

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #1

The Organization of the Church Changed

After the establishment of the church in Jerusalem in 29 A.D. it spread throughout the Roman Empire at a rapid rate. At first the apostles played the dominant role in its spread and growth. Soon we see other men called evangelist taking on the important role of evangelizing. Some assisted the apostles while others went in different directions. Next elders appear in local congregations. This is not strange as synagogues had elders. The work of elders in the synagogues was similar to the work of elders in the church. No doubt in Jerusalem whole synagogues were converted.

It was an easy transition for synagogue elders to adapt to the work of an elder in the church. At the close of Paul's first missionary journey he and Barnabas returned over the same route they had already taken appointing elders in the churches they had established. The main difference would be that these Christian elders received some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which would enable them to teach and stabilize the churches they oversaw as there was no written word (Bible) that soon. Still later deacons appear.

There was opposition to the doctrine Paul and Barnabas taught. It came from Judaizing teachers who seem to follow Paul everywhere he would go. As soon as Paul would move on the Judizers moved in and would attempt to convince the new Christians they were to observe certain things set forth in the Old Testament, especially circumcision. These false teachers were converted Jews who taught that certain items in Judaism were still intact.

This was especially true in reference to the act of circumcision. They argued that Gentile converts should be circumcised. Paul and Barnabas made a special trip to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders about what these false teachers were saying. The Judizers claimed they had been sent out by the church in Jerusalem which was false. The matter was settled but it did not stop the Judizers as they continued to infiltrate many churches with this false doctrine.

Another very disturbing false doctrine was Gnosticism. It declared that Jesus did not come in the flesh because anything material was evil. Thus, Jesus would not come in the flesh because this would be sinful. He only appeared to have flesh. What they saw was only an illusion. This false doctrine would continue to be a thorn in the side of the church on into the third century.

The second century would bring in a second generation of Christians. These Christians seemed to have been faithful to the Scriptures with the exception of the role of elders in the local churches. The apostles had seen to it that a plurality of elders existed in each church. There were qualifications set forth for a man to qualify to become an elder in the church. They considered elders would serve in this office for a lifetime.

For some reason this second generation seem to feel the church would functioned better under the leadership of one man rather than a plurality of men. The names elder and bishop both applied to the same work. The apostles made no distinction between the two names but later on churches selected one man to be the primary leader of the church. He was addressed as the "Bishop."

Elders and deacons continued to function but were not considered as being on the same level of authority as a Bishop. Most of these men seemed to be more prominent than the rest of the elders. Sometimes he was called the "President" over the local church. Later on this was replaced by the exclusive title of "Bishop." It is interesting that in some churches of Christ in England today they still have a president.

He does not have the authority of an elder or bishop but presides over the order of worship, the Lord's Supper, introduces the speaker, and sits on the pulpit throughout the sermon. It is difficult to trace where the practice of appointing men to be "Bishops" began and why they felt the need for only one bishop.

They also thought that the office of an elder lasted for a lifetime. Upon his death they would select a successor. It could be that in selecting a successor they sought out a man who seemed to have superior abilities than the remaining elders. About the best we can say is that it started and was practiced in the early part of the second century. Among this second generation of Christian there were a number of men who wrote letters to individuals and churches.

The name "Apostolic Fathers" was given to Christian writers because it was thought that they were personal disciples of the apostles. However it does not seem that this was true. However, they were men who were loyal to the scriptures which were handed down from earlier Christians. They were not inspired and did not write as inspired men. They wrote seeking answers and often gave advice to churches.

As an example there were letters from the church at Rome which were penned by one its bishops to the church in Corinth. The writer may have been a man called Clement who signed his letters as "Bishop of Rome." Ignatius a writer who lived in Antioch wrote several letters mostly to churches in Asia Minor. He mentions false doctrine which these churches were being threatened by resulting in division. His solution was to bring all the members under the authority of one bishop in each church.

It soon becomes evident that each church moved in the direction of having one bishop ruling over the members with elders being in subjection to the "Bishop." This was a dangerous and devastating departure from the word of God. It would be the beginning of a hierarchical pyramid that would later bring into existence the Catholic Church, and subsequently affect the Church of England, and the Episcopal Church,

Polycarp is supposed to have been a student of the Apostle John. He was a saintly man put to death for his refusal to deny Christ. He wrote a letter to the church in Philippi describing the responsibility of elders. However he gives no indication of any office higher than that of an elder. Yet he was regarded as "the bishop of the church in Smyrna."

Early church historians noted that the offices of elder and bishop were identical, and were not differentiated until later on, and that a plurality of elders was the norm for church government. Jerome (347 – 420) said, "Elder is identical with bishop." Chrysostom (349 – 407) voiced the same sentiment. They also say that the churches were governed by a joint council of elders.

The changes listed above might have seemed small to some, however, no one had the right to propose something they thought was better. Look again at what the apostles authorized. Each church had complete autonomy. Each church was under the oversight of a plurality of older men. The change would end up eventually with one man (the Pope) ruling over the entire church.

Churches no longer had any independence which opened door for many false doctrines to be brought into the churches which now had no authority to reject them. It has always been difficult for men to accept the simple directions given to the church through the New Testament. Men seem to think they can improve on God's ways. Israel was not satisfied with the system of Judges given to them. They wanted a king like the other nations which would bring on many difficulties for the nation.

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DPCTROME #2

Constantine The Great and the First Creed

The church had been under persecution by the Roman government for 250 years. With the coming to the throne of Constantine the Great, this would all change. He would be the chief instrument for raising the church from a low estate of oppression and persecution to a position of honor and power. He would become the first Christian Caesar (king). This would result in joining of church and state (a kind of theocracy) which was a great departure from the organization given to the church by the Lord.

He perceived that idolatry had outlived itself in the Roman Empire, and that Christianity was superior. Christian lifestyles were far superior to pagan lifestyle. Christianity appeared to him the power he needed for a political reformation of the empire. At first he revered all the pagan gods as mysterious powers; especially Apollo the god of the sun. The first evidence of a leaning towards Christianity was on a military march from Gaul across the Alps with an army of ninety-eight thousand soldiers toward Rome. He said he had a dream one night, in which he was directed to stamp on the shields of his soldiers the cross with the name of Christ, and then go forth against his enemy.

Later while praying to God in clear daylight towards evening, he claims he saw a shining cross in the heavens above the sun with the inscription, "By this conquer." On the following night he said Christ himself appeared to him while he slept and directed him to have a standard prepared in the form of the cross and go against Maxentius an enemy in Italy. Hereafter, this cross standard would take the place of the Roman eagle.

We would suppose if Christ did appear to him he would have exhorted him to repent and be baptized rather than to carry out a bloody military campaign. He put off his baptism for 25 years, almost to the hour of his death as many believed baptism took care only of your past sins. It did not cover one's sins between baptism and death.

After his victory in Rome in 312 A.D. he issued an edict which allowed every subject of the Roman Empire to choose whatever religion he preferred. At the same time he assisted Christians in getting buildings and property which they turned into church buildings. Later on they would gain control of pagan temples which they would convert into places of worship.

This probably explains the origin of cathedrals which came next. The building itself would be considered as sacred. This would be a far cry from the simple places of worship where the early Christians would meet for worship.

Constantine quickly aligned himself with the bishops, which was to his advantage since it was the bishops who controlled the churches. He exempted Christian leaders from military and municipal duty. He abolished various customs and ordinances which were offensive to Christians. He also erased heathen symbols such as Jupiter, Apollo, Mars, Hercules and others from the imperial coins. He facilitated the emancipation of Christian slaves. He also gave his sons a Christian education.

Constantine is remembered the most for the Council of Nicaea. Having espoused the cause of Christianity he wanted to see the churches united. In the year 325 he called upon all the bishops of the empire to meet with him at the city of Nicaea to settle the question concerning the Godhead and in particular the divinity of Jesus. Their expenses for the trip would come from the public treasury. Each bishop was to bring with him two elders and three deacons which would amount to over fifteen hundred men. The council began around June the 14th and closed on the 25th of July.

The direct concern was to establish the doctrine of the true deity of the Son. The deity of the Holy Spirit did not seem to be an issue. The result was the writing of the first creed for the church that dealt with doctrine. The council of Nicaea was a major turning point in the history of the church. It seems strange to us that almost 300 years after the apostles, there would arise those who would question whether Jesus was divine.

The New Testament was completed by 68 A.D. The deity of Jesus is stressed numerous times throughout the New Testament. For the next 250 years, there were serious questions about the divinity of Jesus that were being disputed. We never cease to be amazed at how quickly error can creep into the church. We wonder why there was no respect for the teachings of the apostles who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the New Testament.

This one man, Constantine, would completely devastate the church so that it would never be the same. Later on efforts would be made to correct some of the abuses. While history records all the negative things about the church it does not seem to recognize that there were those who would have opposed such changes. Jesus said "the gates of Hades (death) would not prevail against it." Therefore there is every reason to believe the Lord's church continued to exist in smaller numbers in the Roman Empire and later in Europe, but not in as large numbers as the apostate church (Catholic Church) had.

It is amazing what one man can do to destroy the Lord's church. The pagan emperor claims he saw a sign in the sky of a fiery cross and a vision of Christ at night. These were pure lies. He claimed to be a convert to Christianity even though he was not baptized until death was knocking at his door. He called together the bishops of the Roman Empire (about 318) to meet with him in Nicaea. He appeared in royal robes before them and presided over them.

Furthermore he nominated himself to be a bishop except he said he considered himself to only be over material and civil matters whereas the bishops would be concerned with spiritual matters. The result of the council of Nicaea was the writing of the very first religious creed.

From then on the writing of creeds would become common. It also marked the beginning of the union of church and state which still exists today in certain places. This great demagogue demonstration was a complete denial of Scripture. It was nothing but blasphemy and a profound change in the church. Constantine was the first to make major changes in the organization of the Lord's church, leading thousands away from the truth. God's way is always the best way. It is tragic that men think they know a better way.

Constantine sent his mother Hellena to locate relics in Palestine. Arriving in Palestine she builds the Church of the Nativity and the Church of Ascension supposedly over the places of the birth and ascension of Jesus. She claimed to have brought back the original cross, its nails, plus many other relics. The buildings and relics became sacred. Thus we have the beginning of the worship of relics.

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #3

Jerome and the Latin Vulgate

Jerome (347-419 A.D.) was one of the outstanding personalities of that time. He was born to wealthy parents and was educated in Rome. He was baptized at the age of 20 and was ordained a priest in 378. He traveled extensively. It was on one of these trips he decided to be a monk. He is one of the most outstanding scholars of his day.

He believed in monasticism and was a hermit even though this system had not yet developed in the apostate church. He is known for translating the Bible into Latin which was the language of the Roman Empire at that time. He was the most learned, the most eloquent and most interesting authors among the people of his day.

His library became one of the most famous in the world. Many of the books had been self copied. Everywhere he traveled he would take his library with him. It must have been very expensive to carry all his books on his- journeys. But it shows his dedication to gain knowledge.

In fact he had a tremendous thirst for knowledge and continued to learn and write to the end of his life. He was one of those intellectual minds which reading and study were as indispensable as daily bread. He could not live without books. He possessed a remarkable memory.

When Jerome wanted to write or translate he would go into some ascetic seclusion such as the Syrian Desert of Chalcis, Bethlehem, etc. He learned both Greek and Hebrew as these were Bible languages. In Bethlehem about 385 he learned Hebrew from a rabbi who through fear of his fellow Jews would visit Jerome by night. Jerome called upon other Jewish scholars to his aid.

Though his knowledge of Hebrew was defective, it still was better than other writers. It took him 15 years to translate both the Old and New Testaments. Overall his writings were immense. Apart from the Vulgate, he wrote commentaries on many of the books of the Bible.

The primary thing people remember about Jerome is his translation of the Bible into the Latin language which would become known as the Latin Vulgate. The word "Vulgate" means "common" thus the common language of the people. It would become the official language of the Catholic Church.

It supplied the church in that age with terms and phraseology which were used by the priest when referring to certain ordinances and sacred objects. Latin came to be looked upon as the language of the church.

This Latin Bible was adopted by the Catholic Church and thus became the official Bible. It would remain this way for 1,000 years until a newer version was adopted. The significance of all of this was that the Jerome's Vulgate became a captive Bible owned and controlled by the Roman Catholic Church. During this thousand year period it was not given to the people but to the high officials of the Roman church. The people were forbidden to read it or to have it in their houses.

Unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their pretensions. No modifications were allowed and no new translation was permitted. To oppose the church on this matter would result in serious repercussions such as being put to death by being burned at the stake. Many had to flee their homes and country to avoid the wrath and punishments handed down to those who defied the authority of the Roman church.

Another tragedy of Jerome's translation is that Latin would soon become a dead language and most people in Europe could not read it even if the Vulgate was made available to them. We wonder how Jerome himself could with a clear conscious practice the many errors that had already entered the church by the time he began his translation of the Latin Vulgate.

By keeping the Bible in the Latin language the Catholic Church was able to keep the people ignorant on all essential doctrines of the Scriptures. The truth is the Bible was held in hostage by the Catholic Church preventing the people from having any access to its teachings. Even many of the priests seemingly were not aware of its teachings.

Martin Luther, a Catholic priest, had never read much of the Bible through before he went to Rome and observed all the false practiced at the very center of Catholicism – Rome. Upon his return home he vowed to read the scriptures. Luther recalls that once in a University Library he saw a Bible chained to a lectern.

He opened to the First Book of Samuel and read the story of Hannah and how her son Samuel was chosen to be a "man of God." At the time he wished that he could possess and study a Bible. Evidently all the Catholic schools which trained priests did not give them a background in the Bible. Evidently most graduated knowing only how to conduct the various rites of the church - how to conduct their Masses, weddings, funerals, absolve members from their sins, baptize infants and confirm children.

Jerome's translation of the Scriptures into Latin could have been a great event but with the church in control of the translation and Latin becoming a dead language the people were ignorant of. There has always been the need of new translations of the Bible because language changes over time. Today many have opposed some of the modern English translations of the Bible.

Would it surprise you to know that the King James Bible used the Latin Vulgate primarily along with very few available Greek manuscripts to give us the KJV? The New KJV and other modern English translation attempt to bring the English up to how we use English today.

Would it surprise you to know that the old KJV of 1611 used the Latin Vulgate and a few Greek manuscripts to translate the KJV? Since then a large number of Greek manuscripts have been discovered thus enabling translators to have better access to the original language of the New Testament.

Jerome did a great work but little did he realize his translation would be restricted to a privileged few. His work had a reverse effect in that it was kept in seclusion preventing men from knowing the will of God. Had it been available probably it would have led to newer and better translations much sooner. Jerome's Vulgate was held captive by the Catholic Church for many years. It should be obvious many teachers and Bible scholars of that day were deficient in the scriptural truths found within God's word.

The theme of these lessons is how men have changed the doctrine of the New Testament. To view the work of Jerome most scholars would agree that he produced a good translation. By translating it into Latin he put it in a language the people of Europe were unable to read. Also keeping it a captive by the Catholic Church this prevented it from having a wide circulation. It was available primarily to only a scholarly class of men in universities. The common people had no such access.

There would have been many who could read Latin who knowledgeable of Latin who had no connection with universities. It has been said that many would pay a priest to read to them from the Latin. We do not know how wide spread this was. Also there were few Greek texts that were available even to the scholarly.

How thankful we should be that we live in a word where we are blessed with several versions of the Scriptures and that we can read for ourselves the Word of God.

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #4

Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin

Aurelium Augustine is considered one of the most important figures in the development of the Catholic Church as a philosopher and theologian. He has the distinction of being called one of the "Church Fathers." He was born November 13, 354 in North Africa and died Aug. 28, 430 A.D. at the age of 75. His mother was a devout believer in the church (Catholic) but his father was pagan.

As a child he attended the services of the church but they did not seem to appeal to him. He really had no interest in Christianity. He lived a sinful life to the displeasure of his mother. At an early age he developed an affair with a young woman and lived with her for 14 years. She gave birth to a son. He became a student of a number of philosophers and studied their writings. Later he moved to Italy and was followed by his mother.

The Bishop of Milan, Ambrose, seems to have had significant influenced over him to accept the church. While living in Italy he converted to the church in 386 A.D. which would put him at the age of 36. He gave up any interest in marriage but his son continued to live with him.

He writes that he devoted himself to serving God, desiring to lead a celibate life. He said that once while alone he distinctly heard the voice of a child saying, "Pick up and read."

When he reached his house he picked up a Bible and happened to turn to **Romans 13:13, 14** which reads, **"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and wantonness, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."** He says this is what changed his life.

He returned to his original home in North Africa where he would spend the rest of his life. He was ordained a priest and became a famous preacher. In his book **"Confessions"** he details his spiritual journey which became a classic in literature. On his way back to Africa his mother died. Later his son also died. He soon found himself alone without any family.

Augustine taught that original sin of Adam and Eve was an act both of foolishness and pride. Having committed this particular sin, human nature was henceforth transformed to become sinful. Adam and Eve through reproduction (**children**) passed this sin on down to their descendants. It was a great wound to all human nature. This has caused all descendants of Adam and Eve to be born with the original sin committed in the Garden of Eden by Adam and Eve including its guilt also.

Augustine concluded that unbaptized infants will go to hell as a consequence of original sin. In a later period some theologians held to the view that unbaptized infants will not suffer in Hell. However, they will never see God face to face. Starting around 1300, unbaptized infants were often said to inhabit a place called **"limbo."**

The catechism of the Catholic Church declared: **"As regards children who have died without Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them,"** allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who die without Baptism.

As recent as 1997 they no longer think babies will go to hell or limbo. The Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary is that Mary was conceived without any sin. This is to free Mary from original sin: **"the most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race was preserved immune from all stain of the original sin."**

Catholic doctrine says that the dead can go directly to heaven but this is rare. A person has to be an extremely good and devout person for this to happen. The most likely place is Purgatory where one remains until punishment has been satisfied for their venial sins. Prayers in their behalf may help to speed up their release. All the Patriarchs went to a Patriarch Limbo until Christ died on the cross. Hell is the destination of all those who commit mortal sins.

This cardinal doctrine of the Catholic Church is contrary to at least four New Testament concepts.

(1) John said that **"sin is the transgression of the law."** Thus, when one commits sins, he transgress (**goes against, breaks**) the law (**1 John 3:4**). Anything that violates God's righteousness is sin. One who works apart from or against God's word is guilty of sin. He is acting without any authority (**Matthew 7:21-23**).

We are separated and alienated from God by fulfilling the desires of the flesh. This is the New Testament's concept of how one becomes guilty of sin. There is no scripture that says we inherit sin but rather it is clear that we commit sin. There is a vast difference between the two.

(2) The word of God does not say one word about the forgiveness of any inherited sin. It does not mention forgiveness of the "guilt" of any kind of original sin. The New Testament speaks of "thy sins" or "your sins" (Acts 3:19; 22:16). One is forgiven of his own acts of transgression, not the sins of those who have lived before him. We are forgiven our personal sins not the sins of Adam and Eve.

The writer of Hebrews say "For I will be merciful their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" This fundamental fact concerning sin states that when sin is forgiven, it is not "remembered not more." In other words it is completely erased from God's mind. If it is forgotten how can it be passed down? We would naturally assume that both Adam and Eve were forgiven at some point even though they suffered the consequences of their sin.

The consequence was being driven from the garden, bearing pain in the birth of a child, difficulty in tilling the ground and finally physical death. All of these consequences have been passed down to all men but not the original sin.

(3) Christ "was delivered for our offences" (Romans 4:25). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body" (1 Peter 2:24). The death of Christ was for my sin, my guilt, my salvation. The death of Christ and the shedding of His blood is never said to be for the purpose of removing inherited original sin.

(4) There are numerous Scriptures that say individuals are judged by their own works, not the works of Adam and Eve. They are also rewarded "according to their works." There is no Scripture or Bible example that says a man is condemned to an eternal Hell because of what Adam and Eve did!

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #5

The Roman Catholic Church

It is difficult to establish a specific date for the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church. This is because it was in a constant state of evolution adding one false doctrine after another. Its doctrines evolved over many years even as late as 1995. However, there are certain events that set it forth as crystallized in doctrine and make it a separate and distinct religion, but certainly not the New Testament Church.

Gregory the Great was the last Latin Church father and the first of the popes. He is looked upon as one of the purest and useful popes. The time of his position as a pope lasted for 13 years (A.D. Sept. 3, 590 to March 12, 604). It was a time full of trouble.

Rome was no longer the center of the Roman Empire. Constantine who was considered the first Christian Caesar had moved the capital of the Empire to Constantinople and became known as the Byzantine Empire. Italy and Rome had become no more than a province of the Byzantine Empire.

Gregory was born about A.D. 540 to a wealthy family of Rome. His education was in government service. The Greek emperor Justin appointed him to the highest civil office in Rome. However he would soon brake with the world and became a monk. Pope Pelagius II of Constantinople made Gregory one of seven deacons of the Roman church.

Gregory was very mission minded which led to the conversion of many in England which came under the jurisdiction of Rome. This has been considered the greatest event of that age by Catholics. He did this with 30 monks, marching under the sign of the cross.

In A.D. 590 he was elected pope (**spiritual father**) by the unanimous voice of the clergy and the Byzantine emperor Mauricius. He would now devote all his energies toward returning Rome to its previous glory. He did this with the firm conviction that he was the true successor of St. Peter and also the Vicar of Christ. He surrounded himself with monks making them bishops but retained his life style of the Monastic life.

The papal chair seemingly had now been established in Rome. Even so, his authority was never considered as being over the Eastern (**Greek**) Churches. Even Gregory himself did not claim such jurisdiction but emphatically declined and denounced any such claim.

Meanwhile in Constantinople, John IV, who was the Patriarch of Constantinople now claimed that he had authority over the Eastern Churches. He constantly used in his letters the title "**Universal Bishop.**" After John's death Gregory sent his ambassador to demand that the new Patriarch, Cyriacus, should renounce the title "**Universal Bishop**" which he refused to do. Gregory himself refused to use this title while he was pope.

Phocas, an ignorant, vulgar, cruel upstart had Emperor Maurice and his whole family murdered. He then took control over the Empire. Gregory of Rome hastened to congratulate him, calling on heaven and earth to rejoice that the church was now free from the Emperor Maurice. The murderer and usurper Phocas repaid the favor by taking sides on who would become the ruler over all the churches.

He declared that the Roman Church was now to become "**the head of all churches.**" It is no wonder then that the successor of Gregory, Boniface III, was less humble and had no scruples against taking on this title, plus even other arrogant titles. If we were prone to give a date for the beginning of the Catholic Church it would be during the reign of Boniface III (**A.D. 606 – 607**). He is the first to claim authority over all the churches.

The Catholic Church's claim to be the Universal Church is based on a statement that Jesus made to Peter in **Matthew 16:16-19**, which is a very familiar passage. "**And Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon, Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against, And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'**"

Let us look closely at these verses and see what they teach. **First** of all Jesus promised to build His church. No one denies this. **Second**, He said it would be built upon the fact that he was the Son of God who had the authority to build His church. Christ was not speaking of Peter as the foundation. The big rock is the confession made by Peter, that Jesus was the Son of God.

There are two words in the Greek for the English word rock. When Jesus said Peter was a rock he used the Greek word "**Petros**" which means a small rock. When Jesus said he would build His church upon "**this rock**" he used the Greek word "**Petra**" meaning a large bed rock like you see in the side of a mountain. This second rock refers to the confession of Peter. So the church was built on Jesus, a big rock, in contrast to Peter who was a little rock.

The Catholic response is that Jesus was speaking in Aramaic the language of Palestine. This may be so but it is interesting that the New Testament was written in Greek and the Holy Spirit specifically chose two different words when recoding this conversation between Jesus and His disciples in the book of Matthew.

In **verse 18** He would build his church, then in the next verse **(19)** He said he would give unto Peter the keys of the of the kingdom of heaven. It should be clear that the church and kingdom are one and the same. The church is the kingdom and the kingdom is the church.

There is no Scripture that justifies the existence of the Catholic Church. It is filled with false doctrines which have come from men and church counsels. The concept of a universal pope is entirely out of the question. Peter was a far cry from all of the Catholic Popes down to the present. The church of the New Testament in no way resembles the Catholic Church. With its long history of corruption one wonders how it can still function.

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #6

Wycliffe, the Morning Star of the Reformation

For many years very few copies of the Bible were available to the rich and none for the average man on the street. For a thousand years the word of God had been locked up in languages known only to the learned. This was primarily Latin as translation by Jerome and available only to Catholics.

The church had ruled that all religious services were to be done in Latin thus the average man on the streets could not understand what was said by the priests in the worship service (**Latin Mass**) of the Catholic Church. There were no more than 15 translations in French which were not assessable to the public.

In the fourteenth century there arose in England a man who would make a big impact in changing the situation concerning the availability of the Scriptures. In addition he would lead a revolt against the Catholic Church and its doctrine.

John Wycliffe lived about 200 years before the time of the Protestant Reformation, but his teachings were close to those of Luther, Calvin and other reformers. He was a man ahead of his time. Historians have labeled him "**the Morning star of the Reformation.**"

John Wycliffe lived almost 200 years before the Reformation. Born c. 1330 in Yorkshire, England he died Dec. 31, 1384. He received his education at the University of Oxford. Later he would become a teacher at Oxford. At first his interest was in politics.

He became chaplain for the king. He took a bold stand against the payment of tribute claimed by the pope from the English king and showed that papal assumption of authority over secular rulers was contrary to both reason and revelation. Thus an effectual blow was struck against papal supremacy in England. Pope Gregory XI issued five bulls against Wycliffe, denouncing his theories and calling for his arrest. The call was refused. Oxford refused to condemn its outstanding scholar.

Wycliffe would return to the Oxford area and from the seclusion of his study, he began a systematic attack on the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church. As he more clearly discerned the errors of the papacy; the more earnestly he presented the teachings of the Bible. He saw that Rome had forsaken the word of God for human tradition.

He fearlessly accused the priesthood of having banished the Scriptures, and demanded that the Bible be restored to the people and that its authority be again established in the church. Wycliffe with clear insight, struck at the root of the evil, declaring that the system of the priesthood and the order and rank of the clergy was itself false and corrupt and that it should be abolished.

His chief target was the doctrine of "transubstantiation"—that the substance of the bread and wine used in the Eucharist is changed into the actual body and blood of Christ. He condemned the doctrine as idolatrous and unscriptural. He sought to replace it with the idea of remanence – that nothing changed about these elements – they remained the same after the priest offered a prayer. Few writers attacked their opponents with such strong wording as Wycliffe did with the doctrines of the Catholic Church.

A papal bull arrived in England with a command for the arrest and imprisonment of the heretic Wycliffe. This command pointed directly to burning at the stake. It was feared that Wycliffe would soon fall prey to the vengeance of Rome. It would seem that providence intervened as the pope died instead of Wycliffe. The death of the pope was followed by the election of two rival popes. This occurrence greatly weakened the power of the papacy and Wycliffe was temporarily forgotten.

Wycliffe now preached the gospel in the halls of Oxford and became known as "the gospel doctor." But he also preached to the poor. He determined that the gospel should be carried to every part of England. To accomplish this he organized a group of preachers who were simple, common, devout men, who loved the truth. These men went everywhere, teaching in the market places, in the streets of the big cities and in the country lanes. Thus we have a small Reformation taking place in England.

But his greatest work remained yet to be done. His greatest intention was to translate the Bible into English so that every man in England might read in the language in which he was born, the wonderful works of God. But suddenly his labors were stopped. He was not yet sixty years of age when attacked by a dangerous illness. The clergy rejoiced when they heard this. They thought he would die. But he didn't die and was more determined than ever before to accomplish an English Bible.

During the last years of his life Wycliffe with the assistance of some of his students, undertook a translation of the Scriptures from the Latin into the English tongue. The work was completed about 1382, the first translation to be made in English.

It is not known how much of the translation was made by Wycliffe personally, perhaps the New Testament and part of the Old Testament. Yet it is correct to describe it as the Wycliffe version, for it was due to his scholarship and under his guidance that the historic project was accomplished. In 1388 John Purvey, a close friend and associate, thoroughly corrected and revised Wycliffe's first version. This Bible held sway until the sixteenth century.

The art of printing was unknown. It was only by slow and wearisome labor that copies of the Bible could be made. So great was the interest to obtain the Bible that many willingly engaged in the demand. Some of the more wealthy purchasers desired the whole Bible. Others bought only portions. In many cases several families united to purchase a copy. Thus Wycliffe's Bible found its way to the homes of the people who spoke English.

With Wycliffe's emphasis on the sole infallibility of the Scriptures made it open now for men to examine what the Scriptures say. As a result of Wycliffe's writings and the preachers he sent out to preach caused many to recognize a new and accurate doctrine. Thus a new faith was accepted by half of the people of England. Wycliffe expected that his life would be the price of his fidelity.

The king, the pope, and the bishops were united to accomplish his death. But before they could touch him he fell stricken with palsy, and in only a short time yielded up his life. More than 40 years after his death the Catholic Church ordered his bones exhumed and publicly burned. His ashes were thrown into a nearby stream.

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #7

Martin Luther and the Doctrine of Salvation by Faith Only

Luther was born Nov. 10, 1483 at Eisleben, Germany of devout Catholic peasants. His was an age of superstition that believed in demons, ghosts and witches. He reported that he distinctly heard the devil more than once and often disputed with the devil in the night about the condition of his soul. Such superstitions figured largely in Luther's early theology

Terrified by a storm on July 2, 1505 he cried out to his patron saint, "Help me St. Anne, I will become a monk." In 1505 he entered an Augustinian monastery. Fear for his salvation drove him into monastic life. He once said, "If I could believe that God was not angry with me, I would stand on my head for joy." Monastic life never relieved him of this fear. The righteousness of God was simply the punishment meted out to sinners for their punishment.

While in the monastery he subjected himself to every possible form of discipline and mortification. No one could surpass him in prayer, fasting, vigils, self-discipline and self mortification. Yet in all these things his soul found no peace. An older priest advised him, "You must obey God and believe in forgiveness. You have the wrong idea of Christ. Christ does not terrify; his office is to comfort". A trip to Rome was very unsettling to his faith.

A final blow to his faith came with the sale of indulgences. The church developed indulgences as a means of releasing sinners from the penalty for their sins. By contributing a certain amount of money one could purchase an indulgence. In 1515, Pope Leo X authorized the sale of indulgences in Germany to raise money to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Johann Tetzel a German priest traveled in Germany selling them.

Tetzel preached that an indulgence freed people from punishment of any confessed sins to a priest and could even release souls who were already in purgatory. Luther was outraged. He sent a letter to the Archbishop denouncing Tetzel's actions enclosing a list of his 95 Thesis which were critical of issues and many other abuses within the Catholic Church.

About this time Luther came to a conclusion that would change the religious world in its thinking about salvation. In his study of Paul's letter to the Romans, he came to **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."**

He pondered over the meaning of the **"righteousness of God"** and concluded that righteousness was a free gift to those who believe in Christ. All the sinner has to do was accept it as a free gift. He concluded that justification is by faith only, rather than by the many works of the Catholic Church.

Justification was a judicial act of God whereby God acquits the sinner of his guilt and clothes him with the righteousness of Christ on the one condition of personal faith in Christ. He concluded that people are justified solely (**alone**) through faith in God's promise that Christ died for their salvation.

In his view when sinful people trust Christ died on the cross for their sins, then Christ takes their place before God's judgment seat and God finds them **"not guilty"** for Christ's sake. He further said that people cannot earn faith but rather faith is a gift from God. Once justified by faith, believers are then led by the Holy Spirit to do good works toward others. Works are the results of Justification, rather than the means by which people are saved.

This was a total departure from the Catholic position on faith. For Luther justification by **faith alone** was the sum and substance of the gospel. This was a drastic change from his Catholic concept of salvation.

He translated the Bible into the German language. The Latin Bible was so guarded by the Catholic Church it was about the only translation available with the exception of the Greek text both of which Germans could not read. This opened up the Bible to the German people since it was now in a language they could understand.

So strong were his feelings about salvation by faith alone that in his translation of **Romans 3:28** he added, the word "alone" so as to make the passage read, **"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith (alone) apart from the deeds of the law."** When asked why he had done this he said, **"As to Romans 3:28, if the word "alone" is not found in the Latin or Greek texts, yet the passage has that meaning and must be rendered so in order to make it clear and strong."**

SOME OBSERVATIONS

First, Paul did not say this. If this is what it meant, **why didn't Paul say so?** He was not ignorant of such words as "alone" and "only," and could have placed them in the text.

Second, faith is not a gift from God as Luther contended because faith begins by "hearing the word of God" (Romans 10:17). This leads one then to repent of his or her sins then to be baptized into Christ (Romans 2:38; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27).

Third, it is not our imperfect faith that saves us, but the perfect faith of Jesus who demonstrated His faithful obedience to the Father. Paul declares in **Philippians 2:5-8** that Jesus emptied Himself of heaven with all its glories, took on human flesh, "humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." We are saved "in Christ" where all spiritual blessings are found (Ephesians 1:3).

The only way one gets into Christ is to be baptized into Him. (See Galatians 3:27.) No man can have faith in Christ when he refuses to be baptized into Christ. The influence of Luther's teaching can be seen in many of the translations of today. In such passages as Galatians 2:16, 20; 3:22; Ephesians 3:12, and in Philippians 3:9 where in the KJV, "faith of Jesus Christ" it has been changed to "faith in Jesus Christ" in later translations. This no doubt has been done to bolster the "faith only" doctrine of Luther.

Fourth, contrary to Luther, the Lord does not infuse righteousness into those who believe as righteousness is not transferable, but is obtained by being fully identified with him and becoming like Him. Paul wrote, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Salvation is dependent upon our willingness to die to ourselves and become one with Christ by "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," and living "soberly and righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:1). (Also see Romans 12:1, 2.)

It is interesting to note that later when Luther came to James 2:14-26 he found that his doctrine of "faith only" conflicted with James' insistence that man's faith by itself will not save but is a dead faith. True faith will produce good works. He plainly declared, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). Luther was furious in his denunciation of the epistle, insisting it was not canonical and did not belong in the New Testament. He referred to it as an "epistle of straw."

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #8

Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation

What Luther did in Germany, Zwingli did even more in Switzerland. Ulrich Zwingli was born on New Year's Day, 1484 in Wildhaus, Switzerland. He would begin a Reformation that resulted in the demise of the Catholic Church in Switzerland. He was the third of eight boys and two girls born to an official of the city of Zurich. His uncle Bartholomew was a preacher (pastor) of a church and it was under him that he received his early education.

At the age of ten he was sent to study under Gregory Bunzli a teacher in the School of St. Theodore. His higher education was at the University of Vienna and the University of Basel. He was highly educated acquiring a B.A. degree in 1504 and a Master of Arts in 1506. It was in schools like this that men planted the seeds of reformation in student's minds.

In 1606 he was ordained into the priesthood. He moved to Einsiedeln, where he saw close at hand the evil practices of Catholicism such as the selling and buying of indulgences. He began to preach against them and condemning them several years before Luther did.

A plague struck Zurich and destroyed nearly a third of its population. Zwingli himself who had been faithfully ministering to the needs of sick people contracted the disease himself. He emerged from a near death experience becoming a changed man. After he fully recovered from the plague, Zwingli began earnestly fighting for strict obedience to the literal teachings of scripture.

In Switzerland, reform was brought about by appealing to the magistrates of the city who would then call for a debate between Roman Catholic theologians and the reformers. Those who defended their position most effectively were almost always a reformers who based his arguments solely on scripture. The victor was awarded the right to make, or not make it a practice.

Zwingli won his first of many successfully debates in 1523. Some of the changes brought about by his debates were: the observance of Lent was abolished, clerical celibacy was declared to be unbiblical, churches were severed from any connection with the papacy, and mass was replaced with a simple worship that all in the congregation could participated in.

There were great victories for Zwingli and other Swiss reformers. A debate between Zwingli and Martin Luther was held with the hope of unifying the two groups. They managed to agree on 15 points of essential reform, but there was one issue of dispute over the Lord's Supper they could not agree on. The Swiss did not agree with Luther's (Catholic) doctrine of transubstantiation. Zwingli said the Supper was a symbolic act, not a literal changing of the substance of the elements. They elements represented the body and blood of Jesus.

It is said Luther would answer Zwingli by saying that Jesus clearly said, "this IS my body." Some sources say that Luther harshly disagreed with Zwingli and called a halt to further discussions. Zwingli's was greatly disappointed in their attempt to unify the two camps. It is said Luther did not like Zwingli after this debate and made no effort to meet with him again.

Luther could be very harsh and show his dislike for any opponent. They were so close in most doctrines, yet so far from their belief about the bread and the wine used in the Lord's Supper. The result of this meeting ended up leaving two different camps of Protestantism.

Zwingli came the closest to restoring New Testament Christianity than any of the other reformers. Luther and his views were more widely known, whereas Zwingli's understanding of the Bible was not very well known outside of Switzerland. He rejected the veneration of saints. Unbaptized children were not damned to a hell or Limbo. However he defended infant baptism saying it replaced the circumcision of the Old Testament. He completely did away with the mass.

The churches of Zurich were purged of relics, crucifixes, altars, candles, and all ornaments. The frescoes were effaced, and the walls were whitewashed, so that nothing remained but bare walls but their buildings were filled by worshipping people. Expensive pictures were broken and burnt. The bones of well known saints were buried.

Zwingli did away with the communion ware substituting wooden plates and a cup placed on a rough wooden table. The organ was chopped up. He rejected chanting by a choir in Latin replacing it with congregational singing of psalms and hymns in the local language. He said that the sole authority for doctrine and worship is to be derived from the Bible only – it is the only authority in religious matters.

He clearly declared that the word of God is the only rule of faith, not the doctrines of the Bishops, Popes and councils. He said the Bible produced the church not the church produced the Bible. This shows how wide the gap had become between Zwingli and the Catholic Church.

We admire Zwingli for what he accomplished. However, he left us with a false doctrine which can destroy the Bible's concept that baptism is for the remission of sins. Zwingli said that one is saved by faith which he adopted from Luther, and that baptism has no saving power.

He argued that baptism was only an "outward sign of an inward grace." Baptism was merely a sign that one was saved. His teaching on Baptism destroyed the possibility of knowing what one must do to be saved. Baptism is reduced to merely a sign or symbol. This doctrine would be passed down primarily to the Baptist and others. It still exists today in the Baptist Church.

Recently I read a book by a well known evangelist, Rick Warren. He discusses salvation emphasizing faith in Jesus Christ. Although he does not believe that baptism has anything to do with salvation He urges his reader, if they have never been baptized then they should not delay doing it – do it as soon as possible. [Why all this urgency if it has nothing to do with salvation?](#) By simply looking at a person we can't tell if that person is a Christian unless we had seen him or her baptized. If baptism is only a sign, then it only lasts for a few seconds at the moment a person is baptized.

Zwingli's doctrine on baptism has prevented thousands from understanding and obeying a clear command of the Lord that we are to be baptized "for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:38). To his credit, Zwingli came close to restoring the New Testament church. Having died at an early age he could not continued his efforts to reform the Catholic Church.

The Catholics formed an army and attacked Switzerland in an attempt to bring them under control. Zwingli went with the Swiss forces to serve as a Chaplain and was killed during the battle. [How far would he have continued to go if he had lived longer?](#)

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #9

John Calvin and Predestination

John Calvin (1506 1564) was born in France. He went to the University of Paris where he studied theology. Later Calvin went to the College de France in Paris to study Greek. The college was noted for Humanism, the study of classical and culture literature. At some point between 1528 and 1533 Calvin says he experienced a "sudden conversion" and became interested in Protestantism.

He said, "God subdued my soul to docility by a sudden conversion." What this experience was we do not know. Calvin became highly critical of the abuses in the French Catholic church. At that time in France his ideas would have been heretical. He lived at a dangerous time for heretics thus He fled Paris. In the following year 24 heretics were burned at the stake.

For three years (1533 to 1536) he roamed France, Italy and Switzerland to escape attention for his beliefs. He went to Geneva, Switzerland in 1536 where he had more religious freedom. He published the first edition of his "Institutes of the Christian Religion." This book is a clear explanation of his religious beliefs which were heretical at that time.

Geneva became the centre of his work. Geneva was a French-speaking Swiss city. At the time of Calvin's arrival the city was struggling to achieve independence from Catholic control. In May 1535 the city adopted religious reform. Monasteries were dissolved, The Catholic Mass was abolished and Papal authority renounced. This was a big step away from Catholicism. It would take Calvin fourteen years to fully impose his doctrine concerning what the church should resemble.

Calvin's services were plain and simple. He placed great importance on the sermon. Worship and the seeking for the knowledge of God should be the center of worship. Though he himself liked instrumental music, he distrusted its use in religious services believing it distracted the people from the more important parts of the worship.

Musical instruments were banned from the churches, but congregational singing was permitted and this proved to be both popular and an effective way of spreading the gospel. All matters relating to worship must come directly from the Scriptures so psalms took the place of hymns in the services.

Calvin rejected the organization of the Medieval (Catholic) church as contrary to the New Testament. He wanted a church modeled after the church in Apostolic (New Testament) times. There were to be no bishops such as the Catholic Church had. All ministers (preachers) were equal. Their duties were to preach, administer the Lord's Supper, and look after the spiritual welfare of the people. They were to uphold moral discipline but were assisted by the elders. The elders were elected by the city council. Thus church and state were tied together.

However, Calvin believed that the church and state should be separate but he tolerated it. Deacons also were elected and were to look after the relief of the poor. Calvin's overall plan was in many ways still far from New Testament Christianity. The thing that Calvin is most noted for is his doctrine of Predestination. Simply stated, God has chosen to send certain people to Heaven and the remainder to Hell.

It would be unfair to say this was only Calvin's doctrine for it can be found in Augustine's writings. After Augustine's death it became unpopular and died out. Calvin resurrects it with several additions. Basically, Calvinism is known by an acronym: T. U. L. I. P.

T – Total Depravity: Sin has affected every part of man. The heart, emotions, will, and body are all affected by sin. We are completely sinful. Calvin argues **how is it possible for anyone to choose or desire God?** Calvin's answer is, He cannot, therefore God must predestine.

U – Unconditional Election: God does not base His election on anything good He sees in an individual. He chooses the elect at random without any consideration of the merits within the individual. Man has nothing to do with God's selection. In the same way he does not reject one to hell because he sees wickedness in an individual. He randomly selects those who will be lost even though they may want to believe and want to go to heaven. The lost and can do nothing to change their lost condition.

L – Limited Atonement: Jesus died only for the elect after they have already been chosen to be among the elect. Jesus purchased only those in the church with his blood. This implies that the church contains the elect. If you are in the church that is a good sign you are one of the elect. If you are not in the church that is a sign you are not one of the elect.

I -- Irresistible Grace: When God calls his elect into salvation, they cannot resist. God extends an internal call and it cannot be resisted. This call is by the Holy Spirit who works in the hearts and minds of the elect to bring them to repentance and regeneration whereby they willingly come to God.

P - Perseverance of the Saints: You cannot lose your salvation. This is because the Father has elected the redeemed, and the Holy Spirit has applied salvation. Thus, those saved are eternally secure. They are eternally secure in Christ.

Calvinism focuses on God's sovereignty. By virtue of His omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence He can do whatever He desires. A correct view is that God could look into the future and could see those who will choose, love, and obey Him thus He chooses them to be saved. Those who reject him will not be saved. Jesus died for all people who live in sin. Each person decides if he wants to be saved or not. It is also possible to lose your salvation. **"We are to take heed lest we fall"** We know some of the Galatians had **"fallen from grace."**

Calvin draws from Scripture to buttress his arguments. **"He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."** Calvin said that this is God's good pleasure not anything we do. He says, God **"purposed in himself"** (Ephesians 1:9) thus he considered nothing outside himself such as man's obedience, with which to decide who would be saved and who would be lost.

He uses Jacob and Esau as an example. When born none had done anything good or bad. But God decided that, **"the elder will serve the younger"** (Romans 9:11, 12). God could look into the future and see what kind of man Esau would turn out to be. God could see that Jacob would be more spiritual. He chose the better man to develop his scheme of redemption. Calvin points out that God, **"has mercy upon whomever He wills, and He hardens the heart of whomever He wills"** (Romans 9:18).

However, Pharaoh had already demonstrated he would not allow the Israelites to leave Egypt. By hardening his heart God could prove that no one can deter God in his plan to bring salvation to mankind. Calvin said God is free to determine a purpose for election, but that purpose has nothing to do with man's desire or effort. Calvin said nothing is clearer than **Romans 9:16, "It does not therefore; depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy."**

Also what about Romans 9:21, "Has not the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for dishonor?" God "wants all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4). "God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9). He quotes Paul, "no one is righteous, no one understands, no one seeks God." He takes this passage out of context. [How can this be?](#) We even see pagans doing honest and good things, heroic acts of sacrifice, obeying civil laws, some seeking God.

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #10

Henry the VIII and the Church of England

The Church of England separated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534 with the idea that it would be both Catholic and Reformed. It was Catholic in that it viewed itself as a part of the universal church of Jesus Christ with an unbroken continuity with the early apostolic church with emphasis on the teachings of the early Church Fathers, as set forth in the Nicene, and Athanasian creeds.

It was reformed in that it has been shaped by the doctrinal principles set forth by the 16th century Protestant Reformation, in particular in the Thirty-Nine Articles of faith and the Book of Common Prayer.

According to tradition, Christianity arrived in Britain in the first or second century. The earliest historical evidence of Christianity among the native Britons is found in the writings of such early Christian Fathers as Tertullian and Origen writing in the first years of the third century of their presence. However, there is some evidence there were Christians there very early after the Roman invaded Briton who were converted Roman soldiers.

Some say there are certain markings on Hadrons Wall which separates England from Scotland which indicate Christians were there. While Christian Britons had been there a long time at the time of the Anglo-Saxon invasion the Britons made little progress in converting these newcomers from their paganism. Thus Pope Gregory sent "Saint Augustine" from Rome to evangelize the Angles.

Augustine established a church in Canterbury thus becoming the first in a series of Archbishops of Canterbury which today is the headquarters of the Church of England. The English church was under papal authority for nearly a thousand years, before separating from Rome in 1534 during the reign of King Henry VIII.

The king wanted an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon so he could marry Anne Boleyn. Under pressure from Catherine's nephew, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and Pope Clement VII refused the annulment. Eventually, Henry, who theologically still was very much doctrinally a Catholic, took for himself the title "Supreme Head of the Church of England" to ensure the annulment of his marriage.

He then was excommunicated by Pope Paul III. Because of his strong preference for traditional Catholic practices, Protestant reformers were unable to make many changes to the practices of the Church of England.

Under his son, Edward VI, more Protestant-influenced forms of worship were adopted. Under the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury, a more radical reformation began to take place. A new pattern of worship was set out in the Book of Common Prayer (1549 and 1552). The confession of the reformed Church of England was set forth in their Articles of Faith.

The reformation was cut short by the death of the king. Queen Mary I, who succeeded him, returned England again to the authority of the Pope, thereby ending the first attempt at an independent Church of England. During Mary's reign, many leaders and common people were burnt for their refusal to recant of their reformed faith. These were known as the Marian martyrs and the persecution has led to her nickname of "Bloody Mary."

Mary also died childless and so it was left to her half sister Elizabeth to resolve the direction of the church. It ended up in as moderately Reformed in doctrine and but contending continuity with the Catholic and Apostolic traditions of the Church Fathers. It remained under the head of state which would be a source of continued friction into the next century.

For the next century, during the reigns of James 1, he took the lead in ordering the creation of what would become known as the King James Bible. He attempted to bring unity to the Church of England by setting up a commission consisting of scholars from all views with the Church in hopes of producing a new translation of the Bible free of Calvinist and Popish influence. The project was begun in 1604 and completed in 1611.

The Old Testament was translated from the Masoretic Hebrew text, while the New Testament was translated from the Greek manuscripts along with Latin texts. The work was done by 47 scholars working in six committees, two based in each of the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, and Westminster. They worked on certain parts separately; then the drafts produced by each committee were compared and revised for harmony with each other.

The **Authorized Version** is often referred to as the **King James Version**, particularly in the United States. This despite the fact that King James himself was not personally involved in the translation, though his authorization was legally necessary for the translation to begin, and he set out guidelines for the translation process, such as prohibiting footnotes and ensuring that Anglican positions were recognized on various points.

Meanwhile, there were significant swings back and forth between two factions: the Puritans (**and other radicals**) who sought more far-reaching Protestant reforms in the Church of England and the more conservative churchmen who aimed to keep closer to traditional beliefs and Catholic practices.

The failure to submit to Puritan demands for more extensive reform was one of the causes that would lead to the English Civil War. The war produced about three skirmishes with the Anglican Church remaining in power. The casualties included King Charles I, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud. Many bishops were dethroned and many former practices were outlawed, and in their place, Presbyterian ecclesiology was introduced instead of the old episcopate system.

The 39 Articles were replaced with the Westminster Confession, and the Book of Common Prayer was replaced by the Directory of Public Worship. Despite this, about one quarter of English clergy refused to conform to this new form of State Presbyterianism.

With the restoration of Charles II, Parliament restored the Church of England to a form not far removed from its earlier Elizabethan version. One difference was that the ideal of encompassing all the people of England into one religious organization had to be abandoned. The religious landscape of England assumed its present form of today with the Anglican Church occupying middle ground.

Puritans who dissented from the Anglican establishment were unable to accomplish their goal of reforming the Anglican Church. Roman Catholicism was too strong to fall in line with the Anglican Church thus they continued their existence outside the National Church rather than submitting to its doctrine.

With the Act of Toleration which was enacted May 24, 1689, nonconformists had the freedom of worship. Protestants who dissented such as Baptists, Congregationalists and Quakers but not Roman Catholics were allowed to have own places of worship and their own teachers and preachers. Their meeting places were called "Chapels."

The word "Church" could not be included in their denominational name. The Act of Toleration deliberately did not apply to Catholics and Unitarians. It also excluded any dissenters from holding any political office.

As for the Church of England its organization changed some but they never restored the simple autonomous organization of the early church with its elders and deacons. There was no change in their elaborate form of worship which includes many things not authorized by God's word. The Church of England is a far cry from the apostolic church of the first century.

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #11

John Smyth and the Baptist Church

Historians trace the earliest Baptist church back to 1609 in Amsterdam, Holland with English Separatist John Smyth as its pastor. Separatist were people who had fled the Church of England because they could no longer accept its faith and doctrine. Separatist were not save to live in England and thus many fled to other countries. Holland offered the most religious freedom of any country at that time. Thus many fled there so as to be safe from persecution.

In accordance with his reading of the New Testament, he rejected the baptism of infants believing baptism was only for believing adults. Baptist practice soon spread to England. Here, there were General Baptists who considered Christ's atonement extended to all people, while there were Particular Baptists who believed that the atonement only to the elect. In 1639, Roger Williams established the first Baptist congregation in the North American colonies.

Baptist generally believed in believer's baptism (as opposed to infant baptism), salvation through faith alone, Scripture alone as the rule of faith and practice, and the autonomy of the local church.

They practiced baptism by immersion (as opposed to sprinkling). Baptist churches are widely considered to be Protestants although some Baptist disavows any identity with Protestantism claiming to have originated before the Protestant movement in Europe. Some have claimed they go back as far as John the Baptist with the church being named after him.

The term Baptist comes from a Greek word which is related to the idea to wash, dip, immerse. The term **Baptist** as applied to Baptist churches is a modification of the term Anabaptist (which means rebaptizer), and was used up into the 19th century as a general epithet for churches which denied the validity of infant baptism. The English Anabaptists were called Baptists as early as 1569. The name Anabaptist continued to be applied to English and American Baptist, even after the American Revolution.

Prior to Smyth and Amsterdam, the Church of England had broken away from the Catholic Church. However, there were some Christians who were disappointed that the Church of England had not made corrections of what some considered to be serious errors and abuses. Of those most critical of the Church's direction some chose to stay and try to make constructive changes from within the Anglican Church. They became known as "**Puritans**" and are described as cousins of the English Separatists.

At first Smyth began meeting in England with group of about 60 to 70 English Separatists. This was done in the face of great danger. The persecution of religious nonconformists in England led Smyth to go into exile in Amsterdam with fellow Separatists from the congregation he had gathered in Lincolnshire, separate from the established church (**Anglican**). Smyth was convinced that his infant baptism had not been valid and that he should be baptized again as a believer. So in 1609 he first baptized himself and then baptized others.

In 1609, while still in exile Smyth wrote a tract titled "**The Constitution of the Church**" in which he expressed two propositions: **First**, infants are not to be baptized and **second**, Antichristian converts are to be admitted into the true church by baptism.

Hence, his conviction was that a scriptural church should consist only of regenerate believers who have been baptized on a personal confession of faith. He rejected the Separatist movement's doctrine of infant baptism. Shortly thereafter, Smyth left the group. He was convinced on the basis of his understanding of the Scripture that infants would not be damned should they die in infancy. Smyth, now convinced that his self-baptism was invalid, applied with the Mennonites for membership. He died waiting for membership to be granted to him.

Roger Williams and John Clarke are credited with founding the earliest Baptist church in North America. In North America. In 1639 Williams established a Baptist church in Providence, Rhode Island, and Clarke began a Baptist church in Newport, Rhode Island. According to research there is doubt which of these was the first Baptist congregation in America. Exact records for both congregations are lacking.

In 1845 Baptist congregations in the United States split over three main issues: slavery, missions, and doctrinal integrity. The northern congregations were opposed to owning slaves and tried to prevent slaveholders from being missionaries.

Southern congregations were concerned over perceived liberalism in the north, accusing some missionaries of denying virgin birth and divinity of Jesus. After the civil war another split occurred: most black Baptists in the South separated from white churches and set up their own congregations. In the late 1860s they rapidly set up several separate state conventions.

In 1895 their three national conventions merged into the National Baptist Convention. With 8 million members, it is the largest African-American religious organization and is second in size to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Today Baptist defines their church membership as a congregation of baptized believers in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The primary external qualification for membership in a Baptist church is a public profession of faith in Jesus, followed by water baptism. Baptist churches do not have an age restriction on membership, but will not accept a member a child who is considered too young to fully understand and make a profession of faith of their own volition and comprehension.

In such cases, the pastor and parents usually meet together with the child to verify the child's comprehension of the decision to follow Jesus as Lord. The church also allowed vote whether the candidate can be a part of the church. There are cases where persons make a profession of faith but fail to follow through with believers' baptism.

In such cases they are considered saved and usually eligible for membership. They do not believe that baptism has anything to do with salvation yet they expect that believers be baptized. The question then is **why?** Their answer would be that baptism is a public expression of one's inner repentance and faith.

It is a symbolic display of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. In reference to **Acts 2:38** where Peter admonishes his listeners to be baptized **"for the remission of sins"** many Baptist have argued that the word, **"for"** can be translated **"because of."** Thus Peter is made to say, repent and be baptized because your sins have already been forgiven.

Baptism is simply a sign that says you have been forgiven of your sins because they were forgiven when you believed and confessed your faith in Jesus. Unless you have seen the person confess their faith in Christ this sign would only be visible only when they are put under the water. They share many of the same doctrines that other fundamental churches believe in and practice.

Most Baptists hold that no church or ecclesiastical organization has inherent authority over a Baptist church. This also involves freedom from any kind of governmental control. They are very firm on the separation of church and state.

Generally speaking they believe in the literal second coming of Christ. Many hold to the doctrine of Premillennialist. They hold to the supremacy of the Scriptures. For something to become a matter of faith and practice it must be something explicitly ordained through command or example in the Bible

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #12

John Wesley and the Methodist Church

By Jimmy Eaton Red bank church of Christ

John Wesley (1703 – 1791) along with his brother Charles Wesley is largely credited as the founders of the Methodist Church. However they always considered themselves as being members of the Church of England. John was a graduate of Oxford. Being a very devout man he felt people were not as devoted to the Lord as they should be.

He and his brother founded societies or small groups who would meet together on a regular basis first at Oxford to develop and cultivate their spiritual lives. One of his greatest achievements was the enlistment of young men to become itinerant, un-ordained preachers to travel widely to evangelize and care for people in their societies.

These were looked upon as "assistants" and did open air preaching. They preached wherever they could find a crowd who would listen to them. Under Wesley's direction, Methodists became leaders in many of the social issues of their day, such as prison reform, and the moral right to freedom from slavery.

On October 14 1735, Wesley and his brother Charles sailed from Kent, England to Savannah, Georgia where Governor Oglethorpe wanted Wesley to be the minister of a newly formed parish. On the voyage to the colony Wesley came into contact with Moravian settlers. He was impressed by their deep faith and spirituality.

At one point in the voyage a storm came up and broke the mast of the ship. While the English panicked, the Moravians calmly sang hymns and prayed. This experience caused Wesley to believe that the Moravians possessed an inner spiritual strength which he lacked. This would greatly influence Wesley's theology.

When they reached Savannah on February 8, 1736 Wesley also saw an opportunity to spread Christianity to the Native American Indians in the colony. However, he and his brother encountered many problems as they attempted to evangelize people. Furthermore, John found disaster in his relations with Sophia Hopkey, a woman who had journeyed across the Atlantic on the same ship as Wesley.

Wesley and Hopkey became romantically involved, but Wesley abruptly broke off the relationship on the advice of a Moravian minister in whom he confided. Hopkey contended that Wesley had promised to marry her and therefore had gone back on his word in breaking off the relationship. Wesley's problems came to a head when he refused to offer Hopkey the communion. She and her new husband, William Williamson, filed suit against Wesley. Wesley stood trial and faced the accusations made by Hopkey.

The proceedings ended in a mistrial, but Wesley's reputation had been tarnished too much, he made it known that he intended to return to England. Williamson again tried to raise charges against Wesley to prevent him from leaving the colony, but he managed to escape back to England. He was left exhausted by the whole experience. Returning to England he was depressed and turned to the Moravians. Both he and Charles received counsel from a young Moravian missionary Peter Boehler.

On the night of May 24, 1738, at a Moravian meeting he said, "I felt my heart strangely warmed." This "feeling" was perceived as God giving Wesley assurance that he was saved as the Moravians taught.

This would become an important piece of his theology. He believed that those who were pardoned and accepted by God through faith would not be left without an assurance of their right standing before God. It was based on Romans 8:16, "For the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." He taught that in the act of assurance there are two participants: God's Spirit and man's spirit. God's Spirit gives a subjective experience or feeling to the one who wants assurance that he is a child of God.

This inward subjective experience may bring feelings of joy or a sense of forgiveness or confidence of a relationship with God ---- or it may not. It is a gift from God which He gives as he chooses. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." Scripture presents truth. If I do what it commands me to do in order to be a Christian it (the Scriptures were produced by the Holy Spirit) assures me that I am a child of God. No subjective experience is necessary.

Wesley defined the witness of the Spirit as: an inward impression on the soul where the Spirit of God directly testified to our spirit that we are the children of God. However, on the other hand the Spirit may not do this. Wesley believed that assurance of salvation was a privilege of every believer, but seemingly he backs off of this position by saying not every believer may receive this "direct" assurance.

Obviously then a subjective assurance of salvation is not necessary salvation. He did say that usually joy attends a person at the beginning of their salvation, especially to those who have mourned deeply, but it (the Spirit) "sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth (subjective experiences) according to the counsels of His own will."

Wesley never stopped preaching the importance of faith for salvation, but the witness of God's Spirit that one was, indeed, a child of God was most comforting and gives us inner strength. Wesley allied himself with the Moravian society early in his preaching. In 1738 he went to Herrnhut, the Moravian headquarters in Germany to study. The Moravians had a great impact on his teachings. However, later in 1739 Wesley broke with the Moravians. He still believed the Anglican Church (Church of England) had much to offer in its practices.

Finally he decided to form his own followers into a separate society. He wrote, "Without any previous plan, the Methodist Society began in England." At first He was unhappy about the idea of "open air" or "field preaching" as some were doing. Earlier in his life he would have thought that such a method of reaching the lost was almost a sin, but He came to recognize that open air services were successful in reaching men and women who would otherwise never enter most the church buildings.

From then on he took the opportunities to preach wherever an assembly could be brought together. He even used his Father's tombstone at Epworth as a pulpit more than once. Wesley continued to preach for fifty years---entering churches when he was invited.

He preached in fields, in halls, cottages, and chapels, when a local Anglican church would not receive him. Wesley and his followers continued to work diligently, especially among the neglected and needy.

He felt that the Anglican Church failed to call sinners to repentance, that many of the clergymen were corrupt, and that people were perishing in their sins. He believed he was commissioned to bring about a revival in the church.

Riding on horseback he preached two or three times each day. It is estimated He rode 250,000 miles, gave away 30,000 English pounds (**money**), and preached 40,000 sermons. He died a poor man. The Sunday school movement which supposedly has its roots in Robert Raikes, a publisher, was adopted by Wesley and became a part of the Methodist Church.

Wesley wrote, "I verily think these Sunday Schools are one of the noblest specimens of charity which have been set on foot in England since William the Conqueror. The value of these schools is that hundreds of poor children with no access to any school or private education were learning to read and study the Bible".

From 1739 onward, Wesley and the Methodists were persecuted by English clergymen and magistrates because they preached without being ordained or licensed by the Anglican Church. Wesley died March 2, 1791 at the age of 87. He left behind 135,000 members and 541 itinerant preachers and the Methodist Church.

His teachings have served as the basis for the holiness and Pentecostal movements which are very predominant today. Wesley's "**religious experience**" still attracts many today. His brother, Charles is remembered for the over 3,000 hymns he wrote and composed, many of which are still widely used today in church hymnals.

MEN WHO CHANGED NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE #13

John Knox and the Presbyterian Church

John Knox (**c1505 – 1572**) was the leader of the Scottish reformation. He was born near Heddington and some think he received his basic education at the University of St. Andrews. He became a Catholic priest. He began a study of what became known as the "**church fathers.**" He became strongly attached to George Wishart, a well known Scottish reformer.

Wishart traveled extensively in fear for his life all over Scotland denouncing Catholic doctrine. He was investigated for heresy and was finally put to death. His early martyrdom did not stop Knox in his studies, but rather stirred him to continue further to examine and preach against Catholic doctrine. He became the chaplain of the St. Andrews castle where Protestants sought refuge but it did not last for long.

The queen of England, Mary of Guise decided that this little Bastille of Protestantism of about 130 people who had taken refuge inside the castle could only be taken by force and requested the king of France, Henry 11 to intervene. French galleys approached St Andrews on 31th of July, 1547 Knox was forced to row on a galley-slave boat until his release in 1549.

Galley slaves were chained to benches and rowed throughout the day without a change in posture while an officer watched over them with a whip in hand. They were tortured if they did not give proper signs of reverence when mass was performed on the ship.

Knox recounted an incident in which one Scot was required to show devotion to a picture of the Virgin Mary. The prisoner was told to give it a kiss of veneration. He refused and when the picture was pushed up to his face, the prisoner seized the picture and threw it into the sea, saying, "Let our Lady now save herself: she is light enough: let her learn to swim." In February 1549, after spending a total of 19 months in the galley-prison, Knox was released. It is uncertain how he obtained his liberty.

He preached in England until the accession of "Bloody Mary" in 1553, when he fled for his life to Europe. In Geneva he came into contact with the Frenchman John Calvin. It has been said that he became more Calvinistic than Calvin. Having been a student of Greek in his earlier years he helped to translate the Geneva Bible while in Geneva. Receiving a call from Scotland to return to his homeland, he did in 1559. He now saw the emergence of a new Protestant nation.

Knox's boldness and influence were unsurpassed, and he was not ashamed to speak out against the Catholic Church before hostile rulers. Today he is probably more widely known as the founder of the Church of Scotland which later on in America became known as the Presbyterian Church.

KNOX AND PREDESTINATION

Having been a student of John Calvin we assume it would only be natural that he would become an advocate of the doctrine of Predestination. Predestination is God's eternal decree, by which He determines within Himself what He has willed for each person. All are not created in equal condition. Eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal damnation for others. Being ordained for eternal damnation is not an unjust act. All are guilty of falling short of God's will and as such deserve damnation.

By electing some to have eternal salvation, God is merely exercising His free will in mercy. Those not elected are only receiving their just-rewards for their lack or failure for reaching His requirements. It is not God's knowledge of someone's future works which he uses to determine if they deserve eternal life. His knowledge is such that there is nothing future or past, but all things are present. God sees all of time—past time--present time-- future time as all being in the "present tense."

God's election is decided on the basis of God's free will. It seems evident that with Knox no one deserves eternal life. It is purely what God chooses without the merits of the one being predestined. A person's presence in the church may be an indication he is among the elect or else he might not be there.

KNOX AND THE QUEENS

Knox was opposed to the rule of women. He wrote a pamphlet against such. He said that it was "unnatural." He had in mind Queens like Mary Tudor, queen of England, Mary Queen of Scotland.

Knox's prejudices against women were not unusual in his day; however, even he was aware that the pamphlet was dangerously seditious. He therefore published it anonymously and did not tell Calvin, who denied knowledge of it until a year after its publication, that he had written it.

In England, the pamphlet was officially condemned by royal proclamation. A year after its publication Elizabeth Tudor became queen of England. Although Knox had not targeted Elizabeth, he had deeply offended her, and she never forgave him. With a Protestant on the throne, the English refugees in Geneva prepared to return home to England. Knox decided to return to Scotland. He left in January 1559, but he did not arrive in Scotland until May of 1559 due to Elizabeth's refusal to issue him a passport through England.

KNOX AND THE REFORMED CHURCH (KIRK)

On August 1, 1560 the Scottish Parliament met to settle religious issues. Knox and five other ministers were called upon to draw up a new confession of faith. Within four days, the Scots Confession was presented to Parliament, voted upon, and approved. A week later Parliament issued three acts in one day.

First, it abolished the jurisdiction of the pope in Scotland. The **second** condemned all doctrine and practice contrary to the reformed faith. **Third** it forbade the celebration of mass in Scotland. Knox and other ministers were given the task of organizing the newly reformed church or the Kirk as the Scots called it. Each church was free to choose or reject their own pastor; but once he was chosen, they could not fire him.

Each parish was to be self-supporting, as far as possible. The bishops were replaced by ten to twelve "**superintendents.**" Baptism and Communion were a central part of the Church of Scotland. They practiced infant baptism. When Queen Mary came to the throne it was inevitable that friction would arise between the queen and Knox. She was Catholic and Knox was Protestant.

There was several heated confrontation between the two. It is a wonder Knox survived. He would have lost his head had it not been for the popularity of the reformed church in Scotland of which he was the guiding light. He brought some of the queens to tears by his blunt conversation with them.

Knox was one who would never back down from his convictions even if his life were in danger. An example of firmness can be seen in his capture by the French and being placed on a galley-slave boat to row for almost two years. He suffered physically during this period and almost died at one point.

One interesting trait of the early Presbyterian Church was its terminology concerning the place of worship. Early Presbyterians were careful to distinguish between the words "**church**" and "**meeting houses.**" Very few referred to the place of meeting as the church. The people were the church and the places where they met to worship were simply a "**meeting house.**" Early meeting houses were very austere in appearance.

The Presbyterians of today will in most cases be quite different than what they were when John Knox was alive and preaching. Very little has been written about the death of Knox although we know that

many nobles attended his funeral. Even his burial place is not known for sure. The area around St. Giles in Edinburgh is paved and has become a parking lot. Some think he is buried somewhere beneath the present day parking lot.