. Schaff also says,

"...every mode of appointment was evidently exposed to abuse, and could furnish no security against unworthy candidates, if the electors, whoever they might be, were destitute of moral earnestness and the gift of spiritual discernment." (Ibid., p. 241)

Schaff then reveals the second and third transition toward absolute papal power, when he says,

"Toward the end of the period before us (post-Nicene age) the republican element in the election of bishops entirely disappeared. The Greek church after the eighth century vested the franchise exclusively in the bishops. The Latin church, after the eleventh century, vested it in the clergy of the cathedral church, without allowing any participation to the people. But in the West, especially in Spain and France, instead of the people, the temporal prince exerted an important influence, in spite of the frequent protest of the church.

Even the election of pope, after the downfall of the West Roman empire, came largely under control of the secular authorities of Rome...till, in 1059, through the influence of Hildebrand (afterward Gregory VII.), it was lodged exclusively with the college of cardinals, which was filled by the pope himself." (Ibid., pp. 241-242)

Thus we see that the Apostate church moved from a local church concept to the universal, from de-centralization to self-perpetuating centralization. It justified this trend on the basis of ecumenical necessity. It enforced its authority through violent discipline. Schaff, because of his own bias, agreed with the necessity of this system, saying,

"Mediaeval Christianity was very weak, and required for its self-preservation a strong central power and legal discipline...Roman unity was better than
undisciplined independency." (Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 99-100)

Schaff seems to support this principle in comments on the struggles of the 8th Century Pope, Boniface, against the independent spirit of some of his missionaries to Germany. His success crushed the independents, but sealed once again the enclosure of apostasy, so that none could escape with impunity. Therefore ecumenism, as practiced by Rome, only served to "unify" people in error, not in truth. If the truth of God’s Word had prevailed, all men willing to submit to the truth could have been united spiritually, and would have needed no geographical identity, or be tied together organizationally.

Centralization of the Roman type was one of the causes for the climactic division between East and West, between the Greek and Roman churches (Ibid., p. 311). The Greek church, however, waited until the principle of the Papacy reached its final stages of preparation before it objected. It had utilized all the other stages of centralization from the congregational independence of the Apostolic system to the Patriarchical system, the last stage before the Papacy. But it would not take the final step. This organizational issue was treated as the only one serious enough to break away from Rome. Some may cry crocodile tears over this major religious division, but real tears should be shed over the fact that the organizational practices and doctrines of the Greek church were just as foreign to Scripture as those of Rome.

The Roman Church now had in place a system as despotic as any of the political systems of the Middle Ages. It allied itself with political despots, feeling more affinity with them than with any democratic movements. For instance, Pope Innocent III supported the cause of King John, of England, against the Barons who had forced him to sign the Magna Carta (June 15, 1215). This charter, perhaps the foundation instrument of English Common Law, was, for its time, a bold "declaration of independence," Schaff says that...

"This document...the most important contract in the civil history of the English-speaking peoples, meant defined law as against uncertain tradition and the arbitrary will of the monarch...The pope made the fatal mistake of taking sides with perjured royalty against the reasonable demands of the nation...He asserted that the ’wicked audacity of the barons tended to the contempt of the Apostolic see (himself), the detriment of kingly prerogative
(a tyrannical prerogative he himself wanted to claim), the disgrace of the English nation, and the endangering of the cross." (History, Vol. 5, p. 172)

Innocent declared the Magna Carta "null and void for all time," but the English nation was not listening to Rome (to its glory, and to the benefit of all freedom-loving people).

The work of Wyclif and Huss in the late 14th and early 15th Centuries did not touch strongly on church organization, except for their attacks on the Papacy and the College of Cardinals. The Roman church had such enormous disciplinary power that dissent could gain very little foothold. Being as far removed from congregational independence as night is from day, the Roman church struggled to protect its dubious "gains." The Pope's only real foe was the Council, which carried the moral force of consensus. Schaff says that in the fifteenth century, theologians like Nicolas of Cusa were saying that Councils were "inspired by the Holy Spirit," and that "the pope derives his authority from the consent of the church" (Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 224). Before Nicolas, John Gerson had taught that "the papal office is of God, and yet the pope may be deposed even by a council called without his consent" (Ibid., p. 210). It is no wonder, then, that popes, like...

"...Martin and his successors feared councils, and it was their policy to prevent, if possible, their assembling, by all sorts of excuses and delays. Why should the pope place himself in a position to hear instructions and receive commands?" (Ibid., p. 168)

When Lutheranism was triumphant in Germany, with its rejection of the Papacy, it was inevitable that the discussion of church organization should come up. Fueled by the study of organizational examples in the New Testament, the desire to return to apostolic practice raised the question of congregational independence. For centuries, local parish churches had been denied the right to select their own priests. When the Peasant's War began (1523), one of their demands was the right to elect their own "pastors." Zwingli counted this as a reasonable demand, because of his stronger reformatory spirit, but Luther rejected it (Ibid., Vol. 7, p. 443).

However, Lutherans discussed the subject of church organization at length, considering four methods. They could (1) retain the form of episcopal hierarchy, less the pope, or (2) they could constitute a civil episcopate, returning to the days when kings and governors
appointed bishops, or (3) they could organize a representative synodical government, or (4) they could have "congregational independency...self-governing congregations of true believers in free association with each other." Schaff says,

"The last two ways are more thoroughly Protestant and consistent with the principle of the general priesthood of believers; but they presuppose a higher grade of self-governing capacity in the laity than the episcopal polity.

All these forms of government admit of a union with the state (as in Europe), or a separation from the state (as in America). Union of church and state was the traditional system since the days of Constantine and Charlemagne, and was adhered to by all the Reformers. They had no idea of separation; they even brought the two powers into closer relationship by increasing the authority of the state over the church. Separation of the two was barely mentioned by Luther, as a private opinion, we may say almost as a prophetic dream, but was soon abandoned as an impossibility...

The German Reformation did not stimulate the duty of self-support, nor develop the faculty of self-government. It threw the church into the arms of the state, from whose bondage she has never been able as yet to emancipate herself...while the common people remained as passive as before, without a voice in the election of their pastor, or any share in the administration of their congregational affairs. The Lutheran prince took the place of the bishop or pope; the Lutheran pastor, the place of the Romish priest, but instead of obeying the bishop he had to obey his secular patron." (Ibid., pp. 517-520)

In Luther's view, congregational independency was to be favored, if a congregation of "true believers" could be found. However, most congregations, in his judgment, were merely a "mixed multitude of nominal professors!" Schaff says that he abandoned the whole idea after the Peasant's War, and became a sort of Protestant Pope, "consulted by princes, magistrates, theologians, and people of all sorts" (Ibid., pp. 538-539).

The Swiss reformation, being more inclined to recover and restore Apostolic custom, considered congregational independence as a valid option. As early as 1526 AD, the "Diet
of Ilanz" in Switzerland abolished the "episcopal monarchy" and introduced "congregational independence," though they did not go as far as later congregationalists in England and America. (Ibid., p. 139-140.) The Church-State connection was maintained.

The Anabaptists went further, however, abolishing the clergy and placing congregational government in the hands of the whole congregation. For this, and for their other "radical" (or, scriptural) views, they were persecuted to the death. Schaff says that...

"The age was not ripe for unlimited religious liberty and congregational self-government. The Anabaptists perished bravely as martyrs of conscience." (Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 72)

John Calvin's views of church polity were more congregational than those of Luther and Zwingli. Schaff says that the autonomy of most churches...

"...is more or less curtailed by the civil government wherever Church and State are united, and where the State supports the Church. For self-government requires self-support. Calvin intended to institute synods, and to make the clergy independent of State patronage. But in this he did not succeed...

...The churches under Calvin's influence always maintained, at least in theory, the independence of the Church in all spiritual affairs, and the right of individual congregations in the election of their own pastors. Calvin derives this right from the Greek verb used in the passage which says that Paul and Barnabas ordained presbyters by the suffrages or votes of the people (Acts 14:23)." (Ibid., pp. 467-468)

Sixteen years after the death of Calvin, congregationalism began to surface in the ferment of English Protestantism.

"What was in substance the Congregational Way evolved spontaneously in many times and places. Among people studying the Gospels and the Book of Acts arose a craving to re-establish the primitive Christian Church as they understood it, in its purity and simplicity...In England a clear expression of the fundamentals of Congregationalism was made about 1580 by Robert Browne. According to his philosophy a church existed wherever two or three were gathered together to attempt to live by the law of Christ. He therefore
considered that such a church was organized when its members bound themselves by a covenant and elected their elders. No temporal power had authority over such a church, whose allegiance was to Christ, its true head. Separate churches owed each other fellowship in aid and counsel, but could not command each other." (Starkey, *The Congregational Way*, p. 15)

Browne's ideas were so novel for the time that he had much difficulty in maintaining churches under the rule, and eventually returned to the fold of Anglicanism. However, the famous Separatists of Plymouth Pilgrim fame took up Browne's cause, and suffered for it.

"In 1592, three great 'Separatist' leaders, Henry Barrowe, John Greenwood, and Francis Johnson, established" a purely "congregational" church. The Plymouth Separatists who came to America in 1620 belonged to this same group." (Encyclopedia Americana, 1954 Edit., Vol. 7, p. 501.)

The Puritans, who were contemporary with them, were content to reform the Church of England, but the Separatists thought that Anglican theocracy was beyond reform. Therefore, they "separated" themselves from its communion. By the laws of England, all of their meetings were illegal, and stiff punishments were prescribed when they were convicted. Under the leadership of William Brewster and John Robinson, some fled first to Holland, then to America, landing at Plymouth in 1620. For some years, their primary goal was physical survival, but when stability came to the colony, they turned to more spiritual pursuits.

They were followed to Massachusetts by a larger Puritan invasion, but in the isolation of America, the church polity of the Separatists became more appealing than allegiance to the distant monarch of England. Congregationalism grew in popularity, and influenced the thinking of many Americans.

Occasional attempts to return to the Presbyterian principle of synod government did not readily appeal to men who were just beginning to enjoy their freedom from clerical control. However, democracy was growing apace with church autonomy. This democratic influence pushed New England Puritans to call a synod and provide a codification of church polity called the Cambridge Platform. In their deliberations on church government, they...

"...found the establishment of autonomous congregations suitable to
circumstances. Autonomy was not absolute; each church owed fellowship to the others, and 'synods' had been called as problems arose ...Autonomous though the individual congregations were, the Platform ratified a custom in operation ever since the settlement of the Bay, the fellowship between churches in councils to be called to advise each other in times of pressing difficulty. Such groups would function in 'debating and determining matters of religion according to the Word...and publish the same to the churches whom it concerneth...to the correction of errors and heresies and the establishing of truth and peace ...which is the end of the synod.'" (Starkey, The Congregational Way, pp. 92-93)

We can see from this statement that pure independency and autonomy did not really exist, even among the Puritans of this time. This led to new apostasies. "The office of elder would be forgotten. Synods would in Massachusetts become ministers' associations" (Ibid.).

The Puritan revolution in England, followed by the "Protectorship" under Oliver Cromwell (1653-1658) freed the American Puritans from the watchful eye of a jealous monarch long enough for this impure congregationalism to find a home. A half-century later, the controversial John Wise wrote a book entitled A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches." This book was to become what was described as the "Magna Carta" of American Congregationalism. In this book, Wise...

"...traced the Way back to its origins in the primitive Christian churches of the Apostles, and described the extinction of ancient liberties by prelates who found it 'no pleasant thing to flesh and blood to engage in the conduct and oversight of Christ's volunteers; to bear with their manners; to exercise patience toward them in all their infirmities; and in all their weaknesses to continue a high valuation for them as the flock of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood; all this requires abundance of self denial; and if it is so, then it's no wonder that many of their prelates were willing gradually to extricate themselves out of this uneasy condition, and embrace all opportunities of introducing another order into the churches that might tend more
to the exaltation of their own power and dignity.' So came the bishops." (Ibid., p. 122)

Wise probably touched on several of the motivations which prompted early bishops to abandon apostolic governmental tenets for the more satisfying dignity of being "prelates." In his book, he traced, as we have done, the degeneration of Apostolic polity, and argued for a return to it. Yet, as we have seen, they did not return all the way.

The renowned Barton W. Stone, in the beginning of the 19th Century, abandoned the doctrines of Calvinism, and with several sympathizers formed the Springfield Presbytery, a synod separate from their parent Presbyterian Church. Earl West writes,

"Under the new Presbytery, in less than a year, fifteen congregations were established--seven in Ohio and eight in Kentucky. But it took also less than a year for them to see that this Presbytery 'savored of a party spirit,' and was a handicap to their work. Plans were immediately begun to dissolve the organization, and on June 28, 1804 there was issued, 'The Last Will and Testament of The Springfield Presbytery." (West, Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 1, p. 25)

This document showed that its writers had a sense of humor, but they were dead serious in their abandonment of synod style government. In their "Witnesses' Address," they say that...

"...they undertook to prepare for the press a piece entitled Observations on Church Government, in which the world will see the beautiful simplicity of Christian church government, stripped of human inventions and lordly traditions. As they proceeded in the investigation of that subject, they soon found that there was neither precept nor example in the New Testament for such confederacies as modern Church sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, General Assemblies, etc. Hence they concluded, that while they continued in the connection in which they then stood, they were off the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, of which Christ himself is the chief corner stone." (Ibid., p. 28)

Thomas Campbell also inherited some of his views of church government from his
Presbyterian background, which favored synods. In the beginning of his work, having been expelled from the Presbyterian fellowship, he gathered supporters into a group they called "The Christian Association of Washington." This showed that they had not yet understood the "ancient order," but were still paying homage to the denominational tradition of founding local churches through the auspices of the "church at large." They soon recognized their error, however, and dissolved themselves into a church.

Still inclined toward having extra-congregational assemblies, Thomas and his son Alexander, who had recently come from Scotland, quickly found some affinity with the Baptists. Following their governmental practice, they first joined the Redstone Association, but later formed the Mahoning Association of churches (1820). West says,

"There was a noticeable difference between this Association and others of that day. Its general policy was less tyrannical, allowing more freedom among churches than was usual for that day. Its constitution declared that it did not have authority over the churches, but that it would recognize the independence of the congregations. The association claims to act in an advisory capacity only, at the same time disclaiming any superiority, jurisdiction or coercive right." (Ibid., p. 66)

In spite of this disclaimer, human associations all have the temptation to rule over churches in some ways. This is evident in the implications of their purpose. Promoters said,

"The utility of an Association appears in many respects as the obtaining a more general acquaintance with the State of the Churches and giving advice in cases of difficulty: supply destitute churches; and guarding ourselves against innovations which the churches of Christ may expect always to be troubled with..." (Ibid., p. 67)

All the ancient justifications of the governmental innovations of the Ante-Nicene church are found in this justification of the 19th Century "Association." Discussions of governmental options continued, infiltrating and dividing a number of Baptist Associations in Kentucky and other places. The sentiment of those wishing to dissolve the Associations was based on the realization that such organizational schemes were absent from the New Testament. Yet, when the Machining Association was dissolved, Alexander Campbell was displeased,
and persuaded the brethren not to forsake some sort of regular extra-congregational assembly. They reluctantly agreed to have annual "State Meetings."

These "Restorationists" had rejected the long-established principle of "episcopacy" and its appendages. The "eldership" was re-established in the churches, with a plurality of elders in each church. The "ordination" of preachers was abandoned. The local churches were independent and autonomous. Yet, the journey out of "organized" religion was agonizingly complex, they found. Some kind of "binding" organization seemed necessary to some in the Campbell Movement, so the annual "State Meetings" (or, "Cooperational Meetings") were held to read reports from the churches, to plan "missionary work" for the coming year (often acting as the "agent" for sending out "state missionaries"), and to discuss problems of interest to all the churches. These gatherings fell into practices which aroused much suspicion, however.

Having escaped the despotism of unscriptural denominational structures, many participants in the "Restoration Movement" watched for, and detected signs that the Cooperational Meetings were a trend in that direction. Those who defended them most strenuously were inclined to think that the opponents of the meetings were "anti-progress." They thought it "good" to pool resources of money and talent, in order to accelerate the growth of the church. They ignored the truth that only by the Scriptures may local churches provide for "every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). Thus, the "Cooperational Meetings," controversial from the beginning, became precedents for, and predecessors of, human organizations and "societies." A key to the problem was that their promoters never realized that something that had to be promoted and defended by human reasoning and sentiment, rather than by Scripture, should be abandoned as dangerous to the cause of unity.

When the Campbell and Stone movements drew closer together, the period from 1831 to 1835 saw a series of joint meetings to discuss a union. This accomplished little, but the goal was gradually met throughout the country by the independent actions of the local churches. But Barton W. Stone had some reservations about the organizational concepts of Campbell. Walter Scott tried to convince Stone that "cooperation meetings" did not threaten the independence of local congregations. But Stone still believed that such meetings could revive the despotism of Baptist Associations, and expressed his view in
one of his discourses. He says,

"Every duly organized church has the power of self-government committed to it by the great bishop, Christ Jesus. By him laws are given them by which they are to be governed. To him each church is responsible for itself alone, and not for another. The church at Philadelphia was not responsible for that at Sardis, nor that at Sardis for the church at Thyatira. The church at Ephesus was not to blame for the disorders at Corinth, and so of all the rest. The great bonds of union of the churches are the Bible alone, and a life of holy obedience to all its precepts. Every attempt at a more perfect consolidation is a departure from the simplicity that is in Christ, and will ultimate in disunion and slavery. Let the churches be well instructed in their duty...that it is their duty to send evangelists, and to help them in their journey; that is, to support them and their families in all good things. Should one church be unable to support one evangelist, let two or more cooperate to do it. This course will preclude the necessity of the annual meetings of the elders and brethren, to talk much, and make resolves on paper to no effect, and which die the death of all such things, unpitied and unlamented by the Bible Christian." (Mathes, James M., Works of Elder B. W. Stone, Vol. 1, pp. 327-328)

Stone's mild manners, tolerant spirit, and his death in 1844 robbed him of a continuing great influence on the movement he labored so hard to promote. At his death, Alexander Campbell's influence was still rising, and would continue on for another twenty two years. Campbell was one of the leading polemicists in the discussion of cooperational schemes, because he was dissatisfied with the progress of the cause. He thought the church needed a "dose" of organizational "medicine."

The principle which had originally attracted many to the Restoration was stated clearly in 1823 by Alexander Campbell in the very first issue of his first published journal, The Christian Baptist. In describing the early apostolic church, he said,

"Their churches were not fractured into missionary societies, Bible societies, education societies; nor did they dream of organizing such in the
world...In their church capacity alone they moved. They neither transformed themselves into any other kind of association, nor did they fracture and sever themselves into divers societies..." (Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 6)

But, surrounding the "Restoration-minded" churches, the denominations paraded visible successes with their human organizations. The apostolic principle of local churches, functioning without benefit of extraneous human structures, was a system untried since the days of the Apostles, so it was natural for those who were trying this "new" system of work to lack confidence at times in its efficiency. Alexander Campbell himself was one who became dissatisfied with the lack of progress and energy for the work that he observed in the status quo. By 1842, he was writing regarding those frustrations,

"We can do comparatively nothing in distributing the Bible abroad without cooperation...We can do comparatively but little in the great missionary field of the world either at home or abroad without cooperation...We can have no thorough cooperation without a more ample, extensive, and thorough church organization." (Millennial Harbinger, Vol. 4, No. 11, p. 523)

Whatever the reason for his change of mind, Campbell exerted great influence to turn many of his contemporaries toward the idea of the Missionary Society. Most of the arguments in favor of cooperation arrangements were based on the principle of "expediency" (ignoring Thomas Campbell's scriptural assertion in the Declaration and Address that anything expedient must also be lawful, alluding to 1 Corinthians 6:12).

Ignored also was the fact that the Scripture was "silent" on the subject of organization for the "church at large," the universal church, and to speak where the Bible was silent was in violation of the basic principle stated by Thomas Campbell, as well as in Scripture (1 Peter 4:11).

Ignored also was the information in the New Testament which revealed that the Local church was the organization to work, specifically, in evangelism (1 Thessalonians 1:1,8; 2 Corinthians 11:8, Philippians 1:5,4:15-16).

Vocal opposition to arguments for human arrangements, which were first heard as much as 20 years before the establishment of the American Christian Bible Society in 1845, and the American Christian Missionary Society in 1849, now grew more strident.
In answer to A. Campbell's five articles on "Cooperation" in the Millennial Harbinger (1831), an article signed A. B. G. said, "There never was, and there never can be, any occasion for such a combination of the churches to build up the Redeemer's kingdom." As objections increased, Alexander Campbell vented his frustration with conservative thinkers, by saying, "I have found a large class of men, professors, too, who will sit for a year rather than rise up crooked. They are conscientious men; but they do nothing right lest they should do something wrong" (Millennial Harbinger, 1838).

A second round of arguments occurred a decade later, as the campaign to create the Society grew in proportion to the wealth and strength of the church. Alexander Campbell had conceived the universal church as made up of local churches, rather than of individual Christians. As early as 1834, he had said,

"The church...is not one congregation or assembly, but the congregation of Christ, composed of Christ, composed of all the individual congregations on earth." (Millennial Harbinger, July, 1834)

By 1842, he was saying,

"Now if Christ's kingdom consists of ten thousand families, or churches --particular, distinct, and independent communities--how are they to act in concert, maintain unity or interests, or cooperate in any system of conservation or enlargement, unless by consultation and systematic cooperation? I affirm it to be, in my humble opinion, and from years of observation and experience impossible" (Millennial Harbinger, 1842).

This inability to appreciate how independent churches can operate without some sort of uniting "system" was what corrupted the church in the Post-Apostolic years, and many promoters of human organizational schemes in the churches of Christ today have the same trouble seeing the wisdom in God's design. They think that independent churches having no organic ties are the victims of an inefficient system, even when they cooperate by simultaneous action. Their position reminds us of the anecdote in which Benjamin Franklin, the American revolutionary, is reputed to have said that democracy was one of the worst forms of government known to man, but that all the other forms were even worse! So it is with congregational independence. This plan of God seems inadequate, but alter-
native human plans are worse, because they unleash apostate trends toward centralization. West shows us how the frustrated Campbell illustrated his solution to the problem:

"Campbell presents his views on Church Organization by presenting a hypothetical case of a group of evangelists who go to an island called Guernsey. In five years they establish congregations which Campbell calls A, B, C, D, etc. After a while, Campbell says, these churches discover they cannot work efficiently without pooling their resources. A meeting is called at congregation A, and here the churches decided to band together and act in all matters just as one church." (West, Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 1, p. 160.)

An anonymous objector to this proposed combine of churches wrote, in 1844, "We do not misapprehend Brother Campbell, then, when we say seven separate churches...are in his plan organizing, to form one 'whole church'... Here then, I affirm, is a new organization, a new church, and a new name—a district church—a district name. I call it new because no such use of the word church is found in the Scriptures." (Millennial Harbinger, 1844)

It is true that the word "church" is used in a "district" since in Acts 9:31, but not in reference to a district or combined organization. It refers to the saints "distributed" through the districts mentioned.

Opposition to Campbell's proposed organizations grew more firm when brethren met in Nashville, in 1842, to discuss cooperation proposals that were in vogue, and concluded, "1. That there is positive scriptural authority for every religious work that is well pleasing to God. 2. That the church of Christ is the only divinely consecrated organization on earth for Christian labor. 3. All other organizations through which men propose to perform spiritual labor tend but to obscure, discredit, and subvert the reign of the Messiah." (Gospel Advocate, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 110)

At the Campbell-Rice debate in 1843, the several preachers and elders gathered in attendance discussed the question of the Society, and were persuaded to abandon the plan temporarily by the "tears, prayers and arguments" of Jacob Creath, Sr. (West, Search,
Vol. 1, p. 161.) When the Missionary Society was formed in 1849, Jacob Creath Jr. (named for his uncle, Jacob Creath, Sr.) wrote,

"Because God our Father *divinely commissioned* his Son to our world, and His Son sent the apostles as missionaries to the world, and they *divinely organized* individual congregations all over the Roman Empire, in the first century, does it, therefore, follow, that we in the nineteenth century, without any *divine warrant* and contrary to our own rule of faith, have the right to call conventions, form Bible, missionary, and tract societies, elect popes, and do all other things we wish? My logic does not run this way. They had divine credentials for what they did. We have none for what we are doing. That is the difference between them and us." (*Millennial Harbinger*, 1850)

If we study the history of the churches of Christ in the 20th Century, we can see from these sample 19th Century arguments a definite parallel to those made in the recent struggle over Institutionalism. The arguments, nevertheless, were effective enough then to divide the church, and still are, so long as men choose to be led by human concepts, instead of Scripture.

From the establishment of the Missionary and Bible Societies in 1845-49, opposition began to grow. The Gospel Advocate paper was founded by Tolbert Fanning and William Lipscomb in 1855 to have a medium for a discussion of the Society issue. Fanning wrote in 1857,

"We believe and teach that the Church of Christ....is the only divinely authorized Missionary, Bible, Sunday School, Temperance and Cooperation Society on earth...Hence we have questioned the propriety of the brethren’s efforts to work most successfully by means of State, district and county organizations, 'Missionary,' 'Publication' and 'Bible societies'...and Free-Mason and Odd-Fellowship Societies' to 'visit' the fatherless and widow in their affliction, or any other human organization for the accomplishing of the legitimate work of the church." (*West, Search for the Ancient Order, Vol 1*, p. 206)

Ben Franklin, editor of the American Christian Review, the most popular paper of that
period, tried to support the Societies, and participated in their activities, until he began to question their Scriptural credentials. Then, he became an opponent, throwing his considerable influence into the fight to abolish them.

The leaders of the Societies were also their own worst enemies, using them as platforms for political and social statements (this was the period of the strife that led to the Civil War, 1861-65), and confidence in the Societies, both North and South, gradually faded. By 1865, it was apparent to the advocates of the Missionary Society that it was on its last legs. So, a new principle had to be instituted to seduce men away from the Restoration Principles that had been enunciated by Thomas Campbell and Barton Stone. A son-in-law of Alexander Campbell, W. K. Pendleton, spoke at a meeting of the society, asserting that the silence of the Scripture is not prohibitory, but allows liberty. Isaac Errett, editor of the Christian Standard, proposed that the Restoration Motto be changed to read, "Where the Bible speaks, we are silent, and where the Bible is silent we may speak." Thus, the issue became, "How do we interpret the Scripture," rather than "How do we do missionary work?" Those in favor of joint cooperation began to follow Pendleton's "inclusivist" policy, which resulted in a division of the Church. The opponents treated the silence of Scripture as "exclusivists," following the scriptural principles proposed by Thomas Campbell.

The result was tragic, because the great trust placed in the "Restoration" principles of Thomas Campbell and Barton Stone had fed the hope of obtaining the "unity of all believers" on the Bible. Human nature, and the factious spirit, set the dream back 100 years. Congregations divided, and brethren were alienated. Two distinct churches arose, the Christian Church--Disciples of Christ, and those who chose to remain as the church of Christ.

Among the churches of Christ the study continued, so that toward the end of the 19th Century, the concept of true congregational independence was well developed. David Lipscomb wrote:

"All meetings of churches or officers of churches to combine more power than a single church possesses are wrong...A Christian, one or more, may visit a church with or without an invitation and seek to stir them up to a more
faithful discharge of their duties. But for one or more to direct what and how all the churches shall work, or to take charge of their men and money to use it, is to assume the authority God has given to each church." (Gospel Advocate, 1890)

Evidence abounds that this principle had to be asserted again and again, in order to convince restless innovators that local church autonomy must not be violated. In 1934, W. E. Brightwell wrote:

"Any individual Christian, or group of individuals, smaller than a local congregation: or any group of individuals or churches larger than a local church; or any individual church itself that begins thinking in terms of what the whole brotherhood should do, and goes or sends somebody to the churches to see that they do it, and acts as an agent or agency through which the brotherhood does it, thereby constitutes itself a full-grown, blown-in-the-bottle, fourteen-karat missionary society of the deepest dye! ...To call it something else, or to leave it un-named, is a mere technical dodge. It is not condemned because it is similar to a missionary society, but because it violates the same fundamental principle the society violates--namely, the initiative and autonomy of the local congregation." (Gospel Advocate, Dec. 20, 1934)

Bro. Brightwell's comments cover any sort of organization which displaces or augments congregational action in God's Scheme of collective work. All such innovations spring from discontent with God's plan. The most common complaint against congregational independence is that it is "inefficient." Of course, this complaint is made by men who believe they are honestly comparing the performance of independent congregations against more familiar organizational schemes of men. Their judgment is subjective, however. Who can say that congregational independence is inefficient, if he does not work within it energetically, and patiently give the plan time to prove its worth? It is this lack of patience that causes many innovators to promote their cherished organizational schemes. They are perhaps sincere in not wishing to repudiate the plan of God, but they escape from an evil conscience in the matter by saying that the organizational concepts of the Bible are matters
of little importance, or that there must be discoverable implications in Scripture of a more efficient organization. One spokesman for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) says,

"Now most of us have been forced to recognize the insufficiency of congregational autonomy and to repudiate the anarchy of independency."

(Osborn, Ronald E., "Toward The Christian Church," p. 49)

"We are widely agreed among Disciples of Christ today that general church structure is needed. We have lived for a century and a half with congregational autonomy and have found it wanting." (Ibid., p. 52)

This perception of the inefficiency of independent congregations is even recognized among the more liberal leaders of present day churches of Christ. In his study of the church from the viewpoint of the Abilene Christian College Lectures, Bill Banowsky has written:

"The lecturers came to desire a missionary procedure which would more effectively involve the hundreds of small congregations. But they also sought a program whose scope would be more far-reaching than even the best, but isolated efforts of any one large congregation. They could not resist the temptation to shop about and contrast their plight with the obvious strong points of denominational machinery. Thus, they sought for some practical, scriptural means of brotherhoodwide control." (Banowsky, William S., The Mirror of a Movement, Christian Publishing Co., 1965, p. 313).

Banowsky's terms betray the motives behind the eventual development of the "Sponsoring Church" concept of brotherhood organization. He talks about "desire" for a "more effective" program that would be more "far-reaching" than the "isolated efforts" of a "large congregation." They were unable to "resist the temptation" to emulate "denomina- tional machinery." But even though they "sought for some practical, scriptural means of brotherhoodwide control," they could not find it. Indeed, if it could have been found, more than a century of debate on the subject would have settled the matter already. Schemes of organization not found in the New Testament, as we have already said, must be defended by vague human reasoning, which cannot appeal to the minds of those who are content to work strictly by the things revealed in "holy writ."

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The yearnings described by Banowsky have born fruit in the evolution of the concept called by some “the sponsoring church.” This system allows one church to nominate itself as the “sponsor” of some specific task, be it evangelism, or benevolence, or education. The invitation is then extended to other congregations to support this effort by contributions. The presumed efficiency of this system is the motivation for establishing it, but congregational equality is destroyed. A congregational “class system” results between receiving and contributing congregations. No precedent for this is seen in the Scripture, and no hint of it is found in Apostolic teaching.

The most digressive concepts being promoted today in regard to the abandonment of local church autonomy come from the so-called "Crossroads/Boston Movement." Though the congregations of this movement derive their historical heritage with other churches of Christ, they now speak in terms reminiscent of Catholicism. They have a "Mother Church," and divide their coalition of churches into "Pillar Churches, Capitol City Churches, Small City Churches, and Countryside Churches." Elderships, or "leaderships" in these churches extend their "oversight" to the brotherhood, in much the same way that early bishops did in the Apostasy of the 2nd Century. Yet, the churches of Christ that have so far been unwilling to accept this new apostasy have inconsistently accepted other organizational concepts that have no more support in Scripture than these.

What has been covered in this chapter is designed to give us a "historical perspective" to help us understand where we stand in reference to New Testament Christianity. The spirit of apostasy never sleeps. It thrives on discontent with God's plan. It can destroy the apostolic order again and again. The evidence of history proves this to be true. Therefore the signs of discontent regarding the apostolic order must be detected and stifled when they first appear, in order to prevent history from repeating itself.
CHAPTER TWELVE

FREEWILL VERSUS PREDESTINATION

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” --- Revelation 22:17

Perhaps the most important historical controversy which has spanned the Christian age is the one which addresses the question, "To what degree does each convert to Christ act in his own behalf to gain salvation?" This is a question that troubled the Ante-Nicene Christians, and still troubles men today. The broad spectrum of views on this subject is both confusing and devastating. Despite the clear teaching of the Scripture on the principle of freewill, a variety of "predestinarian" systems seeking to deprive man of some or all of his activity in behalf of his own salvation have been dominant in our world. This error has resulted from a misunderstanding of the Bible application of the terms "predestination" and "foreordination." These terms are used freely in the Bible (Romans 8:28-30, Ephesians 1:3-6), and seem to suggest an exclusive action of God, when isolated from other Scriptures. But it is also clear that man exercises his free choice, or will, in conversion (Acts 2:40, Philippians 2:12, Revelation 22:17). Therefore, the biblical concepts of Predestination and Freewill must be reconciled.

Early misconceptions on this subject sprang from human philosophy, and were destined to breed later errors. In Colossians 2:3-10, Paul works to divert Christians from human speculations. He assured the Colossians that in Christ "are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." Then he says, "This I say, that no one may delude you with persua-
siveness of speech." He admonishes them, "As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in your faith, even as you were taught." After a short pause, he says, "Take heed lest there shall be any one that makes spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily, and in him you are made full..."

These admonitions, if they had been taken to heart, would have protected the early Christians from the deceptions of human philosophy, tradition, and precepts. He later shows how they were to avoid the pitfalls of Judaism, mysticism, and asceticism in verses 16-23. However, depending on their regional origins, early uninspired teachers (after the Apostolic Age) let previous philosophical views control their thinking about the doctrine of salvation. Schaff says that the...

"Greek (mainly Alexandrian) Fathers", "laid great stress upon human freedom, and upon the indispensable cooperation of this freedom with divine grace......(The) Latin (mainly Roman) Fathers......guided by their practical experience rather than by speculative principles, emphasized the hereditary sin and hereditary guilt of man, and the sovereignty of God's grace, without, however, denying freedom and individual accountability."

These divergent views still influence theology today. The controversies created a rift between East and West that eventually led to the division of the apostate church (Roman Catholic vs. Greek Orthodox). Schaff continues,

"The Greek church adhered to her undeveloped synergism, which coordinates the human will and divine grace as factors in the work of conversion...The Latin church,...under the influence of Augustine (396-430 A. D.), advanced (or, digressed, JNC) to a system of divine monergism, which gives God all the glory, and makes freedom itself a RESULT of grace."

(Schaff, History, Vol. 3, p. 786.)

"Synergism" in this context is defined as "a cooperation of divine grace and human activity," while "monergism" is an action of only one. Of the "Latin Fathers," Tertullian (b. 150 AD) was one of the first who speculated on these subjects. Schaff says,
"Tertullian's theology revolves about the great Pauline antithesis of sin and grace, and breaks the road to the Latin anthropology and soteriology afterwards developed by his like-minded, but clearer, calmer, and more considerate countryman, Augustin(e)." (Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 824)

THE AUGUSTINIAN SYSTEM

Augustine was perhaps the most respected theologian of the Nicene and Post-Nicene periods of religious history. His work spanned the close of the 4th Century, and the beginning of the next. He was a North African Bishop, adhering to the Western Latin church, later to evolve into the Roman Catholic church. He worked to resolve the stance of this church on the subject of "divine anthropology," the study of the nature of man. Schaff says,

"Before Augustine the anthropology of the church was exceedingly crude and indefinite. There was a general agreement as to the apostasy and the moral accountability of man, the terrible curse of sin, and the necessity of redeeming grace; but not as to the extent of native corruption, and the relation of human freedom to divine grace in the work of regeneration and conversion." (Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 785-786)

Augustine set out to show how extensive man's corruption was, and succeeded among his ignorant contemporaries so well that he convinced many that corrupt man had no ability to save himself, and no initiative to do so. His salvation would be entirely the work of God, by the means of predestination. He based his theology on his own experience, which is described in his "Confession" as a horrendous struggle against evil, and then attempted to put every man in that same mold. This, of course, was an egocentric course, since many had not had such depraved experiences (one such man was Pelagius, whom we will discuss later in this chapter). Augustine's view of the nature of man was his view of himself, a man without volition to do good, helpless under the captivity of sin, and completely dependent on the intervention of God into his life.

Augustine believed that the first man, Adam, had the nature of freedom of choice before his fall, but lost it in consequence of the fall. By his misunderstanding of Romans 5:12-21, Augustine views sinful Adam, not as an individual, but as the whole human race in "one
man." His sinful act, because he embodied the whole human race, became the sin of the race, not of himself alone (see Schaff, History Vol. 3, p. 824). Knowing more Latin than Greek, Augustine allowed the weak Latin Vulgate construction of Romans 5:12 to lead him to this conclusion. The Latin suggests that all men sinned in Adam, rather than the simple Greek idea that "all men sinned" (compare Romans 3:23, and see Ibid., pp. 833-834.) If the transmission of guilt to all men is inferred from the language of this passage, we must also infer from vss. 16-17 the transmission of righteousness to all men, and to the same degree, from Christ. If Adam's sin claims all men, then the righteousness of Christ claims the same number. However, this logical interpretation would imply not only universal sin but also universal salvation. Augustine and his historical students would accept the first readily, but would categorically reject the second. Their inconsistency demonstrates the complicated maze of doctrine that tended to evolve from the original false reasoning.

Augustine's conclusion that all of Adam's posterity have sinned in him finds a comparative parallel in the principle stated by the inspired writer of Hebrews 7:1-10, especially vs. 9-10, in which the argument is made that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek, because, at the time Abraham paid those tithes, Levi "was yet in the loins of his father" (see Ibid., p. 854). However, Augustine's similar argument, designed to settle Adam's sin on his posterity, has no independent confirmation in inspired literature, and proves to be untenable when we see that his proposition is refuted by many Scriptures.

John the baptizer rejected the supposition of the Jews that the righteousness of Abraham could be transferred to his posterity. He said to them, "You offspring of vipers...Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham to our father:' for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:8-9). And Jesus told his hearers, who claimed virtue by being children of Abraham, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham!" (John 8:39). Imitation of Abraham's works was a more certain proof of righteousness, not genealogical heritage. The Apostle John says, "Little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous..." (1 John 3:7).

Once Augustine had convinced himself that Adam's sin could be inherited, however,
he proceeded to careless interpretations of a few passages, while ignoring others which would refute his views. When he looked at Psalms 51:5, he stressed the language that said, *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me,* not realizing that David was most likely using such phrases to exaggerate the calamity of guilt, not describing its inception. However, what David said of his condition has to be reconciled with the teaching of Ezekiel 18:1-20, which was God's condemnation of the doctrine of inherited sin when it had become popular in Israel. The prophet, speaking for God, declares that God will remove the reason for trusting in the proverb, *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.* His argument is based on hypothetical cases in a succession of fathers and sons who alternate between wickedness and righteousness. Then the Lord concludes, *The soul that sins, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him,* vs. 20. He is saying that each man suffers for his own sins, not the sins of others. The Apostle Paul confirms this principle in Galatians 6:7-8, *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.*

Those who accept Augustine's premise, however, respond by citing Exodus 20:4-6, but any consideration of this passage must be carefully handled to make certain that we do not interpret it in contradiction to Ezekiel 18. Moses does not confirm the idea of inherited sin; he says the iniquity of the fathers is visited on future generations of those "that hate" the Lord, that is, upon those who imitate the iniquities of their fathers. From this condemnation, we must exclude infants, since they are incapable of "hate."

James 1:13-15 refutes the theory of inherited depravity, because it shows that spiritual death is *"brought forth"* by the "*full-grown*" sin of each individual who is *"drawn away by his own lust, and enticed."* So, man is not dead in sin when born, but only when he himself succumbs to temptation, giving birth to sin. (Compare Romans 7:9, and Ephesians 2:1.)

Jesus also taught that we must imitate the virtues of "*little children,"* something he would not have advised if they were inherently totally depraved (Matthew 18:1-4). He also
taught that children must be allowed to come to him (not carried to him), and that the kingdom belongs to such little children (Matthew 19:14). The ability to "come to Jesus" on their own initiative excludes newborn infants, but implies free will.

Augustine's contention that children are born in sin is based on his conclusion that, when Adam fell, the nature to make a choice between good and evil fell also. If this contention is true, it follows that the heirs of Adam no longer enjoyed the freedom of choice. They were incapable of doing good, unless "quickened by grace." Schaff says that to Augustine,

"Original sin...is the native bent of the soul towards evil, with which all the posterity of Adam--excepting Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of a pure virgin--come into the world, and out of which all actual sins of necessity proceed." (Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 829.)

Augustine's concept that man is, by reason of Adam's sin, changed to a natural evil state, in which he is unable to voluntarily obtain salvation, sets the precedent for a complete system which can be summarized in the following points from Schaff:

(1) All men are sinners, and justly condemned in consequence of Adam's fall.
(2) Man in the natural state has no freedom of choice, but is a slave of sin.
(3) God out of free grace elected from eternity and unalterably a part of mankind to holiness and salvation, and is the author of their good deeds; while he leaves the rest in his inscrutable counsel to their merited damnation.
(4) God has unalterably predestined the impenitent and persistent sinner to everlasting punishment, but not to sin, which is the guilt of man and condemned by God.
(5) Christ died only for the elect. (Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 533)

Thus, the Augustinian doctrine of Predestination was the offspring of a special train of reasoning. If the doctrine of inherited total depravity is unscriptural, this logical progression to "particular predestination" is not rational. Even if his reasoning were based on sound premises, Augustine is forced to acknowledge that there were unanswered questions in his theory. He followed a presumptive path, reasoning that...

"...If all men are by nature utterly incompetent to good, if it is grace that
works in us to will and to do good, if faith itself is an undeserved gift of grace: the ultimate ground of salvation can then be found only in the inscrutable counsel of God. He appealed to the wonderful leading in the lives of individuals and of nations, some being called to the gospel and to baptism, while others die in darkness. Why precisely this or that one attains to faith and others do not, is indeed, a mystery. We cannot, says he, in this life explain the leadings of Providence; if we only believe that God is righteous, we shall hereafter attain to perfect knowledge.

He could cite many Scripture texts, especially the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, for his doctrine. But other texts, which teach the universal vocation to salvation, and make man responsible for his reception or rejection of the gospel, he could only explain by forced interpretations. Thus, for instance, he understands in 1 Timothy 2:4 by the all men, whom God will have to be saved, all manner of men, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, or he wrests the sense into: All who are saved, are saved by the will of God. When he finds no other way of meeting objections, he appeals to the inscrutable wisdom of God." (Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 856)

PELAGIUS AND THE DOCTRINE OF FREEWILL

Into Augustine's "logical" theology now intrudes Pelagius, an English monk with "clear intellect, mild disposition, learned culture, and spotless character" (Ibid., p. 790). Pelagius repudiated Augustine's theory of God-enabled faith, because of his inability to "conceive that the power to obey the commandment must come from the same source as the commandment itself" (Ibid., pp. 790-791). In the course of his life he went to Rome, and rebelled against the low tone of morality he found among churchmen, which they justified by citing the prevalent Augustinian doctrine of the inherent corruption of man.

While in Rome, Pelagius converted Coelestius, who proved to be more skillful in argument than Pelagius himself. Because of the long shadow of Augustine, Pelagius needed all the help he could obtain, in order to enunciate his fresh uplifting view of the nature of man. His cause received great help from bishop Julian, of Eclanum. Schaff says that he...
"...was the most learned, the most acute, and the most systematic of the Pelagians, and the most formidable opponent of Augustine; deserving respect for his talents, his uprightness of life, and his immovable fidelity to his convictions, but unquestionably censurable for excessive passion and overbearing pride." (Ibid., p. 800)

In contrast to Augustinianism, Pelagius' concept of Adam is that he is merely an individual man, and not representative of all mankind, having freedom of will and choice both before and after the fall. He believed, therefore, that all men were given free choice, at all times. He would admit that he could observe a tendency in some men to do evil, but he asserted that there was also inherent goodness in many men, even in those yet unbaptized. So, there was no room in Pelagius' view for inherited guilt, from Adam, or any other source. (Pelagians, however, inconsistently practiced infant baptism, which was generally considered in that day a necessity, following the Augustinian view of inherited sin.)

Pelagius wrote that men were capable by the force of their own will to grow better, to excel in righteousness, and even to be sinless (compare Romans 6:1-18). Much of what he said and wrote, however, is known only because of what his enemies quoted, in order to answer him and mark him as a heretic. We cannot be certain that he was always quoted correctly, because most of his writings were destroyed in a purge of his works.

The most damaging of Pelagius' ideas, if we have him truly represented, was that man is solely active in his own salvation, while God's grace is seen as an "external auxiliary." This suggests a system of "human monergism," as opposed to Augustine's "divine monergism." Though Augustine and Pelagius were at opposite ends of this controversy, pitting singular divine action against singular human action in salvation, truth was in the middle, in the principle of synergism (see Romans 5:1-2, 10:1-15; Ephesians 2:8; and compare the precept of Romans 10:17).

In contrast to Augustine's morbid view of the sinful inclinations of man, Pelagius was...

"...inclined to admit an increasing corruption of mankind, though he ascribed it solely to the habit of evil, which grows in power the longer it works and the farther it spreads. Sin, however, is not born with man: it is not a
product of nature, but of the will...The universality of sin must be ascribed to the power of evil example and evil custom.

And there are exceptions to it. The 'all' of Romans 5:12 is to be taken relatively for the majority. Even before Christ (he claims) there were men who lived free from sin, such as Abel, Abraham, Isaac, the Virgin Mary, and many others. From the silence of the Scriptures respecting the sins of many righteous men, he inferred that such men were without sin." (Ibid., pp. 806-807)

Better examples of righteous persons might have been Enoch, Elijah, and Zacharias and Elisabeth, the parents of John the baptizer. But this latter view is imperfect, in view of such passages as 1 Kings 8:46 and Romans 3:23. Pelagius may be misrepresented here, since we find the charge mainly in the polemic answers of Augustine. If Pelagius is faithfully represented, we admit that he probably went too far, and that his views deserve the appellation, "Pelagian Heresy." Augustine's view, itself a heresy in view of Bible teaching, became the popular view, however, and after that, in spite of much more truth in the Pelagian system, it was always referred to as "The Pelagian Heresy."

These polarized views have been revived again and again, without the warring sides understanding the "synergistic" solution found in the Bible. The logical consequence of Pelagius' concept of freewill is that all men are "capable" to make a free choice in answering God's grace by their own "enabling faith" (Romans 5:1-2). Therefore, all passages which speak of the universal appeal of the gospel (such as 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, and Revelation 22:17) need some kind of "forced" explanation to make them fit the Augustinian concept of particular, or personal predestination.

THE CONTROVERSY THROUGH THE CENTURIES

By a series of mishaps and politic maneuvers, pure Pelagianism was eventually rejected by the Roman church. However, Schaff says,

"This result...did not in itself necessarily imply the complete approval of the Augustinian system. Many, even opponents of Pelagius, recoiled from a position so wide of the older fathers as Augustine's doctrines of the bondage of man and the absolute election of grace, and preferred a middle ground."
Popular remnants of Pelagianism were still found in Southern Gaul, generated by a rejection of Augustine's view of predestination. John Cassian was at the head of this party, and though...

"...he rejects decidedly the errors of Pelagius, and affirms the universal sinfulness of men, the introduction of it by the fall of Adam, and the necessity of divine grace to every individual...With evident reference to Augustine, though without naming him, he combats the doctrines of election and of the irresistible and particular operation of grace, which were in conflict with the church tradition...In opposition to both systems he taught that the divine image and human freedom were not annihilated, but only weakened, by the fall; in other words, that man is sick, but not dead, that he cannot indeed help himself, but that he can desire the help of a physician, and either accept or refuse it when offered, and that he must cooperate with the grace of God in his salvation." (Ibid., p. 861)

This "Semi-Pelagianism" grew in popularity over several decades, but was vigorously denied by many disciples of Augustine. As time went on, however, Semi-Augustinianism began to captivate the majority of the clergy, and...

"At the synod of Orange (Arausio) in the year 529...the Semi-Pelagian system, yet without mention of its adherents, was condemned in twenty-five chapters or canons, and the Augustinian doctrine of sin and grace was approved, without the doctrine of absolute or particularistic predestination." (Ibid., p. 865)

THE GOTTSCHALK CONTROVERSY

After settling into Semi-Augustinianism, the Roman Church was not deeply embroiled again in discussion of the matter of predestination until the early 9th Century. At that time, a maverick monk of "noble Saxon parentage" began to disturb the Roman hierarchy by advocating pure Augustinianism. He had been placed as a child in a convent by his parents, as a "pious offering." On gaining his maturity, he resented this involuntary vocation, and sought to escape from it. His suit failed, but he was transferred to another
convent, where he devoted himself to a study of the works of Augustine. He was especially fascinated with the subject of predestination, and began where Augustine left off. As we have seen, Augustine left some disturbing "loose ends" in his teaching, so Gottschalk attempted to tie them together, logically. Schaff says,

"He held a two-fold predestination of the elect to salvation, and of the reprobate to perdition; not in the sense of two separate predestinations, but one predestination with two sides (gemina, i.e. bipartita), a positive side (election) and a negative side (reprobation). He could not conceive of the one without the other; but he did not teach a predestination of the sinner to sin, which would make God the author of sin." (Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 531)

One of the difficulties of predestinarianism arises on this question of sin. If God controls all events by foreordination, would it not follow that those who sin do so by God's direction? The advocates of Augustinian, Lutheran, and Calvinistic predestination all feel the force of this argument, and indignantly reject this conclusion, while refusing to abandon their concept.

In the discussions that rose around Gottschalk's strident support of Augustine,

"The main question was whether divine predestination or foreordination which all admitted as a necessary element of the Divine perfection, was absolute or relative; in other words, whether it embraced all men and all acts, good and bad, or only those who are saved, and such acts as God approves and rewards. This question necessarily involved also the problem of the freedom of the human will, and the extent of the plan of redemption. The absolute predestinarians denied, the relative predestinarians affirmed, the freedom of will and the universal import of Christ's atoning death." (Ibid., p. 530)

One wonders, when he reads this statement, why they delved into this subject to such great lengths and depths, if the Bible is clear on this matter. The answer is that the words of the early church "Fathers" were respected as much as the Bible, and their words were full of confusion and error. The parties to the discussion, also, held inconsistent views; they forced attempts to reconcile a strong belief in predestination with the rational objections
raised to it; they complicated simple doctrines to the bewilderment of a multitude of "laymen." All this exposes their intellectual debates as confrontations that produced much "heat," yet little "light."

After all the discussion, however, Semi-Augustinianism, with its emphasis on divine grace, maintained its position in the dogmas of the Roman church, in spite of the problems raised by it.

One problem that rose out of these discussions was in the matter of divine "foreknowledge," or whether foreknowledge has any force to shape future events. Schaff's exposition of some of this discussion is:

"Foreknowledge is a necessary attribute of the omniscient mind of God, and differs from foreordination or predestination, which is an attribute of his omnipotent will. The former may exist without the latter, but not the latter without the former. Foreknowledge is absolute, and embraces all things and all men, good and bad; foreordination is conditioned by foreknowledge, and refers only to what is good. God foreknew sin from eternity, but did not predestinate it; and so he foreknew the sinners, but did not predestinate them to sin or death...There is therefore no double predestination (as Gottschalk claimed), but only one predestination which coincides with election to eternal life. The fall of Adam with its consequences falls under the idea of divine permission. God sincerely intends to save all men without distinction, and Christ shed his blood for all; if any are lost, they have to blame themselves."
(Ibid., p. 534)

Another problem that had to be discussed was the matter of the intent of God. Did He wish to save all men, or was atonement limited only to the elect? Pure Augustinianism would have espoused "limited atonement," but many could see that this violated the clear statements of universal opportunity for salvation in the Scripture. What resulted was an inconsistent proposition. One party to the discussions "...asserts that nothing can happen in heaven and earth without the will or permission of God," but on the other hand they say that God, in spite of the foreknown perdition of the reprobate "would have all men to be saved and none lost!" Schaff says that this inconsistent compromise satisfied most parties.
in the discussion, and "ended the controversy. It was a defeat of predestinarianism in its rigorous form and a substantial victory of Semi-Augustinianism" (Ibid., p. 536).

Gottschalk was the suffering victim of this "victory." His obstinacy in advocating "rigorous" Augustinianism brought him only ridicule, brutal scourgings, and imprisonment for twenty years. He was so intransigent in his views that it took an almost fatal scourging to force him to cast his writings into a fire. He demonstrated how one can be a martyr, not for truth, but for pernicious error.

When the Roman Church entered the period dominated by Scholasticism (and mysticism), the "Schoolmen" were willing to discuss fully the position of the church on predestination and freewill, but carefully choosing their path, and using their polemic skills cautiously, so that they would not antagonize the "Holy Office" of the Inquisition, which by that time was the frightful disciplinary arm of the church. The discussion tended gradually toward a renewed emphasis on freewill, but began with Innocent III (1198-1216) confirming the views of Augustine regarding the corruption of man in his book *Contempt of the World* (Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 153). Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), in a work supposedly on the subject of the freedom of the will, "advocated the position that the power to do good was lost by sin, and prevenient grace is required to incline the will to holiness" (Ibid., p. 355). Peter the Lombard (1100-1160), on the effect of divine foreknowledge, restated the idea by declaring that "God's predestination of the elect is the cause of God in them and is not based upon any foreseen goodness they may have. Their number cannot be increased or diminished. On the other hand, God does not take the initiative in the condemnation of the lost. Their reprobation follows as a consequence upon the evil in them which is foreseen!" (Ibid., p. 634).

But, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) "represented the semi-Pelagian standpoint...The number of the elect is unknown, but they are the minority of the race. Reprobation is not a positive act of God. God's decree is permissive. God loves all men. He leaves men to themselves, and those who are lost, are lost by their own guilt" (Ibid., p. 669). Duns Scoto (1265-1308) seems to emphasize free will to the same degree that Thomas Aquinas does. A story told about him says that he engaged a farmer on the subject of his salvation. "The farmer, who was engaged in sowing, turned and said: 'Why do you speak to me? If God
has foreknowledge that I will be saved, I will be saved whether I do good or ill.' Duns replied: 'Then, if God has foreknowledge that grain will grow out of this soil, it will grow whether you sow or withhold your hand. You may as well save yourself the labor you are at.'" (Ibid., p. 686). But Duns Scotus was realistic enough to recognize the power of the Inquisition, and skillfully avoided the charge of heresy in his day.

When Martin Luther came as the genius of the 16th Century Reformation, he also became a champion of a return to pure Augustinianism. He called Duns Scotus "'the most arrant of sophists,' and he made him responsible for the revival of Pelagianism and exalting the consequent value of good works by emphasizing the freedom of the will and the natural powers" (Ibid., p. 692). Luther's Reformation revived rigid Augustinianism for a time, But Schaff writes,

"The relation of the Roman church to Augustine in regard to predestination is similar to that which the Lutheran church holds to Luther. The Reformer held the most extreme view on divine predestination, and in his book on the Slavery of the Human Will, against Erasmus, he went further than Augustine before him and Calvin after him; yet notwithstanding his commanding genius and authority, his view was virtually disowned, and gave way to the compromise of the Formula of Concord (1576 AD), which teaches both an absolute election of believers, and a sincere call of all sinners to repentance. The Calvinistic Confessions, with more logical consistency, teach an absolute predestination as a necessary sequence of Divine omnipotence and omniscience, but confines it, like Augustine, to the limits of the Infralapsarian scheme, with an express exclusion of God from the authorship of sin. Supralapsarianism, however, also had its advocates as a theological opinion. In the Roman church, the Augustinian system was revived by the Jansenists, but only to be condemned." (Ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 524-525)

Two terms that appear in this statement will need definition to those curious enough to pursue a study of Predestination in its varied forms. The terms are infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism. Schaff is of some help to us here, when he discusses the teaching of John Calvin,
"With the Calvinistic system there arose two schools...the Infralapsarians (also called Sublapsarians) and the Supralapsarians, who held different views on the order of the divine decrees and their relation to the fall (lapsus). The Infralapsarians adjust, as it were, the eternal counsel of God to the temporal fall of man, and assume that God decreed, first to create man in holiness; then to permit him to fall by the self-determination of his free will; next, to save a definite number out of the guilty mass; and last, to leave the rest in sin, and to ordain them to eternal punishment. The Supralapsarians reverse the order, so that the decree of election and reprobation precedes the decree of creation; they make uncreated and unfallen man the object of God's double decree." (Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 552)

Those who are not entangled in the fine distinctions of these two "schools" may wonder how the doctrine of predestination got so complicated. The answer must rest on the fact that most false doctrinal theories generate more problems than they solve.

Until Calvin, the most widely accepted views in the Roman church were those which came out of the Gottschalk controversy. The Synod of Chiersy (853 AD) "adopted four propositions," or "chapters." Schaff lists them in this order:

(1) God Almighty made man free from sin, endowed him with reason and the liberty of choice, and placed him in Paradise. Man, by the abuse of this liberty, sinned, and the whole race became a mass of perdition. Out of the massa perditionis God elected those whom he by grace predestined unto life eternal; others he left by a just judgment in the mass of perdition, foreknowing that they would perish, but not foreordaining them to perdition, though he foreordained eternal punishment for them. This is Augustinian, but weakened in the last clause.

(2) We lost the freedom of will through the fall of the first man, and regained it again through Christ. This chapter, however, is so vaguely worded that it may be understood in a Semi-Pelagian as well as in an Augustinian sense.

(3) God Almighty would have all men without exception to be saved, al-
though not all are actually saved. Salvation is a free gift of grace; per-
dition is the desert of those who persist in sin.

(4) Jesus Christ died for all men past, present and future, though not all are
redeemed by the mystery of his passion, owing to their unbelief. (Ibid.,
Vol. 4, p. 535)

It is easy to conclude that these propositions are much more mild that Augustine's.
Luther's failed attempt to restore the precepts of Augustine shows that they were no more
popular among Protestants than they were among Catholics. However, the Reformed
Church did accept the concepts of John Calvin (1509-1564 AD), which were stronger than
the Catholic position. Beginning with the presumption that man is "incapable" of approach
to God, and must wait for "enabling grace," Calvin reasoned that...

(1) Man must be in a state of immobility caused by inherited sin (Total
Depravity).

(2) Since all are born in sin, incapable to help themselves, and God must
initiate the salvation of the ones he "elects," then He cannot set any
conditions of salvation. (Unconditional Election).

(3) Those whom God enables are the only ones who can be saved (Limited
Atonement).

(4) To acquire the conversion of all who were among the elect, God's grace,
like His power, must be irresistible. (Irresistible Grace)

(5) If God elects, unconditionally, and initiates the salvation of men by means
of irresistible grace, He has the power and the obligation to maintain the
salvation of men, no matter what they do. (Perseverance of the Saints).

Out of this reasoning was formed what others later called the "TULIP" system:, as
follows:

T otal depravity (All are born in sin, corrupt at birth)
U nconditional election (God saves incapable sinners)
L imited atonement (Christ died only for the elect)
I rresistible grace (Unavoidable imposition of election)
P erseverance of saints (Whom God elects cannot be lost)
Calvin's system treats the false doctrine of original sin as a fundamental truth, and the rest of his structure rests on this faulty "foundation." Roman Catholic belief in original sin led to the development of other false doctrines (Immaculate Conception, Worship of Mary, Baptism of infants, Confirmation, etc.) Protestantism, following the same error, generated various divergent forms of the Augustine-Calvin systems, creating variant "denominations."

One thorn in Calvin's side was provided by his controversial opponent Servetus, whom Schaff (himself a Calvinist) characterizes as the "deformer," the "arch-heretic," and the "master architect of ruin." Schaff thinks of Calvin as the greater man, because his books are in every library, while those of Servetus are "among the greatest rarities" (Ibid., Vol. 8, pp. 687-688). Actually, Servetus' ambition was to become the "reformer of the Reformation." Yet, in reaching for this goal, he made too many enemies by his erratic posturing. He revived the ancient controversies on the Godhead by rejecting the Doctrine of the Trinity. He also seemed to believe in the Pagan concept of Pantheism. However, he brought fresh new arguments to bear on other controversies. He rejected infant baptism, and said that any justification of it on the basis of the Old Testament practice of circumcision was in error. (This position put him in much jeopardy because it connected him with Anabaptists, who had been imprisoned, drowned, hanged, and burned by their Protestant persecutors for decades.) What brought Servetus into direct conflict with Calvin were his denials of absolute predestination and the slavery of the human will. He also rejected the concept of inherited guilt. He argued for the retention of free will in man after the fall. And, finally, he "rejected also the doctrine of forensic justification by faith alone...He held that man is justified by faith and good works, and appealed to the second chapter of James and the obedience of Abraham" (Ibid., pp. 747-749). Though this made him a "Pelagian" in the eyes of many, his appeal to Scripture was sound. On the subject of baptism, Schaff says that Servetus taught that...

"...Baptism is a saving ordinance by which we receive the remission of sins, are made Christians, and enter the kingdom of heaven as priests and kings...It is the death of the old man and the birth of the new man. By baptism we put on Christ and live a new life in him.

But baptism must be preceded by the preaching of the gospel, the illu-
mination of the Spirit, and repentance, which, according to the preaching of John the Baptist and of Christ, is the necessary condition of entering the kingdom of God." (Ibid., p. 750)

This stance of Servetus appeals to those of us who have returned to the biblical concepts of the purpose of baptism, but it put him at enmity with the contemporary views of Calvin and other Reformers by connecting him with ideas which Protestants considered to be detestable dogmas of Rome.

Because of his many "heresies," Calvin pronounced Servetus worthy of death at the hands of both Protestants and Catholics. He was arrested, escaped, was recaptured, tried, and burned at the stake in 1553. His death at Calvin's instigation reveals the intolerance of the period by all parties.

As Calvin had his Servetus, Beza, the disciple of Calvin, had his Arminius. James Arminius (1560-1609) was a scholar and polemicist of the first rank. He had grown up in Holland during the time when Spain was trying to conquer it and impose Catholicism on the region. Members of his family suffered death in this war, but he went on to a prominent career as a teacher held in high esteem by many. The doctrines of Calvin had many adherents in Holland, but there were some who resisted its absurd conclusions. Beza and others were instrumental in assigning to Arminius the task of reproving the dissenters. Being an honest and conscientious student of religion, Arminius found himself unable to justify his position by Scripture. Beginning as a Supralapsarian (one who believes that God's two predestination decrees of salvation and reprobation preceded the creation of man), he later tried to be an Infralapsarian or, Sublapsarian (one who believes that the two decrees were put in place after the creation). He did not tarry long in this second view, however, finding as much objection to it as to the first. He proceeded boldly toward the principle of freewill. He was an able debater, and being called upon to present a "Declaration of the Sentiments of Arminius" before the ruling body of Holland, he brilliantly exposed the errors of Calvinism.

His honesty would not allow Arminius to use unacceptable tactics in presenting his views. He first set forth the Supralapsarian version of Calvinism fairly, even showing some of the attempts made to correlate the doctrine with passages of Scripture that seem to
contradict some of its concepts (such as those that call for preaching the gospel, and those which speak of the possibility of apostasy after salvation). He then presented his reasons for rejecting this doctrine.

Arminius saw many contradictions in the doctrine of predestination, as held by the Calvinists. He saw salvation as conditional, based on passages such as Mark 16:16. He respected the command to "work out salvation with fear and trembling" in Philippians 2:12, and showed that the saved would not have been required by Paul to "fear" the outcome of their salvation, if they could not ever be lost. He contended that the predestined condemnation of men was work that was "strange" to God, if His primary quality is mercy, and his nature that of "goodness." He said that sin could not be called "disobedience," if the predestined man was doing exactly what God had ordained, and cited Revelation 2:10 and 2 Timothy 4:7-8 to show that the "Crown of righteousness" is given to the obedient, not to those forcibly predestined.

His most telling arguments set forth the indictment that predestination of the Calvinistic style (especially Supralapsarianism) made God the "author of sin." He said:

"1. One of its positions is, that God has absolutely decreed to demonstrate his glory by punitive justice and mercy, in the salvation of some men and in the damnation of others: which *neither was done*, nor could have possibly been done, unless sin *had* entered into the world.

2. This doctrine affirms, that, in order to obtain his object, God *ordained that man should commit sin*, and be rendered vitiated; and from this Divine ordination or appointment, the fall of man necessarily followed.

3. It asserts that God has denied to man, or has withdrawn from him, such a *portion of grace as is sufficient and necessary to enable him to avoid sin*; and that *this was done before man had sinned*; which is an act that amounts to the same as if God had prescribed a law to man, which it would be utterly impossible for him to fulfil, when the nature in which he had been created was taken into consideration." (Nichols, *The Works of James Arminius*, Baker, Vol. 1, pp. 629-630)

He says, in comment on these and other points, that...
"From these premises we deduce, as a further conclusion, that God really sins. Because, (according to this doctrine,) he moves to sin by an act that is unavoidable, and according to his own purpose and primary intention, without having received any previous inducement to such an act from any preceding sin or demerit in man.

From the same position we might also infer, that God is the only sinner. For man, who is impelled by an irresistible force to commit sin, (that is, to perpetrate some deed that has been prohibited,) cannot be said to sin himself.

As a legitimate consequence it also follows, that sin is not sin, since whatever...God does, it neither can be sin, nor ought any of his acts to receive that appellation." (Ibid.)

Every student of the art of polemics can appreciate this precise reasoning of James Arminius. It is no wonder that his name shines brighter than that of Servetus, or even Calvin, who was no novice in the field of polemics.

Certain aspects of Arminius' teaching, however, conspired to create only a weak front against Calvinism, since he also accepted a form of the principle of predestination (though a little different from Calvin's view on the same subject), and he believed also in "inherited sin." Neither of these beliefs were valid, having no more Scriptural support than those of Calvin! His greatest contribution was to restore consideration of the passages of Scripture which showed a universal, rather than a limited opportunity for salvation, such as 1 Timothy 2:1-4, and John 3:16.

Arminius, in his "Declaration of Sentiments," pointed out that Calvin's Doctrine of predestination "has been rejected both in former times and in our own days, by the greater part of the professors of Christianity" (Ibid., p. 639). It is true that each of Calvin's five TULIP points have gradually fallen into disfavor, and have been moderated or revised through the centuries. But, we do not see a full remedy of these errors, historically, until we examine the work of the 19th Century Reformers, the Campbells and Barton W. Stone.

The so-called "Restoration Movement" provided this escape from Augustinianism and Calvinism. Former reforms of Calvinism (such as that of Arminius) had failed, because the
reformers still held to the concepts of Original Sin, and moderated Predestination. In the 18th Century, the Haldanes and others in Scotland adopted a more practical view of what needed to be done. The doctrine of Calvinism discouraged the preaching of the Gospel, since election was said to be unconditional, and therefore did not depend on consent of the mind in the elect, nor any sort of response. One had to wait for a spiritual experience, some convincing event that indicated to that person that God had saved or elected him.

Reacting negatively to this view, Robert and Alexander Haldane subdued their Calvinistic prejudices to follow the obvious commands in Scripture to "preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15)," and set out to evangelize their region. This invited much criticism and persecution by pure Calvinists, until the brothers were compelled to separate themselves from the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), and form a new congregation.

Still following the "evangelical" trend of the 16th Century Reformation, retained in Calvinism, they taught salvation by faith, apart from baptism, and practiced "optional" adult immersion. Thomas and Alexander Campbell were impressed by the work of the Haldane brothers during their time in Scotland and Ireland, but they were destined to go much further than their mentors. Not one of the tenets of Calvinism, which they had formerly believed, were retained by them. Until these were abandoned, they concluded, primitive Christianity could not be restored. They were joined in this revolution by Barton W. Stone, and other former Calvinists. the Campbells and their compatriots preached:

1. ...that a man is born innocent, and does not become lost until he personally sins, Ezekiel 18:20; Matthew 19:14; James 1:13-15 (exit Total Depravity);
2. ...that election, or salvation, is conditional, resting on the freewill actions of obedience of faith, repentance, confession of faith, and immersion, Revelation 22:17, Romans 1:5, 10:9-10; Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3-4 (exit Unconditional Election);
3. ...that the atonement of Christ is universal, 1 John 2:1-2, 4:14 (exit Limited Atonement);
4. ...that the "grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men (Titus 2:11)," but since all are not saved (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10), God's
saving grace is resistible, Hebrews 10:28-31; (exit Irresistible Grace),
and...

5. ...that the soul that is saved can return to sin and be lost, 2 Peter 2:20-22,
Hebrews 3:12-14, Galatians 5:2-4 (exit the Perseverance of Saints).

There was no vestige of Calvinism's five "TULIP" points in this Scriptural stand, but a
message of hope, and of freedom from the "doctrines and precepts of men" (Matthew 15:9,
Colossians 2:8). Man can still be assured that no matter how deep he has fallen in sin, he
is not destined, contrary to his will, to go to eternal punishment. He can, by the exercise
of his God-given Free Will, choose to renounce the life of sin and appropriate to himself
the promises of eternal life by meeting the conditions that are set forth by God. The appeal
of the Gospel that was spoken on the Day of Pentecost still stands, and Peter's words on
that day are still valid—"Save yourselves from this crooked generation!" --Acts 2:40
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SALVATION: FAITH VS. WORKS

The chasm of antagonism between Catholicism and Protestantism is never deeper than when they are disputing the disparity of their views regarding faith and works. The impetus of the Reformed doctrine is salvation by "faith alone." Catholics, however, remain loyal to the principle of adding "works of merit" to faith, a doctrine developed by several stages from the beginnings of the Great Apostasy. The impression left by this doctrine is that salvation is "earned" by these works.

Victimized by the Catholic inculcation of this extreme and unfounded dogma, and failing to see the truth about works in the New Testament, Protestants (mostly Evangelicals) proclaim that salvation is by "faith alone." Yet, in rejecting the efficacy of such works as baptism (wrongly perceiving them, through Catholic eyes, as works of merit), there is also a form of extremism in the Protestant view. Relying strongly on passages that say that justification is not based on "works of the law" (Romans 3:20, 4:1-4), they commit the error of concluding that no works (including baptism) are required at all. A second influence on their thinking was the prominence of the Augustinian view of the helplessness of the sinner, which requires the "working" of God rather than the works of men.

However, "faith only" proponents were faced with the task of reconciling their views with such passages as James 2:14-26. Luther handled this problem by casting doubt on the authenticity of the book of James. He did not dare to exclude it from his German translation of the Bible, but either ignored its teaching, or misinterpreted it. Luther is on record as saying,

"Insist on it, then, that inwardly, in the spirit, before God, man is justified through faith alone, without all works, but outwardly and publicly, before the people and himself, he is justified through works, that is, he thereby becomes known and certain himself that he honestly believes and is pious. Therefore you may call the one a public justification, the other an inward justification..."

(Plass, What Luther Says, Vol. 3, pp. 1231-1232)
Luther would have us believe that works proceeding from faith are only assurances of justification to ourselves and the "people" (whoever they may be). But the Scripture says that only after Abraham had been obedient did God say, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me" (See Genesis 22:9-12). Luther's subtle, semantical argument obscures the simplicity of what James says. The true purpose of James 2:21-24 is to show us the result of an obedient faith. James asks, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that (or, when) he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?" But James also says that "faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect (complete); and the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.'" So, James confirms the saving combination of a working faith.

The writer of Hebrews explains the dilemma of Abraham in this way, "By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yes, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; even he to whom it was said, 'In Isaac shall your seed be called'" (Hebrews 11:17-18). If Abraham could bring himself to obey a divine order to kill his son as an offering, even though God had told him that Isaac would be his sole means of establishing a "holy nation," then it would be God, not Abraham, who would be assured that he believed.

James is joined by other New Testament writers in confirming the principle of a working faith. Luke shows it in the conversion of the Pentecostians (Acts 2:37-41), of Paul (Acts 22:16), and others. The writer of Hebrews describes the "active faiths" of the worthies of the Old Testament (Hebrews 11). Abel "offered," Enoch "walked," Noah "prepared an ark," Abraham "went out," etc. And Paul Commands the elect to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). An honest objective analysis of the doctrine of salvation by anyone who rejects the illogical and unscriptural theories of Augustine and Calvin, will assure him that saving faith must have its "perfecting" works.

Yet, Luther is adamant in his denial of salvation by works. He says,

"A man cannot be thoroughly humbled until he gets to know that his salvation lies utterly beyond his own powers, counsels, efforts, will, and works and depends absolutely on the pleasure, counsel, will and work of
Another, namely, God alone. For if man, convinced that he is able to do the least thing toward his own salvation, retains confidence in himself and does not utterly despair of himself, he is not humble before God." (Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 672)

If what he says here is true, he makes passages like Acts 2:40-41 seem totally incomprehensible. Peter "exhorted" and commanded his audience, Save yourselves..." And the next verse shows their voluntary compliance; "They then that received his word were baptized..." Any apostolic command to "save self," followed by a voluntary response, is an action, a "work," in which man is a participant with God in a synergistic cooperation of the human will with the divine. To Luther, however, any suggestion of synergism in salvation was worse than "Pelagianism" (Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 345-346). (This device is common among men. When they want to disparage something that might appear to be relatively innocent in itself, they unjustly connect it with something universally held in disrepute.)

But Luther was not content to contradict God in only one or two instances. He exceeded himself in the rejection and perversion of another very plain passage of Scripture. In a sermon on Mark 16:14-20, he said that this passage confirms the idea that "Faith alone saves a man:"

"See to it that you do not add any comment to these words and that you do not try to make them better than Christ has made them. Our learned men and schools for higher learning also wanted to improve on them. They have said that one must understand them like this: 'He that believeth' (understand: 'and does good works') 'shall be saved.' Who has commanded them to make this addition? Do you suppose the Holy Spirit is so stupid that He could not have added these words? So they have completely obscured, nay, they have perverted, this noble passage with this addition. See to it, therefore, that you allow no one to make an addition for you, but that you stay with the words just as they read and that you understand them in this way: 'He that believeth shall be saved' without his merit or any work." (Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 491)

In this statement, Luther stands guilty of perverting the passage by a subtraction, while he accuses others of doing the same thing by an addition! The words he subtracts are,
"...and is baptized." He rejects them in prejudice, because to him they carry the idea of a work of merit. Were he not already in the grave for hundreds of years, we might therefore ask of him, "Do you suppose the Holy Spirit is so stupid that he could not have subtracted these words?" His reaction is against Catholic scholars who make baptism a meritorious work, yet the fact that Catholic teachers might say that baptism is a work of merit does not make it so. Nevertheless, there remains the divine command to "be baptized...for the remission of sins," and like all of God's commands, it must be obeyed. It is obviously a saving action, therefore a saving work (compare 1 Peter 3:20-21).

But let us see the kind of faith that saves, and the kind of works by which "a man is justified."

First of all, we must realize that there are certain kinds of faith that will not save. For example, Paul describes a "faith" that is only a personal inward feeling of trust in the rightness of a practice. This is not the kind of faith we can require of others. Paul says, "The faith which you have, have to yourself before God." It is a private faith, not to be exported (Romans 14:22-23).

The concept taught by Augustine and Calvin (that faith is imposed on the elect in their helplessness) is not valid, since it leaves untapped the volition of man (see the preceding chapter on Freewill vs. Predestination). Such a faith is divinely fashioned and implanted in an arbitrary way. It therefore becomes God's faith, not man's. But Paul says that "Belief comes of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

Finally, we have already noted that we cannot be saved through a faith without works of obedience (James 2:14-17). This is the kind of unfulfilled "faith" that is also held by demons (James 2:19).

Likewise, we must recognize the kind of faith that will save. It is a faith like Abraham's (Romans 4:3-16). (1) He believed the word of God. (2) He believed apart from the covenant of circumcision. (3) He believed apart from the Law of Moses. And (4) his faith was "perfected" (completed) in "works."

We must have the same kind of faith, the only difference being that our "hearing" is of the word of Christ through the Apostles (John 17:20, Romans 10:17, Acts 4:4). However, like Abraham, we also believe apart from circumcision (Galatians 5:2-4), and we believe
apart from the Law (Romans 3:21-27). And, though we are not justified by "works of the law," we must still do the "works of faith" (compare also Philippians 2:12, James 1:2-4, and 2 Thessalonians 1:11).

In addition, there are certain kinds of works that will not save, (1) Works of the Law of Moses (Romans 3:20, 7:4-6), (2) works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), (3) works in human names (1 Corinthians 1:11-15, Acts 4:12), and works done in the name of Jesus, but which He identifies as unlawful (Matthew 7:21-23).

There is also no reward in "Works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves" (Titus 3:4-5), that is, works which we devise and offer to God as a means of salvation. Yet, in the same context, the "washing of regeneration" prescribed by Paul is obviously baptism, which, though it is a work of obedience, is apparently not a work of the sort rejected by God in this passage. Nor is there any value or stability in works that are not of God's doing. They "shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13).

On the other hand, works that will save are those done in obedience to faith (Romans 16:25-26). Among these is the very act of faith itself, for Christ said, This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent" (John 6:29). Repentance is a work that is "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:37-38), and leads "unto life" (Acts 11:13). Confession is a work "unto salvation" (Romans 10:6-10). And baptism is a work of faith that follows and completes these other preparatory works. We read that "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). (NOTE: Crispus is said only to have believed in Acts 18:8, but "the rest of the story" is that he was also baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14).

Baptism is therefore a "work" of obedience. When Paul believed, he was told, in imperative words, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins..." (Acts 22:16). Yet, a passive reception is suggested, when the Scripture says that the Lord Jesus "loosed (washed) us from our sins by his blood" (Revelation 1:5). Then again, an active reception is also implied, when it is said of the faithful that "they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:13-17; compare Hebrews 10:4). In these verses we have a mixture of actors. First Paul is to present himself to wash away his sins in baptism. Then, Christ is active in washing man's sins by his blood. And finally, the saints are active in washing their own robes in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, both man and
Christ are active in salvation, and water baptism is the obedient believer’s means to receive the cleansing of the blood of Christ.

When men have cleared away the "rubbish of the ages," as Thomas Campbell called it in his early 19th Century pamphlet entitled "Declaration and Address," and have rejected all the unscriptural ideas of Augustine, Calvin, Luther, Wesley, and a host of Catholic and Protestant "doctors," the simple and practical principle of a "working faith," which can be found in every man who is persuaded by and responds to the Gospel of Christ, is revealed plainly on the pages of the Bible. We see it in the faith of Abraham, the faiths of the Old Testament characters, and in the cases of conversion recorded in the New Testament. Faith is acquired by voluntarily hearing the truth, and acting responsibly on that conviction. The works in themselves do not merit salvation, since the blood of Christ accomplishes this, but in performing the conditional works commanded by the Lord there is the necessary proving of our faith to God.

Though it is true that our works bring us no personal spiritual "merit," we cannot say that our works are not rewarded. Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is" (Revelation 22:12). There is therefore a reward given to those who practice obedient works of faith. We have the assurance that when we die "in the Lord," and enter our rest, our works will follow us before the throne of God (Revelation 14:13).

These truths were only slowly realized by the early 19th Century seekers for the primitive gospel. The charged religious atmosphere of the late 1700’s and the early 1800’s brought about a great interest in re-discovering the apostolic beginnings of Christianity. Some seekers, however, allowed personal opinions to distract them from fulfillment of their quest, but those who were willing to set aside the religious heritage of their past in favor of learning the whole truth were better rewarded.

The spiritual evolution of former Calvinists Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell and his son, Alexander, was deliberate. Their minds had been unlocked, perhaps, by the revolutionary concepts of the Haldane brothers in Scotland, and their contemporary, John Glas, but their escape from the prison of the past was cautious. Months of study would be given to each new search. In the course of time, however, they uniformly abandoned infant
baptism for adult immersion. Yet, becoming immersionists still did not result in a ready belief that immersion was "for the remission of sins."

Others, like Walter Scott, a teacher and preacher on the "Western Reserve" in Ohio, were wrestling with the same issue. Scott had come under the influence of George Forrester, who had rejected all creeds, and had taken a stand on the Bible alone as his guide in religion (West, Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 1, p. 80). Through his instruction, Scott came to the conclusion that adult immersion was the true baptism of the New Testament. He forsook the doctrine of infant baptism, and was baptized.

Later, after having met Alexander Campbell, Scott conferred with him about Alexander's coming debate with W. L. McCalla. In a previous debate with John Walker in 1820, Campbell had "hinted at the idea" that baptism was for the remission of sins, but in consequence of the new debate, he determined to study the matter again, and asked advice from Walter Scott. They concluded that the time was ripe to broach the subject, publicly (Ibid. p. 82). Propagating baptism as a work of faith became an integral part of restoration preaching even though it was considered radical by many in the religious community, and opened them to the charge of believing in "baptismal regeneration."

By the time that Scott had begun his evangelistic work in Ohio in 1827, the simple preaching of the gospel, which urged obedience in the "works" of faith, repentance, and baptism, in the pattern of the conversions in the book of Acts, was gaining ground against the prevailing doctrines of Calvin (Ibid. p. 84). Since that day, it has been the bold pattern in churches of Christ to preach "works of faith" rather than "salvation by faith alone." We are indebted, therefore, to the 19th Century "Restorationists" for their rejection of exclusive monergistic historical positions on either "works" or "faith," and we are thankful for their providential rediscovery and proclamation of the synergistic "middle ground" principle of a "working faith."
A great hindrance to the complete understanding of Bible authority has been the custom of men to treat some things commanded by the Lord as "essential," while treating other things as "matters of indifference." It is impossible to promote proper respect for divine authority, so long as men have this attitude. There was a tendency to do this even in Bible times. In the Old Testament, the classic case is that of Nadab and Abihu, recorded in Leviticus 10:1ff. As sanctified priests, God expected these men to "glorify" Him before the people by exhibiting an attitude of careful obedience. However, when they lit their incense for use in a ceremony (an important and legitimate part of Old Testament ritual), they used "strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them." They failed to meet God's expectations when they did not ignite their incense lawfully, so He "devoured them" with fire, and "they died before Jehovah." Their sin was the result of treating the simple task of lighting incense as a "matter of indifference."

Moses (their uncle), Aaron (their father), and their brothers, could have let their sympathies run the wrong way, on the side of the dead men, if they had possessed attitudes toward the commands of God similar to those of Nadab and Abihu. However, "Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons (the remaining priests), 'Let not the hair of your head go loose, neither rend your clothes (in grief); that you die not, and that He (God) be not wroth with all the congregation: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which Jehovah has kindled." If any wailing was to be done, it must not be for Nadab and Abihu, but for the fact that God was not glorified, and was provoked to anger!

Encouraged by Moses, Aaron and his sons did not abandon their priestly service that day, finishing their normal duties, and were careful not to show public grief over the death of their offending brethren. By this courageous behavior, God's tarnished glory was restored, and the message of the incident was made clear. Nothing that issued from the
mouth of God could be treated as unimportant.

Jesus showed the hypocrisy of certain men of His day who were attempting to be teachers, but who, in His eyes, were "blind guides." He said to them, "Woe unto you...that say, 'Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor.' You fools and blind! for which is greater, the gold, or the temple that has sanctified the gold? And, 'Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it, he is a debtor.' Ye blind! for which is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift? He therefore that swears by the altar, swears by it, and by all things thereon. And he that swears by the temple, swears by it, and by him that dwells therein. And he that swears by the heaven, swears by the throne of God, and by him that sits thereon" (Matthew 23:16-22). When men follow their own set of values, and make distinctions regarding the importance of certain practices, they are prone to make the common human mistake of sitting in judgment on the value system of God.

In the next few verses of Matthew, Jesus rebuked his audience in another case of inconsistent emphasis. He said to them, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these you ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone" (Matthew 23:23). Though Nadab and Abihu ignored the importance of "detail," these men were putting their stress on it, leaving "weightier matters" undone. Jesus shows them that both the aesthetic instruction of God, and its accompanying meticulous details, deserve equal attention, if we recognize God as the author of both kinds of commands.

These biblical illustrations point up a problem within the problem. When men set themselves to judge what is important, and what is not, the standards will vary in proportion to the variance of human choice. There can be no consistent set of rules that all will accept. To have unanimity, all of God’s commands, whether they state broad principles, or meticulous detail, are important.

Nevertheless, early in the history of Christianity, men emerged who dared to treat God's commands capriciously. We have already noted in our historical study of baptism that the early document called...
"The Didache allows pouring in cases of scarcity of water. But after-wards this mode was applied only to infirm or sick persons; hence called clinical baptism. The validity of this baptism was even doubted by many in the third century; and Cyprian wrote in its defense, taking the ground that the mode of application of water was a matter of minor importance ..." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, pp. 249-250)

Cyprian's daring was not isolated. Others imitated his attitude throughout the history of the Great Apostasy. One thing that gave them this unwarranted courage was the presumption that God had vested them with discretionary powers regarding the weight of different elements of God’s Word. When they divided the doctrines of the Bible into the categories of important and unimportant, vital or indifferent, the way was opened for much false teaching. The far-reaching consequences of this attitude are seen when we hear Luther, more than a thousand years later, say,

"...I would have those who are to be baptized completely immersed in the water, as the word says, and as the sacrament signifies. Not that I hold this to be necessary, But it were well to give to so perfect and complete a matter a perfect and complete sign." (Plass, What Luther Says, vol. 1, p. 58)

Strangely, this is the same Luther who would say,

"All the words of God are weighed, counted, and measured...Not one letter in Scripture is purposeless...It is very dangerous to speak of things divine in a different manner and in words different from those which God himself uses." (Ibid., pp. 65-66)

In another case of inconsistency, Luther would urge the use of Instruments of music in worship (Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 982), but at the same time call the practice of worshiping God in the wrong manner "idolatry." He says,

"There is an amazing confusion of religions and forms of religious worship in the world. This came about because all wanted to have and worship a god but proceeded without the Word of God, according to the opinion of their own heart. But this is, properly speaking, idolatry, when we ourselves give God a form and invest God with some sort of religious worship which He Himself
has not instituted and has not commanded in His Word. For God does not want to be worshiped in any other way than that which He Himself prescribed." (Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 1548).

Thus, we observe an erratic pattern of thought in Luther which could easily issue from his tendency to divide things authorized by God into those which are essential, and those which are not.

Between Cyprian and Luther we find various prominent leaders who were willing to say that certain precepts of God were not essential. Bernard, the famous Abbot of Clairvaux (12th Century) declared that "baptism was not indispensable to salvation when the opportunity is not afforded" (see Chapter Seven). The veneration which was customarily shown toward bishops and abbots carried over into fawning respect for what they said, making it easy for medieval Catholics to accept their fallible judgments on critical issues.

The Protestants, as we can see from the attitude of Luther, failed to restore an appreciation of the equity of God's commands. Calvin followed Luther in preferring immersion to sprinkling and pouring, but pronounced the mode of applying water to the convert a matter of indifference (Institutes, IV, ch. 15, sec. 19). Calvin also had this attitude toward some customs held over from Catholicism. Schaff says that one of the predecessors of Calvin in Geneva...

"...in his iconoclastic zeal had, before the arrival of Calvin, abolished all holidays except Sunday, the baptismal fonts, and the unleavened bread in the communion, all of which were retained by the Reformed Church in Bern... Calvin himself regarded such matters as in themselves indifferent, but would not forsake his colleagues." (History, Vol. 8, pp. 358-359)

To Calvin, loyalty to "colleagues" was apparently more important than purging the church of religious customs of human origin. In the matters mentioned above, certainly, special holy days and baptismal fonts for sprinkling and pouring were contrary to Apostolic teaching, but the use of unleavened bread should not have been condemned in the same context. The adoption of leavened bread by the reformed church in Geneva was an obvious reactionary attempt to establish a visible alternative to the use of unleavened bread in Catholic churches. Such a reaction revealed the kind of militant reformatory spirit
which could ignore biblical evidence, in order to accomplish its zealous goals. The inspired record says that the Lord, *"in the night in which he was betrayed, took bread"* (1 Corinthians 11:23). That night was the feast of Passover, so the bread he broke was unleavened Passover bread. The Lord employed this bread to establish the New Testament practice of the Lord's Supper. This is a clear implication of what should be used when we practice it today (*even if Catholics do the same*).

When the use of instruments of music in the worship began to trouble the 19th Century "Restoration" pioneers, Earl West says,

"...of course, the use or non-use of the instrument was symptomatic of an attitude toward the scriptures. Because many felt the use of the instrument was in direct violation of a basic principle which was necessary to maintain if the church was to return to the ancient order, they vigorously opposed it. Although it was frequently contended that the use of the instrument was a comparatively innocent practice, advocated even by some very spiritual-minded men..." (Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 2, p. 73)

In this statement, we can see the same elements at work which rose in the Apostate Church, the subjection of God's commands to a human system of values, and respect for those judgments in proportion to the respect shown for the men who expressed them. The judgment that the use of instruments of music in worship was "comparatively innocent" was based on the presumption that men can decide which of God's commands are vital, and which are not.

J. W. McGarvey, the highly respected preacher of the latter part of the 19th Century, opposed the use of instruments of music, yet agreed to fellowship those who used them. He wrote,

"Once we had no men among us who were known to tolerate instrumental music in worship. After that there arose some who contended that whether we use it or not is a mere matter of expediency." (Ibid., p. 83)

But in 1869, Moses Lard wrote in the *Apostolic Times*,

"The subject of expediency, as interpreted by some of us, may yet prove the rock on which the reformation for which we are pleading goes to pieces
...When we plead expediency to justify practices unknown to the apostolic age, we are not within the limits of the expedient. We are then violating the word of God. Expediency is no law for innovations, either in faith or practice; and he who pleads it to this extent has abandoned the only rule which can save us from ruin." (Ibid., p. 89)

Earl West comments that when Robert Richardson, the biographer of Alexander Campbell, discussed this issue with H. T. Anderson in the columns of the *Christian Standard*, he objected to Anderson's contention that...

"...there was no law against the use of instrumental music; therefore, it is permitted by expediency...Richardson, an opponent of the instrument, set forth the other side. Expediency, Richardson pointed out, is not without the law, but within it. Before there can be expediency, there must be law. To illustrate the point, he uses the subject of Prayer. The Bible prescribes prayer, but expediency determines the place, the space of time, and the posture of prayer. Then he writes, 'As it regards the use of musical instruments in church worship, the case is wholly different. This can never be a question of expediency, for the simple reason that there is no law prescribing or authorizing it. If it were anywhere said in the New Testament that Christians should use instruments, then it would become a question of expediency what kind of instruments was to be used, whether an organ or melodeon...and what circumstances should regulate the performance.'" (Ibid., p. 90-91)

As the view of "expediency" held by some in this period allowed for innovations like instruments of music, so the same view, a century later, brought in the practice of local church subsidies to human organizations, and the principle of elevating some local churches to be "agencies" for the brotherhood in special projects. All the evidence of the New Testament regarding the limitations of local church work, and the strict autonomy of local churches, was regarded as of little importance when placed beside the grandeur of human enterprise. The tragic result of this is that the cloak of "expediency" disguises the practitioner of innovations as a law-abiding disciple of Jesus, but actually only masks a
deeper problem; the willingness to treat some plain precepts of God as immaterial and dispensable.

In every age, when innovators seek a certain predetermined end, they often relegate the word of God to a position of secondary authority, or they treat some precepts of Scripture with sufficient indifference to gain their ends. To those who wish to be loyal to the principle of respecting every precept of an all-wise God, there can be no distinction of importance, no inequities of authority in what God has said, whether they seem important in the eyes of men, or not.

Though he was appealing for consistent compliance with all the rules of an obsolete law, the Psalmist was stating a principle that should apply to all of God’s revealed will, when he wrote,

"Blessed are they that are perfect in the way, who walk in the law of Jehovah. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, that seek him with the whole heart. Yea, they do no unrighteousness: they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded thy precepts, that we should observe them diligently. Oh that my ways were established to observe thy statutes! Then shall I not be put to shame, when I have respect unto all thy commandments..."

— Psalms 119:1-6
Appendix

Declaration and Address by Thomas Campbell

NOTE: This document, published in 1809, is in the public domain and may be copied and distributed at will. This version was scanned and marked up for inclusion in the Restoration Literature Meta-Index by Jim McMillan in March, 1995.

(NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR, Joe Neil Clayton – This pamphlet, written nearly 200 years ago, has many premises that are worthy to apply to the cause of uniting all believers in one body. It is presented without comment, so that any who read it may draw independent conclusions from its pages. Even though Thomas Campbell was seeking to convince his readers of the proper way to interpret Scripture, he did not always apply it correctly to some of his suggestions. It is to his credit that he recognized this failure himself in the years after its publication. This copy is presented in a readable font, and only a few corrections have been made to the text, spellings, mostly. The author only counsels all readers to remember that this document was written by a man who was only beginning to grope for the truth regarding the correct way to interpret the Scripture. He carried, at the time of his writing, much of the denominational “garbage of the ages,” as he called it, in his own bosom. Therefore, the 21st Century reader needs to adapt himself to the manner of speaking, and the vocabulary of the early 19th Century. For further study of the document, the author offers help in his book entitled, The Thunderous Silence of God, available from the author's website.)

FROM the series of events which have taken place in the churches for many years past, especially in this Western country, as well as from what we know in general of the present state of things in the Christian world, we are persuaded that it is high time for us not only to think, but also to act, for ourselves; to see with our own eyes, and to take all our measures directly and immediately from the Divine standard; to this alone we feel ourselves Divinely bound to be conformed, as by this alone, we must be judged. We are also persuaded that as no man can be judged for his brother, so no man can judge for his brother; every man must be allowed to judge for himself, as every man must bear his own judgment--must give account of himself to God. We are also of opinion that as the Divine word is equally binding upon all, so all lie under an equal obligation to be bound by it, and it alone; and not by any human interpretation of it; and that, therefore, no man has a right to judge his brother, except in so far as he manifestly violates the express letter of the law. That every such judgment is an express violation of the law of Christ, a daring usurpation
of his throne, and a gross intrusion upon the rights and liberties of his subjects. We are, therefore, of opinion that we should beware of such things; that we should keep at the utmost distance from everything of this nature; and that, knowing the judgment of God against them that commit such things, we should neither do the same ourselves, nor take pleasure in them that do them. Moreover, being well aware, as from sad experience, of the heinous nature and pernicious tendency of religious controversy among Christians; tired and sick of the bitter jarrings and janglings of a party spirit, we would desire to be at rest; and, were it possible, we would also desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren throughout all the churches: as would restore unity, peace, and purity to the whole Church of God. This desirable rest, however, we utterly despair either to find for ourselves, or to be able to recommend to our brethren, by continuing amid the diversity and rancor of party contentions, the veering uncertainty and clashings of human opinions: nor, indeed, can we reasonably expect to find it anywhere but in Christ and his simple word, which is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Our desire, therefore, for ourselves and our brethren would be, that, rejecting human opinions and the inventions of men as of any authority, or as having any place in the Church of God, we might forever cease from further contentions about such things; returning to and holding fast by the original standard; taking the Divine word alone for our rule; the Holy Spirit for our teacher and guide, to lead us into all truth; and Christ alone, as exhibited in the word, for our salvation; that, by so doing, we may be at peace among ourselves, follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Impressed with these sentiments, we have resolved as follows:

I. That we form ourselves into a religious association under the denomination of the Christian Association of Washington, for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men.

II. That each member, according to ability, cheerfully and liberally subscribe a certain specified sum, to be paid half yearly, for the purpose of raising a fund to support a pure Gospel ministry, that shall reduce to practice that whole form of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. And, also, for supplying the poor with the holy Scriptures.
III. That this Society consider it a duty, and shall use all proper means in its power, to encourage the formation of similar associations; and shall for this purpose hold itself in readiness, upon application, to correspond with, and render all possible assistance to, such as may desire to associate for the same desirable and important purposes.

IV. That this Society by no means considers itself a Church, nor does at all assume to itself the powers peculiar to such a society; nor do the members, as such, consider themselves as standing connected in that relation; nor as at all associated for the peculiar purposes of Church association; but merely as voluntary advocates for Church reformation; and, as possessing the powers common to all individuals, who may please to associate in a peaceable and orderly manner, for any lawful purpose, namely, the disposal of their time, counsel and property, as they may see cause.

V. That this Society, formed for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, shall, to the utmost of its power, countenance and support such ministers, and such only, as exhibit a manifest conformity to the original standard in conversation and doctrine, in zeal and diligence; only such as reduce to practice that simple original form of Christianity, expressly exhibited upon the sacred page; without at tempting to inculcate anything of human authority, of private opinion, or inventions of men, as having anyplace in the constitution, faith, or worship, of the Christian Church, or anything as matter of Christian faith or duty, for which there can not be expressly produce a "Thus saith the Lord, either in express terms, or by approved precedent."

VI. That a Standing Committee of twenty-one members of unexceptionable moral character, inclusive of the secretary and treasurer, be chosen annually to superintend the interests, and transact the business of the Society. And that said Committee be invested with full powers to act and do, in the name, and behalf of their constituents, whatever the Society had previously determined, for the purpose of carrying into effect the entire object of its institution, and that in case of any emergency, unprovided for in the existing determinations of the Society, said Committee be empowered to call a special meeting for that purpose.

VII. That this Society meet at least twice a year, viz.: on the first Thursday of May, and of November, and that the collectors appointed to receive the half-yearly quotas of the
promised subscriptions, be in readiness, at or before each meeting, to make their returns to the treasurer, that he may be able to report upon the state of the funds. The next meeting to be held at Washington on the first Thursday of November next.

VIII. That each meeting of the Society be opened with a sermon, the constitution and address read, and a collection lifted for the benefit of the Society; and that all communications of a public nature be laid before the Society at its half-yearly meetings.

IX. That this Society, relying upon the all-sufficiency of the Church's Head; and, through his grace, looking with an eye of confidence to the generous liberality of the sincere friends of genuine Christianity; holds itself engaged to afford a competent support to such ministers as the Lord may graciously dispose to assist, at the request, and by invitation of the Society, in promoting a pure evangelical reformation, by the simple preaching of the everlasting Gospel, and the administration of its ordinances in an exact conformity to the Divine standard as aforesaid; and that, therefore, what ever the friends of the institution shall please to con tribute toward the support of ministers in connection with this Society, who may be sent forth to preach at considerable distances, the same shall be gratefully received and acknowledged as a donation to its funds.

ADDRESS, ETC.

To all that love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity, throughout all the Churches, the following Address is most respectfully submitted.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN:

That it is the grand design and native tendency of our holy religion to reconcile and unite men to God, and to each other, in truth and love, to the glory of God, and their own present and eternal good, will not, we presume, be denied, by any of the genuine subjects of Christianity. The nativity of its Divine author was announced from heaven, by a host of angels, with high acclamations of "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good-will toward men." The whole tenor of that Divine book which contains its institutes, in all its gracious declarations, precepts, ordinances, and holy examples, most expressively and powerfully inculcates this. In so far, then, as this holy unity and unanimity in faith and love is attained, just in the same degree is the glory of God and the happiness of men
promoted and secured. Impressed with those sentiments, and, at the same time, grievously
affected with those sad divisions which have so awfully interfered with the benign and
gracious intention of our holy religion, by exciting its professed subjects to bite and devour
one another, we cannot suppose ourselves justifiable in withholding the mite of our sincere
and humble endeavors to heal and remove them.

What awful and distressing effects have those sad divisions produced! what aversions,
what reproaches, what backbitings, what evil surmisings, what angry contentions, what
enmities, what excommunications, and even persecution! ! ! And, indeed, this must, in
some measure, continue to be the case so long as those schisms exist; for, saith the
apostle, where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. What dreary
effects of those accursed divisions are to be seen, even in this highly favored country,
where the sword of the civil magistrate has not as yet learned to serve at the altar. Have
we not seen congregations broken to pieces, neighborhoods of professing Christians first
thrown into confusion by party contentions, and, in the end, entirely deprived of Gospel
ordinances; while, in the mean time, large settlements and tracts of country remain to this
day entirely destitute of a Gospel ministry, many of them in little better than a state of
heathenism, the Churches being either so weakened with divisions that they cannot send
them ministers, or the people so divided among themselves that they will not receive them.
Several, at the same time, who live at the door of a preached Gospel, dare not in
conscience go to hear it, and, of course, enjoy little more advantage, in that respect, than
if living in the midst of heathens. How seldom do many in those circumstances enjoy the
dispensations of the Lord's Supper, that great ordinance of unity and love. How sadly, also,
does this broken and confused state of things interfere with that spiritual intercourse
among Christians, one with another, which is so essential to their edification and comfort,
in the midst of a present evil world; so divided in sentiment, and, of course, living at such
distances, that but few of the same opinion, or party, can conveniently and frequently
assemble for religious purposes, or enjoy a due frequency of ministerial attentions. And
even where things are in a better state with respect to settled Churches, how is the tone
of discipline relaxed under the influence of a party spirit; many being afraid to exercise it
with due strictness, lest their people should leave them, and, under the cloak of some
specious pretense, find refuge in the bosom of another party; while lamentable to be told, so corrupted is the Church with those accursed divisions, that there are but few so base as not to find admission into some professing party or other. Thus, in a great measure, is that Scriptural purity of communion banished from the Church of God, upon the due preservation of which much of her comfort, glory, and usefulness depend. To complete the dread result of our woeful divisions, one evil yet remains, of a very awful nature: the Divine displeasure justly provoked with this sad perversion of the Gospel of peace, the Lord withholds his gracious influential presence from his ordinances, and not unfrequently gives up the contentious authors and abettors of religious discord to fall into grievous scandals, or visits them with judgments, as he did the house of Eli. Thus, while professing Christians bite and devour one another, they are consumed one of another, or fall a prey to the righteous judgments of God; meantime, the truly religious of all parties are grieved, the weak stumbled, the graceless and profane hardened, the mouths of infidels opened to blaspheme religion, and thus the only thing under heaven divinely efficacious to promote and secure the present spiritual and eternal good of man, even the Gospel of the blessed Jesus, is reduced to contempt, while multitudes, deprived of a Gospel ministry, as has been observed, fall an easy prey to seducers, and so become the dupes of almost unheard of delusions. Are not such the visible effects of our sad divisions, even in this otherwise happy country. Say, dear brethren, are not these things so? Is it not then your incumbent duty to endeavor, by all Scriptural means, to have those evils remedied. Who will say that it is not? And does it not peculiarly belong to you, who occupy the place of Gospel ministers, to be leaders in this laudable undertaking? Much depends upon your hearty concurrence and zealous endeavors. The favorable opportunity which Divine Providence has put into your hands, in this happy country, for the accomplishment of so great a good, is, in itself, a consideration of no small encouragement. A country happily exempted from the baneful influence of a civil establishment of any peculiar form of Christianity; from under the direct influence of the antichristian hierarchy; and, at the same time, from any formal connection with the devoted nations that have given their strength and power unto the beast; in which, of course, no adequate reformation can be accomplished, until the word of God be fulfilled, and the vials of his wrath poured out upon them. Happy
exemption, indeed, from being the object of such awful judgments. Still more happy will it be for us if we duly esteem and improve those great advantages, for the high and valuable ends for which they are manifestly given, and sure where much is given, much also will be required. Can the Lord expect, or require, anything less from a people in such unhampered circumstances--from a people so liberally furnished with all means and mercies, than a thorough reformation in all things, civil and religious, according to his word? Why should we suppose it? And would not such an improvement of our precious privileges be equally conducive to the glory of God, and our own present and everlasting good? The auspicious phenomena of the times furnish collateral arguments of a very encouraging nature, that our dutiful and pious endeavors shall not be in vain in the Lord. Is it not the day of the Lord's vengeance upon the anti-Christian world--the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion? Surely, then, the time to favor her is come; even the set time. And is it not said that Zion shall be built in troublous times? Have not greater efforts been made, and more done, for the promulgation of the Gospel among the nations, since the commencement of the French revolution, than had been for many centuries prior to that event?

And have not the Churches, both in Europe and America, since that period, discovered a more than usual concern for the removal of contentions, for the healing of divisions, for the restoration of a Christian and brotherly intercourse one with another, and for the promotion of each other's spiritual good, as the printed documents upon those subjects amply testify? Should we not, then, be excited by these considerations to concur with all our might, to help forward this good work; that what yet remains to be done, may be fully accomplished. And what though the well-meant endeavors after union have not, in some instances, entirely succeeded to the wish of all parties, should this dissuade us from the attempt! Indeed, should Christians cease to contend earnestly for the sacred articles of faith and duty once delivered to the saints, on account of the opposition and scanty success which, in many instances, attend their faithful and honest endeavors; the Divine cause of truth and righteousness might have long ago been relinquished. And is there anything more formidable in the Goliath schism, than in many other evils which Christians have to combat? Or, has the Captain of Salvation sounded a desist from pursuing, or proclaimed a truce with this deadly enemy that is sheathing its sword in the very bowels
of his Church, rending and mangling his mystical body into pieces? Has he said to his servants, Let it alone? If not, where is the warrant for a cessation of endeavors to have it removed? On the other hand are we not the better instructed by sage experience, how to proceed in this business, having before our eyes the inadvertencies and mistakes of others, which have hitherto, in many instances, prevented the desired success? Thus taught by experience, and happily furnished with the accumulated instructions of those that have gone before us, earnestly laboring in this good cause, let us taken unto ourselves the whole armor of God, and, having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, let us stand fast by this important duty with all perseverance. Let none that love the peace of Zion be discouraged, much less offended, because that an object of such magnitude does not, in the first instance, come forth recommended by the express suffrage of the mighty or the many. This consideration, if duly weighed, will neither give offense, nor yield discouragement to any one that considers the nature of the thing in question in connection with what has been already suggested. Is it not a matter of universal right, a duty equally belonging to every citizen of Zion, to seek her good? In this respect, no one can claim a preference above his fellows, as to any peculiar, much less exclusive obligation. And, as for authority, it can have no place in this business; for, surely, none can suppose themselves invested with a Divine right, as to anything peculiarly belonging to them, to call the attention of their brethren to this dutiful and important undertaking. For our part, we entertain no such arrogant presumption; nor are we inclined to impute the thought to any of our brethren, that this good work should be let alone till such time as they may think proper to come forward and sanction the attempt, by their invitation and example. It is an open field, an extensive work, to which all are equally welcome, equally invited.

Should we speak of competency, viewing the greatness of the object, and the manifold difficulties which lie in the way of its accomplishment; we would readily exclaim, with the apostle, Who is sufficient for these things? But, upon recollecting ourselves, neither would we be discouraged; persuaded with him, that, as the work in which we are engaged, so, likewise, our sufficiency is of God. But, after all, both the mighty and the many are with us. The Lord himself, and all that are truly his people, are declaredly on our side. The prayers of all the Churches, nay, the prayers of Christ himself (John xvii:20, 23), and of all that
have ascended to his heavenly kingdom, are with us. The blessing out of Zion is pronounced upon our undertaking. "Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee." With such encouragements as these, what should deter us from the heavenly enterprise, or render hopeless the attempt of accomplishing, in due time, an entire union of all the Churches in faith and practice, according to the word of God? Not that we judge ourselves competent to effect such a thing; we utterly disclaim the thought; but we judge it our bounden duty to make the attempt, by using all due means in our power to promote it; and also, that we have sufficient reason to rest assured that our humble and well-meant endeavors shall not be in vain in the Lord.

The cause that we advocate is not our own peculiar cause, nor the cause of any party, considered as such; it is a common cause, the cause of Christ and our brethren of all denominations. All that we presume, then, is to do what we humbly conceive to be our duty, in connection with our brethren; to each of whom it equally belongs, as to us, to exert himself for this blessed purpose. And as we have no just reason to doubt the concurrence of our brethren to accomplish an object so desirable in itself, and fraught with such happy consequences, so neither can we look forward to that happy event which will forever put an end to our hapless divisions, and restore to the Church its primitive unity, purity, and prosperity, but in the pleasing prospect of their hearty and dutiful concurrence.

Dearly beloved brethren, why should we deem it a thing incredible that the Church of Christ, in this highly favored country, should resume that original unity, peace, and purity which belong to its constitution, and constitute its glory? Or, is there anything that can be justly deemed necessary for this desirable purpose, both to conform to the model and adopt the practice of the primitive Church, expressly exhibited in the New Testament? Whatever alterations this might produce in any or in all of the Churches, should, we think, neither be deemed inadmissible nor ineligible. Surely such alteration would be every way for the better, and not for the worse, unless we should suppose the divinely inspired rule to be faulty, or defective. Were we, then, in our Church constitution and managements, to exhibit a complete conformity to the apostolic Church, would we not be, in that respect, as perfect as Christ intended we should be? And should not this suffice us?

It is, to us, a pleasing consideration that all the Churches of Christ which mutually
acknowledge each other as such, are not only agreed in the great doctrines of faith and holiness, but are also materially agreed as to the positive ordinances of the Gospel institution; so that our differences, at most, are about the things in which the kingdom of God does not consist, that is, about matters of private opinion or human invention. What a pity that the kingdom of God should be divided about such things! Who, then, would not be the first among us to give up human inventions in the worship of God, and to cease from imposing his private opinions upon his brethren, that our breaches might thus be healed? Who would not willingly conform to the original pattern laid down in the New Testament, for this happy purpose? Our dear brethren of all denominations will please to consider that we have our educational prejudices and particular customs to struggle against as well as they. But this we do sincerely declare, that there is nothing we have hitherto received as matter of faith or practice which is not expressly taught and enjoined in the word of God, either in express terms or approved precedent, that we would not heartily relinquish, that so we might return to the original constitutional unity of the Christian Church; and, in this happy unity, enjoy full communion with all our brethren, in peace and charity. The like dutiful condescension we candidly expect of all that are seriously impressed with a sense of the duty they owe to God, to each other, and to their perishing brethren of mankind. To this we call, we invite, our brethren of all denominations, by all the sacred motives which we have avouched as the impulsive reasons of our thus addressing them.

You are all, dear brethren, equally included as the objects of our love and esteem. With you all we desire to unite in the bonds of an entire Christian unity--Christ alone being the head, the center, his word the rule; an explicit belief of, and manifest conformity to it, in all things--the terms. More than this, you will not require of us; and less we cannot require of you; nor, indeed, can we reasonably suppose any would desire it, for what good purpose would it serve? We dare neither assume nor propose the trite indefinite distinction between essentials and non-essentials, in matters of revealed truth and duty; firmly persuaded, that, whatever may be their comparative importance, simply considered, the high obligation of the Divine authority revealing, or enjoining them, renders the belief or performance of them absolutely essential to us, in so far as we know them. And to be ignorant of anything God
has revealed, can neither be our duty nor our privilege. We humbly presume, then, dear brethren, you can have no relevant objection to meet us upon this ground. And, we again beseech you, let it be known that it is the invitation of but few; by your accession we shall be many; and whether few, or many, in the first instance, it is all one with respect to the event which must ultimately await the full information and hearty concurrence of all. Besides, whatever is to be done, must begin, some time, some where; and no matter where, nor by whom, if the Lord puts his hand to the work, it must surely prosper. And has he not been graciously pleased, upon many signal occasions, to bring to pass the greatest events from very small beginnings, and even by means the most unlikely. Duty then is ours; but events belong to God.

We hope, then, what we urge will neither be deemed an unreasonable nor an unseasonable undertaking. Why should it be thought unseasonable? Can any time be assigned, while things continue as they are, that would prove more favorable for such an attempt, or what could be supposed to make it so? Might it be the approximation of parties to a greater nearness, in point of public profession and similarity of customs? Or might it be expected from a gradual decline of bigotry? As to the former, it is a well-known fact, that where the difference is least, the opposition is always managed with a degree of vehemence inversely proportioned to the merits of the cause. With respect to the latter, though we are happy to say, that in some cases and places, and, we hope, universally, bigotry is upon the decline; yet we are not warranted, either by the past or present, to act upon that supposition. We have, as yet, by this means seen no such effect produced; nor indeed could we reasonably expect it; for there will always be multitudes of weak persons in the Church, and these are generally most subject to bigotry; add to this, that while divisions exist, there will always be found interested men who will not fail to support them; nor can we at all suppose that Satan will be idle to improve an advantage so important to the interests of his kingdom. And, let it be further observed upon the whole, that, in matters of similar importance to our secular interests, we would by no means content our selves with such kind of reasoning. We might further add, that the attempt here suggested not being of a partial, but of general nature, it can have no just tendency to excite the jealousy, or hurt the feelings of any party. On the contrary, every effort toward a permanent
Scriptural unity among the Churches, upon the solid basis of universally acknowledged and self-evident truths, must have the happiest tendency to enlighten and conciliate, by thus manifesting to each other their mutual charity and zeal for the truth: "Whom I love in the truth," saith the apostle, "and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which is in us, and shall be with us forever." Indeed, if no such Divine and adequate basis of union can be fairly exhibited, as will meet the approbation of every upright and intelligent Christian, nor such mode of procedure adopted in favor of the weak as will not oppress their consciences, then the accomplishment of this grand object upon principle must be forever impossible. There would, upon this supposition, remain no other way of accomplishing it, but merely by voluntary compromise, and good-natured accommodation. That such a thing, however, will be accomplished, one way or other, will not be questioned by any that allow themselves to believe that the commands and prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ will not utterly prove ineffectual. Whatever way, then, it is to be effected, whether upon the solid basis of Divinely revealed truth, or the good-natured principle of Christian forbearance and gracious condescension, is it not equally practicable, equally eligible to us, as ever it can be to any; unless we should suppose ourselves destitute of that Christian temper and discernment which is essentially necessary to qualify us to do the will of our gracious Redeemer, whose express command to his people is, that there be "no divisions among them; but that they all walk by the same rule, speak the same thing, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment?" We believe then it is as practicable as it is eligible. Let us attempt it. "Up, and be doing, and the Lord will be with us."

Are we not all praying for that happy event, when there shall be but one fold, as there is but one chief Shepherd? What! shall we pray for a thing, and not strive to obtain it! ! not use the necessary means to have it accomplished! ! What said the Lord to Moses upon a piece of conduct somewhat similar? "Why criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward, but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand." Let the ministers of Jesus but embrace this exhortation, put their hand to the work, and encourage the people to go forward upon the firm ground of obvious truth, to unite in the bonds of an entire Christian unity; and who will venture to say that it would not soon be accomplished?
"Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people," saith your God. To you, therefore, it peculiarly belongs, as the professed and acknowledged leaders of the people, to go before them in this good work, to remove human opinions and the inventions of men out of the way, by carefully separating this chaff from the pure wheat of primary and authentic revelation; casting out the assumed authority, that enacting and decreeing power by which those things have been imposed and established. To this ministerial department, then, do we look with anxiety. Ministers of Jesus, you can neither be ignorant of nor unaffected with the divisions and corruptions of his Church. His dying commands, his last and ardent prayers for the visible unity of his professing people, will not suffer you to be indifferent in this matter. You will not, you cannot, therefore, be silent upon a subject of such vast importance to his personal glory and the happiness of his people--consistently you cannot; for silence gives consent. You will rather lift up your voice like a trumpet to expose the heinous nature and dreadful consequences of those unnatural and anti-Christian divisions, which have so rent and ruined the Church of God. Thus, in justice to your station and character, honored of the Lord, would we hopefully anticipate your zealous and faithful efforts to heal the breaches of Zion; that God's dear children might dwell together in unity and love; but if otherwise . . we forbear to utter it. (See Mal. ii: 1-10.)

O! that ministers and people would but consider that there are no divisions in the grave, nor in that world which lies beyond it! there our divisions must come to an end! we must all unite there! Would to God we could find in our hearts to put an end to our short-lived divisions here; that so we might leave a blessing behind us; even a happy and united Church. What gratification, what utility, in the mean time, can our divisions afford either to ministers or people? Should they be perpetuated till the day of judgment, would they convert one sinner from the error of his ways, or save a soul from death? Have they any tendency to hide the multitude of sins that are so dishonorable to God, and hurtful to his people? Do they not rather irritate and produce them? How innumerable and highly aggravated are the sins they have produced, and are at this day producing, both among professors and profane. We entreat, we beseech you then, dear brethren, by all those considerations, to concur in this blessed and dutiful attempt. What is the work of all, must
be done by all. Such was the work of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Such is the work to
which you are called, not by the authority of man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father,
who raised him from the dead. By this authority are you called to raise up the tabernacle
of David, that is fallen down among us, and to set it up upon its own base. This you cannot
do, while you run every man to his own house, and consult only the interests of his own
party. Until you associate, consult, and advise together, and in a friendly and Christian
manner explore the subject, nothing can be done. We would therefore, with all due
deference and submission, call the attention of our brethren to the obvious and important
duty of association. Unite with us in the common cause of simple evangelical Christianity;
in this glorious cause we are ready to unite with you. United we shall prevail. It is the cause
of Christ, and of our brethren throughout all the Churches, of catholic unity, peace, and
purity; a cause that must finally prosper in spite of all opposition. Let us unite to promote
it. Come forward, then, dear brethren, and help with us. Do not suffer yourselves to be
lulled asleep by that siren song of the slothful and reluctant professor: "The time is not yet
come, the time is not come; saith he; the time that the Lord's house should be built."
Believe him not. Do ye not discern the signs of the times? Have not the two witnesses
arisen from their state of political death, from under the long proscription of ages? Have
they not stood upon their feet, in the presence, and to the consternation and terror of their
enemies? Has not their resurrection been accompanied with a great earth quake? Has not
the tenth part of the great city been thrown down by it? Has not this event aroused the
nations to indignation? Have they not been angry, yea, very angry? Therefore, O Lord, is
thy wrath come upon them, and the time of the dead that they should be avenged, and that
thou shouldest give reward to thy servants the prophets, and to them that fear thy name,
both small and great; and that thou shouldest destroy them that have destroyed the earth.
Who among us has not heard the report of these things, of these lightnings and
thunderings and voices; of this tremendous earthquake and great hail; of these awful
convulsions and revolutions that have dashed and are dashing to pieces the nations, like
a potter's vessel? Yea, have not the remote vibrations of this dreadful shock been felt even
by us, whom God has graciously placed at so great a distance?

What shall we say to these things? Is it time for us to sit still in our corruptions and
divisions, when the Lord, by his word and providence, is so loudly and expressly calling us
to repentance, and reformation? "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy
beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come
unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust, O Jerusalem;
arise, loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion." Resume that
precious, that dear-bought liberty, wherewith Christ has made his people free; a liberty
from subjection to any authority but his own, in matters of religion. Call no man father, no
man master on earth; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. Stand
fast, therefore, in this precious liberty, and be not entangled again with the yoke of
bondage. For the vindication of this precious liberty have we declared ourselves hearty and
willing advocates. For this benign and dutiful purpose have we associated, that by so doing
we might contribute the mite of our humble endeavors to promote it, and thus invite our
brethren to do the same. As the first-fruits of our efforts for this blessed purpose we
respectfully present to their consideration the following propositions, relying upon their
charity and candor that they will neither despise nor misconstrue our humble and
adventurous attempt. If they should in any measure serve, as a preliminary, to open up the
way to a permanent Scriptural unity among the friends and lovers of truth and peace
throughout the Churches, we shall greatly rejoice at it. We by no means pretend to dictate,
and could we propose any thing more evident, consistent, and adequate, it should be at
their service. Their pious and dutiful attention to an object of such magnitude will induce
them to communicate to us their emendations; and thus what is sown in weakness will be
raised up in power. For certainly the collective graces that are conferred upon the Church,
if duly united and brought to bear upon any point of commanded duty, would be amply
sufficient for the right and successful performance of it. "For to one is given by the Spirit
the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith
by the same Spirit; to another the discerning of spirits: but the manifestation of the Spirit
is given to every man to profit withal. As every man, therefore, hath received the gift, even
so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." In
the face, then, of such instructions, and with such assurances of an all-sufficiency of Divine
grace, as the Church has received from her exalted Head, we can neither justly doubt the
concurrence of her genuine members; nor yet their ability, when dutifully acting together, to accomplish anything that is necessary for his glory, and their own good; and certainly their visible unity in truth and holiness, in faith and love, is, of all things, the most conducive to both these, if we may credit the dying commands and prayers of our gracious Lord. In a matter, therefore, of such confessed importance, our Christian brethren, however unhappily distinguished by party names, will not, cannot, withhold their helping hand. We are as heartily willing to be their debtors, as they are indispensably bound to be our benefactors. Come, then, dear brethren, we most humbly beseech you, cause your light to shine upon our weak beginnings, that we may see to work by it. Evince your zeal for the glory of Christ, and the spiritual welfare of your fellow-Christians, by your hearty and zealous co-operation to promote the unity, purity, and prosperity of his Church.

Let none imagine that the subjoined propositions are at all intended as an overture toward a new creed or standard for the Church, or as in any wise designed to be made a term of communion; nothing can be further from our intention. They are merely designed for opening up the way, that we may come fairly and firmly to original ground upon clear and certain premises, and take up things just as the apostles left them; that thus disentangled from the accruing embarrassments of intervening ages, we may stand with evidence upon the same ground on which the Church stood at the beginning. Having said so much to solicit attention and prevent mistake, we submit as follows:

PROP. I. That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.

2. That although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them. They ought to receive each other as Christ Jesus hath also received them, to the glory of God. And for this purpose they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing; and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.
3. That in order to do this, nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the word of God. Nor ought anything to be admitted, as of Divine obligation, in their Church constitution and managements, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles upon the New Testament Church; either in express terms or by approved precedent.

4. That although the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inseparably connected, making together but one perfect and entire revelation of the Divine will, for the edification and salvation of the Church, and therefore in that respect cannot be separated; yet as to what directly and properly belongs to their immediate object, the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for the worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament Church, and the particular duties of its members.

5. That with respect to the commands and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the Scriptures are silent as to the express time or manner of performance, if any such there be, no human authority has power to interfere, in order to supply the supposed deficiency by making laws for the Church; nor can any thing more be required of Christians in such cases, but only that they observe these commands and ordinances as will evidently answer the declared and obvious end of their institution. Much less has any human authority power to impose new commands or ordinances upon the Church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined. Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the Church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.

6. That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the Church. Hence, it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place
in the Church’s confession.

7. That although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of Divine truths, and defensive testimonies in opposition to prevailing errors, be highly expedient, and the more full and explicit they be for those purposes, the better; yet, as these must be in a great measure the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of Christian communion; unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the Church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment, or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information; whereas the Church from the beginning did, and ever will, consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers.

8. That as it is not necessary that persons should have a particular knowledge or distinct apprehension of all Divinely revealed truths in order to entitle them to a place in the Church; neither should they, for this purpose, be required to make a profession more extensive than their knowledge; but that, on the contrary, their having a due measure of Scriptural self-knowledge respecting their lost and perishing condition by nature and practice, and of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, accompanied with a profession of their faith in and obedience to him, in all things, according to his word, is all that is absolutely necessary to qualify them for admission into his Church.

9. That all that are enabled through grace to make such a profession, and to manifest the reality of it in their tempers and conduct, should consider each other as the precious saints of God, should love each other as brethren, children of the same family and Father, temples of the same Spirit, members of the same body, subjects of the same grace, objects of the same Divine love, bought with the same price, and joint-heirs of the same inheritance. Whom God hath thus joined together no man should dare to put asunder.

10. That division among the Christians is a horrid evil, fraught with many evils. It is anti-Christian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ; as if he were divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself. It is anti-scriptural, as being strictly prohibited by his sovereign authority; a direct violation of his express command. It is anti-natural, as it excites Christians to contemn, to hate, and oppose one another, who are bound by the highest and most endearing obligations to love each other as brethren,
even as Christ has loved them. In a word, it is productive of confusion and of every evil work.

11. That (in some instances) a partial neglect of the expressly revealed will of God, and (in others) an assumed authority for making the approbation of human opinions and human inventions a term of communion, by introducing them into the constitution, faith, or worship of the Church, are, and have been, the immediate, obvious, and universally acknowledged causes, of all the corruptions and divisions that ever have taken place in the Church of God.

12. That all that is necessary to the highest state of perfection and purity of the Church upon earth is, first, that none be received as members but such as having that due measure of Scriptural self-knowledge described above, do profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures; nor, secondly, that any be retained in her communion longer than they continue to manifest the reality of their profession by their temper and conduct. Thirdly, that her ministers, duly and Scripturally qualified, inculcate none other things than those very articles of faith and holiness expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. Lastly, that in all their administrations they keep close by the observance of all Divine ordinances, after the example of the primitive Church, exhibited in the New Testament; without any additions whatsoever of human opinions or inventions of men.

13. Lastly. That if any circumstantials indispensably necessary to the observance of Divine ordinances be not found upon the page of express revelation, such, and such only, as are absolutely necessary for this purpose should be adopted under the title of human expedients, without any pretense to a more sacred origin, so that any subsequent alteration or difference in the observance of these things might produce no contention nor division in the Church.

From the nature and construction of these propositions, it will evidently appear, that they are laid in a designed subserviency to the declared end of our association; and are exhibited for the express purpose of performing a duty of previous necessity, a duty loudly called for in existing circumstances at the hand of every one that would desire to promote the interests of Zion; a duty not only enjoined, as has been already observed from Isaiah
lvii:14, but which is also there predicted of the faithful remnant as a thing in which they would voluntarily engage. "He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; and shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way; take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people." To prepare the way for a permanent Scriptural unity among Christians, by calling up to their consideration fundamental truths, directing their attention to first principles, clearing the way before them by removing the stumbling-blocks—the rubbish of ages, which has been thrown upon it, and fencing it on each side, that in advancing toward the desired object they may not miss the way through mistake or inadvertency, by turning aside to the right hand or to the left, is, at least, the sincere intention of the above propositions. It remains with our brethren now to say, how far they go toward answering this intention. Do they exhibit truths demonstrably evident in the light of Scripture and right reason, so that to deny any part of them the contrary assertion would be manifestly absurd and inadmissible? Considered as a preliminary for the above purpose, are they adequate, so that if acted upon, they would infallibly lead to the desired issue? If evidently defective in either of these respects, let them be corrected and amended, till they become sufficiently evident, adequate, and unexceptionable. In the mean time let them be examined with rigor, with all the rigor that justice, candor, and charity will admit. If we have mistaken the way, we shall be glad to be set right; but if, in the mean time, we have been happily led to suggest obvious and undeniable truths, which, if adopted and acted upon, would infallibly lead to the desired unity, and secure it when obtained, we hope it will be no objection that they have not proceeded from a General Council. It is not the voice of the multitude, but the voice of truth, that has power with the conscience; that can produce rational conviction and acceptable obedience. A conscience that awaits the decision of the multitude, that hangs in suspense for the casting vote of the majority, is a fit subject for the man of sin. This, we are persuaded, is the uniform sentiment of real Christians of every denomination. Would to God that all professors were such, then should our eyes soon behold the prosperity of Zion; we should soon see Jerusalem a quiet habitation. Union in truth has been, and ever must be, the desire and prayer of all such, "Union in Truth" is our motto. The Divine word is our standard; in the Lord's name do we display our banners. Our eyes are upon the promises, "So shall they fear the name of the
Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun." "When the enemy shall come in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Our humble desire is to be his standard-bearers, to fight under his banner, and with his weapons, "which are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;" even all these strong holds of division, those partition walls of separation, which, like the walls of Jericho, have been built up, as it were, to the very heavens, to separate God's people, to divide his flock and so to prevent them from entering into their promised rest, at least in so far as it respects this world. An enemy hath done this, but he shall not finally prevail; "for the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." "And the kingdom and dominion, even the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, and they shall possess it forever." But this can not be in their present broken and divided state; "for a kingdom or a house divided against itself cannot stand; but cometh to desolation." Now this has been the case with the Church for a long time. However, "the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his heritage; but judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it." To all such, and such alone, are our expectations directed. Come, then, ye blessed of the Lord, we have your prayers, let us also have your actual assistance. What, shall we pray for a thing and not strive to obtain it!

We call, we invite you again, by every consideration in these premises. You that are near, associate with us; you that are at too great a distance, associate as we have done. Let not the paucity of your number in any given district, prove an insuperable discouragement. Remember Him that has said, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven: for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." With such a promise as this, for the attainment of every possible and promised good, there is no room for discouragement Come on then, "ye that fear the Lord; keep not silence, and give him no rest till he make Jerusalem a joy and a praise in the earth." Put on that noble resolution dictated by the prophet, saying, "For Zion's sake will we not hold our peace, and for Jerusalem's sake we will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp thatburneth." Thus impressed, you will find means to
associate at such convenient distances, as to meet at least once a month; to beseech the Lord to put an end to our lamentable divisions; to heal and unite his people, that his Church may resume her original constitutional unity and purity, and thus be exalted to the enjoyment of her promised prosperity, that the Jews may be speedily converted, and the fullness of the Gentiles brought in. Thus associated, you will be in a capacity to investigate the evil causes of our sad divisions; to consider and bewail their pernicious effects; and to mourn over them before the Lord—who hath said: "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense and seek my face." Alas! then, what reasonable prospect can we have of being delivered from those sad calamities, which have so long afflicted the Church of God; while a party spirit, instead of be wailing, is everywhere justifying, the bitter principle of these pernicious evils; by insisting upon the right of rejecting those, however unexceptionable in other respects, who cannot see with them in matters of private opinion, of human inference, that are nowhere expressly revealed or enjoined in the word of God. Thus associated, will the friends of peace, the advocates for Christian unity, be in a capacity to connect in larger circles, where several of those smaller societies may meet semi-annually at a convenient center; and thus avail themselves of their combined exertions for promoting the interests of the common cause. We hope that many of the Lord's ministers in all places will volunteer in this service, forasmuch as they know it is his favorite work, the very desire of his soul.

You lovers of Jesus, and beloved of him, however scattered in this cloudy and dark day, you love the truth as it is in Jesus (if our hearts deceive us not); so do we. You desire union in Christ with all them that love him; so do we. You lament and bewail our sad divisions; so do we. You reject the doctrines and commandments of men, that you may keep the law of Christ; so do we. You believe that the word itself ought to be our rule, and not any human explication of it; so do we. You believe that no man has a right to judge, to exclude, or reject his professing Christian brother, except in so far as he stands condemned or rejected by the express letter of the law; so do we. You believe that the great fundamental law of unity and love ought not to be violated to make way for exalting human opinions to an equality with express revelation, by making them articles of faith and terms of communion; so do we. You sincere and impartial followers of Jesus, friends of truth and
peace, we dare not, we cannot think otherwise of you; it would be doing violence to your character; it would be inconsistent with your prayers and profession so to do. We shall therefore have your hearty concurrence. But if any of our dear brethren, from whom we should expect better things, should, through weakness or prejudice, be in anything otherwise minded than we have ventured to suppose, we charitably hope that, in due time, God will reveal even this unto them; only let such neither refuse to come to the light, nor yet, through prejudice, reject it when it shines upon them. Let them rather seriously consider what we have thus most seriously and respectfully submitted to their consideration; weigh every sentiment in the balance of the sanctuary, as in the sight of God, with earnest prayer for, and humble reliance upon, his Spirit, and not in the spirit of self-sufficiency and party zeal; and, in so doing, we rest assured, the consequence will be happy, both for their own and the Church's peace. Let none imagine, that in so saying, we arrogate to ourselves a degree of intelligence superior to our brethren; much less superior to mistake. So far from this, our confidence is entirely founded upon the express Scripture and matter-of-fact evidence of the things referred to; which may, nevertheless, through inattention or prejudice, fail to produce their proper effect, as has been the case with respect to some of the most evident truths in a thousand instances. But charity thinketh no evil; and we are far from surmising, though we must speak. To warn, even against possible evils, is certainly no breach of charity, as to be confident of the certainty of some things is no just argument of presumption. We by no means claim the approbation of our brethren as to any thing we have suggested for promoting the sacred cause of Christian unity, further than it carries its own evidence along with it; but we humbly claim a fair investigation of the subject, and solicit the assistance of our brethren for carrying into effect what we have thus weakly attempted. It is our consolation, in the mean time, that the desired event, as certain as it will be happy and glorious, admits of no dispute, however we may hesitate or differ about the proper means of promoting it. All we shall venture to say as to this is, that we trust we have taken the proper ground; at least, if we have not, we despair of finding it elsewhere. For, if holding fast in profession and practice whatever is expressly revealed and enjoined in the Divine standard does not, under the promised influence of the Divine Spirit, prove an adequate basis for promoting and maintaining unity, peace, and
purity, we utterly despair of attaining those invaluable privileges, by adopting the standard of any party. To advocate the cause of unity, while espousing the interests of a party, would appear as absurd as for this country to take part with either of the belligerents in the present awful struggle, which has convulsed and is convulsing the nations, in order to maintain her neutrality and secure her peace. Nay, it would be adopting the very means by which the bewildered Church has, for hundreds of years past, been rending and dividing herself into factions, for Christ's sake, and for the truth's sake; though the first and foundation truth of our Christianity is union with him, and the very next to it in order, union with each other in him—"that we receive each other, as Christ has also received us, to the glory of God." "For this is his commandment: That we believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he dwelleth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us," even the spirit of faith, and of love, and of a sound mind. And surely this should suffice us. But how to love and receive our brother, as we believe and hope Christ has received both him and us, and yet refuse to hold communion with him, is, we confess, a mystery too deep for us. If this be the way that Christ hath received us, then woe is unto us. We do not here intend a professed brother transgressing the express letter of the law, and refusing to be reclaimed. Whatever may be our charity in such a case, we have not sufficient evidence that Christ has received him, or that he has received Christ as his teacher and Lord. To adopt means, then, apparently subversive of the very end proposed, means which the experience of ages has evinced successful only in overthrowing the visible interests of Christianity, in counteracting, as far as possible, the declared intention, the express command of its Divine author, would appear in no wise a prudent measure for removing and preventing those evils. To maintain unity and purity has always been the plausible pretense of the compilers and abettors of human systems, and we believe, in many instances, their sincere intention; but have they at all answered the end? Confessedly, demonstrably, they have not; no, not even in the several parties which have most strictly adopted them; much less to the catholic professing body. Instead of her catholic constitutional unity and purity, what does the Church present us with, at this day, but a catalogue of sects and sectarian systems--each binding its respective party, by the
most sacred and solemn engagements, to continue as it is to the end of the world; at least, this is confessedly the case with many of them. What a sorry substitute these for Christian unity and love! On the other hand, what a mercy is it that no human obligation that man can come under is valid against the truth. When the Lord the healer descends upon his people, to give them a discovery of the nature and tendency of those artificial bonds wherewith they have suffered themselves to be bound in their dark and sleepy condition, they will no more be able to hold them in a state of sectarian bondage than the withes and cords with which the Philistines bound Samson were able to retain him their prisoner, or than the bonds of Anti-Christ were to hold in captivity the fathers of the Reformation. May the Lord soon open the eyes of his people to see things in their true light, and excite them to come up out of their wilderness condition, out of this Babel of confusion, leaning upon their Beloved, and embracing each other in him, holding fast the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. This gracious unity and unanimity in Jesus would afford the best external evidence of their union with him, and of their conjoint interest in the Father's love. "By this shah all men know that you are my disciples," says he, "if you have love one to another." And "This is my commandment, That you love one another as I have loved you; that you also love one another." And again, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are"; even "all that shall believe in me; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." May the Lord hasten it in his time. Farewell.

Peace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

THOMAS CAMPBELL,

THOMAS ACHESON.

APPENDIX

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To prevent mistakes, we beg leave to subjoin the following explanations. As to what we have done, our reasons for so doing, and the grand object we would desire to see accomplished, all these, we presume, are sufficiently declared in the foregoing pages. As to what we intend to do in our associate capacity, and the ground we have taken in that capacity, though expressly and definitely declared, yet these, perhaps, might be liable to some misconstruction. First, then, we beg leave to assure our brethren that we have no intention to interfere, either directly or indirectly, with the peace and order of the settled Churches, by directing any ministerial assistance with which the Lord may please to favor us, to make inroads upon such; or by endeavoring to erect Churches out of Churches, to distract and divide congregations. We have no nostrum, no peculiar discovery of our own to propose to fellow-Christians, for the fancied importance of which they should become followers of us. We propose to patronize nothing but the inculcation of the express word of God, either as to matter of faith or practice; but every one that has a Bible, and can read it, can read this for himself. Therefore, we have nothing new. Neither do we pretend to acknowledge persons to be ministers of Christ, and, at the same time, consider it our duty to forbid or discourage people to go to hear them, merely because they may hold some things disagreeable to us; much less to encourage their people to leave them on that account. And such do we esteem all who preach a free, unconditional salvation through the blood of Jesus to perishing sinners of every description, and who manifestly connect with this a life of holiness and pastoral diligence in the performance of all the duties of their sacred office, according to the Scriptures, of even all of whom, as to all appearance, it may be truly said to the objects of their charge: "They seek not yours, but you." May the good Lord prosper all such, by whatever name they are called, and hasten that happy period when Zion's watchmen shall see eye to eye, and all be called by the same name. Such, then, have nothing to fear from our association, were our resources equal to our utmost wishes. But all others we esteem as hirelings, as idle shepherds, and should be glad to see the Lord's flock delivered from their mouth, according to his promise. Our principal and proper design, then, with respect to ministerial assistants, such as we have described in our fifth resolution, is to direct their attention to those places where there is manifest need for their labors; and many such places there are; would to God it were in our power to
supply them. As to creeds and confessions, although we may appear to our brethren to oppose them, yet this is to be understood only in so far as they oppose the unity of the Church, by containing sentiments not expressly revealed in the word of God; or, by the way of using them, become the instruments of a human or implicit faith, or oppress the weak of God's heritage. Where they are liable to none of those objections, we have nothing against them. It is the abuse and not the lawful use of such compilations that we oppose. See Proposition 7, page 46 (P. 204 in this reprint). Our intention, therefore, with respect to all the Churches of Christ is perfectly amicable. We heartily wish their reformation, but by no means their hurt or confusion. Should any affect to say that our coming forward as we have done, in advancing and publishing such things, has a manifest tendency to distract and divide the Churches, or to make a new party, we treat it as a confident and groundless assertion, and must suppose they have not duly considered, or, at least, not well understood the subject.

All we shall say to this at present, is, that if the Divine word be not the standard of a party, then are we not a party, for we have adopted no other. If to maintain its alone sufficiency be not a party principle, then are we not a party. If to justify this principle by our practice, in making a rule of it, and of it alone, and not of our own opinions, nor of those of others, be not a party principle, then are we not a party. If to propose and practice neither more nor less than it expressly reveals and enjoins be not a partial business, then are we not a party. These are the very sentiments we have approved and recommended, as a society formed for the express purpose of promoting Christian unity, in opposition to a party spirit. Should any tell us that to do these things is impossible without the intervention of human reason and opinion, we humbly thank them for the discovery. But who ever thought otherwise? Were we not rational subjects, and of course capable of understanding and forming opinions, would it not evidently appear that, to us, revelation of any kind would be quite useless, even suppose it as evident as mathematics? We pretend not, therefore, to divest ourselves of reason, that we may become quiet, inoffensive, and peaceable Christians; nor yet, of any of its proper and legitimate operations upon Divinely revealed truths. We only pretend to assert, what every one that pretends to reason must acknowledge, namely, that there is a manifest distinction between an express Scripture
declaration, and the conclusion or inference which may be deduced from it; and that the former may be clearly understood, even where the latter is but imperfectly if at all perceived; and that we are at least as certain of the declaration as we can be of the conclusion we drew from it; and that, after all, the conclusion ought not to be exalted above the premises, so as to make void the declaration for the sake of establishing our own conclusion; and that, therefore, the express commands to preserve and maintain inviolate Christian unity and love, ought not to be set aside to make way for exalting our inferences above the express authority of God. Our inference, upon the whole, is, that where a professing Christian brother opposes or refuses nothing either in faith or practice, for which there can be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord," that we ought not to reject him because he cannot see with our eyes as to matters of human inference, of private judgment. "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish? How walkest thou not charitably?" Thus we reason, thus we conclude, to make no conclusion of our own, nor of any other fallible fellow-creature, a rule of faith or duty to our brother. Whether we refuse reason, then, or abuse it, in our so doing, let our brethren judge. But, after all, we have only ventured to suggest what, in other words, the apostle has expressly taught; namely, that the strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves; that we ought to receive him that is weak in the faith, because God has received him. In a word, that we ought to receive one another, as Christ hath also received us to the glory of God. We dare not, therefore, patronize the rejection of God's dear children, because they may not be able to see alike in matters of human inference--of private opinion; and such we esteem all things not expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. If otherwise, we know not what private opinion means. On the other hand, should our peaceful and affectionate overture for union in truth prove offensive to any of our brethren, or occasion disturbances in any of the Churches, the blame cannot be attached to us. We have only ventured to persuade, and, if possible, to excite to the performance of an important duty--a duty equally incumbent upon us all. Neither have we pretended to dictate to them what they should do. We have only proposed what appeared to us most likely to promote the desired event, humbly submitting the whole premises to their candid and impartial investigation, to be altered, corrected, and amended, as they see cause, or to adopt any
other plan that may appear more just and unexceptionable. As for ourselves, we have taken all due care, in the mean time, to take no step that might throw a stumbling-block in the way, that might prove now, or at any future period, a barrier to prevent the accomplishment of that most desirable object, either by joining to support a party, or by patronizing anything as articles of faith or duty not expressly enjoined in the Divine standard; as we are sure, whatever alterations may take place, that will stand. That considerable alterations must and will take place, in the standards of all the sects, before that glorious object can be accomplished, no man, that duly considers the matter, can possibly doubt. In so far, then, we have at least endeavored to act consistently; and with the same consistency would desire to be instrumental in erecting as many Churches as possible throughout the desolate places of God's heritage, upon the same catholic foundation, being well persuaded that every such erection will not only in the issue prove an accession to the general cause, but will also, in the mean time, be a step toward it, and, of course, will reap the first-fruits of that blissful harvest that will fill the face of the world with fruit. For if the first Christian Churches, walking in the fear of the Lord in holy unity and unanimity, enjoyed the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and were increased and edified, we have reason to believe that walking in their footsteps will every where and at all times insure the same blessed privileges. And it is in an exact conformity to their recorded and approved example, that we, through grace, would be desirous to promote the erection of Churches; and this we believe to be quite practicable, if the legible and authentic records of their faith and practice be handed down to us upon the page of New Testament Scripture; but if otherwise, we cannot help it. Yet, even in this case, might we not humbly presume that the Lord would take the will for the deed? for if there be first a willing mind, we are told, "it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." It would appear, then, that sincerely and humbly adopting this model, with an entire reliance upon promised grace, we cannot, we shall not, be disappointed. By this, at least, we shall get rid of two great evils, which, we fear, are at this day grievously provoking the Lord to plead a controversy with the Churches: we mean the taking and giving of unjust offenses; judging and rejecting each other in matters wherein the Lord hath not judged, in a flat contradiction to his expressly revealed will. But, according to the principle adopted, we can neither take
offense at our brother for his private opinions, if he be content to hold them as such, nor yet offend him with ours, if he do not usurp the place of the lawgiver; and even suppose he should, in this case we judge him, not for his opinions, but for his presumption. "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"

But further, to prevent mistakes, we beg leave to explain our meaning in a sentence or two which might possibly be misunderstood. In the first page we say, that no man has a right to judge his brother, except in so far as he manifestly violates the express letter of the law. By the law here, and elsewhere, when taken in this latitude, we mean that whole revelation of faith and duty expressly declared in the Divine word, taken together, or in its due connection, upon every article, and not any detached sentence. We understand it as extending to all prohibitions, as well as to all requirements. "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." We dare, therefore, neither do nor receive anything as of Divine obligation for which there cannot be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord," either in express terms or by approved precedent. According to this rule we judge, and beyond it we dare not go. Taking this sentiment in connection with the last clause of the fifth resolution, we are to be understood, of all matters of faith and practice, of primary and universal obligation; that is to say, of express revelation; that nothing be inculcated, as such, for which there cannot be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord," as above, without, at the same time, interfering directly or indirectly with the private judgment of any individual, which does not expressly contradict the express letter of the law, or add to the number of its institutions. Every sincere and upright Christian will understand and do the will of God, in every instance, to the best of his skill and judgment; but in the application of the general rule to particular cases there may, and doubtless will, be some variety of opinion and practice. This, we see, was actually the case in the apostolic Churches, without any breach of Christian unity; and if this was the case at the erection of the Christian Church from among Jews and Gentiles, may we not reasonably expect that it will be the same at her restoration from under her long anti-Christian and sectarian desolations?

With a direct reference to this state of things, and, as we humbly think, in a perfect consistency with the foregoing explanations, have we expressed ourselves in the
thirty-ninth page (see the corresponding page in this reprint), wherein we declare ourselves ready to relinquish whatever we have hitherto received as matter of faith or practice, not expressly taught and enjoined in the word of God, so that we and our brethren might by this mutual concession, return together to the original constitutional unity of the Christian Church, and dwell together in peace and charity. By this proposed relinquishment we are to be understood, in the first instance, of our manner of holding those things, and not simply of the things themselves; for no man can relinquish his opinions or practices till once convinced that they are wrong; and this he may not be immediately, even supposing they were so. One thing, however, he may do: when not bound by an express command, he need not impose them upon others, by anywise requiring their approbation; and when this is done, the things, to them, are as good as dead, yea, as good as buried, too, being thus removed out of the way. Has not the apostle set us a noble example of this in his pious and charitable zeal for the comfort and edification of his brother, in declaring himself ready to forego his rights (not indeed to break commandments) rather than stumble, or offend, his brother? And who knows not that the Hebrew Christians abstained from certain meats, observed certain days, kept the passover, circumcised their children, etc., etc., while no such things were practiced by the Gentile converts, and yet no breach of unity while they charitably forbore one with the other. But had the Jews been expressly prohibited, or the Gentiles expressly enjoined, by the authority of Jesus, to observe these things, could they, in such a case, have lawfully exercised this forbearance? But where no express law is, there can be no formal, no intentional transgression, even although its implicit and necessary consequences had forbid the thing, had they been discovered. Upon the whole, we see one thing is evident: the Lord will bear with the weaknesses, the involuntary ignorances, and mistakes of his people, though not with their presumption. Ought they not, therefore, to bear with each other—"to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; forbearing one with another in love?" What says the Scripture? We say, then, the declaration referred to is to be thus understood in the first instance; though we do not say but something further is intended. For certainly we may lawfully suspend both declaration and practice upon any subject, where the law is silent; when to do otherwise must prevent the accomplishment of an expressly commanded and highly important duty; and such,
confessedly, is the thing in question. What says the apostle? "All things are lawful for me; but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me; but all things edify not." It seems, then, that among lawful things which might be for borne—that is, as we humbly conceive, things not expressly commanded—the governing principle of the apostle's conduct was the edification of his brethren of the Church of God. A Divine principle this, indeed! May the Lord God infuse it into all his people. Were all those nonpreceptive opinions and practices which have been maintained and exalted to the destruction of the Church's unity, counterbalanced with the breach of the express law of Christ, and the black catalogue of mischiefs which have necessarily ensued, on which side, think you, would be the preponderance? When weighed in the balance with this monstrous complex evil, would they not all appear lighter than vanity? Who, then, would not relinquish a cent to obtain a kingdom! And here let it be noted, that it is not the renunciation of an opinion or practice as sinful that is proposed or intended, but merely a cessation from the publishing or practicing it, so as to give offense; a thing men are in the habit of doing every day for their private comfort or secular emolument, where the advantage is of infinitely less importance. Neither is there here any clashing of duties, as if to forbear was a sin and also to practice was sin; the thing to be forborne being a matter of private opinion, which, though not expressly forbidden, yet are we by no means expressly commanded to practice; whereas we are expressly commanded to endeavor to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And what says the apostle to the point in hand? "Hast thou faith," says he; "have it to thyself before God. Happy is the man that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth."

It may be further added, that a still higher and more perfect degree of uniformity is intended, though neither in the first nor second instance, which are but so many steps toward it; namely: the utter abolition of those minor differences, which have been greatly increased, as well as continued, by our unhappy manner of treating them, in making them the subject of perpetual strife and contention. Many of the opinions which are now dividing the Church, had they been let alone, would have been long since dead and gone; but the constant insisting upon them, as articles of faith and terms of salvation, have so beaten them into the minds of men, that, in many instances, they would as soon deny the Bible
itself as give up one of those opinions. Having thus embraced contentions and preferred
divisions to that constitutional unity, peace, and charity so essential to Christianity, it would
appear that the Lord, in righteous judgment, has abandoned his professing people to the
awful scourge of those evils; as, in an in stance somewhat similar, he formerly did his
highly favored Israel. "My people," says he, "would not hearken to my voice. So I gave
them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels." "Israel hath
made many altars to sin: therefore altars shall be unto him to sin." Thus, then are we to be
consistently understood, as fully and fairly intending, on our part, what we have declared
and proposed to our brethren, as, to our apprehension, incumbent upon them and us, for
putting an end for ever to our sad and lamentable schisms. Should any object and say that,
after all, the fullest compliance with everything proposed and intended would not re store
the Church to the desired unity, as there might remain differences of opinion and practice;
let such but duly consider what properly belongs to the unity of the Church, and we are
persuaded this objection will vanish. Does not the visible Scriptural unity of the Christian
Church consist in the unity of her public profession and practice, and, under this, in the
manifest charity of her members, one toward another, and not in the unity of private
opinion and practice of every individual? Was not this evidently the case in the apostles'
days, as has been already observed? If so, the objection falls to the ground. And here let
it be noted (if the hint be at all necessary), that we are speaking of the unity of the Church
considered as a great, visible, professing body, consisting of many co-ordinate asso-
ciations; each of these, in its aggregate or associate capacity, walking by the same rule,
professing and practicing the same things. That this visible Scriptural unity be preserved
without corruption, or breach of charity, throughout the whole, and in every particular
worshiping society or Church, is the grand desideratum--the thing strictly enjoined and
greatly to be desired. An agreement in the expressly revealed will of God is the adequate
and firm foundation of this unity; ardent prayer, accompanied with prudent, peaceable, and
persevering exertion, in the use of all Scriptural means for accomplishing it, are the things
humbly suggested and earnestly recommended to our brethren. If we have mistaken the
way, their charity will put us right; but if otherwise, their fidelity to Christ and his cause will
excite them to come forth speedily, to assist with us in this blessed work.
After all, should any impeach us with the vague charge of Latitudinarianism (let none be startled at this gigantic term), it will prove as feeble an opponent to the glorious cause in which we, however weak and unworthy, are professedly engaged, as the Zamzummins did of old, to prevent the children of Lot from taking possession of their inheritance. If we take no greater latitude than the Divine law allows, either in judging of persons or doctrines—either in profession or practice (and this is the very thing we humbly propose and sincerely intend), may we not reasonably hope that such a latitude will appear, to every upright Christian, perfectly innocent and unexceptionable? If this be Latitudinarianism, it must be a good thing, and, therefore, the more we have of it the better; and may be it is, for we are told, "the commandment is exceeding broad;" and we intend to go just as far as it will suffer us, but not one hairbreadth further; so, at least, says our profession. And surely it will be time enough to condemn our practice, when it appears manifestly inconsistent with the profession we have thus precisely and explicitly made. We here refer to the whole of the foregoing premises. But were this word as bad as it is long, were it stuffed with evil from beginning to end, may be it better belongs to those that brandish it so unmercifully at their neighbors, especially if they take a greater latitude than their neighbors do, or than the Divine law allows. Let the case, then, be fairly submitted to all that know their Bible, to all that take upon them to see with their own eyes, to judge for themselves. And here let it be observed once for all, that it is only to such we direct our attention in the foregoing pages. As for those that either cannot or will not see and judge for themselves, they must be content to follow their leaders till they come to their eyesight, or determine to make use of the faculties and means of information which God has given them; with such, in the mean time, it would be useless to reason, seeing that they either confessedly cannot see, or have completely resigned themselves to the conduct of their leaders, and are therefore determined to hearken to none but them. If there be none such, however, we are happily deceived; but, if so, we are not the only persons that are thus deceived; for this is the common fault objected by almost all the parties to each other, namely, that they either cannot or will not see; and it would be hard to think they were all mistaken; the fewer there be, however, of this description, the better. To all those, then, that are disposed to see and think for themselves, to form their judgment by the Divine word itself, and not by any
human explication of it, humbly relying upon and looking for the promised assistance of Divine teaching, and not barely trusting to their own understanding--to all such do we gladly commit our cause, being persuaded that, at least, they will give it a very serious and impartial consideration, as being truly desirous to know the truth. To you, then, we appeal, in the present instance, as we have also done from the beginning. Say, we beseech you, to whom does the charge of Latitudinarianism, when taken in a bad sense (for we have supposed it may be taken in a good sense), most truly and properly belong, whether to those that will neither add nor diminish anything as to matter of faith and duty, either to or from what is expressly revealed and enjoined in the holy Scriptures, or to those who pretend to go further than this, or to set aside some of its express declarations and injunctions, to make way for their own opinions, inferences, and conclusions? Whether to those who profess their willingness to hold communion with their acknowledged Christian brethren, when they neither manifestly oppose nor contradict anything expressly revealed and enjoined in the sacred standard, or to those who reject such, when professing to believe and practice whatever is expressly revealed and enjoined therein, without, at the same time, being alleged, much less found guilty, of anything to the contrary, but instead of this asserting and declaring their hearty as sent and consent to everything for which there can be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord," either in express terms or by approved precedent? To which of these, think you, does the odious charge of Latitudinarianism belong? Which of them takes the greatest latitude? Whether those that expressly judge and condemn where they have no express warrant for so doing, or those that absolutely refuse so to do? And we can assure our brethren, that such things are and have been done, to our own certain knowledge, and even where we least expected it; and that it is to this discovery, as much as to many other things, that we stand indebted for that thorough conviction of the evil state of things in the Churches, which has given rise to our association. As for our part, we dare no longer give our assent to such proceedings; we dare no longer concur in expressly asserting or declaring anything in the name of the Lord, that he has not expressly declared in his holy word. And until such time as Christians come to see the evil of doing otherwise, we see no rational ground to hope that there can be either unity, peace, purity, or prosperity, in the Church of God. Convinced of the truth of
this, we would humbly desire to be instrumental in pointing out to our fellow-Christians the evils of such conduct. And if we might venture to give our opinion of such proceedings, we would not hesitate to say, that they appear to include three great evils—evils truly great in themselves, and at the same time productive of most evil consequences.

First, to determine expressly, in the name of the Lord, when the Lord has not expressly determined, appears to us a very great evil. (See Deut. xviii:20:) "The prophet that shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, even that prophet shall die." The apostle Paul, no doubt, well aware of this cautiously distinguishes between his own judgment and the express injunctions of the Lord. (See I Cor. vii: 25 and 40.) Though, at the same time, it appears that he was as well convinced of the truth and propriety of his declarations, and of the concurrence of the Holy Spirit with his judgment, as any of our modern determiners may be; for "I think," said he, "that I have the Spirit of God;" and we doubt much, if the best of them could honestly say more than this; yet we see that, with all this, he would not bind the Church with his conclusions; and, for this very reason, as he expressly tells us, because, as to the matter on hand, he had no commandment of the Lord. He spoke by permission, and not by commandment, as one that had obtained mercy to be faithful, and therefore would not forge his Master's name by affixing it to his own conclusions, saying, "The Lord saith, when the Lord had not spoken."

A second evil is, not only judging our brother to be absolutely wrong, because he differs from our opinions, but more especially, our judging him to be a transgressor of the law in so doing, and, of course, treating him as such by censuring or otherwise exposing him to contempt, or, at least, preferring ourselves before him in our own judgment, saying, as it were, Stand by, I am holier than thou.

A third and still more dreadful evil is, when we not only, in this kind of way, judge and set at naught our brother, but, moreover, proceed as a Church, acting and judging in the name of Christ, not only to determine that our brother is wrong because he differs from our determinations, but also, in connection with this, proceed so far as to determine the merits of the cause by rejecting him, or casting him out of the Church, as unworthy of a place in her communion, and thus, as far as in our power, cutting him off from the kingdom of
heaven. In proceeding thus, we not only declare, that, in our judgment, our brother is in an error, which we may sometimes do in a perfect consistence with charity, but we also take upon us to judge, as acting in the name and by the authority of Christ, that his error cuts him off from salvation; that continuing such, he has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. If not, what means our refusing him—our casting him out of the Church, which is the kingdom of God in this world? For certainly, if a person have no right, according to the Divine word, to a place in the Church of God upon earth (which we say he has not, by thus rejecting him), he can have none to a place in the Church in heaven—unless we should suppose that those whom Christ by his word rejects here, he will nevertheless receive hereafter. And surely it is by the word that every Church pretends to judge; and it is by this rule, in the case before us, that the person in the judgment of the Church stands rejected. Now is not this, to all intents and purposes, determining the merits of the cause? Do we not conclude that the person's error cuts him off from all ordinary possibility of salvation, by thus cutting him off from a place in the Church, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation? Does he not henceforth become to us as a heathen man and a publican? Is he not reckoned among the number of those that are without, whom God judgeth? If not, what means such a solemn determination? Is it anything or is it nothing, for a person to stand rejected by the Church of God? If such rejection confessedly leave the man still in the same safe and hopeful state as to his spiritual interests, then, indeed, it becomes a matter of mere indifference; for as to his civil and natural privileges, it interferes not with them. But the Scripture gives us a very different view of the matter; for there we see that those that stand justly rejected by the Church on earth, have no room to hope for a place in the Church of heaven. "What ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" is the awful sanction of the Church's judgment, in justly rejecting any person. Take away this, and it has no sanction at all. But the Church rejecting, always pretends to have acted justly in so doing, and, if so, whereabout does it confessedly leave the person rejected, if not in a state of damnation? that is to say, if it acknowledge itself to be a Church of Christ, and to have acted justly. If, after all, any particular Church acting thus should refuse the foregoing conclusion, by saying: We meant no such thing concerning the person rejected; we only judged him unworthy of a place among us, and therefore put him away,
but there are other Churches that may receive him; we would be al most tempted to ask such a Church, if those other Churches be Churches of Christ, and if so, pray what does it account itself? Is it anything more or better than a Church of Christ? And whether, if those other Churches do their duty as faithful Churches, any of them would receive the person it had rejected? If it be answered that, in acting faithfully, none of those other Churches either could or would receive him, then, confessedly, in the judgment of this particular Church, the person ought to be universally rejected; but if otherwise, it condemns itself of having acted unfaithfully, nay cruelly, toward a Christian brother, a child of God, in thus rejecting him from the heritage of the Lord, in thus cutting him off from his Father's house, as the unnatural brethren did the beloved Joseph. But even suppose some one or other of those unfaithful Churches should receive the outcast, would their unfaithfulness in so doing nullify, in the judgment of this more faithful Church, its just and faithful decision in rejecting him? If not, then, confessedly, in its judgment, the person still remains under the influence of its righteous sentence, debarred from the kingdom of heaven; that is to say, if it believe the Scriptures, that what it has righteously done upon earth is ratified in heaven. We see no way that a Church acting thus can possibly get rid of this awful conclusion, except it acknowledges that the person it has rejected from its communion still has a right to the communion of the Church; but if it acknowledge this, whereabouts does it leave itself, in thus shutting out a fellow-Christian, an acknowledged brother, a child of God? Do we find any parallel for such conduct in the inspired records, except in the case of Diotrephes, of whom the apostle says, "Who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church."

But further, suppose another Church should receive this castaway, this person which this faithful Church supposed itself to have righteously rejected, would not the Church so doing incur the displeasure, nay even the censure of the Church that had rejected him? and, we should think, justly too if he deserved to be rejected. And would not this naturally produce a schism between the Churches? Or, if it be supposed that a schism did already exist, would not this manifestly tend to perpetuate and increase it? If one Church, receiving
those whom another puts away, will not be productive of schism, we must confess we cannot tell what would. That Church, therefore, must surely act very schismatically, very unlike a Church of Christ, which necessarily presupposes or produces schism in order to shield an oppressed fellow-Christian from the dreadful consequences of its unrighteous proceedings. And is not this confessedly the case with every Church which rejects a person from its communion while it acknowledges him to be a fellow-Christian; and, in order to excuse this piece of cruelty, says he may find refuge some place else, some other Church may receive him? For, as we have already observed, if no schism did already exist, one Church receiving those whom an other has rejected must certainly make one. The same evils also will as justly attach to the conduct of an individual who refuses or breaks communion with a Church because it will not receive or make room for his private opinions or self-devised practices in its public profession and managements; for does he not, in this case, actually take upon him to judge the Church which he thus rejects as unworthy of the communion of Christians? And is not this, to all intents and purposes, declaring it, in his judgment, excommunicate, or at least worthy of excommunication?

Thus have we briefly endeavored to show our brethren what evidently appears to us to be the heinous nature and dreadful consequences of that truly latitudinarian principle and practice which is the bitter root of almost all our divisions, namely, the imposing of our private opinions upon each other as articles of faith or duty, introducing them into the public profession and practice of the Church, and acting upon them as if they were the express law of Christ, by judging and rejecting our brethren that differ from us in those things, or at least by so retaining them in our public profession and practice that our brethren cannot join with us, or we with them, without becoming actually partakers in those things which they or we cannot in conscience approve, and which the word of God no where expressly enjoins upon us. To cease from all such things by simply returning to the original standard of Christianity, the profession and practice of the primitive Church, as expressly exhibited upon the sacred page of New Testament scripture, is the only possible way that we can perceive to get rid of those evils. And we humbly think that a uniform agreement in that for the preservation of charity would be infinitely preferable to our contentions and divisions; nay, that such a uniformity is the very thing that the Lord requires if the New Testament be
a perfect model, a sufficient formula for the worship, discipline, and government of the Christian Church. Let us do as we are there expressly told they did, say as they said; that is, profess and practice as therein expressly enjoined by precept and precedent, in every possible instance, after their approved example; and in so doing we shall realize and exhibit all that unity and uniformity that the primitive Church possessed, or that the law of Christ requires. But if, after all, our brethren can point out a better way to regain and preserve that Christian unity and charity expressly enjoined upon the Church of God, we shall thank them for the discovery, and cheerfully embrace it.

Should it still be urged that this would open a wide door to latitudinarianism, seeing all that profess Christianity profess to receive the holy Scriptures, and yet differ so widely in their religious sentiments, we say, let them profess what they will, their difference in religious profession and practice originates in their departure from what is expressly revealed and enjoined, and not in their strict and faithful conformity to it, which is the thing we humbly advise for putting an end to those differences. But you may say, Do they not already all agree in the letter, though differing so far in sentiment? However this may be, have they all agreed to make the letter their rule, or, rather, to make it the subject-matter of their profession and practice? Surely not, or else they would all profess and practice the same thing. Is it not as evident as the shining light that the Scriptures exhibit but one and the self-same subject-matter of profession and practice, at all times and in all places, and that, therefore, to say as it declares, and to do as it prescribes in all its holy precepts, its approved and imitable examples, would unite the Christian Church in a holy sameness of profession and practice throughout the whole world? By the Christian Church throughout the world, we mean the aggregate of such professors as we have described in Propositions 1 and 8, pages 48 and 50, even all that mutually acknowledge each other as Christians, upon the manifest evidence of their faith, holiness, and charity. It is such only we intend when we urge the necessity of Christian unity. Had only such been all along recognized as the genuine subjects of our holy religion, there would not, in all probability, have been so much apparent need for human formulas to preserve an external formality of professional unity and soundness in the faith, but artificial and superficial characters need artificial means to train and unite them. A manifest attachment to our Lord Jesus Christ in faith,
holiness, and charity, was the original criterion of Christian character, the distinguishing badge of our holy profession, the foundation and cement of Christian unity. But now, alas! and long since, an external name, a mere educational formality of sameness in the profession of a certain standard or formula of human fabric, with a very moderate degree of what is called morality, forms the bond and foundation, the root and reason of ecclesiastical unity. Take away from such the technicalness of their profession, the shibboleth of party, and what have they more? What have they left to distinguish and hold them together? As for the Bible, they are but little beholden to it, they have learned little from it, they know little about it, and therefore depend as little upon it. Nay, they will even tell you it would be of no use to them without their formula; they could not know a Papist from a Protestant by it; that merely by it they could neither keep themselves nor the Church right for a single week. You might preach to them what you please, they could not distinguish truth from error. Poor people, it is no wonder they are so fond of their formula! Therefore they that exercise authority upon them and tell them what they are to believe and what they are to do, are called benefactors. These are the reverend and right reverend authors, upon whom they can and do place a more entire and implicit confidence than upon the holy apostles and prophets; those plain, honest, unassuming men, who would never venture to say or do anything in the name of the Lord without an express revelation from Heaven, and therefore were never distinguished by the venerable titles of Rabbi or Reverend, but just simple Paul, John, Thomas, etc. These were but servants. They did not assume to legislate, and, therefore, neither assumed nor received any honorary titles among men, but merely such as were descriptive of their office. And how, we beseech you, shall this gross and prevalent corruption be purged out of the visible professing Church but by a radical reform, but by returning to the original simplicity, the primitive purity of the Christian institution, and, of course, taking up things just as we find them upon the sacred page. And who is there that knows anything of the present state of the Church who does not perceive that it is greatly over run with the aforesaid evils? Or who that reads his Bible, and receives the impressions it must necessarily produce upon the receptive mind by the statements it exhibits, does not perceive that such a state of things is as distinct from genuine Christianity as oil is from water?
On the other hand, is it not equally as evident that not one of all the erroneous tenets and corrupt practices which have so defamed and corrupted the public profession and practice of Christianity, could ever have appeared in the world had men kept close by the express letter of the Divine law, had they thus held fast that form of sound words contained in the holy Scriptures, and considered it their duty so to do, unless they blame those errors and corruptions upon the very form and expression of the Scriptures, and say that, taken in their letter and connection, they immediately, and at first sight, as it were, exhibit the picture they have drawn. Should any be so bold as to assert this, let them produce their performance, the original is at hand; and let them show us line for line, expression for expression, precept and precedent for practice, without the torture of criticism, inference, or conjecture, and then we shall honestly blame the whole upon the Bible, and thank those that will give us an expurgated edition of it, call it constitution, or formula, or what you please, that will not be liable to lead the simple, unlettered world into those gross mistakes, those contentions, schisms, excommunications, and persecutions which have proved so detrimental and scandalous to our holy religion.

Should it be further objected, that even this strict literal uniformity would neither infer nor secure unity of sentiment; it is granted that, in a certain degree, it would not; nor, indeed, is there anything either in Scripture or the nature of things that should induce us to expect an entire unity of sentiment in the present imperfect state. The Church may, and we believe will, come to such a Scriptural unity of faith and practice, that there will be no schism in the body, no self-preferring sect of professed and acknowledged Christians rejecting and excluding their brethren. This cannot be, however, till the offensive and excluding causes be removed; and every one knows what these are. But that all the members should have the same identical views of all Divinely revealed truths, or that there should be no difference of opinion among them, appears to us morally impossible, all things considered. Nor can we conceive what desirable purpose such a unity of sentiment would serve, except to render useless some of those gracious, self-denying, and compassionate precepts of mutual sympathy and forbearance which the word of God enjoins upon his people. Such, then, is the imperfection of our present state. Would to God it might prove, as it ought, a just and humbling counterbalance to our pride! Then, indeed, we
would judge one another no more about such matters. We would rather be conscientiously cautious to give no offense; to put no stumbling-block or occasion to fall in our brother's way. We would then no longer exalt our own opinions and inferences to an equality with express revelation, by condemning and rejecting our brother for differing with us in those things.

But although it be granted that the uniformity we plead for would not secure unity of sentiment, yet we should suppose that it would be as efficacious for that purpose as any human expedient or substitute whatsoever. And here we would ask: Have all or any of those human compilations been able to prevent divisions, to heal breaches, or to produce and maintain unity of sentiment even among those who have most firmly and solemnly embraced them? We appeal for this to the history of all the Churches, and to the present divided state of the Church at large. What good, then, have those divisive expedients accomplished, either to the parties that have adopted them, or to the Church universal, which might not have been as well secured by holding fast in profession and practice that form of sound words contained in the Divine standard, without, at the same time, being liable to any of those dangerous and destructive consequences which have necessarily ensued upon the present mode? Or, will any venture to say that the Scriptures, thus kept in their proper place, would not have been amply sufficient, under the promised influence of the Divine Spirit, to have produced all that unity of sentiment which is necessary to a life of faith and holiness; and also to have preserved the faith and worship of the Church as pure from mixture and error as the Lord intended, or as the present imperfect state of his people can possibly admit? We should tremble to think that any Christian should say that they would not. And if to use them thus would be sufficient for those purposes, why resort to other expedients; to expedients which, from the beginning to this day, have proved utterly insufficient; nay, to expedients which have always produced the very contrary effects, as experience testifies. Let none here imagine that we set any certain limits to the Divine intention, or to the greatness of his power when we thus speak, as if a certain degree of purity from mixture and error were not designed for the Church in this world, or attainable by his people upon earth except in so far as respects the attainment of an angelic or unerring perfection, much less that we mean to suggest that a very moderate
degree of unity and purity should content us. We only take it for granted that such a state of perfection is neither intended nor attainable in this world, as will free the Church from all those weaknesses, mistakes, and mismanagements from which she will be completely exempted in heaven, however sound and upright she may now be in her profession, intention, and practice. Neither let any imagine that we here or elsewhere suppose or intend to assert that human standards are intentionally set up in competition with the Bible, much less in opposition to it. We fairly understand and consider them as human expedients, or as certain doctrinal declarations of the sense in which the compilers understood the Scriptures, designed and embraced for the purpose of promoting and securing that desirable unity and purity which the Bible alone, without those helps, would be insufficient to maintain and secure. If this be not the sense of those that receive and hold them, for the aforesaid purpose, we should be glad to know what it is. It is, however, in this very sense that we take them up when we complain of them, as not only unsuccessful, but also as unhappy expedients, producing the very contrary effects. And even suppose it were doubtful whether or not those helps have produced divisions, one thing, at least, is certain, they have not been able to prevent them; and now, that divisions do exist, it is as certain that they have no fitness nor tendency to heal them, but the very contrary, as fact and experience clearly demonstrate. What shall we do, then, to heal our divisions? We must certainly take some other way than the present practice, if they ever be healed; for it expressly says, they must and shall be perpetuated forever. Let all the enemies of Christianity say Amen; but let all Christians continually say: Forbid it, O Lord. May the good Lord subdue the corruptions and heal the divisions of his people. Amen, and amen.

After all that has been said, some of our timid brethren may, possibly, still object, and say: we fear that without the intervention of some definite creed or formula, you will justly incur the censure of latitudinarianism; for how otherwise detect and exclude Arians, Socinians, etc? To such we would reply, that if to profess, inculcate, and practice neither more nor less, neither anything else nor otherwise than the Divine word expressly declares respecting the entire subject of faith and duty, and simply to rest in that, as the expression of our faith and rule of our practice, will not amount to the profession and practical
exhibition of Arianism, Socinianism, etc., but merely to one and the self-same thing, whatever it may be called, then is the ground that we have taken, the principle that we advocate, in nowise chargeable with latitudinarianism. Should it be still further objected that all these sects, and many more, profess to receive the Bible, to believe it to be the word of God, and, therefore, will readily profess to believe and practice whatever is revealed and enjoined therein, and yet each will understand it his own way, and of course practice accordingly; nevertheless, according to the plan proposed, you receive them all. We would ask, then, do all these profess and practice neither more nor less than what we read in the Bible--than what is expressly revealed and enjoined therein? If so, they all profess and practice the same thing, for the Bible exhibits but one and the self-same thing to all. Or, is it their own inferences and opinions that they, in reality, profess and practice? If so, then upon the ground that we have taken they stand rejected, as condemned of themselves, for thus professing one thing when in fact and reality they manifestly practice another. But perhaps you will say, that although a uniformity in profession, and it may be in practice too, might thus be produced, yet still it would amount to no more than a mere uniformity in words, and in the external formalities of practice, while the persons thus professing and practicing might each entertain his own sentiments, how different soever these might be. Our reply is, if so, they could hurt nobody but them selves. Besides, if persons thus united professed and practiced all the same things, pray who could tell that they entertained different sentiments, or even in justice suppose it, unless they gave some evident intimation of it? which, if they did, would justly expose them to censure or to rejection, if they repented not; seeing the offense, in this case, must amount to nothing less than an express violation of the expressly revealed will of God--to a manifest transgression of the express letter of the law; for we have declared, that except in such a case, no man, in our judgment, has a right to judge, that is, to condemn or reject his professing brother. Here, we presume, there is no greater latitude assumed or allowed on either side than the law expressly determines. But we would humbly ask, if a professed agreement in the terms of any standard be not liable to the very same objection? If, for instance, Arians, Socinians, Arminians, Calvinists, Antinomians, etc., might not all subscribe the Westminster Confession, the Athanasian Creed, or the doctrinal articles of the Church of England. If this be
denied, we appeal to historical facts; and, in the mean time, venture to assert that such things are and have been done. Or, will any say, that a person might not with equal ease, honesty, and consistency, be an Arian or a Socinian in his heart while subscribing the Westminster Confession or the Athanasian Creed, as while making his unqualified profession to believe everything that the Scriptures declare concerning Christ? to put all that confidence in him, and to ascribe all that glory, honor, thanksgiving, and praise to him, professed and ascribed to him in the Divine word? If you say not, it follows, of undeniable consequence, that the wisdom of men, in those compilations, has effected what the Divine Wisdom either could not, would not, or did not do, in that all-perfect and glorious revelation of his will, contained in the Holy Scriptures. Happy emendation! Blessed expedient! Happy, in deed, for the Church that Athanasius arose in the fourth century to perfect what the holy apostles and prophets had left in such a rude and unfinished state. But if, after all, the Divine Wisdom did not think proper to do anything more, or anything else than is already done in the sacred oracles, to settle and determine those important points, who can say that he determined such a thing should be done afterward? Or has he anywhere given us any intimation of such an intention?

Let it here be carefully observed that the question before us is about human standards designed to be subscribed, or otherwise solemnly acknowledged, for the preservation of ecclesiastical unity and purity, and therefore, of course, by no means applies to the many excellent performances, for the Scriptural elucidation and defense of Divinely revealed truths and other instructive purposes. These, we hope, according to their respective merit, we as highly esteem, and as thankfully receive, as our brethren. But further, with respect to unity of sentiment, even suppose it ever so desirable, it appears highly questionable whether such a thing can at all be secured, by any expedient whatsoever, especially if we consider that it necessarily presupposes in so far a unity or sameness of understanding. Or, will any say, that from the youth of seventeen to the man of fourscore—from the illiterate peasant, up to the learned prelate—all the legitimate members of the Church entertain the same sentiments under their respective formulas? If not, it is still but a mere verbal agreement, a mere show of unity. They say an amen to the same forms of speech, or of sound words, as they are called, without having, at the same time, the same views of the
subject; or, it may be, without any determinate views of it at all. And, what is still worse, this profession is palmed upon the world, as well as upon the too credulous professors themselves, for unity of sentiment, for soundness in the faith; when in a thousand instances, they have, properly speaking, no faith at all; that is to say, if faith necessarily presupposes a true and satisfactory conviction of the Scriptural evidence and certainty of the truth of the propositions we profess to believe. A cheap and easy orthodoxy this, to which we may attain by committing to memory a catechism, or professing our approbation of a formula, made ready to our hand, which we may or may not have once read over; or even if we have, yet may not have been able to read it so correctly and intelligently as to clearly understand one single paragraph from beginning to end, much less to compare it with, to search and try it by the holy Scriptures, to see if these things be so. A cheap and easy orthodoxy this, indeed, to which a person may thus attain, without so much as turning over a single leaf of his Bible, whereas Christ knew no other way of leading us to the knowledge of himself, at least has prescribed no other, but by searching the Scriptures, with reliance upon his Holy Spirit. A person may, however, by this short and easy method, become as orthodox as the apostle Paul (if such superficial professions, such mere hearsay verbal repetitions can be called orthodoxy) without ever once consulting the Bible, or so much as putting up a single petition for the Holy Spirit to guide him into all truth, to open his understanding to know the Scriptures; for, his form of sound words truly believed, if it happen to be right, must, without more ado, infallibly secure his orthodoxy. Thrice happy expedient! But is there no latitudinarianism in all this? Is not this taking a latitude, in devising ways and means for accomplishing Divine and saving purposes, which the Divine law has nowhere prescribed, for which the Scriptures nowhere afford us either precept or precedent? Unless it can be shown that making human standards to determine the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church for the purpose of preserving her unity and purity, and requiring an approbation of them as a term of communion is a Scripture institution. Far be it from us, in the mean time, to allege that the Church should not make every Scriptural exertion in her power to preserve her unity and purity; to teach and train up her members in the knowledge of all divinely revealed truth; or to say that the evils above complained of attach to all that are in the habit of using the
aforesaid helps; or that this wretched state of things, however general, necessarily proceeds from the legitimate use of such; but rather and entirely from the abuse of them, which is the very and only thing that we are all along opposing when we allude to those subordinate standards. (An appellation this, by the by, which appears to us highly paradoxical, if not utterly inconsistent, and full of confusion.)

But, however this may be, we are by no means to be understood as at all wishing to deprive our fellow-Christians of any necessary and possible assistance to understand the Scriptures, or to come to a distinct and particular knowledge of every truth they contain, for which purpose the Westminster Confession and Catechisms may, with many other excellent performances, prove eminently useful. But, having served ourselves of these, let our profiting appear to all, by our manifest acquaintance with the Bible; by making our profession of faith and obedience; by declaring its Divine dictates, in which we acquiesce, as the subject-matter and rule of both; in our ability to take the Scripture in its connection upon these subjects, so as to understand one part of it by the assistance of another; and in manifesting our self-knowledge, our knowledge of the way of salvation and of the mystery of the Christian life, in the express light of Divine revelation, by a direct and immediate reference to, and correct repetition of what it declares upon those subjects. We take it for granted that no man either knows God, or himself, or the way of salvation, but in so far as he has heard and understood his voice upon those subjects, as addressed to him in the Scriptures, and that, therefore, whatever he has heard and learned of a saving nature, is contained in the express terms of the Bible. If so, in the express terms, in and by which "he hath heard and learned of the Father," let him declare it. This by no means forbids him to use helps, but, we humbly presume, will effectually prevent him from resting either in them or upon them, which is the evil so justly complained of; from taking up with the directory instead of the object to which it directs. Thus will the whole subject of his faith and duty, in so far as he has attained, be expressly declared in a "Thus saith the Lord." And is it not worthy of remark, that of whatever use other books may be, to direct and lead us to the Bible, or to prepare and assist us to understand it, yet the Bible never directs us to any book but itself. When we come forward, then, as Christians, to be received by the Church, which, properly speaking, has but one book, "For to it were committed the oracles
of God," let us hear of none else. Is it not upon the credible profession of our faith in, and obedience to its Divine contents, that the Church is bound to receive applicants for admission? And does not a profession of our faith and obedience necessarily presuppose a knowledge of the dictates we profess to believe and obey? Surely, then, we can declare them, and as surely, if our faith and obedience be Divine, as to the subject-matter, rule, and reason of them, it must be a "Thus saith the Lord"; if otherwise, they are merely human, being taught by the precepts of men. In the case then before us, that is, examination for Church-membership, let the question no longer be, What does any human system say of the primitive or present state of man? of the person, offices, and relations of Christ, etc., etc.? or of this, that, or the other duty? but, What says the Bible? Were this mode of procedure adopted, how much better acquainted with their Bibles would Christians be? What an important alteration would it also make in the education of youth? Would it not lay all candidates for admission into the Church under the happy necessity of becoming particularly acquainted with the holy Scriptures? whereas, according to the present practice, thousands know little about them.

One thing still remains that may appear matter of difficulty or objection to some, namely, that such a close adherence to the express letter of the Divine word, as we seem to propose, for the restoration and maintenance of Christian unity, would not only interfere with the free communication of our sentiments one to another upon religious subjects, but must, of course, also necessarily interfere with the public preaching and expounding of the Scriptures for the edification of the Church. Such as feel disposed to make this objection, should justly consider that one of a similar nature, and quite as plausible, might be made to the adoption of human standards, especially when made as some of them confessedly are, "the standard for all matters of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government." In such a case it might, with as much justice, at least, be objected to the adopters: You have now no more use for the Bible; you have got another book, which you have adopted as a standard for all religious purposes; you have no further use for explaining the Scriptures, either as to matter of faith or duty, for this you have confessedly done already in your standard, wherein you have determined all matters of this nature. You also profess to hold fast the form of sound words, which you have thus adopted, and therefore, you must never
open your mouth upon any subject in any other terms than those of your standard. In the
mean time, would any of the parties which has thus adopted its respective standard,
consider any of these charges just? If not, let them do as they would be done by. We must
confess, however, that for our part, we cannot see how, with any shadow of consistency,
some of them could clear themselves, especially of the first; that is to say, if words have
any determinate meaning; for certainly it would appear almost, if not altogether
incontrovertible, that a book adopted by any party as its standard for all matters of doctrine,
worship, discipline, and government, must be considered as the Bible of that party. And
after all that can be said in favor of such a performance, be it called Bible, standard, or
what it may, it is neither anything more nor better than the judgment or opinion of the party
composing or adopting it, and, therefore, wants the sanction of a Divine authority, except
in the opinion of the party which has thus adopted it. But can the opinion of any party, be
it ever so respectable, give the stamp of a Divine authority to its judgments? If not, then
every human standard is deficient in this leading, all-important, and indispensable property
of a rule or standard for the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church
of God. But, without insisting further upon the intrinsic and irremediable deficiency of
human standards for the above purpose (which is undeniably evident if it be granted that
a Divine authority is indispensably necessary to constitute a standard or rule for Divine
things, such as is the constitution and managements, the faith, and worship of the Christian
Church), we would humbly ask, Would any of the parties consider as just the foregoing
objections, however conclusive and well founded all or any of them may appear? We
believe they would not. And may we not with equal consistency hold fast the expressly
revealed will of God, in the very terms in which it is expressed in his holy word, as the very
expression of our faith and express rule of our duty, and yet take the same liberty that they
do, notwithstanding their professed and steadfast adherence to their respective standards?
We find they do not cease to expound, because they have already expounded, as before
alleged, nor yet do they always confine themselves to the express terms of their respective
standards, yet they acknowledge them to be their standards and profess to hold them fast.
Yea, moreover, some of them profess, and, if we may conclude from facts, we believe
each of them is disposed to defend by occasional vindications (or testimonies, as some call
them) the sentiments they have adopted and engrossed in their standards, without at the same time requiring an approbation of those occasional performances as a term of communion. And what should hinder us, or any, adopting the Divine standard, as aforesaid, with equal consistency to do the same for the vindication of the Divine truths expressly revealed and enjoined therein? To say that we can not believe and profess the truth, understand one another, inculcate and vindicate the faith and law of Christ, or do the duties incumbent upon Christians or a Christian Church without a human standard, is not only saying that such a standard is quite essential to the very being of Christianity, and, of course, must have existed before a Church was or could be formed, but it is also saying, that without such a standard, the Bible would be quite inadequate as a rule of faith and duty, or, rather, of no use at all, except to furnish materials for such a work; whereas the Church of Ephesus, long before we have any account of the existence of such a standard, is not only mentioned, with many others, as in a state of existence, and of high attainments too, but is also commended for her vigilance and fidelity in detecting and rejecting false apostles. "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." But should any pretend to say that although such performances be not essential to the very being of the Church, yet are they highly conducive to its well-being and perfection. For the confutation of such an assertion, we would again appeal to Church history and existing facts and leave the judicious and intelligent Christian to determine.

If after all that has been said, any should still pretend to affirm that the plan we profess to adopt and recommend is truly latitudinarian, in the worst and fullest sense of the term, inasmuch as it goes to make void all human efforts to maintain the unity and purity of the Church, by substituting a vague and indefinite approbation of the Scriptures as an alternative for creeds, confessions, and testimonies, and thereby opens a wide door for the reception of all sorts of characters and opinions into the Church. Were we not convinced by experience, that notwithstanding all that has been said, such objections would likely be made, or that some weak persons might possibly consider them as good as demonstration, especially when proceeding from highly influential characters (and there have not been wanting such in all ages to oppose, under various plausible pretenses, the unity and peace of the Church), were it not for these considerations, we should content ourselves with what
we have already advanced upon the whole of the subject, as being well assured that duly attended to, there would not be the least room for such an objection; but to prevent if possible such unfounded conclusions, or if this cannot be done, to caution and assist the too credulous and unwary professor, that he may not be carried away all at once with the high-toned confidence of bold assertion, we would refer him to the overture for union in truth contained in the foregoing address. Union in truth, among all the manifest subjects of grace and truth, is what we advocate. We carry our views of union no further than this, nor do we presume to recommend it upon any other principle than truth alone. Now, surely, truth is something certain and definite; if not, who will take upon him to define and determine it? This we suppose God has sufficiently done already in his holy word. That men therefore truly receive and make the proper use of the Divine word for walking together in truth and peace, in holiness and charity, is, no doubt, the ardent desire of all the genuine subjects of our holy religion. This, we see, however, they have not done, to the awful detriment and manifest subversion of what we might almost call the primary intention of Christianity. We dare not, therefore, follow their example, nor adopt their ruinous expedients. But does it therefore follow that Christians may not, or can not take proper steps to ascertain that desirable and preceptive unity which the Divine word requires and enjoins? Surely no; at least we have supposed no such thing; but, on the contrary, have overtured to our brethren what appears to us undeniably just and Scripturally evident, and which, we humbly think, if adopted and acted upon, would have the desired effect; adopted and acted upon, not indeed as a standard for the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church, for it pretends not to determine these matters, but rather supposes the existence of a fixed and certain standard of Divine original, in which everything that the wisdom of God saw meet to reveal and determine, for these and all other purposes, is expressly defined and determined; between the Christian and which, no medium of human determination ought to be interposed. In all this there is surely nothing like the denial of any lawful effort to promote and maintain the Church's unity, though there be a refusal of the unwarrantable inter position of an unauthorized and assuming power.

Let none imagine that we are here determining upon the merits of the overture to which, in the case before us, we find it necessary to appeal in our own defense against the
injustice of the supposed charge above specified. To the judgment of our brethren have
we referred that matter, and with them we leave it. All we intend, therefore, is to avail
ourselves so far of what we have done, as to show that we have no intention whatsoever
of substituting a vague indefinite approbation of the Scriptures as an alternative for creeds,
confessions, and testimonies, for the purpose of restoring the Church to her original
constitutional unity and purity. In avoiding Scylla we would cautiously guard against being
wrecked upon Charybdis. Extremes, we are told, are dangerous. We therefore suppose
a middle way, a safe way, so plainly marked out by unerring wisdom, that if duly attended
to under the Divine direction, the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein, and
of such is the kingdom of God: "For he hath chosen the foolish things of the world to
confound the things that are wise." We therefore conclude it must be a plain way, a way
most graciously and most judiciously adapted to the capacity of the subjects, and
consequently not the way of subscribing or otherwise approving human standards as a
term of admission into his Church, as a test and defense of orthodoxy, which even the
compilers themselves are not always agreed about, and which nineteen out of twenty of
the Lord's people cannot thoroughly understand. It must be a way very far remote from
logical subtleties and metaphysical speculations, and as such we have taken it up, upon
the plainest and most obvious principles of Divine revelation and common sense--the
common sense, we mean, of Christians, exercised upon the plainest and most obvious
truths and facts divinely recorded for their instruction. Hence we have supposed, in the first
place, the true discrimination of Christian character to con secede in an intelligent profes-
sion of our faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, the
reality of which profession is manifested by the holy consistency of the tempers and
conduct of the professors with the express dictates and approved examples of the Divine
word. Hence we have humility, faith, piety, temperance, justice, charity, etc., professed and
manifested, in the first instance, by the persons professing with self-application the
convincing, humbling, encouraging, pious, temperate, just and charitable doctrines and
precepts of the inspired volume, as exhibited and enforced in its holy and approved
examples, and the sincerity of this profession evidently manifested by the consistency of
the professor's temper and conduct with the entire subject of his profession, either by an
irreprovable conformity, like good Zachariah and Elisabeth, which is of all things most desirable, or otherwise, in case of any visible failure, by an apparently sincere repentance and evident reformation. Such professors, and such only, have we supposed to be, by common consent, truly worthy the Christian name. Ask from the one end of heaven to the other, the whole number of such intelligent and consistent professors as we intend and have described, and, we humbly presume, there will not be found one dissenting voice. They will all acknowledge, with one consent, that the true discrimination of Christian character consists in these things, and that the radical or manifest want of any of the aforesaid properties completely destroys the character.

We have here only taken for granted what we suppose no rational professor will venture to deny; namely: that the Divine word contains an ample sufficiency upon every one of the foregoing topics to stamp the above character, if so be that the impressions which its express declarations are obviously calculated to produce be truly received; for instance, suppose a person profess to believe, with application to himself, that whole description of human depravity and wretchedness which the Scriptures exhibit of fallen man, in the express declarations and dismal examples of human wickedness therein recorded, contrasted with the holy nature, the righteous requirements, and inflexible justice of an infinitely holy, just, and jealous God, would not the subject-matter of such a profession be amply sufficient to impress the believing mind with the most profound humility, self-abhorrence, and dreadful apprehension of the tremendous effects of sin? Again, should the person profess to believe, in connection with this, all that the Scriptures declare of the sovereign love, mercy, and condescension of God toward guilty, depraved, rebellious man, as the same is manifested in Christ, and in all the gracious declarations, invitations, and promises that are made in and through him for the relief and encouragement of the guilty, etc., would not all this, taken together, be sufficient to impress the believing mind with the most lively confidence, gratitude, and love? Should this person, moreover, profess that delight and confidence in the Divine Redeemer-- that voluntary submission to him--that worship and adoration of him which the Scriptures expressly declare to have been the habits and practice of his people, would not the subject-matter of this profession be amply sufficient to impress the believing mind with that dutiful disposition, with that gracious
veneration and supreme reverence which the word of God requires? And should not all this
taken together satisfy the Church, in so far, in point of profession? If not, there is no
alternative but a new revelation; seeing that to deny this, is to assert that a distinct
perception and sincere profession of whatever the word declares upon every point of faith
and duty, is not only insufficient, as a doctrinal means, to produce a just and suitable
impression in the mind of the believing subject, but is also insufficient to satisfy the Church
as to a just and adequate profession; if otherwise, then it will necessarily follow, that not
every sort of character, but that one sort only, is admissible upon the principle we have
adopted; and that by the universal consent of all that we, at least, dare venture to call
Christians, this is acknowledged to be, exclusively, the true Christian character. Here, then,
we have a fixed point, a certain description of character, which combines in every profes-
sing subject the Scriptural profession, the evident manifestation of humility, faith, piety,
temperance, justice, and charity, instructed by, and evidently answering to the entire
declaration of the word upon each of those topics, which, as so many properties, serve to
constitute the character. Here, we say, we have a fixed, and at the same time sweeping
distinction, which, as of old, manifestly divides the whole world, however, otherwise dis-
tinguished, into but two classes only. "We know," said the apostle, evidently speaking of
such, "that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

Should it be inquired concerning the persons included in this description of character,
whether they be Arminians or Calvinists, or both promiscuously huddled together? It may
be justly replied, that according to what we have proposed, they can be nominally neither,
and of course not both, for we call no man master on earth, for one is our Master, even
Christ, and all we are brethren, are Christians by profession; and as such abstract specu-
lation and argumentative theory make no part either of our profession or practice. Such
professors, then, as we intend and have described, are just what their profession and
practice make them to be; and this we hope has been Scripturally, and we might add,
satisfactorily defined, in so far, at least, as the limits of so brief a performance would admit.
We also entertain the pleasing confidence that the plan of procedure which we have
ventured to suggest, if duly attended to, if fully reduced to practice, would necessarily
secure to the professing subject all the advantages of divinely revealed truth, without any
liability to conceal, to diminish, or to misrepresent it, as it goes immediately to ascribe everything to God respecting his sovereignty, independence, power, wisdom, goodness, justice, truth, holiness, mercy, condescension, love, and grace, etc., which is ascribed to him in his word, as also to receive whatever it declares concerning the absolute dependence of the poor, guilty, depraved, polluted creature, upon the Divine will, power, and grace for every saving purpose; a just perception and correspondent profession of which, according to the Scriptures, is supposed to constitute that fundamental ingredient in Christian character: true evangelical humility. And so of the rest. Having thus, we hope, Scripturally and evidently determined the character, with the proper mode of ascertaining it, to the satisfaction of all concerned, we next proceed to affirm, with the same Scriptural evidence, that among such, however situated, whether in the same or similar associations, there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions, but that they ought all mutually to receive and acknowledge each other as brethren. As to the truth of this assertion, they are all likewise agreed, without one dissenting voice. We next suggest that for this purpose they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing, etc., and that this rule is, and ought to be, the Divine standard. Here again we presume there can be no objection; no, not a single dissenting voice. As to the rule itself, we have ventured to allege that the New Testament is the proper and immediate rule, directory, and formula for the New Testament Church, and for the particular duties of Christians, as the Old Testament was for the Old Testament Church, and for the particular duties of the subject under that dispensation; at the same time by no means excluding the Old as fundamental to illustrative of, and inseparably connected with the New, and as being every way of equal authority, as well as of an entire sameness with it in every point of moral natural duty, though not immediately our rule, without the intervention and coincidence of the New, in which our Lord has taught his people, by the ministry of his holy apostles, all things whatsoever they should observe and do, till the end of the world. Thus we come to the one rule, taking the Old Testament as explained and perfected by the New, and the New as illustrated and enforced by the Old; assuming the latter as the proper and immediate directory for the Christian Church, as also for the positive and particular duties of Christians as to all things whatsoever they should observe and do. Further, that in the observance of
this Divine rule, this authentic and infallible directory, all such may come to the desirable coincidence of holy unity and uniformity of profession and practice, we have overtured that they all speak, profess, and practice the very same things that are exhibited upon the sacred page of New Testament Scripture, as spoken and done by the Divine appointment and approbation; and that this be extended to every possible instance of uniformity, without addition or diminution, without introducing anything of private opinion or doubtful disputation into the public profession or practice of the Church. Thus and thus have we overtured to all intents and purposes, as may be clearly seen by consulting the overture itself; in which, however, should anything appear not sufficiently explicit, we flatter ourselves it may be fully understood by taking into consideration what has been variously suggested upon this important subject throughout the whole of these premises; so that if any due degree of attention be paid, we should think it next to impossible that we could be so far misunderstood as to be charged with latitudinarianism in any usual sense of the word. Here we have proposed but one description of character as eligible, or, indeed, as at all admissible to the rights and privileges of Christianity. This description of character we have defined by certain and distinguishing properties, which not only serve to distinguish it from every other, but in which all the real subjects themselves are agreed, without one exception, all such being mutually and reciprocally acknowledged by each other as legitimate members of the Church of God. All these, moreover, agreeing in the indispensable obligation of their unity, and in the one rule by which it is instructed, and also in the preceptive necessity of an entire uniformity in their public profession and managements for promoting and preserving this unity, that there should be no schism in the body, but that all the members should have the same care one for another; yet in many instances, unhappily, and, we may truly say, involuntarily differing through mistake and mismanagement, which it is our humble desire and endeavor to detect and remove, by obviating everything that causeth difference, being persuaded that as truth is one and indivisible wherever it exists, so all the genuine subjects of it, if disentangled from artificial impediments, must and will necessarily fall in together, be all on one side, united in one profession, acknowledge each other as brethren, and love as children of the same family. For this purpose we have overtured a certain and determinate application of the rule, to
which we presume there can be no reasonable objection, and which, if adopted and acted upon, must, we think, infallibly produce the desired effect; unless we should suppose that to say and do what is expressly said and done before our eyes upon the sacred page, would offend the believer, or that a strict uniformity, an entire Scriptural sameness in profession and practice, would produce divisions and offenses among those who are already united in one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one hope of their calling, and in one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all, as is confessedly the case with all of this character throughout all the Churches. To induce to this we have also attempted to call their attention to the heinous nature and awful consequences of schism, and to that evil anti-scriptural principle from which it necessarily proceeds. We have likewise endeavored to show, we humbly think with demonstrable evidence, that there is no alternative but either to adopt that Scriptural uniformity we have recommended, or else continue as we are, bewildered in schisms and overwhelmed with the accursed evils inseparable from such a state. It remains now with our brethren to determine upon the whole of these premises, to adopt or to reject, as they see cause; but, in the mean time, let none impeach us with the latitudinarian expedient of substituting a vague, indefinite approbation of the holy Scriptures as an alternative for the present practice of making the approbation of human standards a term of communion; as it is undeniably evident that nothing can be further from our intention. Were we to judge of what we humbly propose and urge as indispensably necessary for the reformation and unity of the Church, we should rather apprehend that there was reason to fear a charge of a very different nature; namely: that we aimed at too much strictness, both as to the description of character which we say ought only to be admitted, and also as to the use and application of the rule. But should this be the case, we shall cheerfully bear with it, as being fully satisfied that not only the common sentiment of all apparently sincere, intelligent, and practical Christians is on our side, but that also the plainest and most ample testimonies of the inspired volume sufficiently attest the truth and propriety of what we plead for, as essential to the Scriptural unity and purity of the Christian Church, and this, we humbly presume, is what we should incessantly aim at. It would be strange, indeed, if, in contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, we should overlook those
fruits of righteousness, that manifest humility, piety, temperance, justice, and charity, without which faith itself is dead, being alone. We trust we have not so learned Christ; if so be we have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus, we must have learned a very different lesson indeed. While we would, therefore, insist upon an entire conformity to the Scriptures in profession, that we might all believe and speak the same things, and thus be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, we would, with equal scrupulositiy, insist upon and look for an entire conformity to them in practice, in all those whom we acknowledge as our brethren in Christ. "By their fruits ye shall know them." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Therefore whosoever heareth those sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye say and do not." We therefore conclude that to advocate unity alone, however desirable in itself, without at the same time purging the Church of apparently unsanctified characters, even of all that cannot show their faith by their works, would be, at best, but a poor, superficial, skin-deep reformation. It is from such characters, then, as the proposed reformation, if carried into effect, would entirely deprive of a name and a place in the Church, that we have the greatest reason to apprehend a determined and obstinate opposition. And alas! there are very many of this description, and in many places, of considerable influence. But neither should this discourage us, when we consider the expressly revealed will of God upon this point, Ezek. xliv: 6, 9, with Matt. xiii: 15, 17; 1 Cor. v: 6, 13, with many other scriptures. Nor, in the end, will the multitude of unsanctified professors which the proposed reformation would necessarily exclude, have any reason to rejoice in the unfaithfulness of those that either through ignorance, or for filthy lucre's sake, indulged them with a name and place in the Church of God. These unfaithful stewards, these now mistaken friends, will one day be considered by such as their most cruel and treacherous enemies. These, then, are our sentiments upon the entire subject of Church-reformation; call it latitudinarianism, or Puritanism or what you please; and this is the reformation for which we plead. Thus, upon the whole, have we briefly attempted to point out those evils, and to prevent those mistakes which we earnestly desire to see obviated for the general peace, welfare,
and prosperity of the Church of God. Our dear brethren, giving credit to our sincere and well-meant intention, will charitably excuse the imperfections of our humble performance, and by the assistance of their better judgment correct those mistakes, and supply those deficiencies which in a first attempt of this nature may have escaped our notice. We are sorry, in the mean time, to have felt a necessity of approaching so near the borders of controversy, by briefly attempting to answer objections which we plainly foresaw would, through mistake or prejudice, be made against our proceedings; controversy making no part of our intended plan. But such objections and surmises having already reached our ears from different quarters, we thought it necessary to attend to them, that, by so doing, we might not only prevent mistakes, but also save our friends the trouble of entering into verbal disputes in order to remove them, and thus prevent, as much as possible, that most unhappy of all practices sanctioned by the plausible pretense of zeal for the truth—religious controversy among professors. We would, therefore, humbly advise our friends to concur with us in our professed and sincere intention to avoid this evil practice. Let it suffice to put into the hands of such as desire information what we hereby publish for that purpose. If this, however, should not satisfy, let them give in their objections in writing; we shall thankfully receive, and seriously consider, with all due attention, whatever comes before us in this way; but verbal controversy we absolutely refuse. Let none imagine that by so saying, we mean to dissuade Christians from affording all the assistance they can to each other as humble inquirers after truth. To decline this friendly office would be to refuse the performance of an important duty. But certainly there is a manifest difference between speaking the truth in love for the edification of our brethren, and attacking each other with a spirit of controversial hostility, to confute and prove each other wrong. We believe it is rare to find one instance of this kind of arguing that does not terminate in bitterness. Let us, therefore, cautiously avoid it. Our Lord says, Matt. xvii: 7: "Woe unto the world because of offenses." Scott, in his incomparable work lately published in this country, called his Family Bible, observes in his notes upon this place, “that our Lord here intends all these evils within the Church which prejudice men's minds against his religion, or any doctrines of it. The scandalous lives, horrible oppressions, cruelties, and iniquities of men called Christians; their divisions and bloody contentions; their idolatries and superstitions, are this
day the great offenses and causes of stumbling to Jews, Mohammedans, and pagans in all the four quarters of the globe, and they furnish infidels of every description with their most dangerous weapons against the truth. The acrimonious controversies agitated among those who agree in the principal doctrines of the Gospel, and their mutual contempt and revilings of each other, together with the extravagant notions and wicked practices found among them, form the grand prejudice in the minds of multitudes against evangelical religion, and harden the hearts of heretics, Pharisees, disguised infidels, and careless sinners against the truths of the Gospel. In these and numberless other ways, it may be said: 'Woe unto the world because of offenses,' for the devil, the sower of these tares, makes use of them in deceiving the nations of the earth and in murdering the souls of men. In the present state of human nature, it must needs be that such offenses should intervene, and God has wise and righteous reasons for permitting them; yet we should consider it as the greatest of evils to be accessory to the destruction of souls; and an awful woe is denounced against every one whose delusions or crimes thus stumble men and set them against the only method of salvation." We conclude with an extract from the Boston Anthology, which, with too many of the same kind that might be adduced, furnish a mournful comment upon the text; we mean, upon the sorrowful subject of our woeful divisions and corruptions. The following reply to the Rev. Mr. Cram, missionary from Massachusetts to the Senecas, was made by the principal chiefs and warriors of the six nations in council assembled at Buffalo creek, State of New York, in the presence of the agent of the United States for Indian affairs, in the summer of 1805. "I am come, brethren," said the missionary, "to enlighten your minds and to instruct you how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to his will, and to preach to you the Gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. There is but one way to serve God, and if you do not embrace the right way, you cannot be happy hereafter." To which they reply: "Brother, we understand that your religion is written in a book. You say that there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there be but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agree as you can all read the book? Brother, we do not understand these things. We are told your religion was given to your forefathers; we, also, have a religion which was given to our forefathers; it teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we receive; to love one another,
and to be united. We never quarrel about religion. We are told you have been preaching to the white people in this place. Those people are our neighbors, we are acquainted with them. We will wait a little to see what effect your preaching has upon them. If we find it does them good, makes them honest, and less disposed to cheat Indians, we will then consider again of what you have said." Thus closed the conference. Alas, poor people! how do our divisions and corruptions stand in your way! What a pity that you find us not upon original ground, such as the apostles left the primitive Churches! Had we but exhibited to you their unity and charity; their humble, honest, and affectionate deportment toward each other and toward all men, you would not have had those evil and shameful things to object to our holy religion, and to prejudice your minds against it. But your conversion, it seems, awaits our reformation; awaits our return to primitive unity and love. To this may the God of mercy speedily restore us, both for your sakes and our own, that his way may be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Amen, and amen.

THE END
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