

Search for Truth
Lesson Ten

Chart 4 - The Church in Persecution

A. Persecution Spreads the Gospel

At the close of the first century, few of the original Twelve were still living. James, the brother of John, was the first to be martyred. Earlier, Stephen, one of the seven deacons, was stoned to death. Initially, the sufferings were inflicted by the Jews. However, the passive attitude of the Roman government toward the Christians drastically changed.

James, a younger brother of Jesus, was slain in the Temple about A.D. 62. Tradition indicates that Peter was crucified upside down and Paul was beheaded. The other apostles, with the exception of John, experienced horrible deaths of stonings, beatings, stabbings and various forms of torturous executions. John is believed to have died a natural death at Ephesus about A.D. 100.

For the next two hundred years, the Church endured the sword of persecution. During the second, third, and early part of the fourth centuries, Rome invoked all its power to destroy what was termed the “Christian superstition.” Despite this, Christ’s followers were not diminished. Rather, their blood became the seed that reproduced for nineteen centuries!

In the years following the apostolic era, every Christian seemed to be a missionary. The soldier tried to win converts from his ranks; the prisoner sought to introduce his guards to Christ. Everyone who had experienced the joy of faith in Christ tried to bring others to conversion.

Consequently, the number of believers rapidly swelled. When rulers, who required respect for idolatrous gods, learned that a secret society in Rome worshipped an unknown God, they became alarmed. Christians were forbidden to meet secretly. Eventually, when some widespread catastrophe occurred – such as fire, famine, flood, or pestilence – it was blamed on the Christians. Presumably, they had invoked the anger of the offended gods.

Cruel laws were enacted. Riots ensued. And the terrible cry, “To the lions with the Christians!” resounded through the streets of Rome.

Faithful Christians became the target for blood thirsty spectator sports. Deadly duels between the gladiators, prisoners, slaves, criminals, and wild beasts became favorite Roman amusements. The emperor who could offer his subjects the grandest variety of bloody entertainments became popular with his domain.

B. Persecution

Until the reign of Nero, Christianity was opposed, but it was tolerated. However, the great fire of

A.D. 64 in Rome changed that. Although the actual cause was probably an accident, rumor labeled it otherwise.

When the emperor himself was suspected, he looked for scapegoats. Nero fingered the blame on the Christians. A terrible persecution ensued as thousands were tortured and executed.

Following Nero's reign was a new emperor, Vespasian. He was responsible for the Colosseum, a massive structure designed to house entertainment. Tier upon tier, sloping upward from a central arena were seats to accommodate almost 100,000 spectators. History indicates that the Colosseum's grand opening was a one hundred day exhibition of public games.

Titus, the conqueror of Jerusalem, followed his father Vespasian as Roman emperor in A.D. 79, but died two years later. His younger brother Domitian, succeeded him.

About A.D. 90, Domitian began a second imperial persecution by slaying thousands of believers throughout the empire. John, the last surviving apostle, was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos. There he received the Book of Revelation, the final New testament Book.

Following the assassination of Domitian, the Christians experienced a relative calm. From A.D. 96 to 161, Christianity was not recognized, but not severely persecuted.

Reigning from A.D. 161 to 180 was Marcus Aurelius, also a ruthless persecutor of Christians. Many thousands of Christians were martyred during this time. Among the martyrs of this era was Polycarp, the aged bishop of Smyrna. He formed a final link with those who had seen Christ, having been taught by John, the beloved disciple. A letter written by the Smyrna Church after his martyrdom in A.D. 156 relates an anti-Christian mob raised an outcry for Polycarp. A police squad went to fetch him. The captain, probably wishing to spare the elderly man awaited him saying, "What harm is there in saying, 'Caesar is Lord' and offering incense to save yourself?"

But Polycarp refused. At the arena, the aged believer declared, "Eighty-six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my Savior and King?" Polycarp was then taken to the stake.

Another famous Christian at this time was Justin Martyr, a philosopher and defender of Christianity. His books relate much valuable information concerning the Church in the mid-second century. Justin met his martyrdom in the reign of a fellow philosopher, Marcus Aurelius. Brought with a number of other Christians before the rulers, Justin refused to sacrifice to the gods. "No right thinking person," he said, "turns away from true belief to false." So he was led away to execution.

Following the death of Marcus Aurelius in A.D. 180, numerous emperors followed in rapid succession and the Church was virtually isolated from persecution for half a century.

C. Catacombs of Rome - A.D. 257

In A.D. 253, Valerian became emperor. At first, he appeared favorable to the Christians. But his policy changed after four years. An edict was published forbidding Christians to hold ordinary public meetings. A further edict specified severe penalties for even professing Christianity.

Also included in the edict was the refusal to bury Christians in cemeteries. This forced believers to bury their dead in the “catacombs” of Rome, which were deep underground passageways or tunnels dug to obtain stone for building the city. If placed end to end, these tunnels would stretch some five hundred miles in length. The slaves and convicts who had worked on the project told the Christians about this safe hiding place for both worship and burial.

In shelves cut in the sides of the tunnels, Christians tenderly laid their dead to rest. Some of the loving inscriptions carved over the remains are still visible.

At night, Christians secretly entered the dark openings in the rock and passed along the darkened galleries to have their Church services.

D. Diocletian burns Bibles – A.D. 303

The years following Valerian’s defeat were years of crisis for the empire, but tranquility for the Church. For forty years, they enjoyed peace. The government was stabilized when Diocletian became emperor in A.D. 285.

Nearly twenty years elapsed without trace of anti-Christian policy. However, the storm broke suddenly. The rapid growth of Christianity rivaled the old state religion, and many influential people again determined to crush it.

The first phase of the new persecution in A.D. 303 was an edict ordering the destruction of all church buildings and copies of Scripture. A second edict ordered the arrest of clergy. The following year, another edict ordered that failure of Christians to sacrifice to the state gods was punishable by death.

Christianity was sternly prohibited and punished by torture and death. But in A.D. 381, less than eighty years afterward, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire! In a single step, Christianity rose from threat of extermination to place of prominence beside the most powerful and influential throne of the world!

Chart 5 - The Decline in Christendom

C. A.D. 300 - 400

Soon after the persecution by Diocletian in A.D. 303, four aspirants battled for the imperial crown. The two most powerful rivals were Maxentius and Constantine, whose armies met in battle in A.D. 312. Maxentius represented the old heathen persecuting element. Constantine was friendly to the Christians, although not yet a professing believer.

A strange experience led Constantine to a Christian profession. He reported seeing in the sky a shining cross bearing the motto, "By this sign thou shall conquer." Upon defeating his rival Maxentius, the cross was adopted as the standard of Constantine's military forces.

Soon afterward, Constantine's Edict of Toleration was published in A.D. 313, which officially ended the Christian persecution. For more than two hundred years, no Christian had been safe from accusation and death. However, with the publication of this edict, persecutions abruptly ceased.

Instead, favors were showered upon Christianity. Money was granted to erect magnificent shrines. Reimbursement was made by cities for Church buildings that had previously been demolished. Churches and edifices began to arise everywhere.

Although heathen worship was still tolerated, the official pagan sacrifices ceased. In many places, heathen temples were converted to Churches. Soon public funds quite liberally enriched the Roman Church, with bishops and other officials receiving support from the state.

Soon Constantine became both head of the Roman Church and head of State. The uniting of Christianity and state formed the "Catholic" or universal church of Rome.

Although the emperor claimed to be a Christian, his personal character lacked spiritual virtues. Also the controversy concerning the Godhead became one of the emperors first problems.

The Birth of the Trinity Doctrine

For this portion of our lesson we will be discussing when the Trinitarian doctrine first came into existence, by briefly explaining to you the two councils which eventually brought forth the Trinitarian Doctrine, and pointing out some key elements about the people of those councils and the Emperors influence within those councils.

This can be found by reading and studying the two councils that ultimately brought forth a Trinitarian point of view. The first council, The Council of Nicea took place in 325 AD. Unlike what you may be thinking, this Council was not over a debate of a Oneness point of view versus a Trinitarian point of view. However it was because of a man named Arius who believed that the Son (Jesus) was created out of nothing before the world was called into being, and for that very reason was not eternal nor of the divine essence.

For his argument he referred to Proverbs 8:22, which reads, "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old." The Hebrew word translated for possessed, he said, could also have meant created or brought forth. Thus Arius, interpreted the passage that the Son was created at some point by God before the creation of the world. This was the reason for the first council.

The council convened in 325 AD in Nicea. It lasted for just about six weeks. It has been said that 318 persons attended, but a more likely number is 225, including every Eastern bishop of

importance, four Western bishops (among them Hosius of Córdoba, president of the council), and two papal legates.

Papal: Of, relating to, or issued by a pope

As the Council began to unfold, it was found that there was mainly three points of view. The first group was a minority led by Athanasius who argued that the Father and the Son were of the same substance. The second group was the Arian group which believed the Son was of a different substance from the Father. And the third group was the majority, in which case the majority of them never fully understood the issues at hand but wanted peace. The majority of them never agreed with Arius, but they also never agreed with Athanasius. Thus later in history they received the nickname of Semi-Arians.

Finally Emperor Constantine, hoping to obtain the most unanimous decision possible, introduced a word called homoousios, which means of the same substance. This was considered controversial because it was used by some people to support a Oneness doctrine of the Godhead, known as Sabellianism, against those with a Trinitarian position.

Upon conclusion of this first Council, the position of Athanasius prevailed. At this time Emperor Constantine sealed the victory by threatening to banish all dissenters. However there were two Bishops who would not sign the creed along with Arius. One of the two Bishops was Eusebius of Nicomedia and these men were placed in exile.

Emperor Constantine then declared that the decrees of the council were divinely inspired, declared them as laws of the empire, and made them punishable by death. The creed that was created from the Council of Nicea was not, however, the creed generally circulated today as the Nicene Creed.

In summary up to this point, this council was mainly those of a Trinitarian mind set concerning the Father and the Son being of the same substance, where as the Arians were of the mind set that the Father and the Son were of a different substance. During their debates, the Emperor Constantine introduced a word that those of the Trinitarian mind set did not like, because a group of people of the mind set that God was not only of one substance, but he manifested himself as the Son, so he was not two separate persons of one substance, but rather one person who manifested himself as the Son and the Father. These people were known as Sabellianism or Oneness people.

The original Nicene Creed that came out of this Council stated: We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten of the Father; (they then clarify what they mean concerning Jesus Christ) that is (He, Jesus is) of the essence of the Father, (He is) God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, (He was) begotten, not made, from the substance of the Father, by whom (Jesus) all things were made both in Heaven and on Earth; who for us men, and for our Salvation, came down and was incarnate (that means he was robed in flesh) and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, (He) ascended into heaven; from thence

he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost.

Remember this creed was to refute Arianism. And again, Arianism was those who believed that the Father and the Son were of a different substance. Due to the fact that during this council, the Trinitarian people as they were trying to refute Arianism, were speaking in a manner that actually was supportive of the Oneness or Sabellianism people; this led to the bishops signing the creed so that they would not be exiled, but to continue teaching the Godhead the way that they always had, which was somewhere between the teachings of Arianism and Trinitarianism. This also sparked the Arians to continue to pursue their doctrine, thus in 381 AD there was a second council that convened.

The second council that convened was the council of Constantinople. This council was summoned by Emperor Theodosius I in 381 AD. Theodosius was a staunch supporter of the original Nicene Creed. So he was biased already. Only Eastern bishops were summoned to this council, but the Greeks claimed that it was ecumenical. Even though they never invited anyone from the West.

Ecumenical: Of or relating to the worldwide Christian church.

So basically the people of this council were claiming that it represented the worldwide Christian Church, even though no one from the Western portion of the Mediterranean was invited.

This council was not truly ecumenical and there were only about 150 bishops in attendance. It gave the bishop of Constantinople honour second only to that of the pope. Even though the Western church did not accept the ranking of Constantinople as second to Rome until the 13th century. Hear what was just said. It took close to nine hundred years before the West finally agreed that the bishop of Constantinople was second only to that of the pope. This Council declared, and the Emperor made it law, that there is one Godhead, Power and Substance of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; the dignity being equal, and the majesty equal in three perfect persons. This is how the Trinitarian Doctrine was born and was the first time the Holy Spirit was even considered a third person in the Godhead.

However it wasn't until some time in the fourth century that the Nicene creed that we use today, came into existence. That's right. Four hundred and some odd years after Jesus' death, the Nicene creed we use today, based off of these two councils that were both completely biased and declared law by the Emperors of Rome, with adjustments to the creed as late as 589 AD at the Synod of Toledo, became the common doctrine of the Trinitarian today.

The Nicene creed in use today omits (that means that they removed it from) the original clause in the first Council of Nicea that stated that Jesus was of the essence of the Father, because it left open the possible interpretation of a Oneness point of view. Yet everyone was taught that the first council was divinely inspired and here they are making adjustments to it, to continue to support their doctrine.

And then they added to the original creed, concerning the portion that stated, And in the Holy

Ghost.

The addition reads: And [I believe] in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceedeth from the Father [and the Son]; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.

It also confessed one Baptism for the remission of sins.

This information is readily available at any library or by searching online about these two councils. Due to the fact that there is no mention of Trinity or Triune in the Bible, and the fact that these councils were not divinely inspired, there is no reason to believe our God is three co-equal persons.

In an in-depth study of these two councils, you will find that many scriptures Athanasius used in the original council of Nicea, and explained their meanings according to the Godhead, to establish his stance against Arianism, that the Trinitarians of today use those same scriptures, to substantiate their arguments against Oneness believers; yet they have already been defined by Athanasius in the council of Nicea stating the opposite meaning that the Trinitarians of today are using to defend their stance against Oneness believers.

In conclusion, what we should have learned from this condensed version of how the Trinitarian Doctrine was born, is that these councils were not divinely inspired, but rather were conducted in a very controlled environment, with Emperors of Rome establishing them as laws, and they are the people who claimed these councils were divinely inspired.

We also learned that the first council had nothing to do with Oneness versus Trinitarianism, and for this very reason, the original council defined scriptures, and built a defense system, that ended up supporting a Oneness point of view. So in the next council, they made the necessary changes to try to alter this point of view, even though they claimed the first council was divinely inspired, it never stopped them from altering it. They also claimed that the second council was ecumenical, yet they did not even invite the bishops from the Western Mediterranean area, who never fully accepted what they concluded at this council until the 13 century, some 900 years later.

And finally, due to the amount of time that has now elapsed since these councils and in our present time, the Trinitarians of today don't even hold true to their original roots, but have changed the meaning of the scriptures around that were already defined in the council of Nicea, to mean something else that was not established in this council. Thus, if you will, the Trinitarians of today would not even agree with the Trinitarians of 400 AD.

D. A.D. 400-500

Some strange doctrines and heathen practices had been introduced into the Catholic church by Greek philosophers in the second century. But when Constantine's Edict of A.D. 313 invited influential heathen Gentiles to assume the leadership, rivers of corruption flowed in!

Thousands of heathen joined the Catholic church after it became an honor to be a Christian. The mere association with Christianity secured a passport to political, military, and social promotion.

No longer was Christianity transforming the world. Rather, the world was changing Christianity! The humility and holiness of an earlier age were replaced with ambition, pride, and arrogance.

E. The Dark Ages - A.D. 400 - 1000

1. The Dark Ages – Defining the Darkness

The Dark Ages as a term has undergone many evolutions; its definition depends on who is defining it. Indeed, modern historians no longer use the term because of its negative connotation. Generally, the Dark Ages referred to the period of time ushered in by the fall of the Western Roman Empire. This took place when the last Western emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by Odoacer, a barbarian. AD 476 was the time of this event.

Initially, this era took on the term “dark” by later onlookers; this was due to the backward ways and practices that seemed to prevail during this time. Future historians used the term “dark” simply to denote the fact that little was known about this period; there was an insufficiency of written history. Recent discoveries have apparently altered this perception as many new facts about this time have been uncovered.

The Italian Scholar, Francesco Petrarca called Petrarch, was the first to coin the phrase. He used it to denounce Latin literature of that time; others expanded on this idea to express frustration with the lack of Latin literature during this time or other cultural achievements. While the term dark ages is no longer widely used, it may best be described as Early Middle Ages -- the period following the decline of Rome in the Western World. The Middle Ages is loosely considered to extend from 400 to 1000 AD.

2. The Dark Ages – The State of the Church

The Dark Ages was a period of religious struggle. Orthodox Christians and Catholics viewed the era from opposing perspectives. Orthodox Christians regarded this time as a period of Catholic corruption; they repudiated the ways of the Catholic Church with its papal doctrines and hierarchy. Orthodox Christians strove to recreate a pure Christianity, void of these “dark” Catholic ways. Catholics did not view this era as “dark.” Catholics viewed this period as a harmonious, productive religious era. The Dark Ages were also the years of vast Muslim conquests. Along with other nomads and horse and camel warriors, the Muslims rode through the fallen empire, wreaking havoc and seeding intellectual and social heresy in their wake. Muslim conquests prevailed until the time of the Crusades. This age old conflict between Christianity and Islam remains until this day.

3. The Dark Ages – Faith vs. Enlightenment

The Dark Ages were a tumultuous time. Roving horse-bound invaders charged the country sides. Religious conflicts arose; Muslims conquered lands. Scarcity of sound literature and cultural

achievements marked these years; barbarous practices prevailed.

Despite the religious conflicts, the period of the Dark Ages was seen as an age of faith. Men and women sought after God; some through the rituals of the Catholic Church, others in more Orthodox forms of worship. Intellectuals view religion in any form as, itself, a type of “darkness.” These thinkers assert that those who followed religious beliefs lied to themselves, creating a false reality. They were dominated by emotions, not fact. Religion was seen as contrary to rationality and reason, thus the move towards enlightenment -- a move away from “darkness.” Science and reason gained ascendancy, progressing steadily during and after the Reformation and Age of Enlightenment.

Chart 6 - Christianity Reforms

A. A.D. 1000 - 1400

Practically all known Western history concerns the Roman church, while only a small fragment has survived regarding the heretics and resistance movements. Their teachings as a whole, were conveniently “misplaced.” We assume that Sabellianism was still believed by many even in the fourth century since it was among the list of condemned heresies at the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381.

Existing glimpses reveal that many so called heretics were actually children of God, standing firm for Bible truths and experiences for which they willingly died.

The men who led the Reformation were not seeking to withdraw themselves from the Roman church. Rather, they were sincerely seeking to improve it. Many of the greatest reformers stayed within the Roman church until they were literally thrown out or ex-communicated.

In the eleventh century, a unique group known as the Albigenses emerged in southern France. They advocated a chaste and Spirit filled life. However, in 1208, Pope Innocent III called for a Crusade against this protesting religious group. The entire community was slain – including some Catholics as well. This protest movement terminated, but their blood fell as seed that soon sprouted again.

Some of the Waldenses, another French group, were Spirit filled and emphasized biblical authority. After memorizing many portions of Scripture, the incorrect teachings of the Roman Catholic church was apparent. But a synod held among Roman church leaders passed a resolution forbidding the laity to have access to God’s Word.

The pope declared that the Waldenses should also be destroyed. Large numbers fled to the Piedmont Valley in the mountains of northern Italy. Although Roman Catholic troops sought to eradicate them, they survived through several centuries and finally in 1458, merged with the Moravians, another group that had some Spirit filled members.

In England, a protest movement was begun by John Wycliffe for freedom from the Roman

Catholic power over the state. He insisted that Christ – not the pope – was head of the Church, and the Bible – not the Catholic church – was the sole authority for the believer.

To support his beliefs, Wycliffe made the Bible available in his people's own language. By 1382, he completed the first manuscript translation of the English New Testament. In England he was protected by powerful nobles.

B. A.D. 1400 - 1500

In Bohemia, John Huss was an advocate of Wycliffe's writings. He died a martyr in 1415 because of his firm stand against the Roman Catholic church. Although his voice was stilled, his fate ignited reformation.

In 1455, one of the greatest thrusts of the Reformation was the invention of the printing press. Prior to this invention, books had been circulated only as rapidly as they could be copied by hand. A Bible during the Dark Ages cost a year's wages. The first book to be printed on Gutenberg's press was the Bible!

The printing press brought the scriptures into the hands of the common man for the first time. Reading the Bible was a privilege which could now be enjoyed by everyone.

As men of the Renaissance referred to the history of the early church and read in the original languages, they observed that the early fathers did not advocate the doctrines taught by the Roman church. Doubts arose in the mind of many leaders, especially among university students. But dissenters soon felt the sting of the "Inquisitions," an appointed court to detect and punish such "rebels."

C. A.D. 1500 - 1600

What precipitated the Protestant Reformation? Pope Leo X, needing large sums of money to complete St. Peter's church in Rome, dispatched agents throughout the empire selling certificates. With these "indulgences," one could receive for himself or his friends, pardon of all sins without confession, repentance, penance, or absolution by a priest.

The system worked successfully. It was easier to buy "remission of sin" than to say prayers. Tetzel, an eloquent Dominican friar, was commissioned by the pope to sell indulgences throughout Germany. Tetzel boasted, "As soon as the coin in the cover rings, The soul from purgatory springs!"

Such deception aroused a Catholic monk named Martin Luther with righteous indignation. In his tower cell, Luther penned ninety-five statements regarding the sale of indulgences.

Around noon on October 31, 1517, his theses were nailed on the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The church door commonly served as a university bulletin board where invitations were publicly issued for debates. However, no one accepted Luther's challenge for more than

two years.

This public announcement of Luther's views was the first in a series of acts which led to the Reformation. But Luther did not intend to separate from his church.

October 31st is All Saint's Day, the customary time of displaying church relics. As people came, supposedly to be blessed by the magical relics, they stopped to read the theses tacked to the door. Upon returning home, they related it to others.

Originally written in Latin, the theses were translated into many languages, printed and carried to every country of western Europe. Within two weeks, Luther's theses became known throughout Germany. The sale of indulgences plummeted to a standstill!

Luther attacked the abuses of the indulgences. Written from a sincere heart and pastoral concern of the people, Luther had not intended to ignite a revolution in the Roman church he loved so well. However, Luther had unknowingly touched a most sensitive spot in the Roman Catholic system!

By raising a question about indulgences, Luther shook his church. His bold statements seemed to loosen the tight grip with which priests had held their people for so long. The church of Rome was not merely stirred, it was shaken to its very foundations!

Soon Tetzel and other Dominican monks were severely criticizing Luther's publication. Statements were published by Luther and his opponents to counter the other's claims. But the more he wrote, the more convinced Luther became that his analysis of corrupt practices within the Roman church was correct.

The more Luther studied, the more Roman church pillars began crumbling! Now he saw that the attack was not merely against the abuse of indulgences, but rather the whole government and authority on which Catholicism was based.

After ex-communication, Luther was summoned to the German Council in Worms. Bravely, he faced the emperor and politely refused to renounce his anti-Rome writings. Fearing for his life, Luther found shelter in remote Wartburg Castle. Under armed guard, he received friends and wrote letters. Most importantly, the entire Bible was translated into German in only ten weeks! Martin Luther's followers became known as Lutherans.

Luther rejected the papacy and priesthood by explaining that "all believers are priests." Prayers to the saints and to Mary were abolished as were the pilgrimages, use of relics, holy water, prayers for the dead, and the belief in purgatory.

D. A.D. 1600 - 1700

In 1612 the first Baptist church was formed. They separated from the Church of England because of their baptismal practices.

The first American colonists in 1620 were Separatists and were called Pilgrims. Those who came nine years later and established the Massachusetts Bay colony were Puritans.

The middle 1600s produced a most interesting group of reformers. Up to this time, organizations had usually branched off from another with some different view or revelations. But now a spiritual awakening came with experiences from God similar to those of the early apostolic times.

The movement that swung farthest from the papacy were the Quakers or Friends. The teaching of George Fox led to a great revival movement in 1647 in which many spoke with other tongues. William Penn's followers, who were Quakers, came from England and settled in Pennsylvania. One of Penn's writings, *The Sandy Foundation Shaken*, openly denied the trinity doctrine of separate persons in one Godhead. (Robert Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, pages 167-168)

Under the guidance of Menno Simons, the radical Anabaptists began to flourish as a moderate group. Simons had been ordained a Catholic priest, but through the writings of Luther and other reformers, he began to organize followers.

In the course of time, the name Mennonites came to be applied to their people rather than Anabaptists.

Once rejected during the Reformation, these peaceful, industrious, and highly respected citizens came to be honored because of their doctrine of separation of church and state.

E. A.D. 1700 - 1800

During the eighteenth century a great evangelical movement spread through Europe and North America.

The Moravians became the first Protestant body to take seriously the great commission. They counted themselves as Christ's soldiers going to all parts of the world to conquer it for the King. Missions were established in Africa, Asia, Greenland, Lapland, and among the American Indians.

Although small in number, this church has influenced other denominations by arousing them to their responsibility of missionary work.

The name of Jonathan Edwards is inseparably linked with the Great Awakening in New England. An outstanding intellectual figure in colonial America, Edwards preached fiery sermons that shook New England.

Edwards' revivals had strong emotional and physical manifestations. Men and women fell to the floor weeping and repenting as he preached about 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.'

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the churches in England, both Established and Separatist, declined to formal services and intellectual belief. From this condition, England was awakened by a group of holiness preachers led by George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers.

Whitefield was the great pulpit orator, stirring the hearts of untold thousands both in England and America.

Charles Wesley was the poet, whose hymns have enriched every congregation. But John Wesley was the undisputed leader and statesman of the movement. Wesley began preaching “the witness of the Spirit” and holy living. The name Methodist came from Wesley’s teaching “methods” of living holy for God.

F. A.D. 1800 - 1900

In America, the Wesley brothers aroused a spiritual awakening. One of the great revivalists from 1821 to 1842 was Charles G. Finney. Henry Ward Beecher was another great evangelist of that era.

The second great awakening fostered a new major denomination, the Disciples of Christ in 1830. Thomas Campbell, a Presbyterian, left his denomination to unite divided Christians by restoring the churches.

A zealous Baptist named William Miller preached the advent of the second coming of Christ. A date was fixed and Miller began warning Americans of the approaching end. Several date settings went by uneventfully.

A nucleus of Adventists formed an association, from which the Seventh-Day Adventists separated in 1846.

The greatest sect-forming years in the South were between the years 1894 and 1926, following the anti-holiness policy statement of the Methodist church. No less than twenty-five Holiness and Pentecostal sects were formed, many calling themselves Church of God. (Synan, *The Holiness Pentecostal Movement*, page 78)