

## I. HISTORY

In order to understand The Church of God and its doctrine and practice, it is important to have a working knowledge of the history of the church. This is the advice of Bildad in the Book of Job: *"For enquire, I pray thee of the former age, and prepare thyself to search of their fathers. . . Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?"* (Job 8:8, 10). It is not possible to understand fully the reasons for current ideas, motives, and actions without first searching the history of the church to find the conditions which produced the concepts and traditions which weigh so heavily on those ideas, motives, and actions.

The word *church* is a translation of the Greek *ekklesia*, which means *those who are called out*. It was used originally to refer to the congregation of God as a collective nation functioning through and governed by theocratic government. Church in both the Old and New Testament economies began with the establishment of government for God's people, and church ceased to exist when the government of God was replaced by civil government.

### A. THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS

Church as a governmental order for the protection and oversight of God's people began with the establishment of Israel as a nation and the giving of the covenant of the law. At Sinai God's people for the first time were established as a nation with governmental order, and a sanctuary was created as the focal point of the government of God within His dominion or kingdom. From the very beginning of the establishment of Israel as a nation, God chose the tribe of Judah as His sanctuary to lead the way for His people (Psalm 78:68,69; 114:1,2). Judah became an election of a tribe called out to be the sanctuary of God.

During his time of communion with God on Sinai, Moses was permitted to see the sanctuary of heaven. He was subsequently commanded of God to make all things according to the pattern which he had seen in the mount (Hebrews 8:5). The work that Moses did among the children of Israel was to establish the governmental order according to the pattern which he had seen in heaven. The theocratic government which he established included his own office as the anointed leader, the appointment of twelve leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel, the establishment of seventy elders of the people, and later the appointment of seven priests to go before the Ark of the Covenant.

It was this governmental order that brought oversight and protection to God's nation that was the central element in the church in the Old Testament. It is for this reason that Israel is called the church in the wilderness in Acts 7:38. The establishment of the government of God constituted the establishment of the church in the wilderness.

### B. THE EARLY CHURCH

#### 1. The Time of Jesus

The ministry of Jesus among the nation of Israel was for the purpose of bringing about a reformation (Hebrews 9:10) that established a new motive and new methods for the worship and service of God. Just as Jesus reformed the worship system of the Old Testament, He likewise reformed the church, reestablishing the offices of the heavenly pattern and re-commissioning the church to go into the entire world and preach the good news of the coming kingdom.

The New Testament church was established on the revelation of Jesus Christ. This

is the truth of the statement of Jesus to Peter: *"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). Jesus built His church by restoring theocratic government to its proper ordering by calling out from the nation of Israel those "whom he would" and establishing them in His eternal Word.

The history of the church in the New Testament began in the second year of Christ's ministry when in the fulfillment of Isaiah 8 and 9 Jesus ordained the twelve apostles on Mount Hattin in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (Luke 6:13; Isaiah 9:1). The fact that the twelve apostles were the first foundational pillars of the church which Jesus built is confirmed in I Corinthians 12:28: *"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles,"* and Ephesians 2:20: *"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."*

The second offices which Jesus restored in the church were the seventy elders. *"After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come"* (Luke 10:1). Together with the twelve apostles, the seventy elders represented the restored pattern of governmental oversight that characterizes church.

The work of building the church was not, however, a mere exercise in establishing an order for government. Jesus was the wise man who built His house on the rock of foundational teaching that He imparted to His disciples (Matthew 7:24, 25). His purpose for calling out men to form His church was to develop an organism that could be molded through His teachings into a perfect body that collectively would be what He was individually, the light of the world.

During the three and one-half years of His ministry Jesus taught His disciples the eternal truths of the Word of God and prepared them in spirit and in precept for the time when He called them the light of the world. Through the process of teaching He transferred to them the responsibility for maintaining truth and righteousness in the earth. Then through His death Jesus purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

## **2. The Time of the Apostles**

The governmental system of the early church continued to function after the ascension of Jesus. Peter, as spokesman for the twelve apostles, assumed leadership of the church during the transitional time between Jesus' Messiahship and the recognition of James, the Lord's brother, as the leader of the church.

In Acts 1 the apostles made choice among the number of those who were believers of one to replace Judas Iscariot. Their lot fell on Matthias who was numbered with the eleven to maintain the foundational number of twelve in the governmental pattern of the church (Acts 1:26). It was evident that the followers of Jesus recognized the importance of government to the continued existence of church. On the day of Pentecost, following the ascension of Jesus, the church was endued with power for service when the baptism of the Holy Spirit, of which John the Baptist had prophesied, was given to the one hundred and twenty believers in the upper room. Peter spoke for the church and declared the experience which they had received as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2:16-21). He continued to declare the resurrection of Christ as a fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 2:20-36).

The early church was a charismatic body, believing in and experiencing the supernatural manifestation of divine power in many signs and wonders and mighty deeds. Divine healing, the working of miracles, and even the raising of the dead were witnesses to the truth which the ministry of the church preached with authority. This witness of divine power emboldened the church in its conflict with the religious authorities of the Jewish religion and with the civil authorities of the Roman state.

In Acts 6 the church made another step in continuing the governmental order of the church when the apostles appointed seven men of wisdom to be responsible for the business of the church. These seven were also ministers of considerable ability as evidenced by the talents of Stephen and Philip (Acts 6:10). The seven were not appointed during the ministry of Jesus because He, Himself, was the manifestation of the Seven Spirits of God which the seven men of wisdom represented.

When Stephen became the first martyr of the church, Saul of Tarsus was among those who stoned him. This incident set in motion the plan of God that would bring Saul into the ministry of the early church and ultimately appoint him as the apostle to the Gentiles. A zealous student of Gamaliel, Saul's ambition for the Law of Moses brought him into conflict with the developing church. While carrying out a persecution of the church, he was smitten with blindness and instructed to join himself to the church (Acts 9).

Shortly after this time Peter was directed of God in a vision to go to Caesarea on the Mediterranean Sea to the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, whose piety had drawn the attention of God (Acts 10). It was the will of God that both Jews and Gentiles share together in the church which Jesus had established, and He confirmed His will by giving the same Holy Spirit baptism to the household of Cornelius that He had given on the day of Pentecost to the Jewish believers. Though he was a devout Jew, Peter immediately recognized the sovereignty of God in bringing the Gentiles into the church and did not hesitate to bear witness of that divine act (Acts 11).

After a number of years of ministering among the Jews, Paul and Barnabas took the message of the church to the Gentiles. They began their missionary journeys that would take them through much of the Roman Empire: As they went, they established local assemblies of the church, ordaining ministerial leaders for the people. During this time the continuing controversy over the degree to which the Gentile believers should keep the law was focused on the question of whether or not circumcision should be imposed upon them. The entire church was called to Jerusalem for a council of apostles and elders to consider that matter (Acts 15). After much disputation James, the chief bishop of the early church, made a decision established on prophecy and the will of the Holy Spirit that the Gentiles be required only to abstain from meats offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication.

Paul continued his ministry as apostle to the Gentiles with the sanction of Peter, James, and John, the pillars of the church (Galatians 2:9). He traveled throughout Asia Minor converting sinners from among the nations and establishing them in the truth of the Word of God. During this time Paul maintained his support for the governmental order of the church, even submitting to a rite of purification on the advice of James as evidence that he had not violated the law of God. Paul continued his ministry even while under arrest and imprisonment, following the will of God that he should stand before the rulers of the Roman government to testify of the work of God in his life. He finally died a martyr in Rome.

James continued to be the chief bishop of the church throughout his lifetime and was a widely-respected leader in Jerusalem. He supervised a time of great growth and expansion for the church and demonstrated his ability to bring forth a meeting of the minds of the ministers of the church in the circumcision question as well as in other areas.

Peter continued to be among the most charismatic of the apostles, being used of God in many unique ways and for many unique tasks. He also became a missionary, sharing the message of the church among many different peoples until he finally came to Rome and was martyred.

John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, was probably the greatest theologian and

visionary of the early church. By virtue of his close relationship with Jesus, he had access to knowledge from Him that the other disciples did not have. John had the most developed understanding of the nature of God and the divinity and humanity of Jesus of any of the apostles. He demonstrated this knowledge of the mystery of divinity in his gospel, in his epistles, and in the Book of Revelation. He was the only man besides Jesus who had the complete Revelation of Jesus Christ, the Vision of All (Revelation 1:1). John was the last of the apostles to die.

The other apostles that Jesus ordained ministered throughout the known world, expanding the scope of the church to include several million members. They took literally the commandment of their Lord to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Beginning with Jesus, Himself, persecution and martyrdom were characteristic of the church through its first three centuries of existence. All of the apostles except John were martyred, as was a large percentage of believers and leaders of the church through subsequent generations. The pagan Roman government was continually hostile toward the Christian believers, subjecting them to the cruelest of tortures and death.

John the Revelator was directed of the Lord to warn the church of this persecution and slaughter in Revelation 2:10: "*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days...*" The symbolic language of Revelation predicted the ten organized persecutions of the Roman Empire against the church. These persecutions began with Nero in A.D. 67 and continued until A.D. 313 when Constantine the Great issued the Edict of Milan, which provided for liberty of worship and opened the way for the proclamation of Christianity as the religion of the state of Rome.

Though the persecution of the church became so great and so consistent that literally thousands of believers were slaughtered, the church continued to expand rapidly. The more intense the persecution, the greater the growth of the church. On the basis of this phenomenon Tertullian was moved to proclaim that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.

### **3. The Apostolic Fathers (A.D. 96-150)**

Following the death of the apostles the early church began a process of gradual decline. The apostles warned of this impending apostasy. Paul declared that after his departure, grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:29). Jude urged the church to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints, noting that evil men had already crept in unawares (Jude 3, 4).

It was during this time that the church both grew in number and was used of God to establish central truths without which the faith of God could not have survived, but it was also in this time that heresy became rampant in the church and the compromise with civil authorities slowly developed. Eventually this compromise in doctrine and government caused the destruction of the early church. Immediately after the passing of the apostles from the scene of action in the church, those men who were their followers assumed the responsibility for the promotion of the church and the doctrines of Christ. These men are called the Apostolic Fathers because they were the fathers of the church who received their teaching firsthand from the apostles of Jesus. The time of their leadership in the church was from A.D. 96 to A.D. 150.

During this time the early church continued to have leadership in Jerusalem with succeeding bishops of Jerusalem assuming primacy over the affairs of the church until after A.D. 100. There was, however, a gradual dispersion of authority in the church with bishops

of various metropolitan areas asserting their independence from a central governing authority in the church.

Among the prominent apostolic fathers were Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, and Barnabas. These were devout men of great faith and faithfulness to the teachings of Christ and the apostles. They were defenders of the faith against the heretical concepts of the day that were spawned from the Hellenic culture.

Clement, a disciple of Peter, and Polycarp, a disciple of John, promoted the doctrine of justification by faith, and Polycarp insisted on maintaining the apostolic practice of Passover observance. Both expressed a tolerance for the continuation of the Judaic practices of the early church. Papias, another disciple of John and friend of Polycarp also was a strong promoter of the doctrine of the return of Christ to establish the millennial reign upon the earth. Barnabas promoted this doctrine, paralleling the millennial reign with the seventh day of man's rule over the earth.

The major heresies that the church confronted in this period of time were from the Gnostics and the Ebionites. The Gnostics promoted a concept of self-knowledge that replaced the need for justification by faith. The Ebionites promoted dependence upon the works of the law for justification. The church fathers widely fought against both of these heresies and kept them from gaining acceptance in the church.

#### **4. The Ante-Nicene Fathers (A.D. 150-311)**

After the Apostolic Fathers the church entered a time known as the ante-Nicene era, the time from A.D. 150 until the Nicene council in A.D. 325. During this time the church witnessed a shift of the center of power from Jerusalem to Rome. It saw an increase in the delineation of Episcopal government with the rise of the monarchic bishops. The ante-Nicene era was also a time for the development of creeds and rules of faith designed to fight heresy and disunity in the church. It was during this time that great controversies of doctrine arose within the church which threatened to destroy not only the church but also the knowledge of Christianity. Numerous leaders arose in the church, however, to defend the doctrines of the Scriptures and to attack the heretical concepts advanced in opposition to those doctrines.

The number of the apologists who defended the doctrines of the church to the secular world and against heathen religions from A.D. 125 until A.D. 190 included Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, Tertullian, and Theophilus of Antioch. The polemicists who fought against heretics within the church from A.D. 190 until A.D. 250 included Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Pantaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.

Justin, Tatian, and Theophilus promoted the concept of the life of Jesus and the church as a fulfillment of the words of the Old Testament prophets. Tertullian and Theophilus were fundamental thinkers in the explanation of the concept of the Trinity. Most of the apologists took strong positions against Marcion and his teaching of Gnosticism and extreme anti-Jewish dogma.

Tertullian was both an apologist and a polemicist, making learned and scholarly explanations of the teachings of the church and delivering strong denunciations of the heresies that were prominent in his day. He was the greatest writer of the ante-Nicene era. Irenaeus accomplished an important polemic work in his five books refuting Gnosticism. His work is the polemic theological masterpiece of the ante-Nicene age. Cyprian argued strongly against the primacy of the Roman episcopacy and wrote on church government and ministry. Pantaeus and Clement were the first and second superintendents of the Alexandrian School of Theology, which was a catechetical school. The most learned of the

representatives of this school were Clement and Origen. The Alexandrian school held to an allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures. The Carthegenian School, on the other hand, promoted a grammatico-historical interpretation. It was from these two backgrounds that much of the understanding of hermeneutics and exegesis used in Christianity was developed.

It was during the ante-Nicene era that the canonicity of New Testament books was established. By A.D. 180 twenty books were canonized, including the four Gospels, the Acts, the thirteen Epistles of Paul, the first Epistle of Peter, and the first Epistle of John. By A.D. 367 all twenty-seven books of the New Testament were canonized. The major criterion used in establishing the canonicity of books was their apostolicity, whether they were written by or under the instruction of an apostle of Jesus. The church today relies heavily on the decisions that the leaders of the church made during this era to establish what is considered Holy Scripture.

### **5. The Nicene Era (A.D. 311-325)**

The great controversy which swept through the church and precipitated the Nicene Council was the question of the nature of the Godhead and the divinity of Christ. The controversy had been developing since the time of the apostolic fathers, with many diverse explanations of the nature of God. The apostles and the apostolic fathers taught that both the Father and the son were God and were to be worshipped as such.

Around the end of the second century Praxaeus propounded the theory that in order to maintain the unity of God, it must be said that the Father and the Son were one and the same person. He contended that the Father Himself became incarnate, suffered, and died as Jesus Christ. He and his followers were called Patripassians (meaning that it was the Father who suffered). Tertullian was a harsh critic of Praxaeus, asserting the Son's consubstantiality with the Father, yet maintaining that they were not the same person.

During the third century Sabellius was converted to Patripassianism and expanded upon and refined the concept of the oneness of the Father and the Son, bringing also the Holy Spirit into the oneness teaching. Sabellius maintained that one God was manifested in succeeding eras as Father (in the giving of the Law), Son (in the incarnation), and Holy Spirit (in the New Testament church).

After the time of Sabellius and probably in reaction to his teaching, Arius, an ascetic priest of Alexandria, began to promote the idea that the Son was created by the Father inferior to Himself and that the Son created the Spirit. Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, along with Athanasius his deacon, was staunchly orthodox and was attacked by Arius as being a Sabellian. Athanasius in turn, developed scholarly and vitriolic polemics against Arius' Unitarianism. Athansius and Arius became the principals in such a church-wide dissension that it became apparent that the truth about the nature of Jesus and His relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit had to be established for the continued existence of true Christian faith in the earth. In A.D. 325 the emperor Constantine convened the church's first ecumenical council, the Nicene Council, to settle this issue.

The Nicene Council established the Nicene Creed, a document that sets forth in definitive terms the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity and confirms the divinity of Christ. While it did not settle the issue completely and controversy continued to rage, the Nicene Creed did establish a statement of the orthodox doctrine of the nature of God which represented a valuable victory for the Christian faith.

Another aspect of the Nicene Council represented a devastating blow to the governmental system of the church. This occurred when Constantine established himself

as the head of the church and joined the church to the state of Rome. At this point the church as an organism of theocratic government ceased to exist.

Why the church would have accepted the emperor of Rome as its head, especially when he was also titled Pontifex Maximus as the high priest of the pagan Roman religion, is a mystery. It was probably a result of the toll that the continuing persecutions of the past three centuries had brought upon the church and the contrasting peace and acceptance that the church found after Constantine proclaimed the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313. Its freedom from state-sponsored persecution and its endorsement by the emperor himself left the church vulnerable to the intrusion of Constantine into the affairs of the church; In A.D. 321 Constantine proclaimed Sunday as the day of rest throughout the Roman Empire. In A.D. 325 he issued a circular letter in which he denounced participation in Passover observance and other Judaic practices saying, "We would have nothing in common with that most hostile people, the Jews...it is our duty to have nothing in common with the murderers of the Lord."

The final death blow was delivered in A. D. 325 when Constantine arrogated to himself the leadership of the church and presided over the Council of Nicaea. The church became the church of the Roman state and ceased to be the Church of God. Though the kingdom of God (the corporate church) and the Christian faith were to continue even during the darkest of the Dark Ages, the church as an organism of theocracy for the fulfillment of Bible prophecy ceased to exist.

This was the beginning of the time when the faithful city became an harlot (Isaiah 1:21; Revelation 17, 18). The church traded the virtue of its theocratic order and purity of doctrine for the safety and power of the Roman Empire. After the Church of God ceased to exist, the Roman church began a gradual decline into heresy, human tradition, and error. Though some bright lights of righteousness and faith continued to shine in succeeding generations, Christianity became a religion of orientation toward justification by works that brought increasing secularization of religion and accompanying error.

### **C. CHRISTIAN HISTORY (A.D. 325-1903)**

Although the scriptural governmental order called church was destroyed by Constantine in A.D. 325, the kingdom of God continued to be present in the earth. On the one hand Christianity experienced triumph as great men arose to confirm the theological underpinnings of the faith. On the other hand it experienced tragedy as evil men arose to obscure many of the truths upon which experiential Christianity was founded and to bury many of the doctrines and practices that were a part of the early church.

#### **1. The Post-Nicene Fathers (A.D. 325-590)**

The Post-Nicene era was a time of creedal development in which Christianity sought to close its ranks around certain central truths. Five of the seven major ecumenical Christian councils were conducted during this time and for this purpose. These were the Nicaea I Council (A.D. 325) which settled the doctrine of the Trinity; the Constantinople I Council (A.D. 381), which asserted the personality of the Holy Spirit and the humanity of Christ; the Ephesus Council (A.D. 431), which condemned the Nestorian concept of the two natures in Christ; the Chalcedon Council (A.D. 451), which fixed the orthodox doctrine of the person of Christ as both fully divine and fully human; and the Constantinople II Council (A.D. 553), which issued anathemas against the teaching that Christ had only one nature. The Constantinople III Council, which focused on the discussion of the two wills of Christ, was held in A.D. 680; and the Nicaea II Council, which dealt with the problems of the adoration of images in worship, was conducted in A.D. 787.

Probably the most important of the post-Nicene councils was the Chalcedon Council because it established for the Christian faith the central truth that Jesus Christ was both very God and very man. By the fifth century the truth of the deity of Christ had been so promoted that many elements of Christianity no longer believed Jesus to have been human. Apollinarius attributed to Christ a human body and soul but not a human spirit-mind, thereby dividing the nature of Christ as two parts human and one part divine, but not fully either. Eutyches taught a form of monophysitism that wholly spiritualized Christ, declaring His humanity as only an appearance that disguised His divinity. Cyril on the other hand taught that Christ is complete in His deity and complete in His humanity.

The Council of Chalcedon was presided over by Leo the Great and adopted a formula of belief based on documents of Leo and Cyril that stated that Christ is "complete as to his Godhead and complete as to his manhood, truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and human flesh, consubstantial also with us as to his manhood, like unto us in all respects, yet without sin, begotten of the Father before all time according to the Godhead, in these latter days, for us and our salvation born of the virgin Mary . . . the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the peculiarity of each nature being preserved and concurring in one person . . . the same Son and only begotten divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ." The creed adopted by this council was important to Christian faith, for it preserved the fundamental nature of the priesthood of Christ as one who is touched with the infirmities and temptations of His people because He has experienced them all as one of them, very man.

The ministry of Christianity followed the pattern of the separation of the ministry from the laity into a professional clergy that had begun in the second century. Despite the fact that the ministerial gifts of Ephesians 4 were specifically given by Jesus for the purpose of equipping the saints of God to do works of ministry, the church began to develop a separate clergy and to relegate all works of ministry to that clergy.

Following the Nicene Council this trend was accelerated, and laymen were even excluded from worship in the church, essentially becoming spectators of a clerical ritual. Though women continued to be used in ministry in the Eastern Church until the fifth century, the New Testament role for women as preachers of the Word of God was abandoned. As a professional clergy developed, so also the trend toward required celibacy increased. Based on a mistaken interpretation of Paul's writings on the subject, the position of Christianity became one of believing that marriage of its clergy was not in keeping with their vows of purity.

As the church became more secularized and attained worldly power, there was a strong reaction against this intrusion on the Spiritual life of the church. The result was monasticism, a practice in which men withdrew from the world to form cloisters dedicated to asceticism, poverty, prayer, and works of service. The results of this trend toward monasticism were both positive and negative. They were positive in the fact that the withdrawal into monasteries by dedicated men of God had much to do with the expansion of knowledge in Christianity and with the preservation of the written Word of God during a time of heathen violence against anything that pertained to culture and learning. They were negative, however, in the fact that the men and women of spirit and dedication withdrew from the world, leaving it in the hands of the secular, the worldly, and the ruthless. Instead of fulfilling the commission of Christ to be the light of the world and to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, they withdrew to preserve their piety and righteousness and left the world at the mercy of Satan and his evil hordes. Though there were some who were dedicated to missionary outreach, the majority of the Christian churchmen were monastic.

The end result of this situation was the plunging of Christianity into the Dark Ages.

The most prominent of the monastic orders was founded in the sixth century by Benedict of Nursia. The Benedictine order marked an epoch in the history of monasticism by superseding all contemporary and older orders of the kind and becoming at once the most illustrious monastic order of the Roman church and the basis of its cloister life. The order began as a regimented schedule of manual labor, prayer, and meditation. In time, however, the abbots (fathers) of the monasteries came to wield greater power, and the monks became squires, scholars, and the most enterprising businessmen of their day. There were many important fathers of Christian faith during the post-Nicene era. The Latin Church produced Lactantius, Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. The Greek Church produced Eusebius, Athanasius, Basil, and Chrysostom.

Perhaps the greatest of the post-Nicene fathers was Augustine. From A.D. 395 he was Bishop of Hippo in Northern Africa for thirty-eight years until his death. Augustine labored in the Gospel and made his city the intellectual center of western Christianity by contributing extensively to the theological understanding of Christianity and emphasizing strong moral rectitude for all Christians. His writings include apologetic, polemic, theological, exegetical, and ethical works. His most famous composition is the *City of God*, a monumental work of twenty-two books which still stands as the most powerful and comprehensive production in refutation of heathenism and vindication of Christianity. It discusses the fall of heathenism and the rise of the Christian church to conquer the world for Christ.

Lactantius was probably the most learned man of his time, a contemporary of Constantine and a skilled writer and rhetorician. Hilary was a strong defender of the doctrine of the Trinity who wrote twelve books on the subject around the middle of the fourth century. Ambrose was bishop of Milan and a staunch supporter of simple, monastic life. He vigorously opposed the Arians and helped to establish the orthodoxy of trinitarianism in the western church. He also asserted the independence of the church from the state, declaring that the emperor was in the church but was not over the church.

Jerome was a scholar, defender of Christianity, and a strong supporter of monastic life. In his monastery in a limestone cave near Bethlehem, he translated the Holy Scriptures from Hebrew and Greek into Latin. A labor of more than twenty years, Jerome's undertaking put the Bible into the language of the realm. His Bible, known as the Latin Vulgate, stood as the basis of Bibles in the western world for more than a thousand years and was the sourcebook of their printing in English. Jerome declared, "He who does not know Scriptures does not know the power and wisdom of God; ignorance of the Bible is ignorance of Christ."

Eusebius was a confidant of Constantine and was one of the great historians of the church. He occupied a place of honor and power in the Nicene Council. John Chrysostom was one of the greatest preachers of the church, an expositor and orator who taught virtue and piety. He was patriarch of Constantinople and wrote *Homilies and Commentaries* and a work on the priesthood. Theodore demonstrated great skill in scriptural interpretation. Among other scriptural subjects to which he brought to bear his exegetical genius, he strongly attacked the emerging concept that Mary was the mother of God. He declared Mary bore Jesus, not the Logos; therefore, Mary was the mother of the Son of God, not the mother of God. He declared it insane to say that God was born of the Virgin; for not God, but the temple in which God dwelt was born of Mary.

The post-Nicene era also witnessed a missionary expansion of western Christianity. Some of the great missionaries were Ulfilos (missionary to the Goths of Germany), Martin

of Tours (missionary to France), Patrick (patron saint of Ireland), and Columba (apostle of Scotland). Through the efforts of these and others, the Christian faith was spread into many barbarian lands.

During the post-Nicene era there were sweeping developments in the government and liturgy of the Christian church. The Roman see gained pre-eminence with the promotion of the primacy of the bishop of Rome, a concept based on the Petrine Theory of apostolic succession in which it was asserted that Peter was bishop of Rome and head of the church and that his successors as bishop of Rome were, therefore, also heads of the church. The Petrine Theory rested on an erroneous interpretation of Matthew 16:18 when Jesus surnamed Simon as Peter and then declared that upon this rock He would build the church. The rock was the revelation of Jesus Christ, not Peter.

The liturgy of the church was modified to accommodate the pagans and heathens that it was trying to reach. Since they required a more visible means of worship, the church began to establish the veneration of angels, saints, relics, and statues. Church festivals were modified in time and in substance to coincide with and parallel the festivals of the barbarians. Many sacred truths of worship were compromised in this misguided attempt at accommodation. Marriage began to be taught as a sacrament of the church, and infant baptism was emphasized. Sacerdotalism, the belief that the substance of the ordinance of Christ is efficacious through the priestly celebrant regardless as to the condition of the communicant, gained ascendancy. The clergy and the laity were further separated in worship. There was also a growing veneration of Mary that asserted her eternal virginity and the belief that she was sinless. Acts of penance, including penitential pilgrimages, also became a significant part of the Christian church's system of righteousness.

## **2. Medieval Christianity (A.D. 590-1073)**

Politically speaking the medieval times dated from the downfallen the Roman Empire in the fifth century; however, for ecclesiastical history they began with Gregory the Great, the last of the church fathers and the first of the popes, at the close of the sixth century. The Roman civil authority had been overthrown by invading Teutonic hordes, and Christianity was becoming a Latin-Teutonic religion.

Gregory was one of the best examples of medieval Christianity. He was monastic, ascetic, and devout; hierarchical and ambitious; indifferent to classical and secular culture, but friendly to ecclesiastical learning; and full of missionary zeal in the interest of Christianity and the Roman see, which in his mind were inseparably connected. Before he became Pope of Rome, Gregory was intrigued with the mission of Christianity to England and worked extensively in that behalf. After he became pope, Gregory sent Augustan to England to establish a headquarters in Canterbury that eventually led to the conversion of the English king to Christianity. Throughout his papacy Gregory promoted the spread of Christianity throughout all of Europe- Gregory organized the ritual of the church and introduced a new mode of chanting that was subsequently called the Gregorian chant.

He was uncompromising in his attacks on Christian heretics and schismatics; however, he was particularly liberal towards the Jews, allowing their unrestricted use of their synagogues and condemning forced baptism. Gregory had a particularly unique view of the authority of Christianity. Though he was bishop of Rome, metropolitan over the bishops of the Roman territory, and patriarch of Italy, he did not claim primacy over all the Christian church. He stood between the patriarchal and the papal system, regarding the four patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem as coordinate leaders of the church under Christ. He maintained a running battle with the patriarch of

Constantinople over the latter's use of the title "universal bishop." He refused to accept the title "universal pope" when others attempted to ascribe it to him; however, there can be no question that he claimed and exercised the authority and oversight over the whole church, even in the East, as much as he had the opportunity and power. It was around the time of Gregory that Mohammed founded the religion of Islam, which is one of the three monotheistic religions of the world. An austere and rigid discipline, Islam featured the concept of spreading its message on the edge of the sword. During and after the time of Mohammed (A.D. 570-632) hordes of devotees to Islam, burning with feverish zeal, swept across the domain of the Eastern Church, slaughtering thousands of Christians. They also overwhelmed northern Africa, long a bastion of Christian piety and leadership, and they proceeded into Spain. The effect of Islam upon the Eastern Church was devastating, with Christians and leaders slaughtered and sanctuaries destroyed.

Islam featured as one of its holy cities, along with Mecca and Medina, the city of Jerusalem, especially the site of Mount Moriah, from which Mohammed supposedly ascended into heaven. This claim to Jerusalem further complicated the religious tensions of the Middle East, for Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans all claimed the Holy City. In succeeding generations Christians and Mohammedans alternated in attacking Jerusalem with religious zeal to free the Holy City from the infidels of the other faith.

In the eighth century the papacy became allied with the monarchy of the Franks and thereby succeeded in an extension of the power and scope of Christianity. The apex of this alliance was seen during the reign of Charlemagne (Charles the Great), the Frankish ruler who was crowned emperor of the Romans by the pope and whose ambition it was to unite all Teutonic and Latin peoples under his temporal rule in close union with the spiritual dominion of the pope.

Charlemagne began the revival of imperialism in Europe. He was to the West what Constantine had been to the East, a dominating civil power with close ties to the Christian church. One of the greatest military leaders in history, Charlemagne led or directed fifty-three military campaigns throughout Europe and expanded his empire and consequently the influence of Christianity. His continuing interest in and promotion of knowledge was a bright light in an age of general ignorance and barbarism, and it brought about a cultural renaissance.

After the decline of the Frankish empire, the Holy Roman Empire was established in 962 by Otho, a Saxon prince. This civil power, which is satirically called neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire, lasted until 1806, when it was destroyed by Napoleon Bonaparte. Under it the papacy maintained great control and it established the imperialistic mindset of middle and modern Western Europe.

Between the ninth and the eleventh centuries a widening rift developed between the eastern and western churches. The division was one of theology and government. The Eastern Church believed that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and not from the Father and the Son as the western church did. The Eastern Church did not believe in the Western church's doctrine of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. The Eastern Church permitted the marriage of the lower clergy, while the western church did not. The Eastern Church preserved the right of laymen to receive the consecrated bread of the Eucharist dipped in wine while the Western church withdrew the cup entirely from the laity. In government the Western church proclaimed the universal authority and infallibility of the pope while the Eastern Church practiced a patriarchal oligarchy.

There were three chief causes of the separation of the eastern and western churches: (1) the politico-ecclesiastical rivalry of the patriarch of Constantinople backed by

the Byzantine empire and the bishop of Rome in connection with the German empire; (2) the growing centralization and overbearing conduct of the Latin church in and through the papacy; and (3) the static condition of the Greek church compared with the progressive nature of the Latin church.

Another event of the times which drove the wedge between east and west and precluded the possibility of their reconciliation was the effect of the Crusades upon the Greek Church. The Crusades developed when European churchmen and civil authorities who had been warring with one another heeded the advice of Pope Urban II in A.D. 1095: "Let Christians stop shearing each other and go against the common enemy of the faith." Military forces, headed by knights who had been inducted in religious ceremonies, turned their attention to the quest of ridding the Holy Land of the Mohammedan infidels. In their travels toward Jerusalem, these armies passed through Constantinople, where they vented their lust for violence and debauchery on the Greek Church that had already been severely weakened by the Islamic hordes. Sanctuaries were desecrated and destroyed, and Greek Christians were tortured and defiled. All this evil was perpetrated in the name of God and the Roman pope.

The tenth and eleventh centuries were truly the Dark Ages of Christian history. Clerical immorality reached its lowest depth, and Rome, itself, was a den of iniquity, with the popes themselves set as the worst examples. Every sort of debauchery was practiced, often in public, and the church and the people were defiled to the fullest extent. So ended the first period of medieval Christian history in a dark state.

### **3. The Middle Ages (A.D. 1049-1517)**

The second period of medieval Christian history begins with the rise of Hildebrand and ends with the reformation of Martin Luther. The first three centuries of this time were the time when the Roman church and the papacy rose from the low estate of weakness and corruption that characterized the Dark Ages to the highest power and influence over the nations of Europe. It was an age of conquest, featuring the Crusades that won and then lost the Holy Land. It was a time of scholasticism with the beginning of great universities and the determination of great minds of the day to prove every article of faith. It was an era of great architectural achievements, with the construction of some of the world's greatest cathedrals.

Hildebrand was a Benedictine monk who mourned the pitiful state of the papacy that was manipulated by the emperors. When Bruno of Toul was appointed to the Papacy by Emperor Henry III, Hildebrand advised Bruno not to accept the papacy from the emperor but to await election by the clergy. It was in this action that he asserted the principle of the supremacy of the Roman church over the State. From that time through the next five popes Hildebrand was the inspiration behind the papacy. Finally Hildebrand, himself, was elevated to the papacy as Gregory VII, and he became the greatest of all the popes. From the beginning of his service to the church, it was Gregory's determination to reform the clergy by destroying two universal evils practiced by the clergy, the traffic in ecclesiastical dignities and offices (called Simony) and the concubinage of the priests. Both had been practiced openly and without shame by evil men during the Dark Ages.

Gregory brought the greatest power in history to the Roman church. His authority even over civil rule was great. The classic example of Gregory's power was seen when Henry IV defied Gregory when the pope enjoined celibacy upon the clergy and abolished the investiture of laymen in his effort to reform the clergy. Gregory simply excommunicated the emperor and released his subjects. Devoid of subjects, Henry found himself barefoot,

doing penance in the snow in order to recover his kingdom.

Gregory's requirement of celibacy upon the clergy was designed to remove the ministry of the church from social ties and concern for the support of families to a positioned independence, with no home or aim but the Roman church. This increased the power of the papacy immensely and was probably an underlying reason, along with his desire to rid the clergy of rampant immorality, for Gregory's stand on required celibacy.

The idea for the First Crusade was Gregory's, even though it was actually begun by his second successor, Urban II. The crusade was designed to free the Holy Land from the Mohammedan infidels, and it succeeded in doing so in A.D. 1095, only to find the land again taken by the followers of Islam. The Second Crusade was a lay crusade of French peasants, but they died in defeat and slavery. The Third Crusade, which took place nearly a century later, was called the Kings' Crusade because it was led by three of the most powerful princes of Europe, emperor Frederick Barbarossa, Philip Augustus, king of France, and Richard the Lion-hearted, king of England. This was the most famous of the crusades.

The supremacy of the papacy continued with the reigns of Alexander III (1150-1181) and Innocent III (1198-1216). The attendance of the popes to the promotion of morality in the clergy was received with acclaim and prompted a revival of monasticism. Two important orders of friars were begun during this time, the Franciscan Order founded by St. Francis of Assisi, and the Dominican Order founded by St. Dominic.

The Dominican Order produced Thomas Aquinas, the greatest theologian in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. Thomas was an imposing figure of enormous intellect. He was a prolific writer and produced works on a staggering range of subjects, including a complete theology of the Roman church.

The posture of Christianity toward knowledge in the Middle Ages was characterized in scholasticism, which was founded in the writings of Augustine and Aristotle. The in-depth studies in logic, philosophy, metaphysics, and theology of such men as Thomas Aquinas and Anselm of Canterbury resulted in the establishment of some of the great universities, notably Bologna, Paris, and Oxford.

Worship in the Middle Ages featured the erection of elaborate Gothic and Norman cathedrals. Trained choirs replaced congregational singing as the music of the church became elaborate. Another important aspect of Roman Catholic worship was the introduction of the rosary by Peter the Hermit in 1090.

The restoration of intellectual and cultural pursuits in education and the arts that came to characterize the latter part of the Middle Ages was called the Renaissance. Great efforts were put forth to encourage the development of music, literature, painting, sculpture, and the like. Many inventions were brought forth from the world of science which was given an open door by the scholasticism of the church and was no longer regarded as evil. A corresponding spiritual awakening was taking place also as men of God began to question the unbridled power and anti-biblical practices of the Roman church.

With all the power wielded by the papacy and the expansion of the Roman church through the Dominican and Franciscan friars, there were many excesses and abuses of power. The Inquisition was brought to bear against those who did not give their allegiance to the pope. The Jews in particular were persecuted, tortured in the most inhuman ways and slaughtered by the thousands for not renouncing Judaism and accepting Christianity. The Inquisition was a thoroughly papal institution, beginning with Innocent III and continuing through Boniface VIII. Church leaders promoted the idea that it was the duty of the church to search out and punish heretics and infidels. The church councils advocated

capital punishment for them, and popes insisted on it. An elaborate system of rules for the Inquisition was developed, and multiplied thousands of innocent people endured its atrocities.

In the midst of all of these abuses of power and the purpose and intent of Christianity, cries arose within the Roman Catholic Church for reform. There were official efforts on the part of the church at reform, including councils at Pisa, Constance, Basel, Ferrara, and Florence in the first half of the fifteenth century; however, these councils succeeded more in healing schism than in bringing reforms to the Roman church.

There were also other voices for reform in that time, some of whom were forerunners of the Protestant Reformation. John Wycliffe (A.D. 1328-1384) fought against the doctrine of transubstantiation and produced the first New Testament translation into English. John Huss (A.D. 1369-1415), a martyr in the cause of reform, was the founder of the United Brethren. Girolamo Savonarola (A.D. 1452-1498) preached widely and strongly against the excesses of the papacy.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the stage had been set for a profound new movement, the Protestant Reformation that would restore the truth of justification by faith, remove Christianity from bondage to the excesses of the papacy, and return piety and faithfulness to the call of God to the ministry.

#### **4. The Protestant Reformation**

The Reformation marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times. Starting from religion, it gave a thrust to every forward movement and made Protestantism the chief force of modern civilization. The renaissance of art, literature, and music was given new dimension with the advent of Protestantism, and the way into a new era of progress for all mankind was pioneered by holy men of zeal and loyalty to the fundamental truths of the Word of God that make men free.

Romanism became static and opposed to the reformation because of its dogma of papal absolutism and papal infallibility begun by the Council of Trent and completed by the Vatican Council of 1870. The Reformation brought to Protestantism correction of many of the errors of the Roman Catholic Church, including the papacy, the worship of saints and relics, transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the mass, prayers and masses for the dead, works of supererogation, purgatory, indulgences, the system of monasticism with its perpetual vows and ascetic practices, and many other superstitious rites and ceremonies.

Protestantism revived and developed the Augustinian doctrines of sin and grace; proclaimed the sovereignty of divine mercy in man's salvation, the sufficiency of the Scriptures as a rule of faith, and the sufficiency of Christ's merit as a source of justification; asserted the right of direct access to the Word of God and the throne of grace without human mediators; secured Christian freedom from bondage of works; and substituted social morality for monastic asceticism and simple, spiritual worship for imposing ceremonialism that addresses the senses and imagination rather than the intellect and the heart.

The Reformation began simultaneously in Germany and Switzerland and swept through France, Holland, Scandinavia, Hungary, England, and Scotland. After the seventeenth century it spread to North America and through commercial and missionary enterprise to every Dutch and English colony. It brought a revival of the experiential Christianity of the early church in which the ministry of the Word of God informed the intellect, stirred the emotions, and formed the will of those who heard it.

Martin Luther was a Roman Catholic priest who performed his duties with great

loyalty. He became a professor at the University of Wittenberg, where he lectured on scholastic philosophy and explained Aristotelian dialectics and physics. In time the conscientious Luther became incensed at the Roman church's evil practice of the sale of indulgences, which became a license for the purchaser to sin. It was in outrage at this practice that he followed an impulse and nailed ninety-five Latin Theses on the subject of indulgences to the door of the castle-church at Wittenberg.

The consequences of Luther's attempt at internal reform in the church which he represented as priest were his immediate rebuke by Pope Leo X and his excommunication three years later. With this action the Protestant reformation was set in motion in Germany.

Luther subsequently campaigned long and hard against popery and the traditions that Rome accepted above the Scriptures. He wrote a book entitled, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, which attacked many of these traditions. His loyalty to the Word of God against any invasion of human tradition has been encapsulated in the phrase, "Solo Scriptura," which means, the Scriptures only.

One of Luther's prominent phrases was "Sola Fide," a statement of his belief in justification by faith only. A part of his awakening at Wittenberg had been Romans 1:17: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith." This scripture was in stark contrast to Rome's justification by the sale of indulgences. Romans 5:1 became the clarion call of the reformation from Luther: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..." Luther's emphasis of this fundamental principle of experiential Christianity was the beginning of the process of restoration of the truths of the New Testament church.

Luther's most able assistant was Philip Melanchthon, a man of great talent as a scholar and theologian. Melanchthon became the theologian of the Lutheran reformation, setting forth its doctrine. He was among the most important men in the development of the Protestant Reformation in Germany. Luther's untiring efforts in promotion of the reformation produced the Lutheran Church which soon was sponsored by the state of Germany.

Simultaneously with the development of the reformation in Germany, reformation was taking place in Switzerland. Huldreich Zwingli made outstanding theological contributions to the entire Protestant Reformation in general and to the Swiss reformation in particular. He sought to bring about reform through democratic law, teaching against the sale of indulgences, priestly celibacy, and popery. He set forth one of the earliest statements of Protestant faith, his "Sixty-Seven Conclusions." Zwingli helped give the Reformation legal status in Switzerland through democracy.

During this time the Anabaptist movement was begun by Menno Simons, from whom the Mennonites and Brethren movements came. The Anabaptist movement was the forerunner of the modern Baptist movement. While the mode of baptism was not a point of dispute, the fact that the Anabaptists required the rebaptism of those who would become members of the true church stirred the emotions and ire of all those who were not associated with them, including the Protestant reformers. The Anabaptists advocated total separation of church and state.

Shortly after Zwingli died, John Calvin came into prominence in Switzerland. Calvin was the father of Presbyterianism, its doctrine and government. He was one of the greatest writers and theologians of Protestantism, and his work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, is a manual of reformed teaching. A unique quality of the teaching of Calvin and the reformers was their emphasis on the democratic process in civil and religious affairs. It was this emphasis that had a great impact upon the ideas of government that came to the fore in colonial America and led to the establishment of a democracy under God in the

United States.

Nothing characterized Protestantism more than the importance that it attached to preaching. The seventh article of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 defines the church as "the congregation of the saints in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered." Some time later John Calvin wrote: "Where the Word is heard with reverence and the sacraments are not neglected there we discover... an appearance of the church."

The reformation spread to England in the time of Henry VIII. While the king's motive for sundering the relationship between the Church of England and the papacy was an impure desire for divorce and remarriage on unscriptural grounds, the end result was a reformation in England and Scotland that was led first by John Knox (1513-1572) and later by James Arminius (1560-1609). Knox spent time in Geneva with Calvin and became thoroughly Calvinistic. He returned to Scotland and established Scottish Presbyterianism. Arminius was influenced by much of Calvin's teaching initially, but his teaching reacted against Calvinism's unconditional predestination, limited atonement, total depravity, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of saints. While Calvinism teaches the predestination of divine sovereignty and free grace, Arminism emphasizes human responsibility that extends the grace of God to all men on the condition of their faith. Arminius' theology became the rule for the Dutch Reformed Church and the Anglican church under the Stuarts. It assumed new vigor in the Methodist Revival and formed a theological foundation for the Holiness and Pentecostal revivals.

The reformation in England also gave rise to the Puritans, Separatists, and Congregationalists who reacted to the pomp and ceremony of the Anglican church with the promotion of simple worship and extreme piety and devotion. These movements also were brought to America and had much to do with the American Revolution and the establishment of the United States of America.

The American colonies were founded by people who were seeking for religious freedom. They included Puritans, Anglicans, Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers, and others. Each of these movements was produced by the Reformation and was brought to America by dedicated believers. The colonies varied in their predominant worship, with different churches being more prominent in different areas. This condition gave rise to the promotion of freedom of religion in the Constitution of the United States of America and the denial of any official church of the state in its Bill of Rights.

While many of the leaders of the American revolution and the establishment of the United States were deists and even agnostics, many of them were also dedicated churchmen in the tradition of Protestantism. The masses of people in the colonies featured a strong desire for obedience to the will and laws of God. There was a religious fervor that from time to time exploded into the flames of revival.

## **5. Revivals In American Protestantism**

The first great revival in Protestantism began with John and Charles Wesley in the eighteenth century. John Wesley was an Anglican priest, who was zealous for the Word of God and for purity and holiness. Wesley received a crisis experience himself on Aldersgate Street in London in 1738. While reading Luther's preface to the epistle to the Romans, Wesley felt his heart "strangely warmed" as the meaning of the reformer's doctrine of justification by faith touched his soul. While Luther and the other reformers accepted justification by faith by intellectual assent, Wesley experienced a profound feeling.

After their conversion, John and Charles Wesley began to preach that the Scriptures taught a life of perfection in which holiness and sanctification could be achieved by the action of the Holy Spirit upon the human will that actually rooted out the nature of sin. This was the doctrine of sanctification as a second definite work of grace. This teaching brought a flame of revival that swept across England and, even to a greater degree, across America. With the able help of George Whitefield and Francis Asbury, the Wesley Brothers promoted and fanned the flames of revival that brought great changes in the lives of thousands of Americans. Wesley declared to his colleagues in the ministry, "You have nothing to do but save souls." It has been said that except for John Calvin, there was not a man of greater dedication with more abundant self-denial and fruitful apostolic labors in Protestant Christianity than John Wesley.

In the nineteenth century the Holiness Revival swept across the United States. Great preachers like Charles G. Finney and Horace Bushnell openly advocated the creation of excitement in order to attract the attention of the unconverted. In the late nineteenth century there was not a greater evangelist than D. L. Moody, a man who preached the gospel with but one center: God's saving act in Jesus Christ, and with but one goal: the conversion and salvation of the sinner. The dedication and fervor of the holiness and Baptist revivalists of the late nineteenth century set the spiritual and theological stage for the unfolding of the Pentecostal revival of the twentieth century.

A manifestation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking with tongues was received by some two hundred people of the Christian Union in western North Carolina in 1896. Four years later on the first day of the twentieth century the baptism of the Holy Spirit was received in Topeka, Kansas, under the ministry of Charles Parham. This incident is recognized as the spark that ignited the flame of the Pentecostal revival that swept across the United States and other parts of the world. One of Parham's disciples, James Seymour, carried the message of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to Los Angeles, California, where the Azusa Street Mission became a focal point for the subsequent fires of revival. There were rapid successions of outpourings of this experience throughout the United States, particularly in California and in the Southeast. Men and women who had experienced the sanctification and holiness produced by the Methodist and Holiness revivals were seeking a deeper experience with God, a duplication of the Pentecostal experience of the first century church. They began to receive it in ever-increasing numbers.

Pentecostals were at first widely persecuted because of many of the excesses in which they indulged in their zeal for spiritual power with God. Later the Spirit of God began to bring organization to the experience through such movements as the Assemblies of God, the Four Square Church, and the Church of God in Christ, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, and the Church of God. With greater organization and definition the Pentecostal experience became more tolerated.

Perhaps due to the persecution that it had endured, Pentecostalism by and large became introverted and failed to promote the experience that it represented to the masses. With the Pentecostals withdrawn into their denominational shells, the Holy Spirit began a new work in the 1960's in which people of all denominations began to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This work was called the Charismatic Movement, the restoration of the charisms, or gifts, of the Holy Spirit to Christians of all faiths. Despite some excesses that paralleled those of early Pentecostalism, the Charismatic Movement accomplished a great task for the work of God in the last days of bringing millions of people into the experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the operation of the gifts of the Spirit. The Charismatic Movement, together with traditional Pentecostalism, has vaulted the number of those who

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profess the Pentecostal experience of speaking with tongues into one of the largest segments of the Christian community in the world.

An important aspect of this work of bringing the baptism of the Holy Spirit to people of all denominations is the prophetic work that is in the process of being accomplished that will bring unity to the spiritual kingdom of God and eventual unity of the faith of God. The beginning of this work is the endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). The eventual result of this positive ecumenical effort will be unity in the Christian community.

It was the Reformation from Roman Catholicism and the subsequent Methodist, Holiness, and Pentecostal revivals that came to Protestant Christianity that prepared the way and set the stage for the restoration of the Church of God in the last days. The organism for the government of God's people and for the fulfillment of Bible prophecy was to be resurrected in the fires of revival.

## **D. THE RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD**

(1903-present) The restoration of The Church of God was a prophetic work that was to accompany the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days. Just as the Temple of Solomon had been destroyed by Babylon and had been rebuilt by Zerubbabel, so the spiritual temple of lively stones that was built up as a habitation for God by the Lord Jesus Christ was destroyed by Babylonian Rome and was to be restored in the last days by men of the same faith and zeal as Zerubbabel and Joshua.

### **1. Resurrection (1903)**

According to prophecy the church was ordained to arise from the grave of tradition imposed upon it by the Babylonian system to be restored in the last days among the Gentiles (Isaiah 52:1; 60:1-3). This event occurred on June 13, 1903, in Cherokee County, North Carolina, when a prophet named A. J. Tomlinson found the body of people whom God had chosen to be the resurrecting Church of God. It was in this same year that the Wright Brothers flew the first airplane, an event that was a material witness to what God was doing spiritually (Isaiah 60:1,8).

A. J. Tomlinson was a colporteur for the American Bible Society, distributing Bibles and religious literature throughout the Southeastern United States. He had printed and distributed his first publication called "Samson's Foxes." At this time Tomlinson had founded an orphanage in Culbertson, North Carolina. God began to move upon him to find the body of people who would be the church in the last days. After investigating many groups, he scripturally determined the one that God had chosen. It was the remains of a small union of churches which in 1886 had become an association known as the Christian Union under the direction of R. G. Spurling. This was the group that had received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 1886. This fellowship had lost adherents because of heresy and fanaticism, and it had become only a small group at Camp Creek. In 1902 the name was changed from Christian Union to The Holiness Church at Camp Creek when A. J. Tomlinson was moved by God to approach them for fellowship. The people had met on the evening on June 12, 1903, to search the Scriptures and give themselves to prayer in seeking God's will for that time.

On the morning of June 13, 1903, Prophet Tomlinson climbed the mountain now known as Prayer Mountain in Fields of the Wood, Cherokee County, North Carolina, to pray for God's guidance in making this prophetic move. He thereby became the man who fulfilled Jeremiah 30:21 ("Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the

Lord."), the purpose of which was to bring about the restoration of the temple of God and the city of Jerusalem, a prophetic type of the church.

The morning of June 13, 1903, became a notable prophetic date. After Tomlinson had "prayed and prevailed," he was instructed of the Lord to join himself to The Holiness Church at Camp Creek with the understanding that that church would be the Church of God of the Bible. Tomlinson said of this event, "This gives a description of what took place that so well corresponds with the prophecy: 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the lord is risen upon thee!' - Isaiah 60:1. And please notice that the statement was not made to indicate that it is *going to be* the Church of God, but that *it is* the Church of God. This corresponds perfectly with prophecy and while this was going on in the 'land of the sky' and where the springs of water flowed, as well as in the 'fields of the wood' so named by David around a thousand years before Christ, the mighty Wright Brothers were laboring hard on the sand dunes in the opposite corner of the state (North Carolina). Now this corresponds with our scripture because the first of the chapter commanded the church to 'arise shine' while the wings and flying are not mentioned until the eighth verse. So apparent was Tomlinson's anointed leadership that he was immediately made pastor of the little body, and he eventually was recognized as God's chosen leader. Under his guidance the church began to grow until it became necessary to convene a General Assembly consisting primarily of the ministry. This first assembly was conducted January 26- 27, 1906, at the home of J. C. Murphy. The church began to experience growth, and church business began to take shape. In 1907 the name of the church was changed from The Holiness Church at Camp Creek to Church of God.

## **2. The Church In Infancy (1903-1922)**

A.J. Tomlinson was no longer merely pastor of the local church but was recognized as General Moderator of the organization in 1909. In 1920 the title of General Moderator was changed to General Overseer. Also in 1920 the first official publication of the Church of God, *The Church of God Evangel*, was published. A. J. Tomlinson's God-given appointment became so apparent that in 1914 after eight years of reappointment as General Overseer by acclamation of the assembly, his position was acknowledged as perpetual. Between 1914 and 1919 Tomlinson led the church in establishing a school of ministry and orphanages. During this time he also established the New Testament pattern of government in the church with twelve elders, seven, and seventy.

In 1919 the church began to drift into a democracy and was headed toward disruption and eventual reformation. A democracy in government was ultimately attained by the year 1922 when a constitution was drawn up, which in effect subjugated A. J. Tomlinson, God's anointed prophet, to the full control and limitation dictated by a "Supreme Judges Court of Justice. " Tomlinson first approved of this constitution until he recognized that it was a device against theocratic government. He then made every effort to correct the error that had crept into the church. This situation precipitated chaos which took on many forms as Tomlinson's words made clear: "I am afraid God has been plaguing us to bring us back to our senses. Nearly all of the churches have had more or less trouble this year in one way or another. Scarcely one has escaped. And to my knowledge this has been the direct cause of some trouble, and in other instances it has been the indirect cause of trouble."

A full account of situations in the viewpoints of both factions in the dispute over the government of the church can be studied in the *Cyclopedic Index of Assembly Minutes* (White Wing Press, Cleveland, Tennessee) and *Like a Mighty Army* (Church of God

Publishing House, Cleveland, Tennessee). Due to the lack of organization in the financial affairs of the church, much suspicion and doubt began to be generated in regard to the General Overseer's office. A.J. Tomlinson had assumed full responsibility for the management of financial disbursements. It became such a monumental task that he was unable to operate it efficiently and systematically while carrying out his responsibilities as General Overseer. Due to the lack of thorough accounting records and the necessity of subsidizing one department from another, he was charged primarily with misappropriation of funds. No conviction, however, could be obtained either from the church tribunal or from civil courts. The fact remains that A. J. Tomlinson was guilty only of failing to organize and operate an efficient financial system. So, as every major event of the New Testament church was of prophetic significance and fulfillment, so it was with the last day's church. When A. J. Tomlinson was impeached on June 21, 1923, the first reformation of the Church of God which was to take place in this day was effected in partial fulfillment of Zechariah 13:8.

### **3. The Post-Reformation Administration of A. J. Tomlinson (1922-1943)**

A.J. Tomlinson was stripped of his recognition from man and his position as General Overseer of the body which he had served faithfully for twenty years; however, he was not stripped of his anointing from God. He courageously stood for theocratic government and his God-given appointment to lead God's people in prophecy. This he did with tenacity and vigor. With the torch of truth he stepped out to reform the church by a principle well supported in Jeremiah 18:1-11.

Under Tomlinson's leadership the church began to flourish again. The years between 1923 and 1933 were filled with the bitter and the sweet. On September 15, 1923, the Church of God began to publish a new periodical entitled, The White Wing Messenger. While being persecuted and prosecuted by the opposition forces from the former denomination from which Tomlinson had reformed the church, the Church of God also realized financial and numerical growth. More important was the continued increase of insight into the Word of God and prophetic truth which was brought forth by the leadership of A.J. Tomlinson.

A major step in the fulfillment of prophecy was taken by the church in 1933. The church flag was revealed according to Psalm 60:4. A primitive design was drawn up, presented to the General Assembly, and accepted as the official flag of the Church of God.

The year 1939 is significant in that in this year a young minister by the name of Grady R. Kent was kidnapped by a mob and beaten severely. The beating was attributed to his successful revivals, in the latest of which some two hundred people had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Egan, Georgia. Later, this man was to become the anointed prophet of God and eventually the Chief Bishop of The Church of God.

Kent was not an educated man, but his inspirations and clear insight into prophecy soon became evident. After his terrible persecution, A. J. Tomlinson called him to Cleveland, Tennessee, to pastor the local church. He had such outstanding success and vision that Tomlinson took him into confidence in many prophetic passages of the Scriptures. Tomlinson began to see the need of establishing a new area of effort in the church and also recognized the man to head it up. The Church Prophecy Markers Association (C.P.M.A.) was formed and accepted by the church in 1941. Not until 1943 did Tomlinson appoint Grady R. Kent to head this department and to work at the perfection of the church. Kent records the following account of his appointment: "On the evening of October 2, 1943, after leaving his office to go home, A. J. Tomlinson succumbed. However,

fifteen minutes before leaving his office, he appointed me as General Secretary of the Markers Association and in the additional office of working at the perfecting of the Church of God."

The death of A. J. Tomlinson was a great loss to the church, the community, and the world. He was eulogized by his friends and foes alike. The President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, sent his expression of condolences and regret to the church at the loss of this giant of spiritual leadership. Tomlinson was one of the spiritual leaders who were instrumental in the overspread of Pentecostalism in the twentieth century; however, along with his message of the Pentecostal blessing he brought a revelation of the restored church as an organism for fulfilling Bible prophecy.

#### **4. The M.A. Tomlinson Administration (1943-1957)**

After the passing of A. J. Tomlinson, his younger son, Milton, was selected to fill the office of the General Overseer. He was not, however, an influential man within the church at the time of his appointment, and he greatly lacked the fortitude of leadership which his father possessed. The reasons for his selection are rather obscure, and an unclear account of the event is given in the *Cyclopedic Index of Assembly Minutes*.

M. A. Tomlinson had a reputation as an honorable man, and he sought to keep the church involved in the expansion of its ministry throughout the world. From 1943 until 1948 he led the church as General Overseer with the support of those who promoted theocratic government. While he lacked the charisma of others, he administered the business of the church well and presided over its continued growth. In 1948, however, his lack of strength to manifest leadership of the church in theocratic order manifested itself in his public acceptance of the General Assembly as the highest authority of the church. In essence he accepted in a functional democracy the very system which A. J. Tomlinson had rejected as unscriptural and not in keeping with theocratic government.

During the time of M. A. Tomlinson's leadership, the church did not, however, lack for prophetic leadership. Grady R. Kent was anointed of God to reveal prophecy and to work at fulfilling A. J. Tomlinson's prophetic vision.

Since the early 1930's Kent had had a vision of the general characteristics of God's prophetic work for the last days. He had known that the church had to be established in the mountains in a place that would be known as *Fields of the Wood*, a fact that was typified in the Old Testament by the fact that the ark of the covenant was found in the fields of the wood in David's day (Psalm 132:6). Kent and A. J. Tomlinson shared intensely in these revelations, and the suggestion of memorializing the spot where Tomlinson had joined the church and initiated its arise, shine, according to Isaiah 60:1, was presented to the Assembly. Under the direction of Grady R. Kent, a massive project was constructed to mark the place of the arise, shine of the church among the Gentiles.

After 1948 Bishop Kent and the C.P.M.A. virtually led the church. He began to preach the airplane as a fulfillment of prophecy, noting its parallel development with that of the church according to Isaiah 60:1, 8. Kent's preaching became so forceful and persuasive that in 1948 the first airplane was purchased for the Church of God to fulfill prophecy. While other religious movements had used airplanes for transportation, none had promoted a prophetic program through their use.

The airplane program added new life and greater development to the church. Eventually there were more than two hundred pilots and over one hundred aircraft. Public airport demonstrations were conducted throughout the United States and foreign countries demonstrating this fulfillment of prophecy and attracting thousands of people to hear the

message of salvation and the restoration of the church.

The church still had legal conflicts with the Church of God from which it had reformed. Both groups were using the name Church of God, and mail and finances were consequently being confused. Eventually the church was prosecuted in Sessions Court, and in 1953 the name of the church was changed from Church of God to Church of God of Prophecy.

In 1956, Bishop Kent, with several pilots and other personnel, flew with nine single-engine airplanes to the Caribbean Islands. Kent declared this to be a fulfillment of Isaiah 60:9: "*Surely the isles shall wait for me.*" These men hazarded their lives, but the news of the prophetic trip brought wide recognition to the church.

The work of Grady R. Kent in the written vision in Fields of the Wood was also declared throughout the country and the world in the news media. The pattern for Kent's construction in Fields of the Wood was according to the city of God in Revelation 21. Many rejoiced in the ministry of this man of God, and their understanding was opened by his many unorthodox manners of demonstrating the Word of God. He was a colorful man, great in knowledge. His effectiveness and leadership were second to none of his peers. Eventually it became evident that his insight into the Word of God superseded any other man in the church.

Along with his recognition from the people as a leader in the knowledge of the Word of God and spirituality, Kent also drew the resentment and jealousy of many of the officials of the church. From the expression of his personal convictions and because of his ability to solve the mysteries of the Book of Revelation, some supporters began to refer to him as being in the spirit and power of John the Revelator. Because of this recognition, he was widely attacked by fellow bishops.

Opposition did not seem to deter Kent's determination to establish the revelation in the hearts of men. He was requested by many of his peers to compromise his message and to discontinue his open declarations. It was their feeling that his interpretation that certain passages of Ezekiel which spoke of cherubim actually predicted airplanes was too absolute. He did not submit to these pressures, however, and continued to preach what God had revealed to him. These men were left with no alternative except to begin to legislate Kent into submission.

The Church of God of Prophecy had formed what was called the "Questions and Subjects Committee," which served in effect for the formulation of doctrine and teachings of the church. This committee rendered forth the legislative tool which eventually became the means of disposing of Kent. At the General Assembly in 1956, the committee brought forth the following resolution: "The church does not endorse attempts by its ministers to identify themselves or other ministers as the Two Witnesses identified in Revelation 11. Neither does it approve of anyone indicating that he is John the Revelator." This was clearly designed to ensnare Kent. So subtle was its execution that it was passed before anyone could oppose it; therefore, it received no immediate opposition.

From September, 1956, until the early part of 1957, Kent was in the valley of decision as to what must be done. He continued to carry out his duties with vigor. The ruling of the Assembly did not, however, lessen the growing opinions that Kent was in the spirit and power of John the Revelator.

In January, 1957, while in a revival in Waycross, Georgia, Kent was inspired to write his testimony, put it into print, and circulate it. In brief, it was an autobiography of his spiritual life containing incidents of peril which he encountered for the Gospel's sake which had brought him to the place where he then was. He also declared his many works of

prophetic fulfillment such as Fields of the Wood and the airplane program. He also for the first time by printed page openly declared himself to be in the spirit and power of John the Revelator. In effect he issued an open challenge to the ruling of the doctrinal committee. Bishop Kent's opposers were more than anxious to take up the gauntlet and dispose of whom they considered the enemy. Kent was called into question for his actions and was brought before the General Overseer M. A. Tomlinson. Tomlinson asked him to recall and cease distribution of his written testimony and to make immediate apologies or to submit his resignation.

Kent's heart was heavy with the weight of such a decision. Since he was not fully aware of all that God was then doing to bring about the fulfillment of Zechariah 13:8 (Zechariah's third part), it seemed for him an impossible decision. To leave the church was not his desire, but to deny his revelation was impossible. The following day he wrote his resignation and signed it on the cross marker in Fields of the Wood, the project which he had developed and for which he had long worked. The following day, February 13, 1957, he delivered his resignation.

### **5. The Grady R. Kent Administration (1957-1964)**

In due course of a few days some three hundred people made a decision to stand with Bishop Kent in his convictions. This group met at the Cherokee Hotel in Cleveland, Tennessee, on February 17, 1957, to reorganize and reform the church according to a more perfect pattern. Inasmuch as M.A. Tomlinson's submission to the General Assembly in 1948 had left the office of the anointed leader vacant, and inasmuch as God had chosen Grady R. Kent to fill this office, Bishop Kent declared himself on the authority of the Scriptures to be the Chief Bishop of The Church of God. Seven Auxiliaries were formed instead of the previous five. The offices of the Twelve Apostles were restored with their three senior officers, the Two Witnesses of the Chief Bishop's office and the Spokesman for the Twelve.

The following year was filled with adjustment in doctrine and practice. In April, 1957, the first issue of the official publication of The Church of God, *The Vision Speaks*, was published. The flag was perfected and presented to the Council of Apostles and Elders for approval on September 3, 1957. It remains the official banner of the church.

On August 1, 1958, the seven-acre tract of land now known as Jerusalem Acres was purchased. Bishop Kent began another project similar to Fields of the Wood. The revelation contained in Jerusalem Acres, however, was to be more far reaching, including the vision of both Jew and Gentile. It was Bishop Kent's intention for Jerusalem Acres to become a virtual display of the pattern of the city of God (Revelation 21).

On August 20, 1958, the official name, *The Church of God*, was legally adopted and restored to the church. The previous titles, *Church of God* and *Church of God of Prophecy*, are differentiated from the present name by the prefix *The*.

After the events of February 13, 1957, the revelation continued to unfold, and the servant over the church proceeded to "give meat in due season." The following year, Bishop Kent introduced the use of the motorcycle and the boat as means of spreading the message of salvation and the prophetic identity of the last day's program. In 1961 Kent added automobiles to the army of specially identified vehicles for the spread of the gospel. In this year he also began the Highway Gospel Caravan, an entourage of motorcycles and automobiles which has traveled throughout the United States proclaiming the message of the soon-coming of Jesus and inviting the people in the highways and hedges and streets and lanes of the cities to accept Christ so that the house of God might be filled (Luke 14).

In May, 1962, Bishop Kent made a long-anticipated trip to Israel for the purpose of marking the site on Mount Hattin where Jesus established the church. There he built a marker, placing twelve stones, symbolic of the twelve apostles that Jesus ordained there, upon one large stone which represented the revelation of Jesus Christ upon which the early church was built.

Coinciding with Bishop Kent's historic trip to the Holy Land was his introduction in the church of the term *New Testament Judaism* to encapsulate the efforts of the church to bring about a restoration of the Judaic heritage of first century Christianity. New Testament Judaism is a comprehensive system of praise, worship, and service which The Church of God developed under Kent's inspiration. It opens great and meaningful methods of Biblical worship to the believer who is seeking for more than contemporary Christian tradition.

In 1963 Bishop Kent concentrated his efforts in Schools of the Apostles in which he instructed the Twelve Apostles that he had ordained in the prophetic work of the church. He finally supervised their dedication in Asheville, North Carolina, at which time he stated that he felt like a man who had laid back a crop and had finished his work. Bishop Kent faithfully, tirelessly, and diligently fulfilled the office of the Chief Bishop for seven years until his death on March 31, 1964, during the Passover season at the time of the great earthquake in Alaska.

#### **6. The Marion W. Hall Administration (1964-1972)**

Upon the death of Bishop Kent, the Twelve Apostles and the Seven Businessmen of the church met in Cleveland, Tennessee, to search the Scriptures and the will of God for the successor to Bishop Kent. There was much discussion of various orders of succession for which there was precedence, including the right of primogenitor, certain prophetic scenarios, and governmental principles. The Twelve Apostles unanimously recognized Marion W. Hall as Chief Bishop.

In the subsequent confusion that arose there were minor losses in the church, however, the majority of the church followed the apostleship and recognized Hall as Chief Bishop. Hall sought to reenact, rather than fulfill, numerous prophetic scenarios of the Scriptures. This led to a time of confusion as to the mission and purpose of the church. Though the church continued its outreach ministries and received many members and ministers into its ranks during this time, much effort was wasted on attempts to reenact the fulfillment of prophecy. The ranks of the governmental pattern of the church were swelled to include offices which Bishop Kent had not restored and which were not a part of the New Testament church. Finally these programs produced abuses of power on the part of Marion W. Hall, who exploited the church's position on theocratic government to establish autocratic control even over some individuals' personal lives. This in turn produced charges of immorality and conduct unbecoming a bishop of the church. Amid this controversy Hall resigned his office in pretense. The Council of Apostles and Elders unanimously agreed to accept the resignation upon the grounds that Hall had been unfaithful in the administration of the office of the Chief Bishop and that he had conducted himself in a manner unworthy of a bishop of the church.

#### **7. The Robert S. Somerville Administration**

The Council of Apostles and Elders unanimously agreed to recognize Robert S. Somerville as Chief Bishop of the church. During this time of transition several men presented themselves before the Council to express their claims to the office of the Chief Bishop; however, the Council rejected each of these claims and maintained its support of

Bishop Somerville.

Somerville's administration began with an emphasis on personal consecration and upholding the office and work of Jesus as High Priest and empowerer of the church. The governmental pattern of the church was restored to its New Testament order that had been established under Bishop Kent's administration. The church again focused its attention on outreach and the promotion of its true prophetic mission in the world. The succeeding years were times of great expansion for the church. The major fault of the church at this time was its ambition and desire to do more in the cause of development and expansion of its outreach than it was financially able to underwrite.

In 1976 the church dedicated the Star of David Building on Jerusalem Acres, a unique building in the shape of a Mogen David Star that was to house the General Headquarters and Publishing Company of the church.

The church also embarked upon an ambitious teaching program with the opening of Kent College, a liberal arts junior college. Great efforts were made and support was given to this work that was designed to upgrade the educational opportunities of church ministers.

The most impressive missionary-evangelism outreach of the church at that time was also launched. Thousands of dollars and man hours were expended in building a church building in Haiti and in seeking to go through open doors in other foreign fields. All of these efforts brought The Church of God into contact with literally thousands of people throughout the world and afforded it the opportunity to share its vision with them.

Under Somerville the church delineated its understanding of New Testament Judaism, the concept introduced by Bishop Kent to give cohesiveness to the church's emphasis on the restoration of the Judaic heritage of the church. Publishing programs were put in place to publicize New Testament Judaism, and the results were that the church received widespread acclaim for its pioneering this area of restoration. Many other ministries in the Christian community began to emphasize the Christian heritage in Judaism as a direct or indirect result of these efforts.

Bishop Somerville led the church into a greater era of tolerance for diversity of expression in the practices of Christianity. The church added elements of worship borrowed from various churches and charismatic movements. Much emphasis was placed on the worship of God in the Spirit. From the church's long-term use of timbrels, liturgical dancing was restored as a worship form with interpretive and rhythmic dancing as a part of the liturgy of worship employed in the church.

An outstanding amount of outreach into the Christian community and into the world with the message and work of the church was made during the administration of Robert Somerville. The fact that these efforts did not produce the immediate results desired served to create unrest in the church and in the Chief Bishop, himself. The pressures of the office and the expectations of the people caused Somerville to accept and promote various independent ministries within the church with wide degrees of individual expression that had a negative impact on the cohesiveness of the church.

Bishop Somerville, himself, became impatient with the lack of anticipated progress in the growth of the church and came to assert excessive authority. He also left himself open to charges of conduct unbecoming a bishop in the church that eventually led to the unanimous request of the Council of Apostles and Elders for his resignation from the office of the Chief Bishop. Somerville resigned in December 1980.

## **8. The John A. Looper Administration (1981-1995)**

After several meetings during which the office of the Chief Bishop was discussed

and efforts were made to determine the will of God for a replacement in that office, the Council of Apostles and Elders unanimously named John A. Looper to the position of Chief Bishop in 1981. Looper's administration was characterized by the continuing promotion of personal righteousness and dedication to maintaining the presence of God in the operation of the church and in the personal lives of its ministers and members. The ministry of the church were encouraged a staunch dedication to the prophetic mission of the church, while upholding the predominance of Jesus Christ in all things that the church does and promotes.

Bishop Looper expanded the promotion of the need for greater tolerance and efforts toward unity in the Christian community. He introduced the concept of the universal Body of Christ to the doctrine of the church, delineating the varying degrees of election in the kingdom, the church, and the bride of Christ.

During the first five years of Bishop Looper's administration the church weathered severe financial crises. The ambition of the church to do more than it was able to sponsor in the Somerville administration had left it in a vulnerable position at a time of world economic crisis and at the time of transition that resulted in loss of ministerial personnel and churches. The leadership of the church persevered in perhaps the greatest financial trial of the history of the church, and with the blessing of God and considerable personal sacrifice on the part of its officials, it was able to maintain the headquarters and publishing operations, along with a continuing missionary outreach and teaching program.

In 1985 an open door was prepared by the Lord for the missionary outreach of the church that resulted in the establishment and rapid expansion of the church on the continent of Africa. This missionary work produced the most solid and productive development of the church on a foreign field since the Reformation in 1957. Other mission fiends have proven to be productive for the church message.

Under Bishop Looper's leadership unity of purpose and spirit was accelerated in the church with the establishment by the Council of Apostles and Elders of The Church of God School of Ministries as an intensive in-service training program for all church ministers. This school helped to redefine the mission and work of the church for many ministers and brought cohesiveness and increased ability to its ministers in general.

The cause of unity and understanding of the teachings and practices of the church was advanced by the publication of a catechism for the church, *Introduction to Apostles' Doctrine*, as well as by the publication of the third revised edition of the *Manual of Apostles' Doctrine and Procedure*. These documents helped solidify the sense of purpose and direction for the church, confirmed its long-standing teachings, and demonstrated its flexibility in opening its heart to receive all that God would send to its care.

In the latter part of his administration, Bishop Looper began to promote teachings that differed from the basic and fundamental teachings of the church. In August 1995, Bishop Looper stated to the Council of Apostles and Elders that he felt that God had relieved him of his responsibilities regarding the Presiding Bishop's office of The Church of God. Looper resigned in August 1995, to pursue his own ministry.

### **9. The Samuel Kramer Administration (1995- present)**

Upon Bishop Looper's resignation he appointed Bishop Samuel Kramer, Spokesman for the Twelve Apostles, as Acting Presiding Bishop of The Church of God. In July, 1996, the Council of Apostles and Elders named Samuel Kramer to the position of Presiding Bishop.

Kramer's administration began with a move to identify the church's basic and

fundamental teachings upon which it had been founded, and to re-emphasize the importance of the family and right-living. In the Council of Apostles and Elders in December 1996, the church again aligned itself with teachings that were dissimilated during the previous administration. The church acknowledged its identity in prophecy relative to Zechariah 4: rebuilding the house of God, and particularly, rebuilding the pattern according to the Candlestick.

A tremendous influx of church and people from foreign fields marked the beginning of this new era in The Church of God. New churches were established in Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador, with plans to travel to Liberia, Zambia, and Nigeria, Africa (as well as India) to accept urgent pleas for membership in the church. In the United States, new churches have also been added with new ministers and members who are excited about the work of The Church of God. Because of the reduction of the church's debt during the Looper administration, The Church of God is now able to focus on winning souls for Christ and building His church this side of the Dark Ages.

### **10. Conclusion**

The Church of God began in the throes of reformation when Jesus came to reform the Jewish religion with a new and living way. It has been restored in the twentieth century with the determination to continue the reformation of its doctrine and practice until the perfect order that was approved by God in the first century is again established and maintained today. The history of The Church of God as a vibrant, reformed, and reforming movement continues and will continue until that perfect day when Jesus Christ shall appear to receive His prepared and adorned Bride.

