

Two Thousand Years of Grace

By Gaylin Schmeling

I. THE BIRTH OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

A. The Age of the Apostles

When was the birthday of the church? What is to be considered the beginning of the Christian Church? Many speak of Pentecost as the birthday of the Christian Church which is indeed proper. On that first Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles and they began their Gospel ministry of salvation. Others, such as Luther, speak of the church already in the Garden of Eden in which the tree of knowledge of good and evil was Adam's church, altar, and pulpit.¹ I prefer to see the founding of the Christian Church in the crucifixion event. On the cross Christ obtained salvation for all people through His holy life and His innocent suffering and death. Just moments after His death when full redemption was accomplished we are shown how that redemption is brought to us and how the church is formed. The Savior's side was opened and from His wounded side flowed blood and water: the water of Baptism, the blood of the Supper, and the Word which is spirit and life through which the Bride of Christ, the church, is formed. (John 19:34; I John 5:6) Johann Gerhard, the great 17th century Lutheran theologian makes an interesting connection in this regard.

You have a type of how the Lord Christ was to have His side opened up by a spear in Adam, who had his side opened by God, and from the rib which was taken from him was crafted a woman. Thus, as Christ fell into death's sleep on the cross, from His opened side flowed blood and water -- the two Holy Sacraments -- from which the Church, Christ's Bride, was built up.²

The Palestinian Church and Paul

The early Christians knew that their faith was based on the redemptive work of Christ prophesied already in the Old Testament (Isaiah 53)³ and made present for them in the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. With this treasure of forgiveness they reached out to those around them. Beginning in Jerusalem with the preaching of Peter on Pentecost, the Gospel message spread throughout Judea. The Jewish leaders were not pleased with the growth of the Christian way. (Acts 9:2) They arrested the apostles to stop them from proclaiming the crucified and risen Christ. Yet the apostles and other believers kept on testifying of their faith.

Stephen, a man called into the public ministry by the church, (Acts 6:1-6) boldly confessed the Lord. He pointed out that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament. The Jewish mob refused to listen to him, dragged him out of the city, and stoned him. Thus we remember Stephen as the first Christian martyr. Philip, another man chosen as deacon with Stephen, carried the Gospel to Samaria. (Acts 8) Up to this point Christianity was mainly confined to the land of Palestine. The believers continued to observe Jewish customs and probably did not appear much different than the other sects of Judaism.

¹ LW 1:95.

² Johann Gerhard, *An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Malone, TX: Repristination Press, 1999), p. 30.

³ The Old Testament is filled with prophesy concerning Christ and His work. Beginning with Genesis 3:15, where the seed of the virgin who would crush the head of Satan is predicted, nearly every aspect of our Lord's life is foretold. The risen Lord Himself said that He was the fulfillment of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, the entire Old Testament Scripture. (Luke 24:44) This biblical truth Augustine formulated in the well-known axiom: "In the Old Testament the New is concealed, in the New the Old is revealed." (*Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet*) Luther makes this same point in his introduction to *The Last Words of David*. (LW 15: 267-270)

This situation was about to change for God was preparing His chosen instrument, Saul of Tarsus. Saul was an unlikely candidate for the Lord's work. He consented to the death of Stephen and he raised a great persecution against the church. Yet on the Damascus road in the year 33 the Lord literally caused Saul to see the light, and he was baptized washing away his sin. (Acts 9) God was now preparing him to be the apostle to the Gentiles or non-Jewish people.

The Pauline Missions

Saul's work began in Antioch where the believers were first called Christians. (Acts 11:26) From there Saul and Barnabas traveled west preaching the good news in Cyprus and Asia Minor, present-day Turkey. (Acts 13-14) At this point the Book of Acts begins using Saul's Greek name "Paul." They usually began their work at the local synagogue and then reached out to the Gentiles in the community. After the first missionary journey of Paul there was an important council in Jerusalem in 49. Questions arose as to whether it was necessary for believers to be circumcised and follow the regulations of the Old Testament ceremonial law in order to be saved. (Acts 15:1) In accord with the Gospel the apostles reiterated that one is not saved by anything he does or accomplishes but alone by faith in the Savior.

In his second missionary journey, Paul, together with Silas, revisited the churches which he established in Asia Minor. The Gospel now reached the European continent, for Paul and his companions crossed to Macedonia and continued from there to Greece, centering their activities at Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth. (Acts 16-18) During his third journey he spent three years at Ephesus. (Acts 19-0) Paul made other missionary travels, possibly going as far west as Spain; at least that had been Paul's dream (Romans 15:28), and Clement of Rome assumed that he reached that goal.⁴ Paul's life came to an end, according to tradition, during the persecution of Nero in 67.

Traditional information has the other apostles following the Pauline missionary example: Peter in Rome, John in Ephesus, Andrew in Scythia, Philip in Phrygia, Bartholomew in Armenia, Thomas in India (Mar Thoma Church), Matthew in Mesopotamia, Simon the Zealot in Persia, James the Less in Syria, Thaddeus in Edessa, Matthias and Mark in Egypt. The Early Church was on fire with the Gospel.

B. The Great Persecutions of the Church

From the time of Nero (ca. 64) to Emperor Diocletian (ca. 303) the church numbers ten major persecutions of believers. At times the persecutions were local and sporadic, at other times systematic and general. Christians were imprisoned, enslaved, mutilated, burned at the stake, coated with pitch and burned as living torches, and thrown to the lions as afternoon entertainment at the coliseum. Yet the satanic attack could not crush the church of Christ. The courage of the Christians even in the face of suffering and death for their Savior made a deep impression upon others, and many were converted. Thus the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church. Finally in 313 Christianity was accepted as a legal religion of the Roman State.

Christians had been open game for those who wished to attack them when Christianity was not a legal religion. To make matters worse they would not worship the emperor and the traditional Roman god, a refusal which was viewed as treason and atheism. They were viewed as antisocial and enemies of society since they would not attend the public games and the philosophical schools, or participate in the military service, all of which activities were associated with the worship of the emperor or the gods. Because the assemblies of Christians were at times called the agape or love feast and since they received the body and blood of God's Son, the rumor arose that churches were places where Christians had sexual orgies, ate the flesh of babies, and did many other immoral things.

Outstanding among the martyrs of this period were Ignatius of Antioch (d. 110), Justin Martyr (100-165), and Polycarp of Smyrna (69-156). Early in the second century Ignatius, guarded by ten Roman soldiers

⁴ I Clement 5:5-7

was being taken through western Asia Minor to Rome, where he was to be executed. On the way Christians gathered to offer comfort and encouragement to their brother in chains. He was the bishop of Antioch in Syria. It was probably at Rome where he underwent martyrdom around 110 AD. He may have been a disciple of John. The seven letters he wrote while on his way to Rome indicate the strong stand he took in opposition to Docetism and Gnosticism, which maintained that Christ only appeared to be a man and thus questioned His humanity. In his letter to the Ephesians Ignatius confessed the scriptural doctrine that Christ is both God and man in one person: “There is one Physician: both flesh and spirit, made and unmade, in man, God, in death, true life, both from Mary and from God, first passable and then impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁵ He declared that Christ was truly human since His true flesh and blood were the nourishment for the Christian’s faith-life. He wrote that the breaking of bread, that is, the Lord’s Supper “is the medicine of immortality [pharmakon athanasias] and an antidote, that we may not die, [antidotes tou mee apothanein] but live forever in Jesus Christ.”⁶ Jesus the Divine Physician provides the medicine for humanity, giving life beyond the grave.

Justin Martyr was born in Nablus in Samaria at the beginning of the second century. He was converted to Christianity around 135. At this point he turned his skills as a philosopher to the defense of the faith. In 150 he wrote his great *First Apology* while at Rome. Here he was martyred around 165. In reading chapters 65-67 of his *First Apology*, one can discern the basic structure of the divine liturgy as it is known today. The faithful came together in Christ’s name on Sunday. They gathered on this day because this was the day God created light out of darkness, and the day the Savior arose triumphant from the grave. At the assembly there were readings from the “memoirs of the apostles” (the Gospel lesson) or from the writings of the prophets (the Old Testament lesson); the homily; the prayers of the faithful; the kiss of peace; the offering of the gift, including the elements for the Sacrament; the thanksgiving, including prayers, the Verba and the ending Amen of the faithful; and finally the distribution and reception.

Polycarp of Smyrna, like Ignatius, was probably a disciple of John and, in turn, the teacher of Irenaeus of Lyons. He was a leader of the church in Asia Minor who clearly proclaimed the way of salvation as it is seen in his letter to the Philippians: “You know it is by grace you are saved, not of works, but by the will of God through Jesus Christ.”⁷ At a great age Polycarp was arrested. The officer who arrested him asked, “What will it hurt to say ‘Caesar is Lord’ and burn incense to the gods?” Others encouraged him to consider his age and curse Christ. Polycarp answered, “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury, how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?”⁸ He was burned at the stake in Smyrna in 156.

C. The Defense of the Faith

Persecution was a danger the church could easily recognize. It came from outside the church and was instigated by men who openly opposed the Gospel. A far more serious threat to the church arose in the second century in the form of teachings that perverted the Gospel. They appeared in three distinct forms or movements: Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Montanism. Gnosticism was at first entirely pagan, but in time became associated with Christian teachings. Both Marcion and Montanus were sons of the church and their doctrine developed within it.

Gnosticism

The term “gnosticism” is derived from the Greek work *gnosis* which means “knowledge.” The Gnostics claimed to possess a special mystical knowledge, reserved for those with true understanding. That knowledge was the key to salvation. The Gnostics taught that the human soul was part of the divine substance and must be

⁵ Ignatius, Ephesians 7:2.

⁶ Ignatius, Ephesians 20.

⁷ Polycarp, Philippians 1:3.

⁸ *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, editors (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), p. 41.

returned to it in order to fulfill its destiny. In this life the soul endured frightful anguish as a result of its union with matter, the principle of evil. Salvation then was the liberation of the human spirit from the bonds of matter. Christ came to the earth in order to remind us of our heavenly origin and give us the secret knowledge which is needed for our soul, the spark of the divine to return to the Great Divine. The Christ of the Gnostics such as Valentinus could not be truly human, for material was evil. Rather he was the foremost spiritual being. With its rejection of the material world, Gnosticism tended either in the direction of asceticism or libertinism.

It has become popular today to advocate the Mother God in contradistinction to God the Father and to promote female pastors in the church. It is said that both of these viewpoints were found in the Early Church. The only place these views were accepted was in the Gnostic churches and never in Orthodox Christianity.⁹ Such views are to be found in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas which is being touted today as the fifth Gospel.

Marcion and his Theology: A Reaction to Legalism and Moralism

Around 140 a Christian named Marcion came to Rome from the north coast of Asia Minor. He was a wealthy ship builder, a deeply religious man, and theologically capable. While many of his teachings were similar to those of the Gnostics, he was not a Gnostic dreamer. In the early church there was a tendency to turn Christianity into a new moral doctrine and thus to forget the Pauline emphasis on the free gift of God. His call for a new discovery of the unmerited grace of God was necessary and relevant in the midst of the legalism that threatened to sweep the church. But his denial of the Old Testament Scripture, the God of the Old Testament, and his dualistic interpretation of the history of salvation brought him under such attack that any positive points of his teaching were not considered.

Marcion rejected all the books of the Old Testament and much of the New. He established his own canon containing only a mutilation of Luke's Gospel and ten epistles of Paul. Even from these books he removed alleged Judaizing elements. This caused the church more carefully to enunciate the established canon of the New Testament.

The Montanist Reaction to Institutionalism

Montanism was a reaction to the institutionalization of the church which resulted from the church's reaction to Gnosticism. Montanus and his followers believed that the hierarchy, which arose in the church as a reaction to Gnosticism, squelched the Holy Spirit and the miraculous gifts given to the early church. Before his conversion Montanus belonged to a religion in which one reached a state of ecstasy and then danced, saw visions, and prophesied. These ideas continued with him after his conversion. Sometime after his baptism, he declared himself filled with the Holy Spirit and began prophesying. He was soon joined by two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, who also prophesied. Montanus believed that he was the Paraclete promised in the Gospel of John (14:16) who would begin a new dispensation -- the age of the Spirit. The new revelation of the Montanists implied that the revelation in the Word made flesh manifested in the written Word, the Scripture, was not complete. Montanism was obviously similar to Pentecostalism and millennialism today.

The Canon, the Creed, and the Monarchical Bishop

The church responded to these perversions of the Gospel with the inspired, inerrant Word, the holy Scripture. From its beginning the church considered the Old Testament to be the book of Christ and was not about to give it up for Marcion. Alongside the Old Testament there came into being the "New Testament," a term probably coined by Irenaeus of Lyons. It is important to note that the canon, that is, the collection of the inspired books of the Bible, was not formed by human decision or authority. It is not the church which creates the Scripture but, on the contrary, it is the Scripture which creates the church. The books of the Bible

⁹ Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospel* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), pp. 70-83.

authenticate themselves. They declare themselves to be God's Word and that claim is reinforced by their marvelous unity, inerrancy, clarity, and power. The Gospel is not believed because it is authorized by the church but because it shows itself to be God's life-giving Word, which has one focus, Christ the Redeemer. The inerrant Word is the church's defense against error and the true source of the Spirit, contrary to Montanism.¹⁰ While most of the canon was gathered very early, occasionally some collectors omitted a book or added a non-canonical book. It was Athanasius who in the year 367 first set forth the collection of the New Testament as it presently exists.

Another element in the church's response to heresies was what we now call the "Apostles' Creed." The false teachers also used the Scripture to defend their errors. Therefore the church developed creeds to express the truths of Scripture in a consistent, systematic manner. The creed pointed out what the Bible taught and what it did not teach. One of the earliest forms of what we know as the Apostles' Creed was composed in Rome around 150. It originated as a creed that one would confess at Baptism.

The third line of defense in the church's battle against error was the development of the monarchical bishop. The Gnostics claimed to have secret wisdom from Christ and the apostles. Men like Irenaeus countered that true wisdom was found in the bishops who teach the Word of God. With Ignatius of Antioch at the beginning of the second century, the power and prestige of the bishop began to rise. Formerly there had been a council of elders in each congregation who were all equally bishops, with one of them chosen to lead and conduct the liturgy. In Ignatius' time the leader received special power and prestige; thus evolved the monarchical bishopric. The bishops began to dominate the presbyters and the congregation. The bishops' power and influence increased as they stood firm against Gnosticism. Ignatius and other fathers viewed the monarchical episcopate as the safeguard of orthodoxy. Because the bishops preserved the doctrine of the apostles, they were honored and obeyed. This process of elevating the bishops resulted in a clerical hierarchy in the Middle Ages. Subordinate to the bishops were the priests who were formerly called presbyters. Above the bishops were archbishops, culminating in the Pope of Rome, who was considered to be the visible head of the church and the vicar of Christ.

D. Daily Life in the Early Church

For Christians today the cross or the crucifix is the most predominant Christian symbol, and rightly so, for it directs us to the heart of the Gospel, Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Yet this was not usually the case in the early church. Early Christians generally avoided the cross. To use a cross in their worship service would have been much like having an electric chair standing in the center of our church. Some of the earliest evidence of this sign is really a mockery of the Christians. Second century graffiti on a Roman Palatine wall has a man with an ass's head on a cross while another man stands nearby in adoration. The words "Alexamenos adores his God" are scratched under the picture. Only gradually did Christians accept the humiliation of the cross as the true sign of the faith.¹¹

The theme of the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep and now shepherds them all the way, was common in Christian teaching and art. However, the most unique early Christian symbol was the fish or Ichthus symbol. Frequently Christians were forced to worship secretly fearing for their lives and the lives of their families. The fish symbol served them well in these difficult times of persecution because it generally went unnoticed by the enemy when Christians used it to communicate. Placed outside of Christians' homes, this symbol silently announced that Christians would be gathering there for worship. It was a secret sign or code used by Christians to identify each other. If a Christian suspected that a stranger might be a believer, the Christian would absentmindedly sketch the fish symbol in the sand. If the stranger was not a Christian, he or she would think the other was merely doodling.

¹⁰ The early church confessed verbal inspiration. The writers did not speak by themselves, but by the Divine Word who moved them. (Just. First Apol. 36) The soul of the inspired writer is compared to a musical instrument which the Holy Spirit uses, as the flute-player breathes into the flute (Athenag. Apol. 9); or a harp or lyre, and the Holy Spirit the plectrum. (Just. Cohort. 8)

¹¹ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, pp. 473-474.

The fish symbol had a great significance for the early church because it was a powerful confession of faith. Christians attached meaning to the word “fish” itself— ἰχθύς in the Greek language. The letters of Ichthus became the acronym: I(J) - Jesus, X(CH) - Christ, Θ(TH) - God’s, Υ(U) - Son, Σ(S) - the Savior. In Greek, if you take the first letter of each of the words in this phrase, together they spell the Greek word for “fish” (Ichthus), much like the acronym MADD stands for Mothers Against Drunk Drivers. This symbol is a bold confession of our confident hope of salvation; Jesus Christ is God’s Son and our Savior. It points out that we become His little fish, His Christians, in the fish pool of Baptism, and that we partake of the life-giving Fish in the Supper, receiving all the blessings of salvation. Finally, the symbol portrays the purpose of our lives and motivates us to be fishers of men.

Worship in the Early Church

The divine liturgy as we know it today has two definable parts: the service of the Word, and the service of the Sacrament. The service of the Word followed the order of the synagogue with its lections and preaching and may have been a separate early morning service, while the Lord’s Supper was connected with an evening fellowship meal, the agape meal. Yet very early in the church’s life they were wedded into one service celebrated at sunrise of the Lord’s Day, as Justin Martyr relates. The service of the Word was also known as the service of the catechumens because those preparing for Baptism were allowed to attend that portion of the service but were asked to leave when the communion service began. Since there were no church buildings, the service often took place in the atrium of the house of one of the more well to do members.

The service of the catechumens consisted of various lections from the Gospels, Epistles, and the Prophets. Usually a portion of the Psalms was sung. Here also the sermon was to be found. The sermon held a very important position in the service. The second part of the service, the service of the faithful, began with the prayers of the faithful, prayers for the various needs of the church. After this the gifts to be offered were brought to the altar, possibly by the people themselves in an offertory procession. These gifts included the bread and wine for the Sacrament. The Lord’s Supper was ushered in by the preface. There were prayers of thanksgiving, the words of institution, distribution, and reception.

The Sacraments

A lengthy period of catechization before the Baptism of an adult (2 years or more) was established by the beginning of the third century. Intensive preparation of the candidates began at Lent with the actual Baptism at the Easter Vigil. During Lent they were taught the baptismal creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the other treasures of the faith, which were otherwise withheld from profane ears.

Hippolytus reports in *The Apostolic Tradition* that on Easter Eve, together with their sponsors and others, those to be baptized were brought to pure flowing water. They removed their clothing to picture the putting off of the sinful flesh in Baptism (Ephesians 4:22-24). First the infants of those instructed were baptized and then the adults themselves. They were asked to renounce Satan and all his wicked works. Then each person would enter the waters, where the baptismal water was applied three times. Before each application, the person would confess that portion of the baptismal creed referring to the person of the Trinity in whose name he or she was about to be baptized. The baptismal creed, which is virtually identical to the Apostles’ Creed, was intimately connected with Baptism. After the candidates were baptized, they received the laying on of hands and were anointed with oil, signifying that the gift of the Holy Spirit was received in Baptism. In the early church the laying on of hands and the anointing symbolized the receiving of the Spirit.

The climax of the catechumenate was the celebration of first communion at dawn on Easter Sunday, Baptism was placed into the context of the Easter festival to indicate that in baptism one died with Christ and

arose to new life by the power of Christ's resurrection (Romans 6).¹² The early Christians confessed the regenerational power of baptism. It truly works faith and gives the forgiveness of sins. They also maintained that the Lord's Supper was the true body and blood of Christ effected by His all powerful Word which is the true nourishment of body and soul for time and eternity giving forgiveness, life, and salvation. Justin Martyr writes in his *First Apology* 66:

And this food is called among us the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His Word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread and, when he had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, This is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is my blood," and gave it to them.¹³

The Teachers of the Church

In this period of church history there were many great leaders and teachers. We will consider three individuals who were representative of the various parts of the empire. The first is Irenaeus of Lyons (130-200) in modern-day France. He was born around 130, probably in Smyrna in modern-day Turkey. Here he heard the city's great martyr-bishop Polycarp, a disciple of the Apostle John. Thus he had a direct link to the Apostolic Age. After he became bishop of Lyons, he wrote his great work, *Adversus Haereses* (Against Heresies) in the 180s and 190s. This work was directed against a variety of Gnostic sects and other heretical groups. Following the characteristics of the Antiochian school centered in Asia Minor he was very biblically orientated. Not until the time of Luther would one find a theologian as scripturally based and as free of philosophical presuppositions.

One of the main themes of his theology was recapitulation or restoration based on Romans 5 and Ephesians 1:10. According to Irenaeus the whole human race was condemned in Adam's fall because the whole race was in Adam. Thus, in the incarnation of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, came the one who recapitulated or reproduced the first in Himself so that he might restore all people to the original righteousness of the creation by His holy life and death. All that the first Adam lost in the fall the second Adam restored in Himself -- and more, eternal life in heaven.

Origen of Alexandria (185-254) was born in Egypt and educated in Alexandria. As a young man his mother prevented him from going out to seek martyrdom during the persecution in which his father was killed. He became head of the catechetical school, leading an extremely ascetical life; he may have even castrated himself. He was not ordained until 230. In a persecution in 250 he was imprisoned and tortured, and never really recovered. His theology was strongly influenced by neo-platonic philosophy. He was one of the most creative thinkers in the early church, but his thoughts were highly speculative. This was representative of the Alexandrian theological school that tended toward allegory and speculative thought. He produced the *Hexapla*, a work placing several versions of the Bible in parallel columns an arrangement which assisted in biblical study. His most enduring contribution to the theology of the church was the formulation of the scriptural doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. The Second Person of the Trinity is the only begotten Son of the Father from all eternity.

¹² Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition*, Sections 16-23, Burton S. Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), pp. 41-49.

¹³ Justin Martyr, *The First Apology* 66, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, p. 185.

Tertullian of Carthage (160-220), an African theologian, was an example of the western theological school which was known for a practical and traditional emphasis. He was brought up in Carthage in North Africa and was a lawyer before he became a Christian. He was one of the first writers to use Latin, rather than Greek, providing the basic theological terminology of the Latin West. With his sharp legal mind he provided the terms “person” and “being” so that we may speak of three persons in the one divine being or essence. The same is true of the terms “nature” and “person” in Christology. In many ways he is the father of Latin Christianity.

II. THE IMPERIAL CHURCH

A. Constantine - First Christian Emperor

By far the worst persecution to befall the church began in 303 during the reign of Emperor Diocletian. In 312 a young man named Constantine, who was proclaimed emperor by his troops, marched on Rome. The two armies faced each other a few miles outside the city. The day before the battle Constantine saw the sign of a cross in the sky and above it the words *In hoc signo vinces* (in this sign conquer). Constantine pledged that if he won the battle he would become a Christian. The next day, October 28, his army won a complete victory. In 313 The Edict of Milan was published, which gave the church freedom of worship. The joyful praises of the Lord who sent such a deliverer were heard throughout the empire.

It is difficult for us fully to comprehend the impact that Constantine had on the church. Just a few years before, Christians had been hunted like animals and now they were given freedom of religion and soon would have most favored status in the empire. It was no wonder that Christians were filled with appreciation for Constantine and his mother Helena who had long been a Christian and strongly influenced her son. Sunday became an official day of rest for all. Beautiful churches were built at government expense by Constantine and his mother. Among these were churches on the site of holy places in Palestine, such as the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The basilica form of architecture originating from public Roman buildings was used in many of these churches. Christian clergy were shown great respect. They did not have to pay taxes and could travel at government expense. Constantine even built a whole new capital, a Christian capital, Constantinople, which is modern-day Istanbul.

Before the time of Constantine Christian worship had been fairly simple. Christians met in private homes and slowly developed house churches like the one found at Dura-Europos dating from around 250. But after Constantine’s conversion, Christian worship began to be influenced by imperial protocol. Incense, which was used as a sign of respect for the emperor, began appearing in Christian churches. Officiating ministers, who until then had worn everyday clothes, began dressing in more formal garments. A number of gestures indicating respect, which were normally made before the emperor, now became part of Christian worship. For example, the processional from the imperial court now began the worship service. Choirs took a much greater part in the service and the congregation came to have a less active role in the liturgy.¹⁴

Instead of being tried by fire the church was now tried by the favor of the emperor. The favor of the emperor made it socially acceptable to be a Christian. Thousands flocked to the church to curry the emperor’s favor. If you wanted a good job or the right position you had to be a Christian. Thus the church was filled with many that had little interest or concern for the Christian faith or morals.

Many were enamored with Constantine but none more than Eusebius of Caesarea (260-339) in Palestine. He wrote the *Life of Constantine*, a work which is filled with exaggerated flattery for Constantine. If that were his only work he probably wouldn’t be remembered. But he wrote another vitally important work; his *Ecclesiastical History* is the main source of the history of the church from the Acts of the apostles to the defeat of Licinius in 324. Without this book we would have little information about the early years of the church. He is known as the father of church history.

¹⁴ J. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. I, (Harper San Francisco, 1984), p. 125.

B. The Trinitarian Controversies or the Battle over the “T”

Constantine had hoped that Christianity would be a unifying factor for an empire that was coming apart at the seams. Yet this was not to be the case. A great controversy broke out concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. This was not the first struggle that developed concerning this doctrine but it was by far the most devastating.¹⁵

An elder at Alexandria in Egypt, Arius by name, taught that the Son was less than God the Father. He was like God but not God as the Father is God. The Father was without beginning while the Son had a beginning, the first and highest of created beings. With an excellent gift for propaganda, Arius composed hymns which were chanted in the streets of Alexandria and throughout the East re-enforcing his major premise, “There was when the Son was not.” Thus he rejected the true divinity of the Second Person.

The Council of Nicaea

When Constantine realized a new controversy was brewing, he called a universal church council, hoping to save the unity of the church which was to be the cement of the empire. The council met at Nicaea near Constantinople in 325. More than 300 bishops were in attendance. It was a sight to behold. Men who had been mutilated and who bore the marks of persecution in their flesh were now being brought together and housed in deluxe accommodations at government expense.

At the council Constantine introduced the term *homoousios*, which he probably received from his spiritual advisor Hosius of Cordova. It meant that the Son was of the same substance as the Father or that He was God as the Father was God. The council expressed belief in one Lord, Jesus Christ. . . very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father, by whom all things were made. The council also rejected those who teach that “there was when he was not,” or that the Son of God was created, or changeable, or of another substance than the Father. Anyone who believed these errors was anathematized (i.e., declared accursed). This is the origin of the Nicene Creed which is used in our communion liturgy.

Athanasius Against the World

Humanly speaking, the biblical doctrine of Nicaea would never have won the day had it not been for a young man who was also from Alexandria, Athanasius by name (c. 296-377). He seems to have been a native Egyptian and not a Greek. This means he would have been dark complected and small framed. This would explain why this theological giant was mocked as the “black dwarf” by his opponents. He made a powerful defense of the *homoousios* at Nicaea. He knew that only a divine Christ could be Savior, therefore the Son had to be of one substance with the Father. Only the one who created all could restore humanity and overcome the sharpness of death. God became man so that we might become as God sharing in His divine glory.¹⁶ In his important treatise *On The Incarnation*, he wrote: “He, the Mighty . . . prepared . . . this body in the virgin . . . that He might turn again to incorruption men who had turned back to corruption, and make them alive through

¹⁵ In the Western Church there was a tendency to emphasize the oneness of the divine essence in the Trinity while in the East there was a greater emphasis on the threeness of the persons and at times an improper subordination of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The two main early heresies were dynamic and modalistic monarchianism. Dynamic monarchianism refers to an attempt to defend the “monarchy” or unity of God by claiming that the divinity that was in Christ was an impersonal power proceeding from God but was not God Himself. It is called “dynamic” by reason of the Greek term *dynamis*, which means, “power.” God was in Jesus as He was in Moses but only in a greater degree. Modalist monarchianism did not deny the full divinity of Christ, but simply identified it with the Father. Because of that identification, which implied that the Father had suffered in Christ, this doctrine is sometimes called “Patripassianism.” This form of the heresy assumed that Father, Son, and Spirit merely represented three different forms or modes of appearance of the one God; or to put it more bluntly, God, like an actor, would wear different masks. Early in the third century it found its greatest expositor in Sabellius from whom it also has taken the name Sabellianism.

¹⁶ *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei* 54; A Religious of CSMV translator and editor (London: A.R. Mowbray and Co Ltd, 1975), p. 93.

death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of His resurrection. Thus He would make death to disappear from them as utterly as straw from fire.”¹⁷

When the bishops returned home from Nicaea there was a concerted effort by the Arian party to overthrow the doctrine of Nicaea. They maintained that the Son was not *homoousios* or of one substance with the Father. Rather they said the Son was *homoiousios* or of like substance as the Father. Because there was merely a letter difference between the two Greek terms, scoffers mocked saying that the whole controversy was over one “i.” Athanasius knew better. The *homoiousios* doctrine spoke of the Son as like but not of equal substance with the Father and therefore there was no divine Savior who could accomplish the redemption of men. The struggle continued on, and often it appeared that the whole world stood against Athanasius, and Athanasius against the world. Slowly, however, the Nicene doctrine prevailed.

The Cappadocians and the Council of Constantinople in 381

Three younger and influential theologians helped make Athanasius’ victory complete. They were Basil of Caesarea (in Cappadocia [300-379]), his friend Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389), and his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa (330-395). Since all were from Cappadocia, in modern day Turkey, they came to be known as the three great Cappadocians.

Many in the East feared that the “same substance” terminology of Athanasius was destroying the distinction between the persons of the Godhead. The Cappadocians clearly defined the terms “person” and “essence” confirming that there was no confusion of the persons. There were three distinct persons in the one divine being or essence. Gregory of Nazianzus properly explained the distinction between the persons: the Father is unbegotten, the Son begotten, and the Holy Spirit processing from the Father and the Son.

At the Council of Constantinople the doctrine of Nicaea was reaffirmed. The battle of Athanasius, who had died in the meantime after enduring five exiles, had not been in vain. This council condemned a heresy which rejected the deity of the Holy Spirit and added much of what our present Nicene Creed states concerning the Spirit.

C. The Christological Controversy or Who Then is Christ?

If the Son is God of the same substance as the Father as confessed at Nicaea, how do the human and divine relate to each other in the person of Christ? How can one speak of Christ as both fully divine and fully human as the Scripture teaches? The Alexandrian school emphasized the deity of Christ and the unity of His person. The Antiochian school tended to highlight the humanity and the distinction between the two natures in Christ.

Nestorius, an Antiochian, was elected patriarch of Constantinople in 428. When he reached the city he was particularly offended by the title *Theotokos* or Mother of God which was being used for the Virgin Mary. He so separated the human and divine in Christ that he was not willing to speak either of the child born of Mary as God or of His mother as the Mother of God. By this separation of the natures Christ was virtually two persons. This teaching tore Christ apart and made His redemptive work of no effect since Christ had to be both God and man in one person to be the Savior.

Nestorius was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431 and banished to Syria and later Egypt. The bishops who supported him formed the Nestorian church, the historic Church of Persia which exists to the present, named The Church of the East and of the Assyrians.

Cyril’s Zeal for Orthodoxy

¹⁷ *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei* 8; A Religious of CSMV translator and editor (London: A.R. Mowbray and Co Ltd, 1975), p. 34.

The man most responsible for the fall of Nestorius was Cyril of Alexandria (375-444). He became bishop of the city in 412. He was a ruthless defender of the truth, and to be his enemy was not pleasant. When Cyril heard of the Nestorian sermons which forbid that the virgin be called the *Theotokos*, he flew into a rage. How dare they suggest that the infant Jesus was not divine! At the Council of Nicaea Christ's divinity had been determined to be timeless. As far as Cyril was concerned, Nestorius had proved himself a heretic and he spent his time seeing that he was condemned. While his main purpose was theological, it also raised the prestige of Alexandria to have the patriarch of Constantinople accused of heresy.

Cyril's doctrine of Christ's person was sound and biblical. As was true of Athanasius before him, his Christological argument was fundamentally about salvation. In order to be the Savior, Christ had to be divine. Therefore he emphasized the divine in Christ. Cyril's great contribution was that he maintained a true personal union in Christ, with a real communication of attributes. Thus there is a divine Savior and not merely a good man in whom God -- dwelled only in a greater degree than the prophets. The latter was the direction followed by the Antiochians.

The Council of Chalcedon in 451

The one weakness in Cyril's writing was that he did not carefully distinguish between the terms "nature" and "person" when he wrote about Christ. Christ had two natures, the human and the divine, but He was still one person. Cyril was improperly read by some of his followers to be teaching only one nature in Christ, in which the divine had swallowed up the human. Those who held to this view were eventually referred to as Monophysites from the Greek meaning "one nature." This view also endangered salvation, for Christ had to be fully divine and human to be the Savior.

The decisions of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, known as the Fourth Ecumenical or Universal Council, clarified the imprecise terminology of Cyril. The terms "nature" and "person" should not be used synonymously. The fathers at Chalcedon made use of a statement on the person of Christ known as Leo's Tome, because it was written by Leo the bishop of Rome, the same Leo who in 452 single handedly persuaded Attila the Hun not to sack Rome. They declared, "We confess one and the same Jesus Christ, the Son and Lord only-begotten, in two natures without mixture without change (against the one-nature doctrine), without division without separation (against Nestorius)."¹⁸

Monophysitism, like Nestorianism, did not die out when it was condemned. A large section of the native church in Syria and almost the whole native church in Egypt, known as the Coptic Church, used Monophysitism as a means of expressing their nationalistic revolt against the Empire. The Coptic and Ethiopian churches are still Monophysite today.

III. THE EASTERN CHURCH

A. Non-Chalcedonian Churches

¹⁸ The Creed of Chalcedon (451): Following, then, the holy fathers, we all with one voice teach that it should be confessed that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same consisting of a rational soul and body; consubstantial [homoousios] with the Father as to his Godhead, and the same consubstantial [homoousios] with us as to his manhood; in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of the Father before the ages as to his Godhead, and in the last days, the same [born], for us and for our salvation, of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God [Theotokos], as to his manhood. One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, made known in two natures which exist without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the difference of the natures having been in no wise taken away by reason of the union, but rather the properties of each being preserved, and both concurring into one Person [prosopon] and one Hypostasis-not parted or divided into two Persons [prosopa], but one and the same Son, only-begotten, the divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from of old have spoken concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us and the Creed of our Fathers has handed down.

The term “Non-Chalcedonian” is used to distinguish those churches which did not accept Chalcedon as opposed to the Orthodox which did. The first of these was the historic church of Persia. Christianity came early to Persia, or Parthia, because Christians had freedom of religion here while they were still persecuted in the Roman Empire. After this church was influenced by Nestorianism its bishop, the Catholicos of the East, sent missionaries to India, Ceylon, and eastern Asia. By the seventh century they reached northwest China. Before the Mongolian invasions of the fourteenth century this church had spread throughout Asia with thousands of converts in China and India. Today it is only a remnant of its former size with members in Iraq, Iran, India, and the United States.¹⁹

The Roman Empire was not the first state to become Christian. Christianity may have penetrated Armenia, a country east of the Black Sea, as early as the first century. Its real apostle, however, was Gregory the Illuminator. By 305 Christianity was the official religion of Armenia. Caught between Byzantine and Persian Empires, Armenia preferred a form of Christianity unacceptable to both and became Monophysite. This church has continued to the present with congregations in many of the larger cities of this country.

The Monophysite doctrine spread through Syria but it gained its greatest number of adherents in Egypt and Ethiopia. There are at least three million Coptic Christians (10% of the Egyptian population) in Egypt today and about 100,000 in the USA. Their Pope Shenouda III lives in Cairo. They have recently been oppressed by the government.²⁰ Christianity was brought to Ethiopia very early. (Acts 8:27) The church survived and grew in spite of Islam. The leader of the church was always consecrated by the Coptic pope of Egypt until the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I (1922-1966) when the Ethiopian patriarchate in Addis Ababa was established.

B. The Orthodox Church

The best of the Christian emperors was Justinian I, who came to the throne in 527. He set out to restore the glory of the Empire and recaptured Italy and North Africa from the barbarians. Justinian made an enormous contribution to architecture, building churches all over the empire, the most famous of which is St. Sophia in Constantinople (Hagia Sophia). At the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553, called by Justinian, the Cyrillian Christology of Chalcedon was again reaffirmed.

After Justinian, the parts of the Roman Empire recovered in the West were lost again, and much of the East was lost, too, because of another inroad which came from Arabia. The sign of the new invaders was the crescent moon, and their cry was, “There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet.” These Moslem conquerors wiped away Christianity in most of Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Iran by 700. John of Damascus (675-749), one of the most gifted systematic theologians that the East produced, lived under Islam. His grandfather and father were officials of the caliph in Damascus. His most important work, *The Fount of Knowledge*, is a summary of the teaching of the Eastern Church.

C. The Great Schism in 1054

The relationship between the Latin church in the West and the Greek church in the East grew more tense as time went on. There were the obvious language differences which brought confusion. Then there was the *Filioque* conflict. In the West the *Filioque* (and the Son) clause was used in the third article of the Nicene Creed which reads, “the Holy Ghost . . . proceeds from the Father and the Son.” The East objected to the use of the *Filioque* in the Creed. In addition to this, there were minor differences in customs such as the use of leavened or unleavened bread in the Lord’s Supper. Yet the major cause for conflict was the ever-increasing pretensions of the bishop, or pope, at Rome. He was demanding more and more power and authority over the entire church, and the Greeks could remember when the pope made no such claims.

¹⁹ A.C. Piepkorn, *Profiles in Belief*, Vol. I, (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 4-10.

²⁰ A.C. Piepkorn, *Profiles in Belief*, Vol. I, pp. 13-25.

The antagonism continued and emotions flared. The Westerners dared to use unleavened bread in Constantinople! “Dry mud” the Easterners called it, and so the conflict wore on. Finally in 1054 the papal legates headed by Cardinal Humbert placed an excommunication of the Patriarch on the altar of St. Sophia. This breach has proved to be final and is known as the Great Schism. The last serious attempt to close the breach was the Council of Ferrara and Florence in 1439; but this was promptly repudiated in the East, and in 1453 Constantinople fell at last to the Turks, its inhabitants still cursing Reunion and all who upheld it.

D. Orthodox Mission Expansion

After much of the Orthodox Church was lost to the Moslems, doors were opened in the north. As early as the fourth century missionaries from Constantinople were penetrating the Balkans and working among the Slavic peoples. Great missionaries in the Balkans were Cyril (827-869) and Methodius (826-885). They translated the Gospels and service books into Slavonic, inventing an alphabet for the purpose. Their mission began in 863 and met with great success. In the East they began the pattern of worship in the native language in contradistinction to the West, where Latin was the liturgical language.

The greatest Orthodox mission expansion took place in Ukraine and Russia. This is the origin of the Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox Churches. We do not know when Christianity first penetrated Russia, but the first important step in establishing the church there was the Baptism of the Empress Olga during a visit to Constantinople in 956. Her son remained a pagan, but his son, Vladimir of Kiev (956-1015), was baptized in 988 and forced his people to accept Christianity. According to legend Vladimir sent envoys to various cultural centers to find the religion best suited to his infant nation. Vladimir’s delegates were duly impressed with Islam and with Rome, but it was Constantinople that won their hearts. Such was the solemn splendor of the divine liturgy there that the visiting Russians found themselves wondering whether they were in heaven or on earth!

After the Mongolian invasions and the fall of Constantinople in 1453, when the center of power moved from Kiev to Moscow, the czar married the daughter of the last Byzantine emperor and believed that Russia was now the spiritual descendent of the Byzantine Empire. It was said that Moscow was the third Rome which would stand forever. This myth inspired the Russian Empire. The Orthodox Church endured the persecution of Moslem, Turk, Czarist, and Stalinist, and yet it has survived to the present and continues to thrive.

IV. THE WESTERN CHURCH

A. Augustine - Father of the Latin Church

At the Easter Vigil in 387 Augustine was baptized by Ambrose of Milan. He did not come to that moment easily. Most of his years to that point had been a struggle between belief and unbelief. But, finally he was graciously gripped by the arms of the crucified and risen Christ. Of this struggle he wrote, “You stimulate him (man) to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they can find peace in you.”²¹ His whole life from then on - as well as the life of the whole Western church - was influenced by the splashing baptismal water of that moment.

Augustine was born to a Christian mother Monica and a pagan father in 354 at Tagaste, a small town in modern day Algeria, while the conflict over the Trinity was raging in the East. The main source for our knowledge of his youth and his conversion is his Confessions, a spiritual autobiography in which he shows how God guided his life in spite of his rebellion and unbelief. Influenced by his Christian mother, young Augustine was enrolled as a candidate for baptism, but he went no further. His spiritual journey through immorality, philosophy, and heresy finally led to the font in 387. His soul was never a rest until he rested in the Lord. He was ordained in 391 and became bishop of Hippo shortly thereafter. He faced a struggle with a puritan sect in Africa, the Donatists, who denied the validity of the Sacraments in the official church because they believed this

²¹ Augustine, *Confessions* I, 1, trans., Tex Warner, *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (New York, 1963), p. 17.

church was impure. In reaction Augustine emphasized that the validity of the Sacraments does not depend on the character or faith of the individual performing the Sacrament. If the proper form is used in accord with Christ's Word and institution, the Sacraments are valid even when administered by immoral priests and heretics. He explained that it is the Word of God that makes a Sacrament, a point vitally important to a biblical understanding of the Sacraments.

Today Augustine is perhaps best remembered for his part in the controversy with a Celtic ascetic by the name of Pelagius. Jerome described Pelagius as a Scotsman dulled by eating too much Scottish porridge. In 405 while at Rome Pelagius first came into contact with Augustine's theology and reacted violently against it. He could not accept the teaching that the salvation of man was dependent entirely on the grace of God - a view which left no room for human efforts and participation. For Augustine the teaching of Pelagius contradicted both Scripture and his own religious experience. He knew that by nature he was totally dead in original sin and that he could do nothing to save himself. Salvation was by the grace of God. This bright light of grace which Augustine defended would be darkened during the Middle Ages. But it would again be ignited in even greater brilliance in the Lutheran Reformation.

In 396 Augustine became the Bishop of Hippo. For the rest of his life he served as a faithful shepherd to his flock, writing a voluminous amount of material on virtually every theological topic. He died on August 28, 430, at the age of 76 as the city of Hippo was being seized by the Vandals. Within a few short years it seemed that all Augustine's efforts had come to nothing. The barbarian tribes swept across North Africa leaving a path of destruction. Islam followed shortly thereafter, making Augustine's homeland Muslim as it remains to this day. Pelagianism arose in a new form, Semi-Pelagianism. Yet, Augustine's great writings have remained a powerful lasting influence in the church.

B. The Barbarian Invasions

Soon after 400, tribes of barbarians began to invade the western part of the Roman Empire. They spread over Gaul, Spain, Italy, and North Africa destroying everything in their path. By 476 the last of the western emperors was dethroned. In the western half of the Empire barbarian kingdoms were established which slowly assimilated the remaining classical culture of the Romans.

As the Western Empire was falling apart people naturally looked to the church at Rome and its bishops for support because it was the strongest institution in the West. Men such as Leo the Great, who prevented the destruction of Rome by the Huns in 452, certainly added to the prestige of the papacy.

The Rise of the Papacy

The pope at Rome began to grow in power and prestige for a variety of different reasons, not the least of which was the barbarian invasions referred to above. The general outline of the papacy is to be seen in Gregory the Great (590-604). Gregory was an excellent administrator and worked hard to improve a ravaged Italy. By sending Augustine of Canterbury he helped in the re-conversion of England. As a result of his interest in liturgical music, the Gregorian chant was named after him.

Gregory was a voluminous writer. His thought was Augustinian, but crudely so, and he was the filter through which the Latin Church read Augustine. What a pity that he did not better understand Augustine's doctrine of grace. In his writing we see a development of the doctrine of purgatory, the sacrifice of the mass, the veneration of Mary and the saints, and other work-righteous teachings which plagued the church until the Reformation. Here we see the formulation of the basic errors of the papacy. He is in many ways the first pope of Rome.

The Rise of Monasticism

Gregory the Great encouraged monasticism. But he was not the founder of monasticism and not the first to encourage it. Tradition says that one of the earliest monks was Anthony from the desert in Egypt (250-356) who was a supporter of Athanasius. Benedict was the father of monasticism in the West with his main monastery at Monte Cassino in Italy established in 520. Monasticism was certainly a benefit in Western Europe. It was in the monasteries that classical knowledge and learning was saved during the barbarian invasions. Also from the monasteries the Gospel was brought to Northern Europe and to Slavic Eastern Europe. Yet the monastery was also fraught with danger. The idea could and did arise that one could help in his own salvation by enduring the rigors of monastic life.

C. Christian Missions in the West

Ever since Pentecost Christians had been spreading the good news of forgiveness and salvation, sometimes slowly, sometimes more rapidly. By the fourth century Christianity had reached the northern frontiers of the Empire. There were Christian communities all along the southern shore of the Rhine and the Danube Rivers. In 304 a young woman named Afra was martyred in Augusta Vindelicorum, known today as Augsburg, Germany; this incident indicates that there was an organized Christian community there. Ulfilas (310-383) was an early missionary to the barbarian West Goths. He provided them a written language and a translation of the Scripture, but he was infected by the Arian heresy. Before the time of Constantine there were already many Christians in Britain. An early martyr was Alban, who exchanged clothing with a pastor to hide him from his persecutors, and as a result Alban died in his place. It seems that bishops came all the way from Britain to the Council of Nicaea.

Martin of Tours and Celtic Christianity

Christian congregations were first formed among the Greek- and Latin-speaking city dwellers in the West. Only gradually did the Gospel reach the native population. Martin of Tours (316-397) is remembered for his efforts in reaching the rural pagan countryside of Gaul or France. He evangelized the rural Celts, the predominant ethnic group in Western Europe before the barbarian invasions, and thus he is the father of Celtic Christianity. In 336 he met Athanasius when he was exiled in Trier and was strongly influenced by him. Innumerable churches were named after Martin, and he was a favorite subject with artists. They usually represented him on horseback, dividing his cloak to give half to a beggar who, according to the legend, was afterwards revealed to him in a vision as no other than Christ Himself.

A young man raised in the tradition of Martin of Tours in a Celtic church on the west coast of Britain continued the cause of Celtic missions. His name was Patrick (389-461). After the Romans withdrew from Britain, Irish pirates on one of their raids took sixteen-year-old Patrick as a slave. During this time he became a sincere Christian. When he escaped he went to France where he was again influenced by Martinian spirituality and was determined to preach the Gospel in the land of his former captors. He spent the rest of his life preaching to the Irish and by the time of his death much of Ireland was Christian.

According to legend Patrick used the three-leafed clover to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity in the following manner. As he preached throughout the Emerald Isle, he incurred the wrath of one heathen Irish chieftain by declaring the great truth of Scripture that the true God was three and yet one. The chieftain took his war club and rushed at the witness of Christ. When Patrick stooped to avoid the blow, he spied a cloverleaf in the grass beneath him. Quickly he plucked the leaf and held it before the eyes of the angry Irish man. The chief saw the force of the silent argument and the missionary was saved. The three-leafed clover-three lobes and still one leaf-carried the conviction to his heart that there were indeed three persons in the Godhead and yet only one God.

The Re-Christianization of Britain and Western Europe

The barbarian invasion brought destruction to much of Christianity and civilization in Western Europe. One of the places that was spared was Patrick's Ireland. Ireland soon became a center for learning and Christian missions. In Britain Christianity remained only in the western-most reaches of the land and here in a greatly weakened state. Irish monks helped to revitalize this church. Columba (521-597) set out for Scotland in 563 with twelve companions. They landed on the island of Iona, off the west coast. Here they established a monastery which was to be the cradle of Scottish Christianity. From here Christianity spread throughout Scotland and northern England. Aidan, a monk from Iona, established a monastery and mission house which became known as the Holy Isle of Lindisfarne on the northeast coast of Britain near the Scotland border. It became the source of missionaries to northern England and Europe. This great Celtic Church was virtually independent and fairly biblical in orientation until it succumbed to Roman custom and papal authority at the Council of Whitby in 664. Here the Celts accepted the headship of the Roman mission founded by Augustine of Canterbury in 597.

The Celtic monks did not stop in Britain. Land that had once been Christian under the Roman Empire but was now in the hands of pagan barbarians was ripe unto the harvest. From the sixth to the ninth centuries, Celtic-inspired missions stretched throughout Europe from Paris, Deventer, Bobbin, to Salzburg and Erfurt. Europe awoke to the Irish men aflame with the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. The forces of paganism wilted before the power of God's life-giving Word. The greatest of these Irish missionaries on the continent was Columbanus (543-615). He and his student companions spent many years as missionaries to Burgundy, Switzerland, and northern Italy. In 610 he founded a strong mission center at Bobbio in northern Italy which cast its shadow on Rome itself. Notice it was Celtic, not Roman, missionaries who brought Christianity back to Western Europe. What an example these Irish missionaries are to our congregations who stand as Christian outposts in a world gone pagan! Yet slowly these Celtic missionaries came under the sway of papal supremacy.

Christian Missions in the North

After the English were converted, an Englishman named Winfrid (675-755), better known as Boniface, was sent as a missionary to the Germans. In the area of Geismar of Hesse one German tribe had a great oak tree which was sacred to their god Thor. They believed Thor would strike anyone dead who touched the tree. Boniface took an ax and cut it down. He was not struck dead. The missionary then split the tree into planks and built a church for the Lord. In 744 he founded the famous monastery at Fulda which was for centuries the principal school of the Benedictine Order. In his old age instead of seeking rest, Boniface turned his face toward another mission field, to Friesland, where in his seventy-fifth year he met the death of a martyr at the hands of the heathen.

In 1124 Bishop Otto von Bamberg, the Apostle of Pomerania, traveled to Stettin on the Baltic Sea to convert the obstinate Pomeranians to Christianity. However, the heathen faith in "Swantewit" and other idols kept flickering up, and many a converted Christian had to pay for his faithfulness to Christianity with his life. The Prussians were finally converted in 1228 with the establishment of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia. From there Christianity was brought to the Baltic States.

Ansgar (801-865), the Apostle of the North, was born at Corbie in Picardy. After having been trained as a monk, he was called to bring the Gospel to the Danes in 826, but had little success. Later, when the emperor Louis the Pious of France sent an embassy to Sweden, Ansgar was one of those who went for the purpose of doing mission work. He was well received by the Swedish king Bjorn and received permission to proceed with his efforts. His mission had great success. Even one of the king's chiefs, Herigar, received Baptism and built in Birka the first Christian church in the North. After 848 he had greater success in Denmark than earlier. He was made archbishop of Hamburg and given charge of the church's work in all of Scandinavia. From Sweden the Gospel slowly penetrated Finland.

The first knowledge of Christianity in Norway came from Christian slaves brought back on Viking raiding expeditions. A young Norwegian man by the name of Olaf Tryggveson (969-1000) was the heir to the throne of Norway. He spent his youth in Viking raids and expeditions abroad. On one of these raids in England

he was confirmed and baptized by the bishop of Winchester. When he returned home to the Trondheim area and became king in 995 he tried to convert the land at times by force. The actual conversion of the Norwegians to the faith of Christianity was accomplished by another man, Olaf Haroldson. This man is remembered as St. Olaf because during his reign as king, from 1015-1030, priests were brought from England to teach the people. He also saw to it that Christian churches were built throughout his realm. Many of the “stave” churches date from this time. In 1397 the Union of Kalmar united the Christian lands of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark under one king. Norway remained united with Denmark until 1814, while Sweden won its independence by 1523.

Norse migration to Iceland began around 860. Celtic monks probably reached the island before this. When King Olaf Trygvason of Norway became a Christian he also brought Christianity to Iceland which was virtually a colony of Norway at this time. In Greenland there were Christians from the time of Leif Erikson in 984. The population varied from 3,000-10,000. In 1124 a bishop was appointed and a cathedral built. When trade with Scandinavia declined in the high Middle Ages these people vanished.

D. Popes and Emperors

An important event occurred on Christmas Day in 800. Charlemagne, the grandson of Charles the Hammer who stopped the advancing Moslems at the Battle of Tours in 732, was worshipping at St. Peter’s Church in Rome. As he was kneeling in prayer, Pope Leo III crept up from behind and placed a crown on his head, hailing him the emperor in the West equal to the Eastern emperor. If any deserved the title it was Charlemagne for he amassed a great kingdom covering much of Germany, France, the Lowlands, and Spain. This crowning established the Holy Roman Empire which was to dominate European policies throughout the Middle Ages and survived until Napoleon discontinued it a thousand years later in 1814. From the time of Charlemagne to Charles V, before whom Luther stood at Worms, a period of 700 years, the political story of Europe was a continual duel between pope and emperor, both of whom claimed supremacy. There were continual ups and downs in this struggle for domination. A high point for the state occurred in 962 when Otto the Great was given the right to approve the election of popes.

In 1076 the controversy between pope and emperor came to a head. Hildebrand, who took the name Gregory VII when he became pope, was part of the Cluny reform movement. This movement sought to develop piety among the lay people and raised the standard of the parish clergy. As part of the reform program Gregory VII worked to enforce clerical celibacy, which at that time was by no means universally observed in the Western Church, and above all to be rid of secular interference in the election of bishops and other church leaders. This immediately involved him in the perennial strife between pope and emperor. He excommunicated Emperor Henry IV and placed the land under interdict. Henry IV was ultimately forced to do penance before Gregory at Canossa. Barefoot in the snow at the gate of the pope’s mansion, he begged for forgiveness for three days. Later Henry retaliated by setting up an anti-pope.

The claims of the papacy reached their high point in the person of Boniface VIII (1294-1303), who declared in the bull *Unam Sanctam* “that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that all human creatures be under the Roman pontiff.”²² From these heights there was a great fall. Seven years after the *Unam Sanctam* the reigning pope was forced to flee to France, where for 69 years at Avignon the papacy was really an appendage to the French monarchy. This is sometimes referred to as the Babylonian Captivity of the papacy. When the pope returned to Rome, there were more troubles. For a while there were two popes, with Christendom divided. The Council of Pisa (1409) vainly tried to displace the two popes by a third, but the result was three popes. Not until the Council of Constance (1414-1418) was the breach healed and there was again one Roman pope.

A notable event in the history of the empire was the issuing of the Gold Bull in 1356: It established the practice of seven electors choosing the emperor: the archbishops of Mainz, Cologne, and Trier; the king of Bohemia; the count of the Palatinate on the Rhine; the duke of Saxony; and the margrave of Brandenburg. From

²² Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 311.

1437 the emperors were continually from the Habsburg line. As a result it was a Habsburg chosen by the seven electors before whom Luther stood at Worms.

While the emperor and pope were struggling for the domination of the West, new developments occurred in the land of Christianity's birth. When Jerusalem was captured by the Moslems in 638, Christians were still allowed to make pilgrimages to the holy places in Palestine. However, with the conquest of Palestine by the Turks in 1071, the pilgrimages were forbidden and the holy places desecrated. Those who did try to visit the sacred places were subject to torture and death. In order to regain the holy places for Christianity the church preached the crusades. Thousands from every class in society went to fight in the East. They were able to regain parts of Palestine for a time. But after seven crusades and thousands lost to war, the holy places remained in the hands of the infidels.

The greatest churchman of the time was not a pope but one who was called the "pope maker" because at least five occupants of the papal throne received their position because of his influence. This man was Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). He was a great preacher and became known as "Doctor Mellifluous," for words flowed from his mouth like honey. He was the motivation behind the Second Crusade. Many hymns were written by him -- among them "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded."²³ His theology centered on Christ's passion and death for our salvation. Christ crucified was the sum of his philosophy.²⁴ This emphasis on the cross of Christ for our salvation caused Luther to write concerning him, "I regard Bernard as the most pious of all monks and prefer him to all the others. . .He is the only one worthy of the name 'Father,' and of being studied diligently."²⁵ At the same time his devotion to Mary gave impetus to the cult of the blessed virgin which was to plague the age.

E. Cries for Reform

Throughout the Middle Ages one can observe a "monastic cycle." The spiritual life of the church was at a low ebb, the priests drunken and illiteracy, the people wanton and lecherous. A monastic order was founded to reform faith and morals and there was a spiritual revival for a time. But then the order lost its fervor and there was a general decline until the next monastic renewal. This cycle is to be seen throughout the age. The Cluny reform movement had long since arisen and fallen when a new type of order was established.

The Franciscans and the Dominicans

These new orders were called the mendicant or begging orders from the Latin, *mendicus*, meaning "beggar." They were also known as friars or brothers. They differed from the older religious orders chiefly in the fact that their particular work took precedence over their liturgical duties. Whereas the earlier monastic orders existed chiefly for the worship of God, the friars' principal duty was to the church. The two great orders of friars were the Dominicans and the Franciscans, and each had its special work. In both cases this work was the propagation of the Catholic faith; but the Dominicans were to specialize in theological study and formal preaching, while the Franciscans, living in extreme poverty, were to devote themselves to the evangelization of the poor and ignorant. The Franciscans preached through their life-style.

The founder of the Franciscan Order was Francis of Assisi (1182-1226.) The son of a wealthy cloth merchant, he was converted after a wild youth and embraced a life of total poverty. As an itinerant preacher he attracted followers and in 1209 formed the order centered at Assisi. His simple faith, humility, and love of nature made him a popular figure. The first Christmas tableau is ascribed to him. He is often pictured today preaching in a forested area surrounded by birds and animals. The real organizer of the order was its second leader Bonaventura. The Franciscans generally followed the Augustinian tradition. Other outstanding thinkers in this order were Duns Scotus and William of Ockham (1280-1349). Ockham through the writing of Gabriel

²³ ELH, #334.

²⁴ *Haec mea philosophia scire Jesum Christum et hunc crucifixum.* Serm., XLIII.4; Migne, p. 995

²⁵ LW 22:38.

Biel greatly influenced Martin Luther. Ockham asserted that (1) the pope is not infallible; (2) that the general council and not the pope is the highest authority in the church; (3) that Holy Scripture is the only infallible source in matters of faith and conduct; (4) that in all secular matters the church and the pope are subordinate to the state.

The founder of the Dominican Order was Domingo or Dominic de Guzman (1170-1221) of a respected family in Castile. This preaching order was established in 1214. The teachers of this order became supporters of Aristotelian philosophy in contrast to the Franciscans who held to Augustinian Neo-Platonism. Among the great scholars of this order were Albert the Great and his student Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) whom Albert referred to as the bellowing shy one. As a student Thomas was mocked because of his size and quiet nature. "You call him a dumb ox," said Albert the Great, "I tell you that the dumb ox will bellow so loud that his bellowing will fill the world." And so it was. Thomas is the climax of scholasticism and the greatest medieval theologian. His first great work was the *Summa contra Gentiles*, intended as a textbook for missionaries and defending natural theology. His *magnum opus* is the *Summa Theologica*, the supreme medieval theological system. In Thomas many of the false teachings of Rome were presented. Yet in 1656 John Dorsch, a Lutheran dogmatician, wrote a book in which he tried to show that Thomas Aquinas could be made to support Lutheran doctrine more than Roman Catholic.²⁶ His *Summa* was the model for all future dogmatics. For example, there is a close connection between the structure and form of his *Summa* and Gerhard's *Loci Theologici*.

The Decay of the Church

The papacy emerged from the period of the councils with all its claims intact. Rather than seizing the opportunity for spiritual reform in the church, the popes were determined to strengthen their political position in Italy. These papal activities demanded money. Money was obtained in any way possible: simony -- this was the sale of church offices, the selling of pardons and dispensations, and the sale of indulgences. The sale of masses and other sacraments was encouraged. With such leadership in Rome, clerical life sunk to a new ebb. The higher clergy were for the most part unscrupulous adventurers interested only in political power and luxurious living. The parish priests were buried in ignorance. Many were flagrantly unfaithful to their vows of celibacy, openly living with their mistresses and children.

In this period the veneration of the saints became increasing popular. Jesus was viewed more as a righteous judge than as the loving Savior. Thus people looked to the saints and especially to His mother as a way to warm His heart. They began to pray to Mary and the other saints, asking them to speak to Jesus in their behalf. This is clearly contrary to the Word which indicates that "there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." (I Timothy 2:5) All worship and prayer is to be directed to the deity. (Matthew 4:10)

The entire sacramental system of the church was turned upside down. According to Scripture the Word and the Sacraments are the means through which Christ's full and complete forgiveness is brought to the individual. But the Medieval Church turned the Sacraments into a vehicle by which the individual is infused with grace and power so that he can help in his own salvation. In penance an individual made confession of his sins to the priest. If he were truly sorry, he could receive absolution or forgiveness. As evidence of his repentance, certain penalties or penances were imposed: a pilgrimage, fasting, or some other service. Long before the Reformation a system of substituting money for these penalties had developed. These pardons were called indulgences and were to lessen the church's punishment for sin in this life and in purgatory. Most people, however, felt that they were actually purchasing God's forgiveness as well.

The greatest problem in the church was the question of salvation. While Semi-Pelagianism was condemned at the Synod of Orange in 529, in the medieval church there was a steady inclination in that direction. Thus later scholastics such as Biel were plainly Semi-Pelagianists and thus work righteous. With this view one was not saved by grace alone but rather had to help in his own salvation.

²⁶ Robert Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, Vol. I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), p. 36.

The Forerunners of the Reformation

There were many attempts at Reformation. Each monastic revival was aimed at reform of the church. There was Peter Waldo, a prosperous merchant of Lyons in France (d. 1177), who taught that the church must return to the simple teaching of Scripture. His followers, the Waldenses were persecuted but survived in the remote valley of the Alps. Later there was Savonarola in Italy. Probably the most important of these pre-reformers were John Wyclif and John Hus. However, they thought mainly in terms of moral reformation and not theological changes. This would be the problem with most of the pre-reformation movements.

John Wyclif (1320-1384) was an Englishman who studied at Oxford and was influenced by the writings of Augustine. He led a reform movement which spread throughout England and to the continent. He believed that Scripture was the only source of doctrine. His teaching was violently anti-papal and he spoke of the pope as the Antichrist. He founded a society of “poor preachers” who traveled the countryside denouncing the abuses of the church and preaching against the sale of indulgences and the doctrine of Transubstantiation. His many followers were known as the Lollards, who after his death were subjected to heavy persecution. The first statute, which ordered burning as the secular punishment for heresy in England, was aimed especially at the Lollards. Wyclif’s teaching was the fiery false dawn of the Reformation. The same may be said of John Hus (1369-1415), a professor at the university of Prague, who was a follower of Wyclif. He became the head of a reform movement in Bohemia. He was a powerful preacher occupying the most influential pulpit in Prague where he expounded the teachings of Wyclif and began preaching reform. The pope condemned him and the emperor persuaded him to attend the Council of Constance under promise that he could return to Prague in safety. But he was condemned as a heretic at the Council of Constance and was burned at the stake in 1415. It is said Hus wrote from his prison cell, “Today, you are burning a goose (for Hus in Czech means goose); however, a hundred years from now, you will be able to hear a swan sing, he will not burn, you will have to listen to him.” The swan was Luther.

V. THE CHURCH IN THE REFORMATION ERA

A. The Lutheran Reformation

The year 1521 was momentous. The Conquistador Hernando Cortez was subduing the Aztec Empire of Mexico and making it part of the Spanish domain. He was followed by Spanish missionaries who brought the Indians into the arms of the mother church. The countries of Europe were beginning an age of expansion that would bring the entire world under Western domination. Yet in the spiritual realm a far greater event was occurring at Worms south of Frankfurt in Germany. On April 18, 1521, an Augustinian monk stood before the church leaders and the Habsburg Charles V who was ruler of much of Western Europe and the Americas. When he was asked to take back or recant everything that he had written, he boldly responded with his “Here I stand” confession which changed the course of Western civilization far more than the discovery of the Americas.

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me! Amen.²⁷

Martin Luther the Instrument of God

²⁷ Walther von Loewenich, *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), p. 195.

Martin Luther was born in the town of Eisleben, Germany, on November 10, 1483, nine years before Columbus discovered America. The next day, the Feast of Martin of Tours, he was baptized. His parents, Hans and Margarethe, were devout German peasants. It soon became apparent that young Martin had exceptional gifts. After his elementary training, he entered the University of Erfurt, Germany, where he excelled in studies of classical literature and philosophy planning for a career in law. But his plans ended abruptly. When he reached the age of 22, a thunderstorm and the death of a friend led Luther to make a vow to enter the quiet life of the monastery. Luther entered the Augustinian Monastery in Erfurt in 1505. There he engaged in further studies and was ordained a priest in 1507. The religion lessons learned at home and in the church led Luther to believe that he had to do certain things in order to pacify an angry God and help in his own salvation. This dread of an angry God drove him in the monastery. He prayed, slaved, fasted, and studied until he wasted away to little more than skin and bones, and yet he felt no peace with God. The more he did the more he knew it would not be enough to make God love him.

After Luther accepted a call to Wittenberg as a professor of Sacred Scripture at the university, the whole question concerning how one is to be saved came to a head. As a reaction to the sale of indulgences, Luther placed the 95 theses on the Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, which is considered by many the birthday of the Lutheran Church. As Luther taught and studied he became more and more uneasy with the Medieval Church's answer to the question of how one is saved. Probably in 1518 his Gospel breakthrough, sometimes described as the "tower experience,"²⁸ occurred. As he studied Romans 1:16-17, 3:19-28 and other sections of Scripture, Luther came to understand that we are justified or declared righteous before God not by any good within us but alone on the basis of Christ's redemptive work which is ours by trusting in the Savior. We are not saved by anything we do or accomplish as the Medieval Church taught but by faith alone in the Savior. When Luther understood this central article of the faith that we are justified by faith alone without the deeds of the law, he felt himself reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas the "justice of God" had previously filled him with fear, now it became to him inexpressibly sweet. This passage of Paul (Romans 1:16-17) became for him a gate to heaven.²⁹ It was this central article of the faith that Luther boldly defended at Worms. This is the clear teaching of Scripture and the whole Ancient Church.

After Worms and his subsequent seclusion in the Wartburg he continued the work of the Reformation. By 1522 his New Testament translation of the Bible was completed and the Old Testament in 1534. Luther wanted the Word to be the daily nourishment for the people and therefore produced a translation readable for the common people. His *Small* and *Large Catechisms* were completed in 1529. One of Luther's most profound books, *On the Bondage of the Will* had been written already in 1525 in reaction to the writings of Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469-1536). Here Luther pointed out that sinful man had no free will in spiritual things. He was spiritually dead in transgression and sin.

Emperor Charles V had not been in his German lands since 1521 because of political difficulties elsewhere. Now he needed the support of all the German princes, including the Lutherans, to drive back the Turks who were at the gates of Vienna. In 1530 he called the Diet of Augsburg, hoping to bring unity between Lutherans and Catholics so that they would be ready to meet the Turks. Because Luther had been outlawed he could not attend the diet. He had to remain at Feste Coburg where he was safe in the Saxon lands of Elector Frederick the Wise. In his place was his young and brilliant co-worker, Philip Melancthon (1497-1560). He was small of stature but great in knowledge. He probably helped Luther in the work of the Reformation more than any other individual. Yet after Luther's death he did irreparable damage to the Lutheran cause by his vacillation in doctrine. At Augsburg we see Melancthon at his finest. Using several other Lutheran statements and with considerable input from Luther, he summarized the faith of Luther and his followers in a statement which has become known as the *Augsburg Confession*, the basic confession of the Lutheran Church. It was read

²⁸ LW 54:193.

²⁹ LW 34:337.

for the diet at 3:00 p.m., Saturday, June 25, 1530. Shortly thereafter he wrote the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*.

Luther was also concerned about the worship life of God's people. His reform of the liturgy was conservative in nature. He disregarded only those things which were contrary to God's Word. He absolutely rejected the idea that the mass was a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead and he restored preaching to a central position in the service. The liturgy was first and foremost God's service to us in Word and Sacrament and secondarily our service of praise and thanksgiving to Him. Luther's first liturgical revision was the *Formula Missae*, his Latin mass, which is similar to Rite Two in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*. Luther's second liturgical revision was the *Deutsche Messe*, the German mass. This is similar to Rite One in the *Hymnary*.

Luther continued to be very busy. He had the responsibility of father and husband. In 1525 he had married Katherine von Bora and their marriage was blessed with six children. Luther and Katie's family life was a wonderful example of the Christian home and parsonage. In 1537 Luther wrote the *Smalcald Articles* in preparation for a church council which did not occur, but the articles are counted among the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church. Luther continued to lead the Reformation. He taught classes at the university; he preached regularly; he produced hymns, articles, letters and books -- so many that his writings fill more than fifty volumes in English. He died on February 18, 1546, at the age of 62, in Eisleben, where he had been born -- one of the greatest teachers of the church.

The Growth of Lutheranism

Luther's Reformation was born in the province of Saxony and Luther himself rarely traveled outside the confines of the former East Germany. Yet the Word he proclaimed spread in every direction. Albert Hohenzollern, the grand master of the Teutonic Knights, received the Lutheran faith in 1522 and with him all of East Prussia. German was used in worship in Königsberg before it was introduced in Wittenberg. Visitation took place as early as 1525. In fact East Prussia was the first evangelical province of Germany. Hannover joined the Lutheran cause in 1533 and Schleiswig in 1534. An important addition to Lutheranism came in 1534 when the province of Württemberg was won. Luther's great co-worker Johann Brenz helped organize the church in the southwestern German province.

Another of Luther's close associates, Johann Bugenhagen (1485-1558), organized Lutheranism in most of northern Germany. He was the pastor of the city church in Wittenberg and Luther's spiritual advisor. He translated the Bible into Low German (*Plattdeutsch*) the language of most northern Germans. In 1525 Bugenhagen was asked to come to Danzig and help reform the church there. From that time on he was considered the foremost organizer of the Lutheran Church. He established the church polity of the Lutheran Church in Hamburg, Lübeck, Braunschweig, Lower Saxony, and Pomerania. When Christian III desired to reform the churches of Denmark and Norway, he too called on Bugenhagen. Bugenhagen was absent from Wittenberg for nearly two years, during which time he reorganized the University of Copenhagen, crowned Christian III in the first Lutheran coronation, consecrated the bishops of Denmark and Norway, and established a new church order for the Scandinavian churches. This is the reason that the Norwegian-Danish Order of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod is often called the "Bugenhagen Order."

Lutheranism in Scandinavia and the Baltic States

In 1536, Christian III called a diet in Copenhagen which formally adopted the Evangelical Lutheran faith as the official religion of Denmark. The spiritual leader of the Danish Reformation was Hans Tausen (1494-1561). He was preaching the Lutheran doctrine in Viborg by 1525. In 1530 under the leadership of Tausen the Lutherans presented a statement of their faith at the Diet of Copenhagen in 43 articles known as the Copenhagen Confession, which coincided in time with the Augsburg Confession. This work of Tausen prepared the way for Bugenhagen.

Lutheranism came to Norway through Denmark, with which it was united since the Union of Kalmar in 1397. King Christian III, who was won for the Reformation while attending the Diet of Worms, established the Reformation officially at the Diet of Copenhagen in 1536. The full effects of the Reformation reached Norway the following year. Catholic bishops were deposed and Lutheran bishops gradually took their place. The first Lutheran bishop appointed to Norway was Geble Pedersson, who was ordained by Bugenhagen. Still the laity didn't really understand the Reformation. The pastors were poorly trained and both they and the laity suffered under the handicap of having only the Danish Bible, hymnbook, and liturgy. Norwegian translations were slow in coming. It was not until the reign of Christian IV (1577-1648) that the Lutheran church became the church of all parts of Norway. At this time Lutheranism took root in Norway through the work of Jørgen Eriksen, Bishop of Stavanger. Known as "Norway's Luther," he had great influence on the spiritual life of clergy and laity. He published excellent sermons, in particular a series of sermons on the book of Jonah which were used in the instruction of pastors. By the end of the century the Reformation was established and organized in Norway. Through Iceland's close connection with Norway Lutheranism reached also that land.

Olavus and Laurentius Petri were the church reformers in Sweden. Olavus (1493-1522) did more than any other teacher to establish Lutheran theology in Sweden. In his doctrinal, liturgical, polemical, and homiletical writings he gave Sweden a statement of faith which established the Swedish church as Lutheran for centuries. His brother Laurentius (1499-1573) preserved the episcopal form of church government and an order of worship which saved the best elements of the past for the new liturgy. The accomplishments of the Petri brothers were evident in the ability of the evangelical church in Sweden to defend itself against the Romanizing tendencies of John III and against the Counter Reformation during the reign of Sigismund, so that at Uppsala in 1593 the church declared itself Lutheran. From Sweden Lutheranism came to Finland, much of which was controlled by Sweden.

Lutheranism came to the Baltic States first in Riga. The city clerk Briesmann was an early reformer here. The Briesmann liturgy was translated into Lettish for the use of the pastors. The Livonia to which Luther wrote included Reval, the capital of Estonia, and Dorpat (Tartu). There was evangelical preaching in Reval very early, and in 1524 the city council named John Lange as evangelical pastor. The Reformation began among the German-speaking people and then reached the native populations. The Baltic Sea was gradually becoming a Lutheran lake.

B. The Swiss Reformation and the Reformed

Luther's motivating principle was the Bible principle -- all church teachings were to agree with Scripture. As a result his Reformation was moderate. Only those things were changed in the Medieval Church which disagreed with Bible teaching. With the help of the Spirit he returned the church to the biblical basis of the Ancient Church. Those in favor of reform were called Protestants. All these were influenced by Luther to a greater or lesser degree, but some of them had very definite ideas of their own.

Zwingli and the Swiss

The Reformation in Switzerland occurred about the same time as it did in Germany. Zwingli's (1484-1531) Reformation centered in the city of Zurich. He felt that Luther's Reformation was fine but it did not go far enough. His followers destroyed all statues and crucifixes of Christ in their churches because they thought that such things were idolatry. They threw out the organs because they were not commanded in Scripture.

The vital difference between Zurich and Wittenberg centered in the means of grace. Zwingli believed that the Holy Spirit worked directly, that He didn't use means. He sarcastically said that the Spirit does not need a wagon to come to us. Therefore he did not believe that the Word and Baptism give us the treasure of forgiveness and work faith in the heart to receive it. The Lord's Supper was not Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of sins but a mere memorial meal with bread and wine. These differences came to a head at the

Marburg Colloquy in 1529, which was called to bring Luther and Zwingli closer together. On the table before him Luther wrote in bold print “This is My Body” to remind himself he could never give up this clear Word of God for a statement like “this represents my body” or “this is my spiritual body.” Because Zwingli and the Reformed would not accept these words, the Marburg Colloquy was doomed to failure and Protestantism suffered division.

Calvin and Geneva

Martin Bucer of Strassburg and Calvin of Geneva (1509-1564) prided themselves in being the middle way between Zwingli and Luther, but their theology was basically Zwinglian in a more refined form. After Zwingli was killed in battle in 1531 while fighting for Protestantism in Switzerland, Calvin became the leader of the Reformed Protestants. Calvin was born in Noyon, France. In 1532 or 1533 he had a conversion experience and began to advocate reform. Soon forced to flee France, he moved to Basel. There in 1536 he published his *Institutes*. This was his most important work, which he continually revised throughout his life. When he was invited to Geneva his purpose was to make it a theocracy, that is, a community ruled by God. He set out to establish a city where people believed and acted as Christians. He laid down strict rules for all to follow. Dancing, playing cards, and theaters were forbidden. The people were required to attend church twice each Sunday, and those who failed to do so without good reason were disciplined. For Calvin the Bible was primarily a book of rules and regulations for the Christian life, while for Luther it was the power of God unto salvation. For Luther the center of theology was Christ and His cross for our salvation, while for Calvin it was the glory and majesty of God.

From disciplined and organized Geneva, Calvinism spread mainly westward.³⁰ Calvinism began to infiltrate Lutheran lands, especially in western Germany. The Palatinate opted for Calvinism, and from here came the famous handbook of Reformed doctrine, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, in 1563. Nowhere was Calvin’s influence felt more strongly than in his native France. Hundreds of missionaries were sent there from Geneva. The Huguenots, as Calvin’s French followers were named, were persecuted mercilessly. The slaughter reached its high point in the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, August 24, 1572. It is believed that as many as thirty thousand Protestants were slain by order of the French king and his mother Catherine de Medici. In Rome a *Te Deum* was sung. Peace came for the remaining Protestants in France with the Edict of Nantes in 1598. One of Calvin’s faithful disciples, John Knox (1505-1572), was the great reformer of Scotland. Here the church was organized under the administration of elders or “presbyters,” which Calvinists believed was the God-ordained form of church government. This Presbyterian Church in Scotland became the best expression of Calvin’s ideas outside of Geneva.

In the Netherlands many were influenced by Luther’s writings. In fact, the first two Lutheran martyrs went to the stake here in 1523. By 1550 the Lutherans were a minority in comparison to the Calvinists. The persecution that Protestants endured here under the rule of Philip II of Spain (1555-1598) was even more terrible than that in France. In 1581 the northern provinces broke away from Spanish rule and proclaimed Calvinism as the state religion in this Dutch republic. In Holland a division arose among the Reformed. Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) rejected Calvin’s view of double predestination, viz., that God chose some to be saved and some to be damned, together with a number of other Calvinistic teachings. The Synod of Dort (1618-1619) upheld strict Calvinism and condemned Arminianism.³¹ It should be noted that most Reformed churches today are Arminian Reformed.

Out of the Swiss Reformation grew an even more radical movement, that of the Anabaptists. They were given this name because they rejected infant Baptism and demanded the rebaptism of those baptized as children. There were many variations among them, but they all would have nothing to do with the state church, which

³⁰ This is not to say that there weren’t large enclaves of Calvinists in Eastern Europe.

³¹ The doctrine which Dort maintained in contradistinction to Arminianism may be summed up with the acronym TULIP: “T” for total depravity, “U” for unconditional election, “L” for limited atonement, “I” for irresistible grace, and “P” for perseverance of the saints.

they said contained hypocrites. They taught that the church should be an association of true believers. In addition they subordinated the outward Word and Sacrament to the subjective experience of the inner light of the Spirit. One of the most important leaders from the Anabaptist movement was Menno Simons (1492-1559) after whom the Mennonites are named.

England and the Elizabethan Settlement

The Anglican Reformation had many peculiarities. It was influenced by the Wyclif reform movement that remained alive in certain parts of England, by members of the English humanist circle such as Thomas More (1478-1535), and by the continental Reformation. All these influences would have probably come to naught had not Henry VIII been compelled to break with Rome in order to obtain a divorce which he felt was necessary in order to obtain a male heir to the English throne. During Henry's reign the service was conducted in English, and an English translation of the Bible was placed in the churches. Yet there was no substantive reform in doctrine.

When Henry's son Edward VI came to the throne in 1547 the Reformation began in earnest. The Archbishop of Canterbury and head of the church was Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556). He had Lutheran leanings early in his career and was married to a German Lutheran, the niece of Osiander, and the reformer in Nürnberg. However, he gradually espoused a mild form of Calvinism. After Edward's death in 1553 the English church officially reverted again to Catholicism under Queen Mary, known as "Bloody Mary" because of her bloody persecutions of the Protestants. Under the rule of "good Queen Bess" (1558-1603) the Elizabethan settlement took shape. Its church government was to be episcopal: and in liturgy, vestments, and other outward forms it remained medieval, but in doctrine it was mildly Calvinistic. The settlement is seen in the *Thirty-nine Articles* and in the *Book of Common Prayer*. This rhyme concerning the Lord's Supper, supposedly from Elizabeth, epitomizes an Anglican attitude toward doctrinal controversy:

It was the Lord that spake it;
He took the bread and brake it;
And what the Word did make it,
That I believe and take it.

Not all in England were content with the Elizabethan settlement. There were those who wanted the church purified of its popish practices, and thus they were called Puritans. Others wanted the congregational form of church government and were nicknamed Congregationalists. They were instrumental in establishing the New England colonies in America. Also from the English dissenters came the Baptists, one of the famous of whom was John Bunyan who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*.

C. The Catholic Reformation

The Reformation swept like a tidal wave over the greater part of Europe, reaching its high-water mark around 1572. But by 1575 this tidal wave began slowly to subside. Roman Catholicism was at last able to check the progress of Protestantism and to win back parts of Europe which it had lost. This Catholic reaction is also known as the Counter Reformation. The purpose of this Catholic Reformation was to bring a renewal in life and discipline, to arrange the church's teaching into an authoritative system over against Protestantism, and to regain the land lost to the Protestants.

Loyola and the Jesuits

Ignatius Loyola was the son of a Spanish nobleman and a soldier in the army of Charles V (1491-1556). Defending a fortress during the war between Spain and France in 1521, he was wounded in the leg. His

recovery was slow and painful. To pass the time he read the only books available, which were of the life of Christ and the lives of the saints. These inspired in him the desire to imitate the latter and to become a knight of Christ. Loyola persuaded the pope to allow him to found an order which would serve the pope and the church. This new order came to be known as the Society of Jesus, and its members were called Jesuits. The order sent missionaries to America and the Far East. Wherever they went they established schools and colleges to educate the people and renew the life of the church. In Europe the untiring labors of the Jesuits succeeded in regaining Poland, Hungary, Austria, and southern Germany for the pope.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563)

The Society of Jesus made considerable progress in the program of reform. Roman Catholic leaders wanted to extend the reform program throughout their church. In 1545 Pope Paul III invited all Catholic bishops to the city of Trent for a general council. The Council of Trent met on and off for 18 years, making many important decisions. This council defined the basic doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. Teachings deviating from Scripture slowly developed during the Middle Ages and here were formally recognized as dogma of the Roman Church. Thus it is appropriate to speak of the Council of Trent as the origin of the Roman Church as we know it today.

The Council of Trent coordinated Scripture and tradition as joint rules of faith. Tradition was as inspired as the Scriptures, and should therefore enjoy equal authority. The church alone had the right to interpret Scripture. The apocryphal books of the Old Testament were acknowledged as equal to the canonical books of the Bible. The celibacy of the clergy continued, and the mass remained Latin, a sacrifice, and in one kind. However the greatest tragedy of the Council was its condemnation of the central article of Christian doctrine, that we are justified by faith alone without the deeds of the Law.³²

D. Lutheranism and the Book of Concord

After Luther's death Charles V had sufficient forces to declare war on the Lutheran princes. Because there was dissension in their ranks Charles was able to defeat the Lutherans at the Battle of Mühlberg on April 24, 1547. After the battle Charles entered Wittenberg, where it is said that he was asked if he desired the bones of Luther to be exhumed and burned. He is said to have replied, "I make war with the living, not the dead." Now in control of much of Germany he imposed the Augsburg Interim on the Lutherans. The Interim conceded the communion cup and the marriage of priests to the Lutherans, but most of the church ceremonies and dogmas remained Roman. With the Leipzig Interim Melanchthon attempted a compromise which caused him to lose the respect of many Lutherans. Harsh treatment of Protestant prisoners finally provoked the Lutherans to throw off the Spanish yoke. When he was defeated in Saxony, Charles was forced to grant Protestantism tentative recognition through the Peace of Passau in 1552 and legal recognition via the Peace of Augsburg in 1555.

Controversies Among the Lutherans

When Luther died there was a leadership vacuum among his followers. Luther's mantle logically fell to Melanchthon but he vacillated in times of crises and did not have leadership abilities. As a result, conflicting

³² The Decrees of the Council of Trent of 1545-1563 remain the official dogma of Rome and reject the scriptural doctrine of justification in no uncertain terms: "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema... If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema... If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies, let him be anathema." (Trent, Ses. VI, Canons 9, 11, 12)

parties arose among Lutherans. The two main groups were the Gnesio-Lutherans, or Genuine Lutherans, who believed they were giving an authentic presentation of Luther's teachings, and the Philippists who believed that Philip Melanchthon's insights were important in Lutheranism. By the grace of God a number of great churchmen arose, including Martin Chemnitz, Nikolaus Selnecker, Jakob Andreae, and David Chytraeus, who through their writings and teachings brought peace to the Lutheran church. The controversies of the time were settled in a joint writing by these men in 1577 known as the *Formula of Concord*. These men were generally from the Gnesio-Lutheran camp but they saw the extremes of both sides and avoided them as true concordists.

We generally speak of six controversies which precipitated the *Formula of Concord*. The Adiaphoristic (*adiaphoron*: matters of indifference) Controversy was caused by the attitude of Melanchthon and the Philippists toward ceremonies in the Leipzig Interim. Melanchthon allowed many of the Roman ceremonies for the sake of compromise under the pretext that these rites were neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture, and thus were adiaphora or matters of indifference. Flacius and other Gnesio-Lutherans held that the use of the Roman vestments and ceremonies were not adiaphora but implied a compromise in doctrine. Melanchthon also compromised with Rome on the doctrine of justification and the seven Sacraments. The Peace of Augsburg in 1555 removed the cause for this controversy, but no agreement on the principles was reached. The Formula upheld the stand of Matthias Flacius (1520-1575) the leader of the Gnesio-Lutherans: "Nothing is an adiaphoron when confession and offense are involved."

The Majoristic Controversy began when George Major, a disciple of Melanchthon, stated that good works were necessary to salvation. Forgiveness of sins was obtained by faith alone, but no one would be saved without good works. The Gnesio-Lutherans were totally opposed to this teaching because it was a return to the Roman doctrine of salvation by faith and good works. Old Nicholas Amsdorf, a faithful co-worker of Luther, went to the other extreme saying that good works were injurious to salvation. What he meant was that reliance on good works for salvation was injurious. Here the concordists rejected both extremes. In Article 4 of the *Formula* they stated that good works are not necessary for salvation; neither are they injurious to salvation. However, good works are necessary in our life because faith will always show itself in a Christ-like life.

The Flacian and the Synergistic (*syn*: together + *ergon*: work) Controversies centered in whether or not the human will or effort cooperated in conversion and salvation. Gnesio-Lutherans contended that man is totally dead in sins and hostile to God. Man could contribute nothing whatever toward his conversion. Melanchthon and his followers maintained that the human will was a co-agent with the Word and the Spirit of God in man's conversion and salvation. Sinful nature had the freedom either to resist or to accept the grace of God. Thus man was responsible either for his own salvation or damnation. Flacius over-reacted to Melanchthon's synergism by saying that original sin is of the very substance of fallen man. This made evil part of the essence of man. The *Formula* rejected any cooperation on the part of man in conversion and salvation. It also explained that original sin is a true corruption of the human nature but is not part of the substance of fallen man as Flacius maintained.

The Osiandrian Controversy centered around the doctrine of justification taught by Andreas Osiander of Nürnberg. Reacting against what he regarded as overemphasis on forensic justification, he taught that God does not declare the sinner just, but makes him just. God does not impute Christ's obedience and righteousness to the sinner, but Christ's divine nature dwells within him making him righteous. In many ways Osiander was reverting to a Roman view of justification. The authors of the Formula categorically confessed the biblical doctrine of forensic justification, that we are declared righteous on the basis of obedience and righteousness gained for us by another, namely, Christ. Christ is our righteousness, not according to the divine nature alone or according to the human nature alone, but according to both natures. The whole Christ accomplished the perfect obedience and righteousness which is counted as ours by faith in the Savior.

The Antinomian (*anti*: against + *nomos*: law) Controversy concerned the place of the Law in the plan of salvation. Luther had maintained that both the Law and the Gospel should be preached because "through the law comes the knowledge of sin." It is not possible to preach forgiveness effectively where the knowledge of sin is absent. John Agricola and others held that the Decalogue belonged to the hall of justice, and not in the pulpit. Only the Gospel should be preached because this alone was capable of producing a real change of heart

and life. There were also some who spoke against the third use of the Law. The concordists maintained that this was a proper use of the Law in the church. The Law has a proper three-fold use (curb, mirror, guide).

Crypto-Calvinistic Controversy concerned the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The Philippists were moving toward views similar to that of Calvin. Melancthon in the *Variata* (altered) form of the *Augsburg Confession* had so watered down the statement on the Supper that Calvin was able to sign it. This controversy carried over into the doctrine of Christology. The Calvinists believed that after the ascension Christ's body is in one location in heaven and therefore He is with us only as God and not as man. He is not with us as our loving brother who knows our weaknesses but only in the blazing divinity before which none may dare to stand. Following this kind of logic the Calvinists readily rejected Christ's bodily presence in the Supper. The *Formula* upheld the clear teaching of Scripture that Christ's body and blood are truly present in the Supper under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received. Also Christ is with us at all times and places not only in the fiery deity but also as true man our brother, for we want to know no God except God in the flesh.

The Book of Concord

While Selnecker, Chemnitz, Andreae, Chytraeus, Koerner, and Musculus were instrumental in writing the Formula, the uncontested leader among them was Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586). In fact he was the leading light in Lutheranism after Luther -- so much so that there was the saying, "If the second Martin (Chemnitz) had not come, the first Martin (Luther) would scarcely have stood." (*Si Martinus non fuisset, Martinus vix stetisset.*) In his early years he attained the position of librarian at the ducal library of Königsberg. His study there prepared him for his future as one of the greatest theologians of the age. In 1554 he was ordained into the public ministry in Braunschweig, and in 1567 he was appointed superintendent of Braunschweig. He continued in this position until the final two years of his life. His three major writings are the *Examen*, a critique of the Council of Trent; *De Duabus Naturis*, a study of the two natures in Christ; and his *Loci Theologici*.

The *Formula of Concord* written in 1577 together with three Ecumenical Creeds, the *Augsburg Confession* (1530), the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (1531), the *Smalcald Articles* (1537), the *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* (1537), the *Small Catechism* (1529), and the *Large Catechism* (1529) forms the *Book of Concord*. On June 25, 1580, exactly fifty years after the *Augsburg Confession* had been presented to Emperor Charles V, the *Book of Concord* was published in Dresden, Germany. These documents gathered in the *Book of Concord* are the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. They presented a clear exposition of the teaching of sacred Scripture.

VI. THE AGE OF ORTHODOXY AND PIETISM

A. The Period of Lutheran Orthodoxy 1580-1675

The *Book of Concord* brought spiritual peace within the Lutheran Church but it did not end the political hostilities that grew from the conflicting religious confessions in Europe. In 1619 the Peace of Augsburg unraveled and war broke out. The Thirty Years' War which resulted can be divided into four main phases: Bohemian (1618-1625), Danish (1625-1629), Swedish (1630-1635), and French (1635-1648). For a while it seemed as if the Lutheran princes and their armies were going to be destroyed, and that Lutheranism in Germany would be pushed into the Baltic Sea. But God aroused the great Lion of the North who was filled with compassion for the suffering German Lutherans. In 1630 Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, brought his army to Germany to assist the Lutherans. His well-organized army went from victory to victory. Before the battle of Lützen, the entire army sang, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" and "O Little Flock." His army defeated the Catholic army but Gustavus died in battle. The war continued for thirteen more years. After thirty years of most savage warfare, the war ended with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. This peace provided equal rights for Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics; but the prince had the right to decide the religion of his realm. The war left Germany so exhausted that the recovery took almost a century.

The Seventeenth Century Dogmaticians

As the Thirty Years' War raged, Lutheranism, as well as the Reformed tradition and the Roman Catholic Church, went through a process of systematization and clarification of the doctrinal positions that each of these bodies had taken during the previous century. Therefore the seventeenth century is known as a period of confessional orthodoxy. Lutheran orthodoxy did not intend to add anything to the doctrine of Luther and the Confessions. Its purpose was to put the teaching of the Reformation into a logical, concise form. In this systematization of doctrine the dogmaticians were indebted to the *Loci* of Melancthon and the *Loci Theologici* of Martin Chemnitz. The format and organization of these documents became the model of the massive dogmatics of the seventeenth century dogmaticians. In their work they used Aristotelian philosophy, as did the scholastics of the Middle Ages, to bring order to their great doctrinal system.

The earliest period of Lutheran orthodoxy is called the golden age (1580-1610), and many of the representatives of this period were either formulators or signers of the *Formula*. The greatest theologian of the time was Chemnitz. The second era was designated high orthodoxy (1610-1648) which included men of the caliber of Aegidius Hunnius and Leonard Hutter. Yet its chief representative was the greatest of the dogmaticians, Johann Gerhard (1582-1637). It is said that Gerhard was third (Luther, Chemnitz, and Gerhard) in the series of Lutheran theologians and after him there was no fourth. Gerhard came from Quedlinburg and in his younger days he had Johann Arndt as his pastor, who exerted a deep and lasting influence on him. He studied at Wittenberg and Jena, spent a number of years in administrative ecclesiastical work, and finally returned to Jena as a professor in 1616. His main work is his *Loci Theologici*, whose vast nine volumes -- a later edition published it in twenty-three -- became the great systematic theology of Lutheran orthodoxy.

The period after Gerhard is referred to as the silver age of orthodoxy (1648-1675). The most brilliant and influential theologian of this period was Abraham Calov (1612-1686). He was born in East Prussia and spent much of his life teaching at Königsberg and Wittenberg. His style was highly polemical in comparison to the other great theologian of the time, Johann Quenstedt (1617-1688) who was known for his irenic style. Quenstedt's family ties reveal the close family relationships between Lutheran theologians during the age of orthodoxy, for he was Gerhard's nephew, one of Calov's numerous fathers-in-law, and the son-in-law of another theologian -- Johann Scharf. It is usually assumed that Francis Pieper favored the use of Quenstedt while Adolph Hoenecke preferred Calov.³³

Hans Poulsen Resen (1561-1638) was largely responsible for the final victory of Lutheran orthodoxy over the Crypto-Calvinism of Hemmingsen in Denmark and Norway. Jesper Rasmus Brochmand (1585-1652) was the giant among the Scandinavian theologians during the period of Lutheran orthodoxy. He was a professor at Copenhagen and bishop of Zealand. The only Norwegian of note among the dogmaticians was Cort Aslakssen (1564-1624). He was born at Bergen and studied at Copenhagen. His most important literary contribution discussed Christology in a very evangelical manner.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Orthodoxy

The dogmaticians were not creative thinkers nor did they intend to be. Their purpose was to preserve the teachings of the Reformation in a systematic form. This was their great strength. They clearly enunciated the great Reformation doctrine of justification by faith together with the doctrines of the means of grace and verbal inspiration for future generations. The dogmaticians are sometimes accused of treating the Gospel as doctrine rather than as the power of God unto salvation. Yet when one reads the devotional writings of Gerhard, Arndt, and others, one finds a warm piety and the power of God unto salvation which touches the heart. The great hymns of Paul Gerhardt and Thomas Kingo, and the music of J. S. Bach certainly are a living expression of the Christian faith.

³³ For an in-depth study of the age see Robert Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*.

Some maintain that Lutherans of this era were more concerned about doctrinal debate and dispute than about missions and the religious life of the common people. The Lutheran lands, however, were not involved in exploration and colonization, and thus did not have the opportunity for mission work as did the Spanish and Portuguese. The Swedish pastor John Comenius did work among the native Americans in the Delaware colony with the result that the *Small Catechism* was the first book translated into an Indian language. While there was a general decline in the spiritual life of the people in central Europe due in part to the Thirty Years' War, in places such as Leipzig orthodox Lutheran religious life remained alive and vibrant.³⁴

P. The Period of Pietism (1675-1750)

Pietism was a reaction to the decline in religious life. Preaching, at times, was rigidly correct in doctrinal content, but devoid of Gospel warmth. The Law was overemphasized in many quarters, Christianity was intellectualized, and Christian life was cold and sterile. The founder of Lutheran Pietism, Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705) responded to this weakness of the church in his *Pia Desideria* (Pious Desires). He encouraged more Bible study among the lay people in small groups or house meetings (*collegia pietatis*). Attention was given to Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Christian faith was to be put into action with a greater emphasis on the Christian life and sanctification. Sermons were to be more devotional with less doctrinal dispute.

Spener's program was put into practice at Halle in Germany by his friend and follower, August Hermann Francke (1663-1727). At Halle he established his famous "Institutions," an orphanage and high school, which became models for charitable and educational institutions throughout Europe. In 1710 he started a Bible institute for the publication of inexpensive Bibles. Francke and the other pietists were also interested in mission work. They inspired a missionary zeal among their followers. When the king of Denmark needed missionaries to send to India, he enlisted two of Francke's men in Halle. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Pluetschau became the first Lutheran missionaries to India. From 1700 to 1800 over sixty men from Halle served as foreign missionaries. In 1742 Henry Muhlenberg was sent from here to serve in Pennsylvania. He was the first great leader of Lutherans in America.

From Germany the movement spread to the Scandinavian countries, where King Christian VI favored the introduction of Pietism into Denmark and Norway. Prominent among the Danish pietists were Hans Adolph Brorson (d. 1764), one of Denmark's great hymn writers, and Erik Pontoppidan (d. 1755) who wrote an explanation to *Luther's Catechism* which was still used in the Norwegian Synod in America. In Norway the movement produced such men as Hans Egede (d. 1758), the great missionary to Greenland, and Thomas von Westen, who was active in education and home mission work. Probably the most famous influential leader in Norwegian Pietism was Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824), a powerful lay preacher. On April 5, 1786, he had a personal religious experience. From then on Hauge preached a message of repentance and regeneration throughout Norway, reviving the backsliders and strengthening and encouraging the faithful. He was imprisoned from 1804 to 1811 not only for his criticisms of church and clergy, but also for his violation of the anti-conventicle act of 1741. He gained many followers and was a Norwegian folk hero. Many Norwegian immigrants in America were influenced by the Haugean movement.

German Pietism had a significant influence on Count Zinzendorf and his nurturing of the Moravian Church on his Herrnhut estate in Saxony. The Moravian Church became the great missionary church of the era. In England John Wesley was influenced by Pietism. He had the same concern about the spiritual indifference in the Anglican Church as the Pietists on the continent. His doctrine was Arminian Reformed but in addition he stressed sanctification and perfection of the believers. His followers adhered to strict methods in their devotion and life and thus they were nicknamed "Methodists." In America the Methodist Church spawned the Holiness churches and the Pentecostal movement.

³⁴ See Günther Stiller, *Johann Sebastian Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984).

The Pietistic movement had definite, positive characteristics. It encouraged Bible study among the laity and put the Bible into the hands of the people. It was the motivation for a great mission enterprise and many charitable organizations. Nevertheless its emphasis on sanctification and holiness downplayed justification by faith alone and caused people to look for the assurance of salvation in their religious experience and good life rather than in Christ's forgiveness conveyed in the means of grace. It took them on a path back to work righteousness. Pietists de-emphasized the means of grace and believed that they experienced the Holy Spirit and all His gifts without outward means. As a result of this, solidly orthodox Lutheran men of the stripe of Valentin Loescher (1673-1749), the last great representative of Lutheran orthodoxy in Europe, were bitterly opposed to Pietism. With its accentuation of personal experience and the subjective aspects of faith, Pietism undermined the objective truths of Scripture and left the church vulnerable to rationalism, which placed human reason above God's Word. After 1758 the floodgates were open to rationalism in Europe.

VII. THE CHURCH IN RECENT TIMES

A. The Confessional Awakening

Rationalism brought great darkness to a world that thought it was enlightened. Everywhere the church was laid waste and the remaining faithful groped in darkness. Rationalist preachers filled the pulpits, starving the people to death with moralism. The truths of salvation were pushed aside as contrary to reason and the pulpit offered a purely "practical" choice of subjects: "The value of early rising," "the value of feeding cows in the stable during the winter, (this on Christmas Day)" "the value of vaccination against smallpox," etc.

For many years the Prussian kings had been striving to effect a union between the Reformed minority and the Lutheran majority in their lands. At last Friedrich Wilhelm III, ruler of Prussia, demanded in 1817 that the Lutheran and Reformed churches in his lands be united into one church so that he, a Calvinist, could receive the Holy Supper with his Lutheran Queen Louise of Mecklenberg. This was a shameful union based on compromise. Only in back-wood villages were the mysteries of God treasured, the Word taught in its truth and purity, and the Sacraments rightly administered.

At last a confessional awakening broke through the darkness of unionism and rationalism. In the year 1817, on the 300th anniversary commemoration of Luther's Ninety-five Theses, Claus Harms started his confessional Lutheran movement among the farmers of the Lueneburger Heide. There were Scheibel at Breslau in Silesia; Grabau in Prussia and Pomerania; and Rudelbach, a Dane, in Saxony who influenced the founders of the Missouri Synod. Soon Wilhelm Loehe spread his far-flung Lutheran net of missions from Neuendettelsau. Also at the universities (Erlangen, Leipzig, etc.) outstanding work was done in exegesis by Harless, von Hofmann, Franz Delitzsch (converted Jew and student friend of C.F.W. Walther); and in dogmatics by Thomasius and Philippi.

In Scandinavia the Lutheran awakening was first felt in the Grundtvigian movement. Nikolai Grundtvig (1793-1872) was a Danish clergyman who advocated renewal in the church. He highlighted the Sacraments in his *bath* and *board* theology. Still his theology was defective, for when he wrote his famous hymn, "God's Word is our Great Heritage," the Word was not the "dead letter" of the Scripture but the "living word" embodied in the Apostles' Creed, an error which infected the first constitution of the Norwegian Synod.

The Lutheran renewal blossomed in Norway with the Johnsonian Awakening. Gisle Johnson (1822-1894) and Paul Caspari (1814-1892) were professors at the University of Christiania. Johnson studied at Leipzig and Erlangen. Thus he was influenced by the renewal in Germany. Johnson sought to imbue his students with a spirit of orthodoxy which blended the passion and fervor of a revival preacher with the intellect of an orthodox dogmatician. The wholesome effect of the Johnsonian Awakening was the return of historic Lutheranism in many parts of the Norwegian Lutheran Church. The State Church of Norway had been influenced by modern critical theology emanating from Germany. When the Norwegian immigration began, the two streams of religious thought which dominated Norway colored Norwegian Lutheranism in America. There was the

Haugean spirit of personal piety and lay activity on the one hand, and sound scriptural theology on the other hand, which the students of Caspari and Johnson brought to the New World.

B. Lutheranism Crosses the Atlantic

When the Norwegian Lutherans came to America they did not arrive in a land with a scarcity of churches. Many of the denominations which had developed in Britain and on the continent were already represented on this side of the Atlantic. The Congregationalists, which in this century became a part of the United Church of Christ, settled in New England, the Anglicans centered in Virginia and the South, and the Baptists, who grew to be the largest Protestant denomination in America, under the leadership of Roger William formed the Rhode Island colony. The Reformed Church developed among the Dutch in New York and Presbyterianism among the Scotch-Irish. The Methodists prospered on the early frontier. The Campbellite Revival in the early nineteenth century produced the Christian Church, Church of Christ, and Disciples of Christ. The Roman Catholic Church was established in Maryland, but it remained a small church body until later immigrations.

Lutherans in America

The Norwegian Lutherans who came to America also met other Lutherans. Lutheran churches were first organized in this country among the Swedes and the Dutch in New York and Delaware; in fact, Delaware began as the Swedish Lutheran colony. Large numbers of Germans came to Pennsylvania. Their great leader and organizer was Henry Muhlenberg who was influenced by Franke and the Halle movement. These Lutherans were imbibed with Pietism and rationalism and influenced by American Protestantism. Therefore fellowship with them was not possible for the Norwegian Synod. These Lutherans were successively a part of the United Lutheran Church of 1918 (ULC), the Lutheran Church in America of 1962 (LCA), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) of 1988. Also the Swedes of the Augustana Synod would find their way into the LCA and then into the ELCA.

Better prospects of a kindred spirit and fellowship were to be found among the "Old Lutherans." They were German Lutherans influenced by the confessional awakening in Europe. Facing religious persecution in Germany some fled to Australia, South Africa, and South America, but the greatest number came to the United States. In 1839 Grabau brought Prussians to New York and founded the Buffalo Synod. But Grabau's Romanizing doctrine of ministry made fellowship impossible. Pomeranians from this migration under Captain von Rohr came to Wisconsin and later affiliated with the Missouri or the Wisconsin Synod. In fact, von Rohr's son Philip would eventually become the president of the Wisconsin Synod. The Wisconsin Synod was organized in 1850 by three pastors in the Milwaukee area. Its first leader was John Muehlhaeuser. The synod began as a unionistic body similar to the Prussian Union in Germany. Yet under the faithful leadership of John Bading as president and Adolf Hoenecke as chief theologian the synod reached confessional purity. The Wisconsin Synod would become a faithful ally of the Norwegian Synod.

In 1847 the Missouri Synod was formed in Chicago. It was made up of Loehe men in Michigan and Indiana, Wendish Lutherans in Texas, Prussians and Pomeranians who were disenchanted with Grabau, and the Saxons from Missouri. The Saxons, 700 in number, came as a religious colony fleeing discrimination in Saxony. After their leader Stephan was found unfit because of illicit behavior, C.F.W. Walther emerged as their leader. He was the first president of the Missouri Synod and the undisputed leader of confessional Lutherans in America. Through his magazine *Der Lutheraner* and other writings he furthered the cause of confessionalism on both sides of the Atlantic. He had a salutary influence on the Norwegian fathers. Beyond a doubt he was the American Luther and the principal founder of confessional Lutheranism in America.

Norwegian Lutherans

In 1825 the first of a large number of people from Norway came to our country. It took three months for these fifty-four Norwegians to cross the Atlantic in their Norwegian Mayflower, the *Restauration*. They settled in New York, but it wasn't long before the cheap land of the west appealed to them. In 1834 a Norwegian settlement referred to as the Fox River Settlement was established about seventy miles southwest of Chicago, and by 1839 there was a settlement at Muskego, Wisconsin. The people brought their Bibles, Catechisms, and hymnbooks but they were without the care of pastors. Elling Eielsen (1804-1883), a lay preacher, worked among these immigrants. In 1842 he walked all the way to New York City and back to get the Pontoppidan Catechism printed. This was the first Norwegian book printed in America. He was a part of the Haugean movement which advocated personal experience and lay preaching and had a strong tinge of anti-clericalism. Another early leader was Claus Clausen, a Danish school teacher who was ordained to serve among the Norwegians by Krause, the Buffalo Synod pastor at Freistadt north of Milwaukee.

The first Norwegian state church pastor to come to America was J.W.C. Dietrichson. On September 2, 1844, he preached his famous sermon under the oaks of Koshkonong, east of Madison, Wisconsin, and administered the Lord's Supper to sixty people. His preparatory address was from Psalm 78:19: "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" The text of the sermon was Matthew 11:28: "Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." God indeed did furnish a table in the wilderness. God established a Norwegian Lutheran church body that was ready to feed the 900,000 or so immigrants from Norway with the life-giving Word and the holy Sacraments.

C. The Norwegian Synod

In 1853 the Norwegian pastors gathered to organize a synod. They had met previously (1851) and established a synod, but its constitution contained the Grundtvigian error (see page 35 above). Therefore the first organization was dissolved. The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was organized at the Luther Valley Church north of Beloit, Wisconsin, on October 5, 1853. It consisted of 38 congregations in three states, with seven pastors, and an estimated membership of 12,000 baptized souls and 6,000 communicants. Those seven pastors were H.A. Preus, G.F. Dietrichson, N.O. Brandt, H.A. Stub, A.C. Preus, C.L. Clausen, and J.A. Ottesen. Pastor A.C. Preus was elected its first president, Pastor U.V. Koren arrived in this country a few weeks later.³⁵ This church body carried on the tradition of the confessional awakening in Europe and considered itself to be the spiritual daughter of the Norwegian state church, its Vivacious Daughter, if you will.

The Triumvirate

Three men stand out in the early history of the synod: Herman Amberg Preus (1825-1894), Jakob Aal Ottesen (1825-1904), and Ulrik Vilhelm Koren (1826-1910). All three of these men studied at the University of Christiania under Johnson and Caspari. Preus was the organizer. He was born in Christiansand, Norway, and in 1851 he arrived at Spring Prairie, a little north of Madison, Wisconsin, where he spent his entire ministry. He was president of the synod for thirty-two years (1862-1894). At his funeral Koren preached, calling him a *skrift teolog*, that is, a scriptural theologian.

Ottesen was the model pastor laboring tirelessly in feeding and gathering the scattered sheep in the Midwest. His birthplace was Fet, in the area known as Romerike, close to Oslo. He served as pastor first in the Manitowoc (1852-1860) and then in the Koshkonong area of Wisconsin (1860-1891). At the same time he was co-editor of the church paper. Ottesen traveled an average of 30-50 miles a day on horseback in summer heat and winter storm. As a result of these difficult journeys, Ottesen contracted chronic rheumatism which worked havoc with the nerves of his legs. It was difficult for him to walk or stand long. Because of this, Ottesen was

³⁵ H. Larson and J.B. Madson, *Built on the Rock* (Mankato: Lutheran Synod Book Company, 1992), p. 8.

often forced to sit in the pulpit when delivering his sermons.³⁶ In 1891 he moved to Decorah, Iowa, where he died in 1904.

One of the vivid scenes from the life of Ulrik and Elizabeth Koren was their first crossing of the Mississippi in December of 1853. A man who said he was a doctor went ahead with a long stake to test the ice on the frozen river. Koren followed pulling a light buggy in which sat Elizabeth wrapped in buffalo robes with all their earthly possessions. In the rear walked a little Norwegian boy who helped by pushing the buggy. It was quite an ordeal for a couple from the gentry tradition in Norway. The Korens were more than willing to make those sacrifices for the kingdom of God. Koren served in Washington Prairie, east of Decorah, Iowa. Through his tireless efforts about twenty parishes were formed from this, his original congregation among them, East and West Paint Creek of the present Evangelical Lutheran Synod. He was beyond a doubt the leading theologian in the synod. At times he is referred to as the Norwegian Walther. Many of his theological writings were published in a four-volume set of books under the title *Samlede Skrifter* (Collected Writings). His warm relationship with Walther and other leaders of the Missouri Synod drew the two church bodies ever closer together.

Growth and Fellowship

During its infant years the Norwegian Synod used the Missouri Synod's seminary in St. Louis, Missouri to train its pastors. But in 1876 it established Luther Seminary in Madison, Wisconsin which in 1888 was moved to the Twin Cities area in Minnesota. The college of the synod was in Decorah, Iowa. The synod organized a number of academies which were basically equivalent to today's high schools. There was also an interest in Christian day schools among the leaders of the Norwegian Synod.

The nineteenth century was a time of Protestant mission expansion. Missionaries were sent to Africa, the Far East, and Polynesia -- to the far corners of the earth. The Norwegian Synod was not sitting idle. The home mission program of the synod followed the Norwegian immigration from western Minnesota and Iowa to the Dakotas and the Pacific Northwest. Mission work was carried out among the Winnebago Indians in Wisconsin, and in 1892 work was begun among the Eskimos in Alaska. Later Rev. H.M. Tjernagel would serve them. A mission to China was begun in 1912 centering in the city of Kwangchow in the Honan Province of central China. The Rev. George Oliver Lillegard was a synod missionary in this mission.

The Norwegian fathers yearned for fellowship on the empty plains of the Midwest. This longing would not be satisfied by those of their own nationalistic ties. They sought long and hard to be joined with other Norwegians in this country, but their former countrymen had embraced Haugeanism. Rather, they found a kindred spirit in the Missouri Synod, and formal fellowship was declared in 1857. This fellowship with like-minded Lutherans would lead to the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference. In July of 1872 the constituting convention of the Synodical Conference was held at St. John's (Bading's church) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Norwegian Synod was represented by the following: Pres. H.A. Preus, Rev. U.V. Koren, Rev. P.A. Rasmussen, Rev. A. Mikkelsen, and Rev. F.A. Schmidt. The following church bodies were represented: The Ohio Synod, the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, the Norwegian Synod, the Illinois Synod, and the Minnesota Synod. The Synodical Conference soon began work among the freed slaves in the South. In the twentieth century the Synodical Conference would carry out extensive mission work in Nigeria in which Rev. Paul Anderson of our synod would participate. The Synodical Conference possessed the Gospel, pure and unadulterated, and it made every effort to share that saving message of Christ crucified.

Conflict and Controversies

The church here on earth is never at peace. It will always be engaged in constant warfare. The Norwegian Synod faced controversies concerning lay preaching, the doctrine of Sunday, slavery, and

³⁶ *Our Great Heritage* (a popular history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod), p. 17.

absolution.³⁷ However, the most devastating conflict was the Election Controversy. Prof. F.A. Schmidt of the Norwegian Synod accused Walther and his synod of teaching John Calvin's doctrine on conversion and election. Walther maintained the scriptural doctrine that we are elected unto salvation not on the basis of anything in us, our works, deeds, faith, or non-resistance of the Spirit, but alone by God's grace. Schmidt said among other things, "We believe and teach now . . . that salvation in a certain sense does not depend on God alone."³⁸ Schmidt and his followers held that God elected and converted some in view of the faith (*intuitu fidei*) that they would some day possess. This implied that faith was a work of man on the basis of which God elected us. Some said that God elected some because they didn't resist the Spirit as much as others. In all this something in man helps in our salvation and with such an understanding one is again on a work righteous path. This was a sly but vicious attack on the central articles of the faith.

Koren and the leaders of the synod stood with Walther and the doctrine of Scripture but at a terrible price. The strife ripped families apart, brother against brother. In the 1880s about one-third of the congregations and pastors left the synod. The synod maintained its doctrinal integrity, but after the turn of the century there was strong sentiment for one Norwegian church body in America. Union fever got the better of them. In 1917 on the basis of two compromise documents, the Madison Settlement and the Austin Agreement, a majority of the Norwegian Synod decided to merge with various other Norwegian Lutheran synods in America to form a new church body. This Norwegian merger was named the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America (NLCA). It was later changed to the Evangelical Lutheran Church which became a part of The American Lutheran Church of 1960 (TALC) and then the ELCA in 1988.

D. The Reorganized Synod

The Lord's grace and mercy had not come to an end for Norwegian Lutheranism. The same Lord who had been with Augustine and Luther in difficult times was with the small remnant that knew it was contrary to the Scriptures to enter the merger of 1917. In June of 1917 a small group of pastors met at the Aberdeen Hotel in St. Paul to evaluate the situation. They issued an invitation to whoever was still interested in the pure doctrine of the Norwegian Synod to meet at the Lime Creek Lutheran Church north of Lake Mills, Iowa, in 1918.

June 14-19 in 1918, thirteen pastors met at Lime Creek to reorganize the synod. The first officers of the reorganized synod were Pastor Bjug Harstad, president; Pastor John A. Moldstad, vice-president; Pastor C.N. Peterson, secretary; and A.J. Torgerson, treasurer. The official name of the reorganized synod was The Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church. In 1958 it was changed to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. These men, assembled at Lime Creek, faced much harassment and derision for not entering the merger. Rev. Harstad encouraged them with the words of Jeremiah: "Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it then you will find rest for your souls." (6:16) The little synod would remain on the old path where alone one could find rest for the soul. An interesting aside to this meeting was the fact that it was illegal to use a foreign language at public gatherings in Iowa (World War I was in progress). The assembly had to travel about a mile north of the church to conduct its Norwegian services and sessions in a tent just across the Minnesota border.

In 1920 the reorganized synod was accepted into the membership of the Synodical Conference. Were it not for the safe haven and nurturing of the Synodical Conference brethren, the little group might not have survived. The initial thought of the remnant had been to become a Norwegian District of the Missouri Synod. This was discouraged by Pieper, who was now the leading light in Missouri, and by others. It was hoped that the reorganized synod would serve as an island of refuge to other Norwegians who might abandon the ship of the merger, and indeed it did.

³⁷ H. Larson and J.B. Madson, *Built on the Rock*, pp. 27-32.

³⁸ Paul Ylvisaker, *A Blessing in the Midst of the Land*, p. 20.

Forward in the Lord

At the time of the Lime Creek meeting it was sarcastically said on the streets of one of the towns in northern Iowa, “That little synod is nothing but a plucked chicken.” The man who said it was obviously in favor of the merger. But a sensible down-to-earth Norwegian farmer is reported to have responded, “Yes, but if the chicken is healthy the feathers will grow back.” (*Den Norske Synode er bare en ribbet høne.-Ja, men naar høne blir frisk og bra igjen så skal fjærene vokse tilbake.*)³⁹ With the Lord’s help the feathers did start to grow. The synod became a haven for many who knew that the merger was wrong. Small groups in the Midwest and other parts of the land called for help and the synod answered the call. After the break in fellowship with the Missouri Synod, the synod became a refuge for many in Missouri who wanted to remain faithful to the truths of Scripture. By 1967 the synod had grown to 83 congregations with 15,000 members. Today the ELS has 139 congregations with 22,264 members and an active home missions program of beginning one or two new missions a year. Outside the Midwest the greatest geographical expansion has been in Florida and along the West Coast.

The ELS supported world missions in Nigeria through the Synodical Conference. Also it worked in Cornwall, England for a time. In 1968 the synod entered foreign missions in earnest when it established its own world mission field in Lima, Peru. Today a national church called “Centro Cristiano” has been organized and national workers are being trained to continue spreading the Gospel as pastors and teachers. The seminary in Lima is an important part of the work in Peru. Here, the future leaders of the church receive their theological training. Mission work was carried out in Nicaragua but the synod withdrew from the field in 1978 because of the volatile political situation. In 1992 the synod began mission work in Chile. New local congregations continue to be established as the missionaries spread the Good News of salvation in Christ in this South American country. The ELS has assisted its sister synod the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia with advice, encouragement, and financial support.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod works with Thoughts of Faith, a church-related organization with missions in Czech Republic and Ukraine. A Lutheran congregation and Christian day school have been established in Plzen, Czech Republic. In Ukraine a new church body, the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, has been formed. A seminary has been established and many congregations and preaching stations are served by the missionaries.⁴⁰

Education was an important concern of the reorganized synod as it had been for the “Old” Norwegian synod. No church body can exist a long period of time without its own educational institution. Bethany opened its doors as a coeducational high school and liberal arts junior college of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1927. A small group of pastors and laymen in 1926 purchased the former Lutheran Academy of Women and presented it to the synod for the education of young people. There were fears that the fledging synod could not financially manage the responsibilities of a college. But at the Lime Creek synod convention in 1927, Rev. G. A. Gullixson, an ardent advocate of the college, moved that the synod take over the school, and Bethany has been a great part of the synod ever since. Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker became president of the institution in 1930. Under his leadership the school prospered and drew students from the other synods in the Synodical Conference. To be sure, there were financial difficulties during the Depression years, but the synod always managed. It is interesting to note that Bethany’s purpose was different from the schools of Missouri (LCMS)

³⁹ The writer received this anecdote from President George M. Orvick.

⁴⁰ The present ELS missionaries:

Peru- Timothy Erickson, David Haeuser, and Terry Schultz

Chile- Karl Kuenzel, Ralph Martens, and Oto Rodriguez

Czech Republic- Mark Grubbs and Matthew Luttman

Ukraine- John Shep, Roger Kovaciny, Jay Webber, and Joel Rakos

and Wisconsin (WELS). Bethany's purpose was not only to train pastors and teachers but to provide a Christian education for all walks of life.⁴¹

From its reorganization in 1918 the ELS was without its own theological seminary for twenty-eight years. It depended on its sister synods for the seminary training of its pastors. But during these early years the hope of establishing its own seminary had been kept alive. Finally in 1946 the synodical delegates, assembled in convention, resolved in the name of the Triune God to adopt fourteen resolutions relating to a new seminary, the first of which was: "To establish a full theological seminary course at Bethany Lutheran College, this course to begin in the fall of 1946." On September 24, 1946, a dedicatory service officially opened Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. The first dean of the seminary was Rev. Norman A. Madson. Originally the president of the college was also the president of the seminary but the two positions were separated in 1976, when Rev. Theodore Aaberg was called as the first president of the institution.⁴²

"The Christian Day School, as an institution, represented the largest item salvaged by the ELS from the storm of 1917." This is the conclusion of Rev. Theodore Aaberg in his 1968 history of the Norwegian Synod.⁴³ The leaders of the old Norwegian Synod were interested in Christian day schools, but few were organized. Only fourteen parishes had schools at the time of the merger. Of these fourteen, three were soon found within the reorganized synod, namely Parkland, Washington, and Somber and Lime Creek, Iowa. While the schools in the merger slowly dwindled into nothing, the ELS added more schools so that today there are fifteen in number. The synod operated a high school in conjunction with Bethany College until 1969. Today several congregations of the ELS are members of area high school associations together with congregations of the WELS.

Originally the synod had no full-time positions. But as the administrative duties increased, the synod called a full-time president. Rev. George M. Orvick was called to that position in 1986. He had become president of the synod already in 1970, but until 1986 he also served as a parish pastor. The only other president of the synod in the past thirty years was Dr. Wilhelm Petersen who held the office from 1976-1980. Rev. Orvick has faithfully served the ELS as its president for 26 years.

Faithful to the Confessions

One of the saddest chapters in the history of Lutheranism in America was the demise of the Synodical Conference. The LCMS had been the bulwark of orthodoxy throughout the world. Yet in the 1930s this mighty defense began to crumble. In 1935 the Missouri Synod accepted separate invitations from the American Lutheran Church⁴⁴ and from the United Lutheran Church to negotiate for the purpose of establishing pulpit and altar fellowship. The ELS and WELS rejected those invitations because they felt that the ALC and ULC merely wanted union without real doctrinal agreement, which conjecture soon became evident. In the negotiations between the ALC and LCMS, the ALC drew up a document called the Declaration, which was ambiguous on many important doctrines (Scripture, salvation, church and ministry, Sunday, and the last things). Missouri's adoption of it in 1938 alongside its own Brief Statement began its slow but steady decline. Discussion between the two churches continued. In 1950 the LCMS and the ALC produced a new union document called the Common Confession. Still, it too was an ambiguous and compromising statement.

The rift between Missouri on the one hand and the ELS and WELS on the other continued to widen. Missouri began to make a distinction between prayer fellowship and joint-prayer so that they could pray at meetings with church bodies with whom they were not in fellowship.⁴⁵ In 1945, forty-four of their pastors drew

⁴¹ Since 1927 the college has had seven presidents or acting presidents: Rev. Holden Olsen, 1927-1929; Rev. W.E. Buszin, 1929-1930; Dr. S.C. Ylvisaker, 1930-1950; Rev. B.W. Teigen, 1950-1970; Rev. R.M. Branstad, 1970-1977; Rev. T.A. Aaberg (acting), 1977-1978; Prof. N.S. Holte, 1978-1982; Prof. M.G. Meyer, 1982-present.

⁴² Deans of the Seminary: Norman Madson, Milton Otto
Presidents of the Seminary: T.A. Aaberg, 1976-1979; G. Reichwald, 1979-1980; W. Petersen, 1980-1997; G. Schmeling, 1997-present.

⁴³ T.A. Aaberg, *A City Set on a Hill* (Mankato: Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1968), p. 92.

⁴⁴ This is the American Lutheran Church of 1930 made up of the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods.

⁴⁵ This occurred at the 1943 LCMS convention at Saginaw which also opened the doors to scouting.

up a statement known as the Statement of the Forty-Four in which they openly rejected the old Missouri stand on church unity and related doctrines. There were even questions concerning inerrancy at the St. Louis seminary.⁴⁶ As the hope of settling these differences gradually faded, the ELS with deep regret declared at its convention in 1955 that its fellowship relations with the LCMS were suspended. Still, this suspension was not without the loss of some members to both the Missouri Synod and the Church of the Lutheran Confession formed in 1960. The WELS broke fellowship with Missouri in 1961. At its 1963 convention the synod withdrew from the Synodical Conference. This ended the synod's association with the LCMS and the Synodical Conference, which had been such a blessing through the years. In 1967 the two remaining synods in the Synodical Conference, the LCMS and the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (SELC-Slovak), dissolved the organization. The SELC then merged with the LCMS.

A New Alliance

The ELS and the WELS continued to work together in the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum which meets biennially to discuss mutual concerns. Yet there was a desire to have an organization more international in scope, an international synodical conference. The 1986 convention of the ELS officially resolved that the synod support the creation of a new confessional Lutheran conference.⁴⁷ A committee began planning for the new conference and its work came to fruition in the constituting convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC).

This historic event took place April 27-29, 1993, at Oberwesel, Germany. It was in this beautiful place overlooking the Rhine River that the new Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference was officially established. Delegates from eleven church bodies gathered there on the Rhine to take part in the constituting convention. The conference is the spiritual heir of the Synodical Conference. It was certainly a joyous and strengthening experience. Those who attended the meeting expressed the same sentiments as Dr. Walther at the constituting convention of the Synodical Conference, "O blessed and blissful day!" Here delegates from throughout the world confessed their adherence to the pure marks of the church, the Word and the Sacraments. The CELC has continued strengthening each of the member churches through mutual encouragement and consultation. The following are the member churches of the CELC.

- Bulgarian Lutheran Church
- Christ the King Lutheran Church of Nigeria
- Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church (Mexico)
- Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church (Russia)
- Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church (Finland)
- Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church (Puerto Rico)
- Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (Germany)
- Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Peru)
- Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)
- Lutheran Church of Central Africa (Malawi Conference)
- Lutheran Church of Central Africa (Zambia Conference)
- Lutheran Confessional Church (Scandinavia)
- Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church (Japan)
- The Lutheran Church of Cameroon
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)

⁴⁶ *Our Great Heritage* (a popular history of the ELS), pp. 42-44; T.A. Aaberg, *A City Set on a Hill*, pp. 135-242.

⁴⁷ 1986 Synod Report, p. 62.

A Look to the Future

We are at the dawning of a new millennium and the 2000th anniversary of the dear Savior's birth for our salvation. He is the Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Heb. 13:8) He took upon Himself our flesh made from dust so that through union with His divinity He might conquer sin, death, and all our foes in the flesh and raise us to His divine glory, eternal life in heaven. We have seen His love, grace, and compassion throughout 2000 years of church history and He continues to care for His bride, the church, all the way through this earthly journey. It is indeed a time to celebrate 2000 years of grace.

As we face the new millennium the prospects of the church are, humanly speaking, not that promising. Our situation is much like that of the Irish missionaries in the sixth century. Their missionary houses were Christian outposts in a continent that had lapsed into paganism. In much the same way our ELS and the other members of the CELC are outposts in a world gone pagan. Still those ancient missionaries did not say woe is me and hide in their monasteries. They did two things, they preserved and they spread. They preserved the Christian literature of the ancient world and they spread the Gospel. Likewise we will strive to preserve the Word of God in its truth and purity and we will spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. We will make our stand with Augustine, Luther, and Koenig. The strength to go forward and do all things through Him -- that strength He gives us in the life-giving Word and the holy Sacraments. As we enter the new millennium may our prayer be that of the great twentieth century hymn writer Martin Franzman:

O Spirit, who didst once restore
Thy Church that it may be again
The bringer of good news to men,
Breathe on thy cloven Church once more,
That in these gray and latter days
There may be men whose life is praise,
Each life a high doxology
Unto the Blessed Trinity. Amen.⁴⁸

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⁴⁸ *The Worship Supplement*, hymn 758.