

A SHORT STUDY IN

*Church History*



by

Wm. E. McDaniel

## The Ante - Nicene Church

The history of the church of our Lord from the time of its establishment until the twentieth century is an interesting story. By studying the most important events and characters who had a part in this history, we may understand some causes of the religious division in the world today and some of the differences between the various existing denominations. This is the first in a series of four lessons to be presented on the theme of church history, in which we shall notice some of the most important developments. Of course time and space will not permit our mentioning many things of interest as well as importance, but we shall notice a few of the outstanding facts. The first of these lessons will be concerning the first three hundred years of the church, from A.D. 30 to 325. We shall notice the importance of the last date mentioned in our study. The second lesson will deal with the next one thousand years, or the period known as the Dark Ages. The third sermon will be a discussion of the reformation and the reformers who worked in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Our last lesson will be a discussion of the restoration, or the effort put forth in America to restore and bring back the church of the first century.

The church had its origin upon the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the city of Jerusalem. This was supposedly in the year 30 A. D. We will not take time to notice the various scriptures which show this to be the birthday of the church, but by study we may learn that the kingdom, or church, was promised and mentioned in prophecy before this date and afterwards it was mentioned as being in existence and spreading throughout the earth. The events which happened on this day and the sermon which was preached, in which the resurrection and coronation of Jesus Christ were first announced to sinful men and women, are recorded in the second chapter of Acts of Apostles.

Within the first century after the church was established the followers of Christ had been instructed by the inspired apostles in all matters of organization, worship, and doctrine. Elders were appointed to oversee the work of each congregation. A plurality of these men was appointed in each church. (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) There were no presiding elders, but all had equal authority in their respective congregations. There were no higher officers but each congregation was free to carry on its own work under the oversight of the elders, who were also called bishops, overseers, pastors, or presbyters. Christians worshipped God by singing song so praise, partaking of the Lord's Supper, praying, studying, and giving of their means according to their abilities. These items of worship were observed upon the first day of every week. Men and women became members of the church by believing in Christ, repenting of their sins, confessing their faith and being buried in the waters of baptism for remission of sins. Disciples were called saints, brethren, and Christians. All of these things were followed according to the instructions of God's word as it was preached by the apos-

tles. This picture of the church of the first century should be kept in mind as we continue our study and see various changes coming into use.

The early church suffered many persecutions. Stephen was the first Christian Martyr, whose death is described in the closing verses of the seventh chapter of Acts. For a time Saul of Tarsus was bold in persecuting and punishing the saints, until his conversion in the city of Damascus. Nero, the Roman Emperor, was the leader of a great persecution in 64 A. D. Following him were Domitian (89-96 A. D.), Hadrian (117-138), and others. Gallienus ruled from 260 to 268, during which time the church experienced a period of peace and safety. The last severe persecution was led by Diocletian from 303 to 311. These trials were of the worst kind, and those who bore them patiently truly manifested their faith in Jesus and their willingness to die for His cause.

Beginning in the second century, a distinction was made among the elders of the churches. Instead of retaining the New Testament pattern of a plurality of elders in every congregation, each of which had equal authority with his co-laborers, one elder in each church was chosen as the leader, or Bishop, and the others were called Presbyters. Later the presiding elder of a city church was considered more important than the elders of country churches, and it was felt that a city Bishop could give instructions and rules to the elders of smaller churches. Such an idea continued to grow until the presiding elder of churches in the capitol cities of the world were given authority over all others. For example, the presiding elder of a church in Houston would have authority over the elders of the church in a small town, and the Bishop of the church in Washington, D. C. would be the most authoritative elder in the nation. There were five leading Bishops, or Patriarchs as they were called. They lived in Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople. Here we see a gradual departure from the simple New Testament pattern of church organization. Instead of elders in each congregation and congregational independence, by the close of the third century there were five leading Bishops over the church, who lived in the capitol cities of the world.

It is interesting to see a few new doctrines coming into the early church. The first of these was known as asceticism. Those who held to this doctrine believed in rigid self-discipline, by which the spirit was able to overcome the flesh. They believed the more they suffered and denied themselves, the nearer they were to God. This led to the erection of monasteries, where monks lived isolated from the world. Other forms of asceticism were fastings, poverty, and later celibacy, or the forbidding of marriage.

The doctrine of montanism was taught during the second and third centuries. Tertullian, who was converted to Christianity in 201 or 202, was said to be the leader of this doctrine. Those who believed as did he, taught the possibility of miracles, revelations, prophecies, gifts of the Holy Spirit, etc. They were among the first to teach the theory of a thousand year reign of Christ upon the earth. In addition to these doctrines, those who held to montanism were strong believers in asceticism, which has been mentioned.

Ebionism was a doctrine held by Jewish Christians. Being Jews, they held to the Old Testament and considered themselves God's chosen people and better than the Gentiles. There were two parties who held this belief. One group, known as the moderate ones, was charitable to the Gentiles and considered them members of the church. The other group was more rigid and would have no fellowship with the Gentiles. They considered Christ a prophet, but not the Son of God. The command of fleshly circumcision was considered by them as still binding, as well as other parts of the Law of Moses. It was such doctrines as these that caused much trouble in churches established by Paul.

One other doctrine was very popular, which was Gnosticism. This was a combination of Christianity and paganism. It was an attempt to answer the origin of God, the world, etc. and to explain the existence of good and evil. According to the Gnostics, matter is evil, hence it and God are opposed to each other. This doctrine was popular in the second century, but by the sixth century it had practically disappeared.

As was mentioned in the opening paragraph, the year 325 marks the close of this period of church history. Before noticing the important event which took place in that year, we must consider other events which caused the final step. About the year 318 there arose a controversy in Alexandria respecting the person of Christ. Arius taught that Christ was not eternal, but that He was a creature, created by God. Athanasius, on the other hand, taught that Christ was eternal and divine, just as God the Father. Both of these men were very bold in preaching their ideas of the nature of Christ, and both of them won many followers. Consequently, there arose two parties in the church over these conflicting doctrines.

At this time the Roman emperor was Constantine. Although he was not a Christian himself, he was kindly disposed toward Christianity and finally consented to be baptized shortly before his death. The trouble which existed in the church over these two doctrines of the person of Christ caused Constantine no little worry. He was anxious to have peace in his kingdom. In an effort to settle this issue, he called the council of the Bishops, to be held in the city of Nicea in June of 325, at which time the matter was to be discussed and solved.

A great number of church leaders attended this meeting, including about 318 Bishops. Constantine himself presided, and there were signs of great pomp and power. During the meeting of these leaders a decision was made, in which it was held that Christ was eternal with the Father. Another important action was the writing of a creed, the first official creed to be written. Thus these men had met and decided a point of church doctrine which others were expected to accept.

It should be remembered that this meeting was called by a man who was not a member of the church, that a matter of church doctrine was decided, and that a creed was written. These events made the year 325 a very important date in church history. Men had now formed a doctrine for the church instead of following the Word of God.

As we close this period, let us once again notice the changes which

came into the church during the first three centuries. Instead of congregational independence and elders of equal authority in each church, there were five leading Patriarchs, city and country Bishops, and elders of lesser authority called Presbyters. Several new doctrines had been introduced which divided the followers of Christ into different groups and prevented the unity for which Christ prayed and which Paul admonished. (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10). Finally, a council had met and had written an official creed, which was something in addition to the word of God.

Our next lesson will be a discussion of the church during the Dark Ages, or the next one thousand years of church history. We shall then notice the introduction of many new doctrines, other changes in the government of the church, and a further departure from the church of the New Testament.

### The Church In The Dark Ages

The purpose of this lesson is to trace some of the most important events and the introduction of various doctrines in the church from 325 to about 1200 A. D. The history of the church from its establishment to 325 has been discussed in a sermon entitled the Ante-Nicene Church. We have already seen the rise of church officers to the point of five leading Bishops who lived in the capitol cities of the world, the introduction of new doctrines, the meeting of the first church council and the writing of the first creed. At this point we begin our study and continue the story of the church.

Constantine, who was the Roman emperor in 325 and who, as we have learned, called the council of Nicea over which he presided, was in many ways a friend of the church. Among other things he restored church property, discouraged idolatry, caused the Roman mode of crucifixion to be discontinued, stopped Romans from slaying infants at birth, modified the practice of killing Christians for entertainment, and settled the controversy regarding Sunday and the Sabbath. He did not make Sunday the day of worship, as some have wrongfully accused him, but only added his sanction to that day. Three centuries before this time the early church met on the first day of the week to break bread. (Acts 20:7). It can be seen clearly that Constantine was a friend and defender of Christianity, although he was not baptized until almost the hour of his death.

The council of Nicea has already been discussed and we have learned its importance. This was the first in a series of seven great councils. It must be remembered that in each of these councils new decisions were made and doctrines of the church were enlarged. More and more, men assumed the authority to make the laws of the church instead of being led by the New Testament. The six councils following the one at Nicea were as follows: 1. First council of Constantinople—381. 2. Council of Ephesus—431. 3. Council of Chalcedon—451. This was the largest and most authoritative thus far. 4. Second council of Constantinople—553. 5. Third council of Constantinople—680. 6. Second council of Nicea—787. Other councils

met after these, but these seven are considered among the most important.

The history of the making and translating the Bible should be noticed just here. The Old Testament was completed and was in common use at least two or three hundred years before Christ. The books of the New Testament were written during the first century of the Christian era and were soon collected in one volume. These were written in Greek, which was the common language of that time. A translation was made by Ulfilas in 350. But the most important document was the version by Jerome in 385, in which he translated the New Testament from Greek into Latin. This version was accepted by the church as final authority, and is used by the Roman Catholic Church today as the source of all versions in modern languages. Other translations and versions were made later, and many parchments and manuscripts have been found, but the Vulgate, as Jerome's work was called, has remained the accepted version of the Catholic Church.

At the opening of this period we find five leading Bishops in the church. They lived in the five capitol cities of the world, which were Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria, and Constantinople. The Bishop of Constantinople, John the Faster, assumed the title of "Universal Bishop" in 588. Later, however, the Bishop of Rome, Gregory, called John the Faster the anti-Christ and assumed the title of "Universal Bishop" for himself. The controversy was finally settled in 606 when the church gave the title to Boniface III, Bishop of Rome. Here for the first time the church recognized one man as head of the church on earth. Thus we see the rise of Papal Authority. It is claimed that the Pope is the head of the church, although Paul wrote that Christ is head over all things to the church. (Ephesians 1:21-23) Finally, in 1870, the Vatican Council, under the leadership of Pope Pius IX, made the decree of Papal Infallibility, by which they taught that every decree made by the Pope is infallible or free from error.

Passing over the events of several centuries, we come to the year 1054, the time of a great division in the church. The division resulted in what is now known as the Roman and Greek churches. The differences between the two bodies are many. Among the things accepted by the Roman Church and denied by the Greeks are the authority of the Pope, the doctrine of purgatory, transubstantiation, hereditary sin, sprinkling for baptism, instrumental music, the selling of indulgences, and the practice of extreme unction, or the special services for the dying.

The remainder of this lesson will be given to considering new doctrines which arose in the church during the Dark Ages. Each of these doctrines shall be studied in the light of the Bible to see whether or not they are pleasing to God. The first is the worship of images, which is said to have begun about the middle of the fifth century. Some feel that images should be used in the churches as aids to worship. However, God commanded Israel by saying, "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah God am a jealous God."

(Exodus 20:4-5). **Israel was commanded not to make images nor to bow down before them.** It is significant to notice that this command is omitted from the catechisms of the Catholic church. (See The New Baltimore Catechism, Pg. 103, Question 224) The second commandment is not mentioned, and the tenth commandment is repeated, thus making ten commandments without including the one regarding images and idols. The same instructions against idols are given in the New Testament. Paul said, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's devices." (Acts 17:29). "We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God." (Acts 14:15).

The worship of Mary, the mother of Jesus, began in a feeling of reverence and love, but became noticeable after the middle of the fourth century. At first she was called "mother of the Lord", later "mother of God" and finally "queen of heaven". This was a product of the pagan practice of worshipping the mother of the gods.

Sprinkling was first substituted for immersion as baptism in the third century in cases of illness or special occasions. It was finally accepted by the council of Ravenna in 1311 as the standard mode or manner of baptism. From the New Testament, however, we learn that baptism required much water (John 3:23), a going down into the water (Acts 8:38), and a burial in the water (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). It is a likeness of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. (Romans 6:5). Thus it is clearly seen that the original form of baptism was not sprinkling but a burial or immersion in water.

The origin of celibacy, or the prohibition of marriage, was gradual. First, no priest was allowed a second marriage. Later no priest was allowed to marry after his ordination. Finally, marriage was prohibited to all priests.

This step was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Paul regarding the falling away. We read, "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in the later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. . . . FORBIDDING TO MARRY, AND COMMANDING TO ABSTAIN FROM MEATS." I Timothy 4:1-3.

Instruments of music were used in Christian worship after the fourth century.

No scripture can be found in the New Testament to teach or sanction Colossians 3:16). He taught that we must give the fruit of our lips in praise to God. (Hebrews 13:15). Singing was commanded by the Lord, but the use of instrumental music was nowhere commanded for the church.

The sale of indulgences is said to have begun in the seventh century. Gibbons, a Catholic writer, defines an indulgence as "a remission in whole or in part, through the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ and His saints, of the temporal punishment due to God on account of

sin after the guilt and eternal punishment have been remitted." (Gibbons, **Faith of Our Fathers**, pg. 307) In the eleventh and twelfth centuries such a practice was enlarged to such a great extent that the church became wealthy through the sale of indulgences. Tetzel was noted for his sinful practices in the sale of indulgences to raise money. This abuse is well described by Schaff. (Vol. V, 756-767). Such a practice is nowhere mentioned in the word of God. James taught the early disciples to confess their faults and pray. (James 5:16) Peter commanded Simon to repent and pray for forgiveness. (Acts 8:22) But the practice of selling indulgences is nowhere in the New Testament.

As we come to the close of the dark ages we find several great changes in the fallen church. A pope is now reigning as head of the body of Christ. Instruments of music are being used in worship; sprinkling is practiced as scriptural baptism; indulgences are sold to those who desire forgiveness of sins and priests are forbidden to marry. Many other changes had been made which are not here mentioned, but these are a few of the most important ones.

May we not forget the teachings of the New Testament against changing the will of God. Paul admonished the church of Corinth not to go beyond the things which were written. (1 Corinthians 4:6) He wrote to the churches of Galatia that any who preached another gospel, whether man or angel, would be condemned. (Galatians 1:8-9). John wrote that those who went beyond the teaching of Christ had not God. (2 John 9) These and similar passages had seemingly been forgotten, and men had changed the will of God and corrupted the church of the Lord.

Two more periods of church history remain. The first was called the Reformation. After these additions had been admitted into the church, some saw various errors and tried to reform the church. Our next lesson will be concerning the lives and works of these reformers.

## The Reformation

This is the third in a series of lessons on the history of the church. In the two preceding studies we have traced the major events in the rise of error and changes in organization from the time the church was established until the fourteenth century. This lesson will be a discussion of the lives and works of early reformers, in their efforts to correct evils in the church and reform it. Proper credit must be given these men for what they did. It was not their intention to establish denominations and followings for themselves. Instead, they were doing what they believed to be right, in the hope of leading souls to Christ and pleasing God. While they taught various doctrines which were erroneous, it should be remembered that their religious background was filled with the false ideas we have already

discovered, and it was hard to see the truth at once. Instead of criticizing these men, we should admire their courage to face a world of false teachings and publicly point out some of their mistakes in doctrine and practice.

The first great reformer was Martin Luther. Born in Eisliben, Germany in 1483, he probably received religious training from early childhood, for he entered a monastery at the age of twenty-two, in 1505, and two years later was ordained as a priest. It was during the winter of 1512-13 that Luther, in his study, began to see some errors in the Catholic church. Finally in 1517, he had the courage to nail his famous ninety-five theses to the door of the church in Whittenberg, Germany, in which he proclaimed these errors.

His three greatest objections to Catholicism were the selling of indulgences, the authority of the Pope, and the doctrine of transubstantiation. The last of these was the doctrine that the Lord's Supper the bread and wine became the fleshly body and blood of Christ when blessed by the priest. In his theses, Luther named these objections and asked for a debate with some one who would defend them. After much criticism and church trials, Luther was excommunicated from the church, but he continued to preach against the errors which he had found. Thus began what is today called the Lutheran Church. It is significant to notice that Luther asked his followers to call themselves not Lutherans, but Christians. In spite of his request, his name has been accepted as a religious title for a church. The name of man has been substituted for the name of Christ.

The greatest error in the teachings of Luther was justification by "faith only". He taught that men were saved at the point of faith in Christ without further acts of obedience. Because the writings of James contradicted his theory, Luther rejected this book of the Bible and labeled it a "book of straw". Yet, the writings of James teach that men are justified by works and not by faith only. (James 2:14-26). While the boldness and courage of Luther must be admired, his mistake in teaching justification by "faith only" must not be overlooked.

Shortly after Luther began his work in Germany, another reformer began working in France. His name was John Calvin. Born in Noyon in 1509, Calvin was able to begin the study of classics in Paris at the age of fourteen. In 1529 he began to study law, but two years later this was cast aside for the study of religion. From that time forward he was busy preaching the five points of his doctrine, called the five points of Calvinism. As these are here mentioned, we shall examine them in the light of the word of God to see whether or not they are true. The first was called inherited sin. It was believed that men inherited the sin of Adam at birth, so that infants were born in sin and therefore condemned. Yet Christ taught His disciples that they must become as little children before entering the kingdom of heaven. Matt. 18:3). Again he said, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven," (Matt. 19:14). Christ regarded little children as fit subjects for heaven, hence sinless. Calvin's theory of inherited sin did not agree with the teachings of Christ.

The second of Calvin's teachings was predestination. He taught that God had ordained some to eternal life and others to eternal damnation, and that there was nothing to be done on the part of man for salvation. Such a doctrine made God a respecter of persons and laid upon him the responsibility of saving and condemning the world. Yet both Peter and Paul declared that God was no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11). Peter also wrote that God does not will that any should perish but is anxious that all come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9). The salvation of man rests upon his actions, for Christ taught that only those who did the will of the Father would enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Mathew 7:21).

Believing in predestination, Calvin taught the doctrine of limited atonement. By this is meant the theory that Christ died only for the elect, not for the world. However, John wrote that He was the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2). Christ said, "Who-soever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17). The blood of Christ was shed for the sins of all who willingly accepted His salvation.

The fourth point of Calvinism was the perseverance of the saints, or the impossibility of apostasy. Calvin preached that those who were saved could not sin so as to be lost. But Peter wrote of those who had escaped the defilements of the world and were entangled therein and overcome. Of such he said, "It has happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog turning to his vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter 2:20-22). Paul wrote of some who were fallen from grace. (Galatians 5:4). Thus both Peter and Paul taught the possibility of doing that which Calvin taught was impossible.

The last of Calvin's doctrines was called the irresistibility of grace. Calvin taught that man could not resist the power of God to be saved if he were one of the elect. But Stephen once said to a council of Jews, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye." (Acts 7:51. In Antioch of Pisidia Paul said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo we turn to the Gentiles." (Acts 14:46). When the apostles and early disciples preached the gospel, many resisted it and thrust it from themselves. They had the choice either to accept or reject the love of God and the invitation of Christ. Thus the grace of God can be resisted and discarded by the will of man.

The five points of Calvinism were inherited sin, predestination, limited atonement, perseverance of saints, and the irresistibility of the grace of God. As each of these doctrines is examined by God's word, the true light, it is found to be false. Though he might have been honest and sincere in his preaching, Calvin was teaching five points of error.

John Knox was born in Scotland in 1505 and was converted to Protestantism in 1542. He preached the doctrines of Calvin which have been discussed. It was Knox who organized and founded what is now called the Presbyterian church, and wrote for it the first articles of faith. Pres-

hyperinism is a growth from the teaching of Calvin, which was later advocated by Knox.

The reformer in Switzerland was Ulrich Zwingli. Six important differences between Zwingli and the Catholic church were his contentions for the right to preach without human authority, the teaching that Christ was the only head of the church, thereby rejecting the pope, the rejection of human doctrines and ordinances, the rejection of prayers to saints and priests, the right of priests to marry, and the rejection of mass, which he considered a form of idolatry. Zwingli did not believe in the special presence of Christ at the Lord's Supper, but considered it a simple memorial of the Lord's death.

Henry VIII was King of England from 1509 till 1547. At first his reign was harmonious with the Catholic church, and he was strong in opposing the doctrines of Martin Luther. Differences arose, however, in 1527 when the king asked for a divorce, which the Pope refused to grant. He was excommunicated from the church in 1538. Together with Parliament, the King organized what was called the Church of England, over which he was head. This was done in 1534, and the act was called the Act of Supremacy. Thus the Church of England had its beginning. Later, when this denomination was founded in America, it was known as the Episcopal Church.

During the years of 1727-1729 there were two brothers studying in Oxford, John and Charles Wesley. While in school, they were members of a religious club, called the "Holy Club". This was sometimes called the Methodist club because of the methodical religious exercises. Of the two, John was the leader. He was an ordained priest in the Church of England. From 1736 until 1738, John Wesley was busy in America doing mission work. His field was the state of Georgia. While there he encountered Spandenberg, a member of the Moravian brethren, who introduced new thoughts of religion to his mind. Upon returning to England, Wesley preached the new doctrines he had learned from Spandenberg. The result was a division in the Church of England and the formation of the Methodist Church. A great companion and fellow-worker of Wesley's was George Whitefield. Working together, they preached their doctrines throughout the land. Often, not being permitted to speak in churches, they preached out of doors. Two leading doctrines of Wesley were salvation by faith only, as had been preached by Luther, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. A division came in the Methodist Church when Whitefield accepted the doctrine of final perseverance and irresistible grace, two of the five points of Calvinism. It is interesting to note that in the movement of Methodism, the church made a distinction between elders and bishops, which Wesley believed to be the same and which the New Testament teaches are the same. Wesley was strong in protesting to this distinction, but to no avail.

According to Baptist historians, the Baptist church began in the seventeenth century.

Two leading groups of Baptists are known as Primitive and Missionary. The first is very Calvinistic in doctrine, while the latter is an advocate of salvation by faith only, the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion and the impossibility of falling from grace.

From this lesson we see the rise of various religious denominations in an effort to reform a fallen and corrupted church. One lesson remains, which is a discussion of the restoration. Instead of trying to reform present denominations, there came an effort to go back to the Bible and restore the church of the New Testament. This effort will be discussed in the last of this series of lessons.

From the New Testament we are taught to listen to Jesus Christ. God has commanded us to hear Him. (Matthew 17:5). May we not be guilty of going to such men as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, or Wesley for our religious belief. Let us go to the word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, since He is the way to the Father and there is salvation in none other. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

## The Restoration

Before discussing the subject announced, let us notice again the difference between the reformation and the restoration. The first was an effort to correct errors in the fallen church already existing. Although such an effort resulted in the establishment of many denominations, it was not the intention of the reformers to produce such division. They only intended to correct error and bring the church back to the way of righteousness.

The restoration, on the other hand, was not an effort to reform some church already in existence, but to restore and bring back the true church of the first century. The following illustration may clarify the subject. As popular as a game of football has become, let us suppose that within the next thirty years it should be forgotten. Then let us suppose that one hundred years from now someone should accidentally find a rule book for football and decide to play the game again. The field would be arranged and players would be selected according to the book of rules. Although no one had seen the game before, they could play exactly as we do today, because they would be following the same rules. So it is with the church. The early church is pictured in the New Testament, which might rightfully be called God's book of rules. Although men lost sight of the church which is there pictured and strayed away from the word of God others later decided to go back to the Bible and started again to form the church of the New Testament. This effort has since been called the Restoration.

The Restoration Movement began in America, and most of the work was done by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. However, there were

some efforts along the same line done by men who lived and preached before the Campbells began their work. Three of these efforts should be noticed. The first was a division in the Methodist Church at Manakin Town, North Carolina on Christmas Day of 1793. James O'Kelly contended for the right of congregational government. He did not believe in higher officers to exercise authority over districts of churches, but contended that each congregation was free to direct his own work. O'Kelly was pleading for something contrary to Methodist practice, and his effort soon died for lack of men to preach and defend it.

A second similar plea for the Bible was in the Baptist Church in the state of Vermont in the year 1800, when some, under the leadership of Dr. Abner Jones, discarded the name Baptist and refused to follow the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, which was then standard doctrine of that church. These disciples were willing to accept the scriptures only and be called Christians. They too were trying earnestly to go back to the Bible.

The third restoring effort was in Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in the year 1801. Barton W. Stone, then a young Presbyterian preacher, was engaged in a meeting, in which he preached the freedom of salvation for all men and the fact that salvation comes without a miraculous influence of the Holy Spirit. These two points were not in agreement with the doctrine of the Presbyterian church. We have learned that this body was founded upon the five points of Calvinism, one of which was the teaching of predestination and the need of being one of God's elect in order to be saved. By 1804 Stone and his associates were out of the Presbyterian church and were contending for the name Christian and the Bible only just as Dr. Jones and his associates were doing in Vermont. Thus Bible students were beginning to see the need of going to the word of God for their religion.

As has already been stated, the Restoration Movement was led chiefly by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Because of their importance, their lives and works must here be discussed. Due to many misunderstandings, however, I must make some things clear from the beginning. I do not believe that Alexander Campbell was a prophet of God, a divine teacher, the founder of a church, nor the one who made the laws of the church of Christ. I do not follow him as my leader in religion, nor do I wear his name. Although he was a great man, he was only a man as others. We must study his life just as we have studied the lives of Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley and others. In our study we must be honest and give him proper credit for all the good he did, but we must not try to excuse his faults in life or doctrine.

Alexander Campbell was born in a village in Ireland in 1788. His father, Thomas, was a minister of the Seceders, a party in the Presbyterian Church. While Alexander was still a young man, his father came to America as a missionary, leaving his family in the old world. Upon arriving in America, he was assigned a district in which to work. Soon

he was criticized for his manner of offering the Lord's Supper. Instead of offering the Supper only to the members of a certain congregation, as was the custom of the Presbyterian church, he offered the privilege to all who wished to eat, regardless of the church in which they held membership. Because of this action he was severely criticized and forced to withdraw from the church for which he had been preaching. Nevertheless, he continued to preach and to exalt the Bible as a sufficient set of rules for the church. Once, while preaching in the home of Abraham Altam, he said, "Where the scriptures speak we speak; and where the scriptures are silent, we are silent." Little did Thomas Campbell realize that he had coined an expression which would later be used by many who would plead for the church of the Bible.

On August 17, 1809, there was an important meeting of those who believed as did Campbell, in which an organization was formed for the purpose of carrying out these principles. This agreement was known as the "Declaration and Address" in which it was declared that the New Testament was a perfect set of rules and the church must be patterned after it.

Campbell's family came to America in the fall of 1809, soon after the occurrence of the meeting just described. Shortly after Thomas and Alexander were together they began to discuss their experiences and findings. While studying in Glasgow, Alexander had seen the sin of division and the need of going back to the Bible. Upon comparing their thoughts they discovered that both had found errors in the denomination with which they were affiliated and were both convicted that men must return to the Bible. Because of such harmony, Alexander began preaching and working with his father.

The Christian Association of Washington soon found that work in the Presbyterian Church was no longer congenial, and on May 4, 1811, thirty-six members met in Brush Run, West Va. for services, at which time Alexander preached and the Lord's Supper was observed. Regular meetings followed this one, in which the Bible was preached and the Supper observed every Sunday.

In 1812 Campbell was confronted with the problem of infant baptism. He and his wife were blessed with a daughter, and they felt that she should be baptized. Campbell was determined, however, to find authority for such an act in the New Testament. Upon investigating, he found that not only was infant baptism nowhere mentioned, but that sprinkling was nowhere taught. Immersion was the only mode of baptism pictured in the scriptures. He had been baptized as an infant in the Presbyterian church, but had never been immersed. There being no one present to baptize him, Campbell went to Matthias Luce, a Baptist preacher, and demanded baptism for remission of sins. Instead of relating an experience of grace, he was willing only to confess his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. In this act he was joined by seven others, including his father.

That such an act was pleasing in the sight of God, there can be no doubt. The story of the conversion of the eunuch shows that he did the same thing in obedience to the will of Christ. (Read Acts 8:26-40). Both baptisms were the same, and since God is no respecter of persons and He accepted the conversion of the eunuch, we must conclude that He would accept not only the baptism of Alexander Campbell, but of any other who would do the same. In the command of baptism, the importance and emphasis rests upon the one who is baptized, not upon one who assists in baptizing the individual.

Having been baptized by a Baptist preacher, Campbell preached for the Baptist Church until 1816. In a sermon preached at Cross Creek, Va., August 30, 1816, he discussed the three dispensations of Bible history, which are the Patriarchial, the Jewish, and the Christian ages. He showed that Christ was greater than Moses and that His gospel was greater than the law given to Israel. This was his famous "Sermon On The Law." Some agreed with Campbell, but many did not. Due to these disagreements, fellowship in the Baptist Church was no longer congenial, and he withdrew from Red Stone Association with which he was affiliated.

In 1830, Campbell and those who believed as he did, united with the Mahoning Association of the Baptist Church. In 1830 the Association finally realized that the Bible authorizes no associations other than the church. The result was the discarding of the Baptist name, all human creeds, associations, etc., and becoming the church of Jesus Christ. Elders were restored as overseers of local congregations. The worship as taught by the apostles in the New Testament was practiced. The name Christian was accepted. Thus the church of the first century was again brought into existence.

In the first of these lessons a brief picture was given of the church of the first century. By comparing the picture given above with that of the early church, it may be seen that they are identical in name, worship, organization, and doctrine. Though separated by centuries as well as miles, the church is the same. Seed from a certain plant will produce the same plant in other parts of the world and at other times. The word of God is the seed of the kingdom. (Luke 8:11). When it is sown in its purity and falls into sincere and honest hearts, it can produce nothing but Christians and children of God.

In the second chapter of Luke's gospel the story is told of how Christ was lost in Jerusalem at the age of twelve. (Luke 2:41-51). By supposing Him to be in the crowd without taking time to investigate, Mary and Joseph went a day's journey without Him. When they realized that He was no longer in their midst they returned to the city and found Him in the temple. Jesus had not left them, but they had left Jesus. When they returned to the place they had left Him, He was still there. Afterwards he went with them to Nazareth. In the early years of the church men began to drift from the way of the Lord, little realizing the danger of the steps they were taking. Through the Dark Ages they were constantly going further from the Bible. Finally some began to see that Jesus was no longer in their midst and they began to take steps back to the Bible way.

This resulted in the Restoration already discussed and the return to the church of the New Testament. May we now be careful that we stay close to Christ and not go away from Him again.

At the close of the last sermon the statement was made that we must not go to the reformers for our religion. Neither must we go to Alexander Campbell and other restorers of that age. We must go to the Lord Jesus Christ and His word for all instructions in becoming a Christian and living a life pleasing to God. The church of Christ pleads for a complete return to the Bible. Investigate for yourself and see what God would have you do.

## I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord

I love Thy Kingdom, Lord,  
The house of Thy abode;  
The church of our blest Redeemer  
saved,

With His own precious blood.

I love Thy church, O God!  
Her walls before Thee stand,  
Dear, as the apple of Thine eye,  
And graven on Thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall,  
For her my prayers ascend;  
To her my cares and toils be giv'n,  
Till toils and cares shall end.

Beyond my highest joy  
I prize her heavenly ways,  
Her sweet communion, solemn  
vows,

Her hymns of love and praise.

Jesus, Thou Friend divine,  
Our Savior and our King!  
Thy hand from every snare and foe  
Shall great deliverance bring.

Sure as Thy truth shall last,  
To Zion shall be given  
The brightest glories earth can  
yield,

And brightest bliss of heaven.

Fisher, **History of the Christian Church**, pgs. 31, 33, 60.

According to the Gnostics, matter is evil, hence it and God are opposed to each other. This doctrine was popular in the second century, but by the sixth century it had practically disappeared.

Moncrief, **A Short History of the Christian Church**, pp 68-82.

Moncrief, *Ibid*, 128-137.

Fisher, *Ibid*, 105, 132-133, 135.

Schaff, **History of the Christian Church**, II, 141, IV, 219, 230.

Mosheim, **Church History**, I, 178

Schaff, **Creeds of Christendom**, I, 150.

Fisher, *Ibid*, 176-177.

Schaff, **History of the Christian Church**, III, 569.

Campbell, **Christian Baptism**, 191-204.

Schaff, *Ibid*, VI, 97-368.

Fisher, *Ibid*, 318-330.

Fisher, *Ibid*, 364-396.

Fisher, *Ibid*, 306-310.

Fisher, *Ibid*, 515-527.

Fisher, *Ibid*, 347-351.

Benedict, **History of Baptists**, Edition of 1848, pg. 304.

Vedder, **Short History of Baptists**, Edition of 1907, pgs. 3-4.

For further information concerning the restoration movement the reader is referred to the following books:

Garrison: **The Reformation of the Nineteenth Century**.

Welshimer: **Concerning the Disciples**.

Davis: **How the Disciples Began and Grew**.

Richardson: **Memoirs of Alexander Campbell**.

Hailey: **Attitudes and consequences of the Restoration Movement**.

West: **The Search For the Ancient Order**, Vol. I-II