

Church History

An Overview of Church History & Apostasy

Lesson Two: The Reformation to the American Restoration

Introduction. In spite of the many moves away from sound doctrine and towards apostasy which history records, there have always been those through the ages who have looked to God's word as the sole standard, and worshiped God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24; Daniel 2:44).

I. The Protestant Reformation.

- A. Corruption and apathy within the Vatican led to growing discontentment among many Catholics within Europe (I Timothy 4:1-3; 6:3-5).
 - 1. To fund massive building projects Rome sponsored the sale of "indulgences" (certificates granting the bearer forgiveness for sins ahead of time).
- B. The rise of "Christian Humanism" led to renewed study of Biblical languages and the original text of the Bible.
 - 1. Erasmus published a Greek New Testament text.



Martin Luther



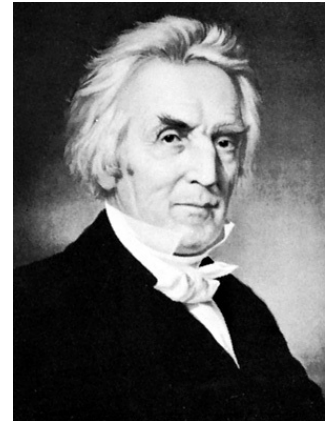
A typical ornate European cathedral

- C. In 1517 a German Catholic priest named Martin Luther issued a challenge to Roman Catholic leadership to debate the doctrine of "indulgences."
 - 1. Luther was tried by the Catholics and labeled a heretic. As a result Luther began to teach and worship separate from the Catholics, eventually leading to the establishment of the Lutheran Church.
 - 2. Luther produced a German translation of the New Testament.
- D. A French scholar named John Calvin formulated a systematic theology known ever since as "Calvinism." Calvinism became the basis for the establishment of the Presbyterian Church (Ezekiel 18:20; Joshua 24:15).

- E. King Henry the VIII of England sought to have his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled that he might marry Anne Boleyn.
 - 1. When the pope refused, Henry abandoned Roman Catholicism and set himself up as the head of the Church of England (**Ephesians 1:22**).
 - 2. King Henry executed William Tyndale for his efforts to translate the New Testament into English (**II Timothy 2:9**).
- F. Even in the face of growing division, there remained Christians who served and worshiped God in simplicity, refusing to be either Protestants or Catholics.

II The American Restoration.

- A. A Scottish Presbyterian father & son named Thomas and Alexander Campbell began to question the soundness of Protestant doctrine and organization.
 - 1. In 1809 Thomas Campbell preached a lesson referred to as the “Declaration and Address” calling for Christian unity.
 - 2. Alexander Campbell began preaching that men should work to return to the “Ancient Gospel” and follow the “Ancient Order” set out in the New Testament.
- B. Separate from the Campbells another Presbyterian preacher named Barton W. Stone also began to preach the idea of restoration (**II Kings 22:13; 23:25**).
- C. In 1832 Campbell and Stone joined together, calling on people to be simply Christians (**I Corinthians 1:11,12**).
- D. Toward the beginning of the twentieth century controversy begins to develop within this movement towards restoration regarding instrumental music in worship and an unscriptural organization in preaching the gospel known as the “Missionary Society” (**Philippians 4:15,16**).
 - 1. Those favoring the instrument and the missionary society split off and formed the Christian Church (**Ephesians 5:19; Proverbs 30:6**).
- E. In the middle of the twentieth century further division resulted when churches moved to financially support human institutions, engage in sponsoring church arrangements, involve the church in social activities and bind the use of only one cup in the Lord’s supper.
- F. There continues to exist throughout the world those who seek to worship the Lord in the simplicity of the New Testament, teaching and practicing only those things which are authorized in scripture.



Alexander Campbell

Conclusion. The Lord’s church has never passed out of existence. Although the eye of history may focus more on apostasy than on truth, the “pillar and ground of the truth” will exist until the Lord’s return (**I Timothy 3:15; I Corinthians 15:23-24**).