

2nd Century

Were these people you will read about below New Testament Christians? Up to now, the only doctrinal change in the church was development of a hierarchy with certain elders being put in charge of several congregations in a city, then another elder calling himself a bishop and being in charge of them. Infant baptism was introduced and pushed by some church leaders as a way of getting control of families while very young. Very few people believed in these things yet.

During the mid-to-late first century, Jesus' Apostle, Simon the Zealot, according to *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History* and *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, established the New Testament church in Britain. Apparently he established congregations on his way there in both Spain and France. And it is likely he went over to the nearest border of Germany not too far away, and established the New Testament church there also. [1] Many of his congregations would still exist in the second century since persecution of Christians in these places had not begun yet.

According to *Reader's Digest Story of the Bible World*, by 185 AD, there were European congregations in Cologne and Mainz, GERMANY; Lyon in FRANCE; Leon, Saragossa and Merida in SPAIN, Carthage in northern AFRICA, and of course ITALY, GREECE and TURKEY as mentioned in the Bible.

(The following will not cover Christianity in Africa, the Middle-East, or the Orient, language barriers precluding a study of that history. It also will not cover today's Turkey and parts of Italy and Greece where apostles of the New Testament established congregations.) [2]

Apparently, the congregations in Europe were established by the students of the apostles called the "Apostolic Fathers." For example, Ireneaus was a life-time missionary to Lyons, Gaul (France). He was a student of Polycarp who had been a student of the Apostle John.

In Ireneaus' writings we find: "...we walk on the highways and sail withersoever we will without fear" (iv.30.1-31.1). [3]

BRITAIN

In 141 AD, in the area of today's Cambridgeshire and village of Grantchester near today's Cambridge "many were baptized." [4] Apparently this was a blooming of the seed of the word planted by apostle Simon the Zealot in the mid- to late-first century as noted above.

FRANCE

The stronghold of Christianity in the second century was France.

Ireneas was raised in a Christian family in today's Turkey, then went to Lyons, France, around 140 AD. He was careful to stay as close to the Scriptures as possible. Although he took an unscriptural title of bishop over a large area instead of just one congregation as directed in the Scriptures, there does not seem to be any other unscriptural practice in his life. He warned "therefore such as

introduce other doctrines, hide from us the opinion which they themselves have concerning God; knowing the unsoundness and futility of their own doctrine, and fearing to be overcome, and so to have their salvation endangered” (iv.32.1) [5]

Other evidence we have of the New Testament church in France is found in *Eusebius*, Book V, Chapter 1, where he devoted fifteen pages to telling about the persecutions they endured. Amphitheaters were built for the purpose of watching slow execution of Christians by various means both in Lyons and Vienna.

Their crime was so-called cannibalism because they ate the body and blood of Jesus (at the Lord’s Supper) every Sunday, and incest because they married their (spiritual) brothers and sisters. They ranged in age from 15 to 90, both men and women. One was a physician.

After their arrest, they were dragged to prison with the crowds beating up on them or throwing stones at them as they passed. Tortures continued in prison day after day. They were put on the rack to get them to recant being Christians. One man had red hot plates of brass placed on the most tender parts of his body. After he died, his body was “one continued wound, mangled and shriveled, that had entirely lost the form of man to the external eye.”

If the foregoing did not kill them, Romans citizens were beheaded. The rest were taken to the amphitheater where they were sent through a gauntlet of scourges and dragged around by wild beasts. If this did not kill them, they were then placed in a hot chair to be roasted to death. One woman endured it all, still without being killed. Thereupon she was put in a net and cast before a bull who killed her. [6]

Keep in mind that most of the variations in doctrine we have today did not exist then. In fact, various Catholic and protestant groups with opposing doctrines claim Irenaeus as their own, groups that did not even exist in his time.

GERMANY

According to George Trabert in his *Church History* of 1897, there were independent congregations of the Lord’s church in today’s Germany at Strasburg, Trier, Augsburg, and along the Rhine River. Since the Roman Empire version of overly-organized and overly-formalized Christianity was not popularized until the mid-300s, every congregation in remote areas was on its own based on the Scriptures that would have been taken to them by the missionaries.

3rd Century

Baptism by sprinkling was introduced, but only for the very sick. Elders began claiming they were the only ones who could impart the Holy Spirit on baptized believers. Much more serious was another power play wherein a priest elevated the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper and told people to worship it because it became the actual body and blood of Jesus.

This was called transubstantiation. This was also a way to get people to stop keeping the Lord's Supper among themselves without church hierarchy. None of these things were widely accepted, but the "church" leaders kept pushing it. It would give them more power over the common Christian.

Both *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History* and *Fox's Book of Martyrs* written in the mid 1500s, tell of persecution of Christians in western Europe because they had established the New Testament church there among the pagans. Unless otherwise indicated in this report, references to all countries but Britain are often taken from *Fox's Book of Martyrs*.

BRITAIN

There was severe persecution of Christians all over the Roman Empire, including Britain, during the reigns of Decius (c.AD 254) and Septimus Severus (c.AD 209). It was during this time that an itinerate underground preacher (identified centuries later by the Catholic church as one of their priests) converted a British-Roman officer named Alban in Hertfordshire.

As explained in David Nash Ford's *Early British Kingdoms*, this itinerate preacher has been identified as Amphibalus. At a time when he was being sheltered and supported by Alban, Roman soldiers entered his home in search of Amphibalus. Alban exchanged cloaks with the preacher, so it was Alban who was executed. Alban was first scourged for refusing to sacrifice to idols, and then ordered beheaded. His would-be executioner was so impressed with this Jesus that Alban was willing to die for, he requested to be executed in his place. On June 22, 287 they were both beheaded.

Apparently the itinerate preacher escaped to Wales where he continued to preach. In the following century, Constantine legalized Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. Please note, that even though various religious groups have declared both Alban and Amphibalus as saints, it is certain they did not go by such a title since the Bible says all Christians are saints. In fact, declaring someone a saint did not even begin until the tenth century, and that only in the Catholic church. Emperor Constantine the Great died in 337 AD. We do not have a birth date, but considering his rise to power the first of the fourth century, he obviously was born in the third century, possibly around 265. His mother was Helena, married to Roman Senator Constantius, a legate in Britain.

K. Chesterton in his book, *A Short History of England*, stated that she was considered a Briton by the British. Some people believe she came from Colchester in Essex; today the town has schools and places named after her, as well as her image appearing on the town hall.

Constantine's maternal grandfather was king of Coel in Colchester. This is based in part on ancient British Sozoman's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, written in the 400s. Remember, there was no thought of modern diversions from the New Testament doctrine such as instrumental music, predestination, etc. Christianity was still simple. His mother apparently did not believe in infant baptism, because Constantine was not baptized until the next century. Baptism remained by immersion until the twelve century.

FRANCE

In Nice, France, Trypho and Respicus were imprisoned for believing Jesus was the Son of God. Nails were pounded through their feet, then they were forced to run or be dragged through the

street. Back in prison they were scourged, torn with large iron hooks, scorched with lighted torches, and finally beheaded on February 1, 251.

In 257 in Toulouse, France, the Christian Saturninus was arrested for refusing to sacrifice to an idol. After being tortured and returned to the idol temple, his feet were fastened to the tail of a bull. The enraged animal was then driven down the temple steps until our brother's head burst open.

In 287 in Aquitaine, France, a Christian woman named Faith was broiled on a gridiron and then beheaded.

Also that year, two Christians named Quintin and Lucian went to Amiens, France, and then to Beaumaris. Lucian was martyred. Quinton went on to Picardy. There he was put on the rack and stretched with pullies until his joints were dislocated. He was also torn with wire scourges, endured boiling oil and pitch poured over him as well as lighted torches burning him. He died in prison shortly after.

SPAIN

In 259 in Tarragon, Spain, Fructuosus, Augurius and Eulogius were burned at the stake for believing Jesus was the Son of the only God, being New Testament Christians.

4th Century

This was the century that Constantine made Christianity legal, set up a church hierarchy in the pattern of ancient Roman government, and called it the Holy Roman Empire. The first creed was put into effect which they called the "Apostles' Creed" though the apostles had been dead for over three centuries. Celibacy of church leaders was introduced, but not widely accepted yet.

BRITAIN

At Richborough is a castle built by the Romans when they landed in Britain in AD 43. This castle has an adult-size baptismal font for immersions on its grounds. The font was built in the fourth century. This, then, indicates that the church continued to exist in Britain and people were being baptized by immersion to become Christians.

RUSSIA TO FRANCE AND SPAIN

In 308, God was about to use a barbarian warrior to further strengthen the New Testament church in France and Spain. According to Origen around 200 AD, the New Testament church had been established in Russia (then called Scythia) by the Apostle Andrew late in the first century. The areas of northern Greece and northeast to Russia around the Black Sea were occupied by the Goths. In Pannonia (later known as Hungary), Christian Quirinus was arrested, chained heavily and put on display from town to town along the Danube River. In the city of Sabaria, a stone was fastened about his neck and he was drowned.

Although the Christians probably had writings left behind by Andrew, it was good for them to have the entire New Testament. In the mid-300s, an alphabet was created for the Goths. The Bible was then translated into that language from the original Greek. This is all they needed to know to make sure they were organizing and worshipping according to the New Testament first century pattern. Then Attila the Hun arrived with his army. The Goths during the next hundred years gradually moved across southern Europe. They ended up in southern France (Gaul) and Spain. They had taken their Bible translated in their own language with them. The Goths remained in control of Spain and France for the next 350 years.

Therefore, the Christianity of western Europe would have been fairly untainted, but also fairly strong before the Roman Empire was able to effectively spread its religious wings to that area. These Goths were never Roman Catholics or Jews, although they treated both minority groups with respect. They were Christians who rejected worship of the Lord's Supper as the actual presence of Jesus. They had the Bible available to everyone written in their own language. These Scriptures were never suppressed until the Roman Catholics grew powerful enough to do so.

FRANCE

In 303 in Marseilles, France, the Christian named Victor spent his fortune on relieving the poor in his congregation, and visiting them at night to comfort them. Arrested by a pagan government, he was dragged through the street while the crowd further degraded him in other ways. In prison he was placed on the rack, and finally returned to a dungeon.

While there he converted his jailers, Alexander, Felician and Longinus. The governor ordered that he be put back on the rack, beaten with batons, and returned to the dungeon. On a third occasion he was ordered by the pagan governor to offer incense to a small idol. He kicked the idol and altar over, and that foot was immediately cut off. He was then thrown into a mill where he was crushed with the stones.

SPAIN

In 304 in Terragona where the New Testament church existed, Valerius an elder, and Vincent a deacon, were arrested for their faith, chained with heavy irons, and dragged to prison. Valerius was banished.

Vincent was placed on the rack until his joints were dislocated. His flesh was torn with large hooks. Then he was placed on a gridiron with fire under him and spikes over him that were driven into him. Still not recanting his belief in Jesus, he was put in a dark dungeon with sharp flints and broken glass on the floor where he died.

5th Century

The unscriptural development of a church hierarchy made another step toward getting control of the Christian world. They introduced ministers wearing clothes that were different from everyone else, calling them priests. They also began an effort to get control of the Scriptures and not allow anyone to read them. Neither was widely accepted, but it was growing in places like Italy and Egypt.

BRITAIN

Infant baptism was reintroduced 407, but hardly anyone agreed with it or conformed to it. It was still another ploy to get control of people's lives by a growing and unscriptural church hierarchy. However, their Bishop Germanus filed a complaint that the British church was practicing only believer baptism. Actually, infant baptism still was not widely accepted.

FRANCE

John Cassian lived in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and wrote of spiritual matters. He lived and wrote in Marseille in southern France. He was condemned by Catholic church leaders around 428 because he opposed the teachings of Augustine about Rome being the city of God, etc., and had many followers throughout southern France. John has been called a monk by many historians, a term loosely applied to many who were merely ministers of the gospel.

SCOTLAND & IRELAND

Early in this century the church spread to Scotland and Ireland, probably as a result of missionary work done by the students of students of the Apostle Simon (the Zealot) in Britain.

In 430, Ninian, who had been educated in Rome, tried to set up congregations, of course with Roman church beliefs, but met with resistance. Both the Scottish and Irish churches were distinct from the Roman church in many things. Later Rome coerced them to live a Catholic or face severe persecutions, tortures and death.

Late in this century when Patrick did missionary work in Ireland and tried to set up diocese with bishops over them, he met with resistance. These people obviously knew from the New Testament that elders/presbyters/bishops were to be heads of only one congregation.

6th Century

Strong efforts were made to have a bishop in Rome made head of the church worldwide. When most Christians heard about it, they rebelled against it. It took centuries of papal wars to finally pull people into line.

BRITAIN, IRELAND, SCOTLAND

In the late 500s a group of Christians began being called Paulicians because they defended their beliefs with the New Testament, especially the writings of the Apostle Paul. They called each other

brother and sister, and taught that faith and repentance were requirements of baptism, and it was by immersion.

As the rest of Europe headed into the Dark Ages, in the Celtic northern European territory, especially Britain and Ireland, education and reading flourished. Beautiful books such as the Lindisfarne Gospels survive from this period. With education flourishing, people could read the Bible for themselves and worship just as Christians in the first century did.

BULGARIA AND FRANCE

The Christians who were nicknamed Paulicians by their enemy for insisting on reading the Bible for themselves, were heavily persecuted by the Catholic church, so eventually fled to Bulgaria and nearby countries.

7th Century

The church in Rome declared that their ordinances were as sacred as the Bible, another ploy to build up personal interests and riches by getting control of the Christians. Of course, it was unscriptural. Also they declared that only certain things could be said at the Lord's Supper, another step toward taking away the ability of people to keep the Lord's Supper in their house churches.

BRITAIN

The New Testament church in Britain had been personally started by the Apostle Simon the Zealot. During this century the Roman church sent missionaries to Britain. These representatives from Rome tried to convert them to fall in line with Roman teachings. But the British Christians overall remained true to the teachings of their apostle. They rejected celibacy of the clergy, confession to priests, infant baptism, and so on.

Augustine followers led a massacre at Bangor, Wales, where some 1200 members of the church were slaughtered. These Christians belonged to independent congregations and taught adult believer baptism. The Catholic church called their leaders monks, but they had their own homes, were married, and had a secular job, and so were just independent preachers of the gospel, not monks.

Church buildings still did not exist. But in 627, King Edwin built his own baptistery.

GERMANY

A Christian named Killien was raised a Christian and went to preach in Franconia, Germany. In Wurtzburg he converted Gozbert, the governor. Later, an opponent in the royal house had him beheaded in 689.

8th Century

This century, the church at Rome declared its bishop/pope was head of the church worldwide. It also ordained images be made of Jesus, Mary and the apostles, and all Christians were now required to bow to those images.

BRITAIN

In Britain, the Bible was first given to the people in what we today call Old English, a combination of German, French and Latin, by Caedman. Although it was in the form of poetry and not an actual translation, it gave the common people an opportunity to read for themselves. Also about this time, Bede made an actual translation of parts of the Bible.

Therefore, all the people had to do who wanted to worship the way people did in the first century, was to read their Bibles. Later the Roman church was able to influence government officials here. But they had trouble getting the Brits themselves to fall in line with them.

When the pope quoted Matthew 16:19 saying the keys of the kingdom were given to Peter only, they wrote the pope back quoting Matthew 18:18 saying the keys of the kingdom had been given to all the apostles.

9th Century

The hierarchy at Rome commanded that bishops had to place the bread of the Lord's Supper on the tongues of worshipers. Although it had been optional in the past, all church officers (priests, bishops, etc.) were now required to wear "holy" vestments and dress different from the average Christian.

GERMANY

The Bible was translated into the German language by an unknown translator. We must always conclude that, whenever and where ever the Bible was translated into the language of a people, they learned for themselves what God wanted of them, and there were always those who insisted on following the Apostle Peter's advice: "We ought to obey God rather than man". After all, God said, "My Word will not return to Me void." Believing that, we must believe that whenever and wherever the Bible was made available to people, churches of Christ rose up.

THE SLAVS

In Moravia, the Slavic alphabet was invented. Then the Bible was translated into the language of the people. It was called the *Old Church Slavonic Bible*. So, although their King Boris in Bulgaria nearby, affiliated with the central church in Constantinople, they still had the Bible and could still meet the way Christians in the first century did.

Anyone wanting to organize and worship the same way people did in the first century could then just read the Bible for themselves and do so.

10th Century

Although religious writers often refer to certain early church leaders as saints, it wasn't until this century that the church hierarchy in Rome declared that it should be done. It was never on the minds of early church leaders! After all, the Scriptures state that all Christians are saints.

BRITAIN

Old English was in the process of changing into what we today call Middle English. In Britain, in 995, Aelfric wrote so many articles about Scriptures in the Old and New Testaments that he ended up quoting most of it. Thus, people could still refer to the writings of the Bible in their own language to organize and worship the same way Christians did in the first century.

EUROPE

The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, discussing the Waldenses, states that there were numerous "sects" (anyone who was not Roman Catholic) during the Middle Ages, but they are obscure because they did not have writings of their own defending their faith; rather they chose to remain to themselves, being congregational in organization.

All we know of them is what their enemies wrote about them. But later they would find it necessary to write letters and tracts defending their New Testament views. "In early times these sectaries produced little literature of their own." They had no need to. The New Testament was all the literature they needed.

"When they produced literature at the beginning of the 15th century, they attempted to claim for it a much earlier origin...the historical continuity of protestantism from the earliest times.

"According to this view the church was pure and uncorrupt till the time of Constantine (350 AD) when Sylvester gained the first temporal possession for the papacy, and so began the system of a rich, powerful and worldly church, with Rome for its capital.

"Against this secularized church a body of witnesses silently protested; they were always persecuted but always survived." [6]

11th Century

The church at Rome declared that no priest could be married. Those who were married were forced to give up their wives and children. If they did not, the wives and children were made permanent slaves of the church. Worse, they now officially declared that the bread of the Lord's Supper definitely became the actual body of Jesus, and the wine became the actual blood of Jesus, so should be worshiped. This had been declared in the past, but now it was enforced. This belief is called transubstantiation. Objectors were easy to identify because they refused to bow down to the emblems. They were arrested and heavily persecuted.

BRITAIN

The French conquered Britain in 1066. The church of Christ had always been strong in France, and some of those who followed the conquerors into England brought their beliefs with them. The first major religious writing published in English was *Represser of Over-Much Weeting [Criticizing] of the Clergie*, opposing the Lollards who called themselves Christians, the church, the church of Christ. They baptized believers by immersion.

FRANCE

Around 1010 in France, a man named Berengarius (Berengar of Tours) preached Gospel truths according to the primitive ways of the first century. He insisted that the Lord's Supper was a symbolic memorial service and not to be worshipped. He insisted that the Bible was the only foundation of faith, not church rules and traditions. People called his followers Berengarians. They just wanted to be called Christians. They spread throughout France, Germany, Italy and England.

About that same time, Peter Bruis (de Bruys), who had heard Berengarius, taught similarly with his followers completely separating from the church of Rome. He wrote a book against the pope entitled ANTICHRIST. Outsiders called this group Petrobusians, although they considered themselves simply Christians.

Some of their beliefs were as follows: (1) The Lord's Supper should be kept as a memorial, and not as a mass where it is worshipped; (2) Ministers should marry; (3) Infant baptism is never found in the Scriptures; (4) churches need not be officially consecrated; (5) Holding masses for the dead is not in the Bible and should not be practiced.

Peter was arrested by the advocates of the Catholic church and burned alive at St. Giles, about 50 miles from Marseille.

GERMANY & NETHERLANDS

Around mid-century, the Four Gospels were translated from Latin into the language of West Saxony which today is the western part of Germany and the Netherlands.

In 1025, according to research done by Hans Godwin Grimm and published in his *Tradition and History of the churches of Christ in Central Europe*, the Catholic Archbishop of Cambrai wrote of some repentant heretics of Lorraine who formerly claimed the original church of Christ did not believe in purgatory, transubstantiation, sin inherited by babies, sprinkling in place of immersion, instrumental music, bowing before images, creation of special saints, and veneration of Mary.

They had been taught by an Italian missionary named Gundulf who stated that there were independent congregations of “true Christians” in the Rhineland and Alsace, and in Switzerland. This information was apparently gleaned from a search of medieval government records in Germany. Dr. Grimm’s ancestor was burned at the stake in 1118 for being a New Testament Christian and belonging to an independent congregation. He stated his grandfather had been converted and baptized by immersion for forgiveness of his sins by a missionary from Italy. It is estimated that his grandfather was born around 1028. (Read more about this below.)

Grimm further stated that there were many churches of Christ in central Germany, and in 1052 the most outspoken of their preachers were burned at the stake in Goslar. Again, he apparently obtained this information from medieval government archives.

12th Century

During this century, the practice of substituting pouring or sprinkling for immersion baptism began to spread widely.

BRITAIN

The Hillcliffe church of Christ was established around 1157 in Oxford, Cheshire, by thirty New Testament Christians. By 1166, another eighty Christian brothers and sisters had been added to the congregation. Many were examined before King Henry II and the English parliament. Their leaders preached the gospel to the king and parliamentarians. They believed in autonomous congregations, baptism of adults by immersion for forgiveness of sins, and patterned themselves after the true church of Christ, not a man-organized denomination. Eventually they built a small chapel with a cemetery dating from 1643 and still existing today.

Another congregation was established some two miles north of this congregation in Warrington, Lancashire. Whenever church authorities got close to finding them, or when they were found and persecution ensued, members of the two congregations would change locations with each other, and probably worshiped together sometimes too.

The Paulicians that rose up in the late sixth century in France and Germany eventually made their way to Britain where they were usually called Publicans or German hereticks. A “monk” identified as Radulph complained that saints should not be prayed to, there is no purgatory, and infants should not be baptized.

Many fled to Europe. Three elders were Dulcinus, Nauarensis and Gerhardus. Nauarensis and his wife, Margaret, fled to Europe, but were killed by the Catholic church there. Others stayed in Britain and survived during the time of Wycliffe and others restoration leaders.

FRANCE

Around the turn of the century, a Mr. Grimm of Ensisheim, was baptized by immersion for forgiveness of his sins by a traveling merchant from Venetia, who in turn was from the “only church of the saints”. In 1118, Mr. Grimm baptized his grandson, Gregory Grimm. The grandson was tortured by Catholic authorities.

By 1143, the government took into custody an entire congregation with these beliefs, and all were tortured. They confessed that such independent congregations were meeting secretly all over France. Since each congregation had its own elders and deacons and no centralized headquarters, the authorities were sometimes unsuccessful in finding them.

In Toulouse, France, in 1147 another congregation of the New Testament church began to be called by outsiders Henricians. Their leader was Henry of Toulouse. He was a former “monk” who believed as Peter De Bruys had. These Christians were centered in Tours. They declared that Christians could do nothing except that which came directly from Scriptures themselves. A letter written by Everinus wrote to Bernard (a future “saint” of the Catholic church) in 1146 complained that these Henricians rejected infant baptism and had formed a “church of Christ” separate from the Catholic church. The elders of this congregation were burned at the stake.

In 1147 Bernard accused the Earl of St. Giles of protecting Henry of Toulouse whom he identified as a heretic who taught believer baptism, elimination of clergy, and independence from the Catholic church.

Peter Waldo/Valdo, was a native of Lyons where the Apostolic Father, Irenaeus had established the New Testament church. Around 1170, he openly opposed the church at Rome. People began calling his followers Waldenses or Waldos.

Alarmed at his effectiveness in spreading the New Testament church wherever he traveled, in 1179, Pope Alexander III ordered him to cease preaching except by direct consent of the local Roman bishop. This did not work, so in 1184 he ordered all Waldenses exterminated. The French tried to oblige him. It began in Toulouse and spread to Province, an area in extreme southern France. So they escaped to Italy.

ITALY

Peter Waldo, merchant from Lyons, France, preached widely in the valleys of Piedmont in northern Italy. His followers were identified by enemies as Waldensians. The unhumane torture they endured

at the hands of the Catholic church are, in some instances, too hideous to print. Their sin? Following only the Scriptures.

In 1155 in northern Italy, Arnold of Brescia and the simple Christians with him declared that it was unscriptural for....

1. The church to own property.
2. Ministers and bishops to control the civil government.

He was hanged at the request of Pope Adrian IV. Still the New Testament church refused to die.

BULGARIA

Many Christians in the Balkans, especially Bulgaria, were discovered by church authorities, some having fled from France. So many such "heretics" were discovered there, tortured and burned, that the name "Bulgare" came to be synonymous with "Heretic" and eventually "Bugger".

NETHERLANDS AND BULGARIA

Godwin Grimm stated in his book, *Tradition and History of the churches of Christ in Central Europe*, that the church of Christ was strong in the Netherlands, and congregations there were in regular contact with other independent congregations in Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Alsace-Lorraine.

GERMANY

In Germany, the first reported Christian martyr by papal decree was the death of an apparent ancestor of Godwin Grimm, Gregorius Grimm around 1118.

"Standing before the tribunal he solemnly declared: 'If there is here a heretic, not I can be called heretic, for having been buried with Christ in the water of rebirth, I also have had by this baptism remission of my sins. I have been raised by Christ from spiritual death. I received Him and He gave me the power to enter the realm of God to become a happy child of my heavenly Father.'

"Interrogated on his teachings, he answered that already his grandfather had been baptized in the little river Fecht by an Italian missionary, and that he supposed that the majority of his fellow believers are inhabitants of Macedonia. But neither the breaking of his arms and legs by the torture nor the flames of the stake where he was burned alive in 1118 could make him tell the names of the little group of Alsatian Christians he belonged to."

Grimm stated that his ancestor's congregation at that location still exists: "From this remarkable year of 1118 we can trace the story of the little church in Alsatia to our days. In the records of the Roman Catholic inquisition they appear as "Ortlibarii," "Runcarii" or "Beghardi," whereas the people called them "Christ's poor disciples" ("Arme Junger Christi") or "Good People" ("Gutleute"). But they themselves never used another name for their congregations but "Christengemeine" ("church of Christ") and for the members of these churches as "Christen" ("Christians") or Brethren and Sisters in Christ."

13th Century

With more and more translations of the Bible being made into the language of the common people, the Catholic church hierarchy at Rome made it church law that no one could study the Scriptures without a church official being present. Thus, power-hungry religious leaders unabashedly took the Scriptures from the common Christian in order to destroy proof that their power was not allowed in the Scriptures.

BRITAIN

By 1235, there were many secret congregations of the church of Christ in Britain. They met in Rochester, Chilterns, Worcester and elsewhere. They endured through the time of Edward III, Richard I, King John, and Henry III. Around 1235, the Friars Minoritis arrived in England ready to force the “heretics” to denounce their beliefs in congregational autonomy, baptism by immersion for remission of sins, and calling themselves the church of Christ instead of the Catholic church. Everywhere, these brave New Testament Christians taught primarily from the scripture Mark 16:15 and 16.

ITALY

Here the Waldenses translated the Bible into the language of the Italian people. Eventually there were two large groups of them involving many congregations scattered north of the Alps and down into northern Italy. Their beliefs were nearly identical.

North of the Alps: (1) Oaths are forbidden by the gospel; (2) Capital punishment is not allowed to the civil power; (3) All Christians are priests; therefore any layman may consecrate the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper; (4) The Roman church is not the New Testament church; (5) Asceticism is not a requirement of Christianity.

Northern/Lombardy, Italy: (1) Oaths are forbidden by the gospel; (2) Capital punishment is not allowed to the civil power; (3) All Christians are priests; therefore any layman may consecrate the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper as long as they were not in mortal sin; (4.) The Roman church is not the New Testament church, but is the scarlet woman of the Apocalypse, whose precepts ought not to be obeyed, especially those appointing fast-days; (5) Asceticism is not a requirement of Christianity. Many fled to the Alps in valleys of Piedmont, and settled in valleys named after them, the Vaudois. Persecution continued in the lower regions.

GERMANY

Grimm explained in his book, “The Roman Catholic church and the German Emperor emulated in suppressing the original church of Christ; from 1118 to 1518, at least 4,000 Christians in Central Europe had to suffer a dreadful death for God’s sake.”

NETHERLANDS

During this century, several translations of the Bible into the common language of the people in the Netherlands came into being, names of translators unknown. But the author of the Bible was always known—God, not man.

14th Century

The Roman church hierarchy needed more money for palaces for its bishops and cathedrals, so told people they could buy their loved ones out of purgatory with indulgences.

BRITAIN

In the 1100s, independent congregations of the church of Christ were called Waldensians by their enemies. By the 1300s from Rochester to Chilterns to Worcester, they were called Lollards. But they called themselves the church of Christ. They were independent congregations who were baptized by immersion for forgiveness of their sins, and continued through the centuries to emphasize Mark 16:15-16.

By the 1330s, records of their enemies in the government-selected official religion, show these congregations were active in Wales, Bristol, Kent, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Newcastle, Yorkshire, and Furness Falls.

John Wycliffe was born in Yorkshire, England 1320. In 1382, Wycliffe completed his translation of the Latin Bible into English, the language of the common person, with the aid of Nicholas Hereford and John Purvey. He also sent out preachers throughout England. His preachers were to supplement the services of the church with religious instruction in the vernacular. The commoners, with their new knowledge, continued to denounce evils of the church, especially among the rich.

In 1379 he wrote public attacks on the pope. He also began formal attacks on the “new” Catholic doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, transubstantiation, saying that in spirit only the bread and wine actually became Christ, but not materially.

Wycliffe was popular among churches of Christ, and those most closely associated with him were called by outsiders “mutterers,” or “Lollards” probably because they continually murmured against the Roman church.

Later, a friend of Wycliffe, Nicholas of Hereford of Queen’s College in England, became a spokesman for the independent congregations. Then Philip Repingdon carried the movement to Leichester where, by 1382, William Swin Derby led a group of adherents into neighboring towns. In 1390-92, he was hidden by sympathizers in Wales

Dr. Hans Grimm wrote in his history of the early churches of Christ in Central Europe, "Even as late as 1390 A.D. a New Testament church in Celtic Hill Cliff in Wales built a room for worship with a great basin for immersion of adults in baptism on confession of faith."

John Purvey compiled the second translation of the Bible, more idiomatic and readable than Hereford's. He preached in Bristol. He declared these "Twelve Conclusions" in 1395 and presented them to the English Parliament:

(1) The present priesthood was not the one ordained by Christ; (1) The Roman ritual of ordination had no warrant in Scripture; (3) Clerical celibacy created unnatural lust; (4) Feigned miracle of transubstantiation led men into idolatry; (5) Hallowing wine, bread, altars, and vestments was related to necromancy (witchcraft); (6) Prelates should not be temporal judges and rulers; (7) Prayers for the dead must be condemned; (8) Pilgrimages must be condemned; (9) Offerings to images must be condemned; (10) Confession to a priest unnecessary to salvation; (11) Warfare is unscriptural; (12) Vows of chastity by nuns led to abortion and child murder; (13) Unnecessary flamboyant pursuit of the arts by the church encouraged waste; (14) The prime duty of priests is to preach; (15) All men should enjoy free access to the vernacular Scriptures.

FRANCE

The Anglo-Norman Translation of the Bible was done in part, but never completed. The Anglo-Normans were of Viking descent and lived mostly in the northern part of France.

BOHEMIA / CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Also in the middle of the fourteenth century, Jan (Johan) Milic of Kromeriz led a Bohemian national reform movement. He was a wealthy Christian who deliberately embraced poverty to preach return to the simplicity of the primitive New Testament church. He died in 1374.

His pupils founded the Bethlehem chapel in Prague where public sermons were preached in Czech in the spirit of Milic's teachings. From 1402, Huss preached at the chapel.

GERMANY

In 1366, the Bible was translated literally word for word from the Latin into the common language of the people in Germany. It was this Bible that, a century later, would be the first one reproduced on a printing press.

Grimm reported that there were strongholds of New Testament Christianity in Poland, Ukraine, Austria, and Germany. Most of their preachers were arrested and executed, usually by torture.

15th Century

The rosary and choirs were introduced into the Catholic church. Also, Mary was elevated to mother of mankind.

BRITAIN

In the early 15th century, members of the church of Christ in Ludchurch, Staffordshire met secretly during times of severe persecution in a deep chasm 60 feet deep and 300 feet long in the Black Forest of White Peak.

William Sawtre (Sawtrey), another leader of this independent congregations movement was burned in 1401. In 1407, Oxford University fired all of its "Lollard" professors.

Keep in mind that this movement was spread, not so much by the peasants, but by leaders with some influence and who had money to help support fleeing Christians trying to avoid persecution. Sir John Oldcastle, Knight, Lord of Cobham, was one of the most powerful men in Britain. In Olchen Valley, Wales, where he lived, he learned the New Testament pattern of becoming a Christian and was baptized in a brook that runs through the valley in the Black Mountains. Small congregations were able to exist without much trouble. They even had their own secret building half cut into rock on the side of a mountain.

He paid for the training of many traveling preachers, apparently having what we might call today a preacher-training school on his estate in Kent. He was good friends with King Henry IV, who protected him. But when Henry died in 1413, his son, Henry V, became king and allowed the official state-selected church to arrest Sir Oldcastle for leading an uprising.

He escaped the Tower of London and fled to his home in Wales, now being considered a traitor. He was found and re-arrested in 1417, and taken back to London. That December he was led to public torture in fields near Lincoln's Inn, part of today's expanded London. He suddenly knelt and prayed for his enemies, and proclaimed to bystanders what the Scriptures said about salvation. Thereupon, the soldiers cut his stomach open, hung him between two poles by chains, then slowly roasted him to death. Throughout it all, rather than recant, he continued to proclaim to the bystanders what they must do to be saved.

Two years earlier in 1415, and thirty years after John Wycliffe's death, Wycliffe was declared a heretic on 267 counts by the government-selected church. His writings were burned, then his bones were burned and cast into the River Swift near the River Avon.

Between 1424 and 1430, hundreds were arrested in various cities in Norwich, Somerset and Lincoln. In 1428, Abraham (NLN), Milburn White, and John Wade, at Colchester, rebelled against the Catholic church, desiring to be Christians only. They were arrested by the church for rebuffing transubstiation, a new doctrine declaring that the bread of the Lord's Supper became the actual body of Jesus Christ, and the wine became the actual blood of Jesus, and therefore should be bowed down to and worshiped. But that was not all. They also believed the true church was not the Catholic church, but any congregation of Christians who had been baptized into Christ by immersion. Further, they believed (1) No one should be required to keep holy days declared by the Catholic church such as Lent; (2) The pope was the antichrist; (3) Priests may marry; (4) Pilgrimages were not scriptural; (5) Images and relics should not be worshiped; (6) Christians should not pray to "saints"; (7) Only believer baptism of adults is acceptable.

White was burned at the stake near Bishopsgate, Norwich. Abraham was burned at the stake in Colchester. John Wadden was burned at the stake in Colchester. John Wade was burned at the

stake in London. These we know by name from Catholic records; but many other New Testament Christians were arrested in Colchester and Norwich and burned at the stake.

In 1431, a former priest, Thomas Bagley of Malden, Essex, was caught preaching the gospel, arrested, and burned at the stake in Smithfield, London. In 1439, another former priest, Richard Wick, was burned at the stake on Tower Hill for preaching the simple New Testament gospel. Another trick was now used, this time against wives of men who were teaching the gospel. They were accused of witchcraft. They were not allowed to defend themselves at their trials because one could not believe a witch. In tracing where the most numerous witch trials occurred, the church of Christ was most represented. These Christians wives were burned to death.

The Coleman Street church of Christ was formed in London in the 1400s and still existed in the 1500s. It was made up of both the working class and professional class. The latter were members of guilds and were primarily small manufacturers and merchants.

The Chestertown church of Christ in Cambridge believed the following, according to records of the Lord Bishop of Ely Gray: (1) Autonomous congregations, (2) baptism by immersion for forgiveness of sins, (3) they were the true church of Christ, not a denomination or extension of the Catholic church. They met in homes and consisted of six people to begin with. They were forced to stand in the public market of both Ely and Cambridge nearly naked as punishment for their sins.

In Dover, Kent, in southern England about half way between London and Calais, France, Lord Cobham had a preacher training school. There were several congregations in Kent, which were in close contact with the church of Christ in Amsterdam Holland, and Colchester, London. Whenever threatened with persecution in one place, those Christians would escape to the other locations until they felt safe enough to return home.

The Broadmead church of Christ was in Bristol in the 1460s. During part of this time, James William, a weaver, preached for the congregation and anyone else who would listen to him. He openly opposed pilgrimages, bowing down to images, and the pope. Later he moved to London where he continued to preach outspokenly, and was finally arrested.

The church of Christ in Wales was known to be in Tewkesbury as well as in Chilterns, the Vale of Evesham, Worcester and other parts of Gloucestershire in the 1100s. At that time people called them Waldensians, but they called themselves just Christians. By the 1400s, people called them Lollards though they, themselves, went by the name church of Christ. Each congregation was autonomous with the leadership of elders. Membership was by immersion baptism of adult believers for forgiveness of their sins.

HOLLAND

Colchester, England, was located about 54 miles from London in one direction, and from Holland in the other direction. During the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries when persecution of the church was at its height, many members of the church of Christ in Colchester and London escaped to Holland, some returning later if they thought things were safe for awhile, and others going on to America. Along with many others, a sister in Christ, Alice Grevill, was arrested for opposing the Catholic church. She testified that she had been a member of the church of Christ in Tenterden for twenty-eight years; that is, since 1483.

RUMANIA

In 1405, Nicodim translated the Four gospels into the language of the common people of Rumania. They were located east of the Black Sea near Russia.

BOHEMIA / CZECHOSLOVAKIA

John of Husinec (Huss) in southern Bohemia entered the University of Prague 1390 and became dean of philosophy in 1401. At this time, Bohemia was resisting overbearing influence especially by Germany.

In 1402, he was in charge of the Bethlehem chapel in Prague founded by his teacher, Jan Milic. In 1409, King Wenceslas IV gave tenure to Czeck faculty, and foreign scholars complained to Rome. Huss was elected rector of the university.

In 1410, Archbishop Zbynek refused to promote Huss to doctor and Pope Alexander V proclaimed a bull ordering the burning of Wycliffe's works, forbidding further preaching at the Bethlehem chapel. Huss appealed to the pope. Zbynek retaliated by announced his excommunication and burning Wycliffe's books. When he died, Rome took over prosecution of Huss.

In 1412 the sale of indulgences was pushed and Huss objected. Rome excommunicated Huss and the king ordered him to leave Prague.

In 1414 the Council of Constance summoned Huss to defend himself. Upon arrival he was imprisoned. In 1415 he was burned at the stake.

As was common at this time, anyone who did not identify themselves with the Roman church was named after the person who seemed to be their leader. The followers of Huss were called Hussites. Vaclav Koranda became their leader after Huss' death. Their basic beliefs were as follows: (1) Open Lord's Supper, both bread and wine given to all Christians; (2) Freedom of preaching from the Scriptures; (4) Poverty of clergy and expropriation of church property; (5) Punishment of notorious sinners, especially prostitutes.

In this same area in Bohemia (Czechoslovakia) Peter Chelcicky led the Hussites until 1460 when he died. Under him, they began to be known as Moravians after the part of Bohemia in which they lived. Keep in mind that these Christians were struggling to maintain the integrity of the Scriptures in their life at a time when everyone else was telling them they were wrong. They were doing the best they could. Also keep in mind that, although they may have begun pure, future generations may have introduced unscriptural practices. This does not mean they were not originally simple New Testament Christians.

In the same country, under the leadership of Jan (Johan) Zelivsky, were reformers who felt that even the Moravians had not returned enough to first-century Christianity. His followers were called Bohemian Brethren, emphasizing the intent of the name "church," meaning "the called out ones" or "brethren." He was executed in 1422.

In 1434 these Christians became known as the Bohemian Brethren. After Jan (Johan) Rokycana their next leader was Brother Gregory, who took over in 1457. They began in Prague, but moved to Kunwald.

Their simple Christian teaching, exemplary moral life and industry attracted many. New congregations sprang up needing a minister. So in 1467 in Lhota they met to work out how the New Testament church did things in the days of the apostles.

They knew of the Waldenses and believed they were apostolic and scriptural in their teachings, practices and way of life. Therefore, they asked for leadership from them through Michael Bradacius. Back in 1447 the Bible began to be printed with movable type. By now there were thirty-three translations – more help for people who only wanted the simplicity of the first-century New Testament church.

In 1475, the Bible was translated into the Czech language from the Latin, and printed with the new printing press.

In 1499, Gennadius gathered together translations of various books of the Bible into one volume. They had all been translated from the Hebrew, Greek and Latin. It was called the Slavonic Translation of the Bible.

ITALY

In 1471, Niccolo Malermi translated the Bible into Italian from the Latin translation. It was printed in Venice.

1487, Pope Innocent VIII issued a bull for the extermination of Waldenses in Italy. Alberto de-Capitanei, Archdeacon of Cremona, put himself at the head of this “holy” crusade.

The New Testament church was attacked in Dauphine and Piedmont at the same time. They took refuge in valley of the Angrogne. Charles II, Duke of Piedmont, defended them to save his territory from extinction.

FINLAND

Agricola translated the New Testament from the original Greek in the common language of his people, the Finns.

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During this century, a general term of “Anabaptist” was applied to people who believed in adult baptism only. This term really means re-baptized as an adult after being baptized as a baby. However, this group claimed baptism of a baby was no baptism at all, so rejected the term. In general, they had the following beliefs:

Baptism of children practiced first by the Catholics and continued by the classical protestants was unscriptural; (2) Baptism involved repentance, a personal faith, and a pledge to lead a Christian life; (3) Catholic and protestant comparisons of Jewish infant circumcision with Christian infant baptism was nonsense; (4) Original sin and predestination were wrong because Christ’s atoning work wiped out the consequences of Adam’s fall; therefore infants were not punishable for sin until awareness of good and evil emerged; then they were to exercise their own free will to accept Jesus, personally ask for forgiveness, and be baptized; (5) The church (community of the redeemed) must be separate from the state.

Thousands were martyred by fire and water, declaring no religious organization—whether protestant or Catholic—had authority in the sphere of Christian regeneration, faith and conscience. They opposed use of the sword for social order and war, and refused to swear civil oaths.

The classical/main-line protestants used the local government to implement their reformation. The Anabaptists were not aiming to reform the church. They were determined to restore it in the spirit of the primitive church.

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A SPECIAL THANKS TO KEITH SISMAN WHO HAS DONE REMARKABLE RESEARCH OF ANCIENT DOCUMENTS AND LANDMARKS IN ENGLAND AND WALES TO TRACE THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THERE.

NEW TESTAMENT- PATTERNED CHURCH

Europe 16th—18th Centuries

16th Century

This was the century the Catholic church announced that its traditions were as sacred as the Holy Bible and only the Catholic church was allowed to interpret Scriptures.. A chalice of wine must be elevated by the priest so it can better be seen and worshiped. Such things as original sin of babies, necessitating their baptism, were made absolute church law. Sins now were required to be confessed to a priest. It even ordained that choirs were to wear certain kinds of vestments.

BRITAIN

They were not normally demonstrative or heroic, but flourished in quiet evasion. Around 1500 in Kent County alone, congregations were started in Tenderden, Feversham, Maidstone, Canterbury, Eythorne, and Canterbury.

In the Chilterns in 1506 and 1507, forty-five Christians were arrested and prosecuted. For this search for congregations of the church of Christ, keep in mind that historians often assign names to opponents of the Catholic church that had been given them wrongly by their enemies. One such name continued to be the Lollards. An examination of their beliefs, as recorded by their accusers, show they considered themselves just Christians—no more and no less.

In Essex County, in 1510, some fifty such Christians. were prosecuted. On May 2, 1511, six men and four women were arrested and tried in Kent County near Sevenoaks. They were guilty of (1) Declaring the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper never became the actual body of Christ to be worshiped; (2) Infant baptism and confirmation did the babies no good; (3) No one should confess

their sins to a priest since God does not give extra powers such as forgiving sins; (4) Images of “saints” were not to be worshiped or prayed to.

Those arrested were promised their freedom after being tortured if they informed on others with these views. Many were from the Tentarden church of Christ. One husband and two sons witnessed against their wife and mother, Alice Grevill, and she was executed.

In 1514 a New Testament Christian merchant, Richard Hunne was murdered in a church-run prison in St. Paul’s. Between 1527 and 1532 at least 218 “heretics” were prosecuted. In 1521, five were burned, and others followed the next decade. Thomas Man was burned at the stake at Smithfield in 1518. All were executed because they just wanted to follow the pattern of the first-century New Testament church.

The Bow Lane church of Christ in London is known to have been meeting as early as the 1520s and possibly earlier. James Bainham and Simon Fish were preachers for this congregation. Before that, they were preachers at the Coleman Street church of Christ.

In 1522, William Tyndale began releasing his translation of the Bible from the original Greek rather than the Latin as his English predecessors had done. He did all of the New Testament. Part of the Old Testament he never finished. He released the entire New Testament in 1526.

In the early 1500s when various groups were trying to break away from the accepted worship established by the Romans, many thought they did not go far enough. They were found later in the various reformation efforts of Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Anglicans, Episcopalians and others.

In general they condemned clerical vestments, the sign of the cross, sponsors at baptism, confirmation, observance of church festivals—all relics of the papacy.

Beginning 1525, ten years after Martin Luther began the Reformation Movement, the churches of Christ said the reformers were not going far enough in such things as autonomous congregations with their own elders and deacons, and use of the Scriptures only as their authority in all things. The term, churches of Christ as being in use is verified by an Anglican theologian, Dr. Fealty who wrote that the “churches of Christ” already existed there in 1525.

In 1529, Simon Fish translated a tract authored by German Henricus Bornelius, and added his own beliefs to it. He named his book “The Summe of the Holye Scrypture.” He taught adult believer’s baptism by being “plunged under the water”.

Between 1527 and 1532 more than 200 Christians were convicted of heresy against the government-selected church. Half came from London, and half from Colchester, Steeple, Bumstead, Birdbrook and elsewhere in Essex County.

The Coleman Street church of Christ was originally called the Bell Alley church of Christ and probably begun in the 1400s there in London. Among its leaders was John Hacker, who was arrested for distributing books against the Catholic church and for the simple New Testament church at Burford.

Another member of that congregation was John Stacey. Brother Stacey had a man in his house to translate Revelation in English. The man's expenses were paid for by John Sercot, a grocer and another member of the guild.

John Stacey was friends with Lawrence Maxwell, also a Christian. They were both bricklayers and belonged to the guild. Coleman Street was just a brief walk to the Guildhall with members all over England. It was about this time—1530—that the Coleman Street congregation began smuggling Tyndale's New Testament throughout Britain.

In York 32 Christians were prosecuted under King Henry VIII, and 45 under Queen Mary I. The Christians attacked (1) saint worship, (2) images, (3) relics (4) holy bread, (5) holy water, (6) sacred buildings and objects, (7) confession, (8) transubstantiation. All they wanted was to imitate the simplicity of the New Testament, the first-century New Testament church.

The Bow Lane church of Christ was located in London. Simon Fish and James Bainham were members. In 1532, Brother Fish was arrested. He declared unabashedly to his accusers that only believers should be baptized in the church of Jesus. On April 20, he was burned at the stake. Fish's widow married James Bainham. He had been arrested in 1531, and declared in court, "The truth of the holy Scriptures" now available to be plainly read by the people since 1526, referring to Tyndale's translation of the Bible into English from Erasmus' Greek. The Bow Lane congregation possibly helped to finance and then smuggle along with the Coleman Street congregation and Canterbury congregation, to other congregations of the Lord's church in Kent. Brother Bainham's torture included the rack, and after enduring several weeks, died by being burned at the stake on April 20, 1532 in the Smithfield district of London.

In 1536 William Tyndale was arrested for heresy in Antwerp, sentenced to death and burned at the stake. Was he a New Testament Christian? Although he was licensed by the Catholic church to preach, it was the only legal way anyone could preach at that time in England. But he did not believe the Catholic doctrines. He wrote that baptism was...

"...the washinge preacheth unto us that we ar clensed with Christe's bloud [blood] shedyng [shedding] which was an offering and a satisfaction for the synn [sin] of al that repent and beleve consentynge [consenting] and submyttyne [submitting] themselves unto the wyl of God. The plungynge into the water sygnyfyeth [signifieth] that we die and are buried with Chryst as concerning ye old life of synne....And the pulling out again sygnyfyeth that we ryse again with Christe in a new lyfeful [life full] of the holye gooste which shal teach us and gyde us, and work the wyll of God in us, as thou seest Rom. 6."

After Tyndale's death, his brother and his brother's children remained faithful. Other relatives, Llewellyn and Hezekiah Tyndale, were members of the church of Christ at Abergaverney, South Wales, near Gloucestershire. Further, Tyndale was friends of the Tracy family who were related to James Bainham, one of the preachers of the Bow Lane congregation in London.

In 1536, *The Great Bible* was edited by Coverdale. Although German, he was hired by a German Lutheran merchant to do so because he did business in English. Actually, it was a translation of

Munster's Latin version of 1535 in the Old Testament and Erasmus' Latin version in the New Testament, the Swiss-German Zurich Bible, Luther's German Bible, and Tyndale's Bible. By royal decree it was to be installed in every church. It was printed in Paris and nearly finished when the French inquisition intervened. Coverdale and his publisher fled with the types and printed sheets, and completed the printing in London in April 1539.

In 1550, Joan Boucher, a member of the congregation at Eythome, Kent, was burned at the stake on May 2 in Smithfield, London, for helping to smuggle Tyndale's New Testament from London to Kent. She had been friends with Anne Askew, a Christian sister who smuggled a copy of the New Testament into the palace under her skirts.

The church of Christ at Canterbury in Kent was established around 1550. In the 1100s, autonomous congregations of the Lord's church were generally called Waldenses. Beginning the 1300s, these same groups with the same beliefs began to be called Lollards. Beginning 1538, these same groups with the same beliefs began to be called Anabaptists. Actually, this label was not correct, because it refers to adult believers being baptized again, and members of the church of Christ denied that infant baptism was a real baptism to start with. William Salesbury translated the New Testament from the original Greek into Welch in 1567. The Bishop's Bible was published in 1568 in English.

In 1588, the Bible was translated by William Morgan into the language of Welch. In some ways it was an offshoot of the Salesbury New Testament translated thirty years earlier. It is used today. In the 1590s, Bartholomew Legate, along with brothers, Walter and Thomas, preached in congregations around London. They rejected Catholic and church of England rituals. They declared the only person who could be rightly baptized was an adult believer. Only the locations where the Coleman Street and Bow Lane churches of Christ are known today. There were several congregations in the 1590s as attested to by government records of those they arrested, but their locations today are unknown.

BOHEMIA / CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In 1501, the Bohemian Brethren published the first non-Catholic hymnbook. Around 1550, many members immigrated to Poland where they began a branch of the Brethren that lasted 200 years.

In 1565, Jan (Johan) Blahoslav translated the New Testament in the Czech language of his people. It was the basis of the later Bible of Kralice published in 1579. The Bohemian Brethren declared the priesthood of all believers. They were led by elders whom they elected, also called the inner Council. Congregations were under the care only of their own elders. Members were carefully tested as to their sincerity, and their progress in the Christian life was occasionally considered.

They printed their first complete Bible in Czech in 1593, called the Kralice Bible, including Jan Blahoslav's New Testament. By 1600 half the protesters in Bohemia and over half in adjoining Moravia were of their faith. Many were also in Poland.

SWITZERLAND

Huldreich Zwingli was born 1484 at Wildhaus, Switzerland, and was ordained 1506 at Glarus. Rather than attack the Roman church, he expounded the Gospel passages. In 1518, he became known as the people's priest at Grossmünster Cathedral at Zurich. He gave many series of expositions of the New Testament enlivened by topical application.

In 1520, he was given permission by Zurich's governing Council to preach the "true divine Scriptures" and his sermons stirred revolts against fasting and celibacy.

In 1521 he debated Franz Lambert, declaring the supremacy of Scriptures. In 1522 he published *On Meats* (referring to fasting) and *The Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God*.

He successfully debated celibacy, the liturgy, and in 1524 images. In 1525 all images were removed, organs suppressed, religious houses were dissolved, the mass was replaced by a simple communion service, baptism was declared for adults only, Bible readings were introduced into the service, and preparation made for a native version of the Bible.

The Zurcher Bible appeared in 1529.

The movement spread from the city of Zurich to nearby towns with the following beliefs:

(1) The church is born of the Word of God and has Christ alone as its head. (2) Its laws are binding only insofar as they agree with Scripture. (3) Christ alone is our righteousness. (4) The Holy Scriptures do not teach Christ's corporeal presence in the bread and wine at the Lord's supper. (5) mass is a gross affront to the sacrifice and death of Christ. (6) There is no biblical foundation for the mediation or intercession of the dead. (7) There is no biblical foundation for purgatory. (8) There is no biblical foundation for images and pictures. (9) Marriage is lawful to all.

In 1525, Zwingli wrote *On Baptism*, emphasizing the significance of water baptism as a covenant sign. In 1531 he wrote *Tricks of the Catabaptists*.

In 1525, Conrad Grebel, a Zwinglian in Switzerland, believed Zwingli was cooperating too much with the government. His followers believed in: (1) Separation of church and state; (2) Voluntarism in matters of faith; (3) Believer's baptism; (4) Pacifism; (5) Rejection of oaths. They became known as Swiss Brethren. They were persecuted, so fled to Alsace in south Germany and into Austria where the Hutterian Brethren had been meeting.

The Bible was translated in 1560 into the language of Swiss, and published in Geneva. It was called the Upper Engadine Translation of the Bible and done by J. Bifrun from the Vulgate into this Romanish Swiss dialect.

FRANCE

In 1523, Jacques Lefevre translated the New Testament from Latin to French. In 1530 he released the Old Testament.

In 1534, Olivetan translated the Bible into the language of the French from the Hebrew, Erasmus' Latin version, and Lefevre's New Testament. More and more people were given the opportunity to become Christians in the simple way, the first-century New Testament way.

AUSTRIA

In 1528 in Austria, Jakob Hutter, a Tirolean, led his Hutterian Brethren in like beliefs of the New Testament church, following the New Testament exclusively in its first-century pattern. He was burned as a heretic in 1536.

NETHERLANDS

In 1532 Luther's German Bible was translated into Dutch. That is all they needed to establish the New Testament church after the simple New Testament pattern.

In 1534, simultaneously in the Netherlands, Obbe Philips led people to believe the same. In 1536, Philips baptized a Roman Catholic priest who just wanted to be a Christian like people were in New Testament days.

GERMANY

Grimm explained in his book that, despite the Catholic church's crusades against non-conformers, "Even in these dark ages, the churches of Christ did not only hold their ground in their strongholds in Alsace-Lorraine, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, but from 1518 to 1538 they succeeded in multiplying their congregations in the Palatinate, Austria, Moravia, and in the center of Germany." By 1524, there were some 12,000 baptized Christians in Alsace-Lorraine, 5,000 in the Palatinate, 2,500 in Frisia, and 2,000 in Salzburg. The Catholic church basically went to war against all those independent congregations that refused to fall under their authority.

Martin Luther translated the New Testament from the original Greek into common German and published it in 1526. In 1534 he translated the Old Testament from the original Hebrew. A number of fleeing Waldenses ended up in Germany where they found refuge. They influenced, and afterwards joined, the Hussites and the Bohemian Brethren who had been independently re-establishing the New Testament church in their own regions, based only on the New Testament. Remember, these were names given them by their enemies.

The Dutch Mennonites early in the century had spread into the Rhineland, across north Germany to the delta of the Vistula River in the Danzig area, and became more numerous than the Swiss and south German Anabaptists.

In 1530, Georges Morel of Dauphine, and Pierre Masson of Provence conferred with German and Swiss Reformers. An extant letter to Oecolampadius shows their attempt to separate from all organized religion and form only the New Testament church.

They were even disturbed, not only about Catholic doctrines, but also about the Lutheran and Calvinistic teaching against freewill and pro-predestination (irresistible salvation). At first they continued to submit to baptism and communion from Catholic priests, but then isolated themselves for their own secret services. They finally broke away completely.

The Waldenses in 1532 at Chanforans in the valley of the Angrogne, then merged with the Swiss and German reformers. They renounced all future recognition of Rome, and decided to worship in public.

In 1534 J. Dietscher translated the Bible into the language of the German people from the Latin. He also used Emser's New Testament and Luther's Old Testament. The Dutch Mennonites early in the century had spread into the Rhineland, across north Germany to the delta of the Vistula River in the Danzig area, and became more numerous than the Swiss and south German Anabaptists.

Grimm, writing of the Catholic war on "heretics" who refused to submit to their authority, said, "The result of this decree was the almost total extermination of the churches of Christ in Alsace-Lorraine, Switzerland, the Palatinate, and Central Germany. With about 100,000 Anabaptists, more than 42,000 followers of Christ were given their choice between revocation and mounting the pyre. By far the greater number chose the latter. Under the witnesses for the gospel truth were four of my ancestors: Augustine and Adolf Grimm in 1525, Godwin Engel in 1535, and the younger Gregor Cron in 1536."

By the end of the century, the churches of Christ basically ceased to exist in Germany, not only due to the persecution by the Catholic church, but also the Lutherans and Calvinists. John Calvin voted to burn at the stake Michael Servetus in Geneva, Switzerland, 1541. Lutheran theologian, Melancthon, supported the burning, drowning and beheading of over 1,000 baptized members of the church in Thuringen and Saxony.

But, as always seems to be the case, a hidden remnant remained. Some 1,000 existed in the Vosges Mountains of Alsace-Lorraine and swamps of Frisia. A few congregations in Hesse and Tyrol were protected by a few Husite noblemen in Moravia.

DENMARK

In 1528, Christiern Pedersen translated the New Testament from two different Latin versions and Luther's German version into the language of his people, Danish.

ITALY

In 1532, Antonio Brucioli translated the Bible into the language of the common people of Italy, using Erasmus' Latin version for the New Testament, and Pagninus' Latin version for the Old Testament. Although the Waldenses had the New Testament and part of the Old printed in their language, they wanted the complete Bible. They furnished a Swiss printer with the entire Old and New Testament who accommodated them.

HUNGARY

In 1541, J. Erdosi translated the New Testament from the original Greek into the Hungarian language. Yes, regardless of whether or not they were registered with a world headquarters in heaven, they had every opportunity to begin the New Testament church the way the apostles set it up in the New Testament.

SPAIN

In 1543, Enzinas Dryander translated the New Testament from the original Greek in the common language of the Spanish. What a movement of getting the Bible into the hands of the people so they could read for themselves!

HOLLAND

Around 1525, Menno Simons, a priest at Pingjum in Holland began studying Luther's tracts and to study the New Testament and to question infant baptism. In 1531 the tailor Sicke Freerks was executed for having been rebaptized as a believing adult. Simons moved to Witmarsum and briefly identified with Munster's Anabaptists. In 1536 he left the Roman church. Within a year he became a minister for the Obbenites led by Obbe Philips.

When Obbe Philips left the group, Menno took over as leader. He repudiated the idea that he had formed a sect. He said that any who had experienced the "new birth" were the true Christian church. He did not take to the term Trinity since it was not in the Bible, and he believed the flesh of Christ had its origin from God rather than Mary.

He moved around, starting congregations often. He was in East Friesland until 1541; Amsterdam, North Holland until 1542; back to East Friesland until 1545; then Lubeck, South Holland until 1547; Wismar until 1554; Wustenfelde until he died in 1561. From his name came the term Mennonite, though he disliked it, preferring simply the church of Christ.

In 1554, the New Testament was translated into the language of the Dutch based on Erasmus' Greek text of the New Testament.

RUSSIA

In 1579 thousands of these Dutch Mennonites fled from Prussia to south Russia and settled in the Ukraine German-speaking colonies where they flourished. The Swiss-German Mennonites settled in the Ukraine also. These Dutch-Russian Mennonites and Swiss-German Mennonites then united in the Ukraine.

The Mennonite worship originally involved what Christians did in the first century. (1) Congregational singing with no musical instruments; (2) Ministers preaching sermons based entirely on the Bible; (3) Worshipers kneeling for prayer.

Again, the reminder that, although a group began as a replica of the New Testament church, changes occurred in later generations.

EASTERN EUROPE

In 1550, J. Seklucyan published the New Testament in the Danish language from the original Greek. In 1553, he translated the New Testament into the Polish from the original Greek. It was the first one published with the new printing press.

The Cracow Bible was the first entire Bible published in Polish, and was translated from the Latin in 1561.

Coresi translated the Acts of the Apostles from earlier manuscripts written during the Huss movement to the Romanian language.

In 1590, G. Karoli translated the Bible into the language of his people, Hungary, from the original Greek and Hebrew.

Why are these translations important? Because, every time they appeared, a new rebellion arose against the large and growing Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist churches, and in favor of going all the way back to the beginning with the New Testament church of Christ.

17th Century

Candles were now required to be burned at mass (the Lord's Supper), yet another adoption from the old Law of Moses. All laws of the church were enforced by governments which wanted the favor and wealth of the growing powerful Catholic church.

BRITAIN

Edward Wightman and Bartholomew Legate were anti-Trinitarians. The Nicene Creed was originated with the Catholic church. It was rejected by the churches of Christ. In 1611, they declared "There is one God, the best and highest and most glorious Creator and Preserver of all; who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Later in 1646 they explained, "The Lord our God is but one God, whose subsistence is in Himself; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto; who is in Himself most holy....In this divine and infinite Being there is the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit; each having the whole divine Essence undivided; all infinite without any beginning and therefore but one God; who is not to be divided in nature, and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties."

In 1611, Bartholomew and his brother, Thomas, both preachers in the London area, were arrested for heresy and imprisoned. Thomas died in Newgate Prison, and Bartholomew was burned to death at the stake in the Smithfield section of London, March 18, 1612.

On December 14, 1611, our Brother Edward Wightman, a member of the Burton-Upon-Trent church of Christ was convicted of heresy for being a member of this autonomous congregation instead of the church of England, being against infant baptism, and declaring the Lord's Supper and baptism as kept by the Catholic church and church of England were not correct. His sentence read, "holding that such a heritick in the aforesaid form convicted and condemned according to the customs and laws of this our Kingdom of England in this part accustomed....being in thy custody to be committed to fire in some publick and open place before the city aforesaid...for the manifest example of other Christians that they may not fall into the same crime." He was burned to death at the stake April 11, 1612 at Lichfield. He was the last Christian to be condemned to the flames in Britain.

His widow and orphaned children moved to London where they attended the church of Christ at White Alley in Newgate. Later they moved to Rhode Island in America where they continued to worship with the church of Christ there.

There was a congregation in Amsterdam that immigrated to London around 1612. At first, they met at the Spittlefields district of London. Soon thereafter, they moved to the Newgate section at London Bridge, and from then on was known as the Newgate church of Christ.

One of the members, Thomas Helwys, was arrested and died in prison in 1616. One of Thomas' friends was John Murton who he had met ten years earlier. John was an elder and preacher for the Newgate church of Christ. In one of his pamphlets that still exists today, he said this: "Members and churches of Christ, are so made both by faith and baptism, and not by the one only, which being true; it will follow, that neither the church and members of Rome, are members of the church of Christ, because Faith is neither required nor performed thereto; nor yet any profession of people, that separate from Rome as no church of Christ, retaining Rome's baptism, and building new churches without baptism." He used Romans 11:20f as his proof text.

The Newgate congregation met half a mile from the Bell Alley congregation and two miles from the Southwark congregation, all in London. There were undoubtedly more.

In the 1620s, congregations in Britain were in London, Lincoln, Epworth, Sarum in Salisbury, Coventry, Tiverton in Devon, Warrington at Hill Cliff, Plymouth, Amersham, Olchon in Wales, Stoney Stratford, Eyethom and Monks-thorpe.

In 1620, the *Mayflower* landed in America with several members of the Bell Alley and Southwark in London churches of Christ. The captain of the Mayflower, Christopher Jones, was from Southwark. Thomas Lamb was a preacher for the Bell Alley congregation (known later as the Coleman Street church of Christ) in London. He was arrested in 1640 and released on bail with the warning "not to preach, baptize or frequent any [unlawful church assemblies]". Lamb traveled around western Britain preaching in private homes and baptizing. "By preaching there, he subverted many, and shortly afterwards in an extreme cold and frosty time in the night season, diverse men and women were rebaptized in the great River Severn, in the City of Gloucester." Lamb had a son, Isaac, who became a preacher at the East Smithfield church of Christ in London, a congregation of some 300 people!

The Broadmead church of Christ in Bristol, was founded in 1640. John Tombes was their preacher, and tried to reform the church of England, and a sermon was printed in the record of the House of Commons. Possibly as a result, in 1642, he fled to Bristol, and finally to London.

In 1645, Brother Tombes learned of problems of the churches of Christ in New England, America, regarding infant baptism, and wrote them to teach them further and encourage them. Benjamin Cox was preacher for the church of Christ at Bedford. He was the son of an Anglican bishop. In 1643 he was jailed in Coventry for preaching against infant baptism.

The church of Christ at Southwark in London was organized around 1621. The first preacher was Mr. Hubbard or Herbert, and the second was John Canne. From there, Canne started the Broadmead congregation in Bristol.

In 1642, famous Anglican theologian, Dr. Daniel Featley, debated four members of the Southwark congregation in London, then published a book about it in 1645 called *The Dippers dipt or the Anabaptists dunckt and plunged over head and ears*. It is from his opposition to the churches of Christ that we learn of their beliefs at that time.

In 1641, Henry Denne, preached a sermon at Baldock based on John 5:35, trying to reform the church of England. He was taught further by Thomas Lamb, the preacher of the Bell Alley church of Christ in London, then resigned from the church of England. He began traveling around England preaching and establishing congregations in the counties of Staffordshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincoln-shire, Kent and elsewhere. He was occasionally arrested. In 1646 he was arrested at Spalding in Lincolnshire for preaching baptism by immersion.

In 1646 in Spalding, Henry Denne preached in the home of merchant, John Makernesse and converted four people: Anne Stennet, Anne Croft, Godfrey Root and John Sowter. They decided to be baptized at midnight in the Little Croft to avoid detection. But word got out and Denne was arrested in Lincoln goal.

Later in 1646 Oliver Cromwell convinced Parliament to reverse their policy so that such independent congregations were not treasonous. In fact, Cromwell's daughter married a New Testament Christian. So Denne was released, then preached and started churches of Christ at Rochester, Chatham, Canterbury, Ely, Eltisly, St. Ives, Spalding, Warboys, and Whittlesey.

In 1650, Henry Denne and others started a congregation in St. Ives, Huntingdonshire (Cambridgeshire). His son, John, continued that work after Henry's death. In 1655, Denne gave up his missionary work and became the minister of the Fenstanton church of Christ at Canterbury. Over in Bristol, the extant Broadmead church records say, "God brought to this city one Mr. Canne, a baptized man. It was Mr. Canne that made notes and references upon the Bible." The wife of a local priest, Mrs. Hazzard, invited Canne to her home where he taught the difference between the Catholic church and the church of Christ. This is how the congregation started.

About 1640, Bro. Cann stated in a pamphlet that there were "many thousands in England that do not hold communion with others, though they doe owne and practise believers' baptism, because they hold with it free will and falling from grace".

In 1651, Brother Ewins became the Broadmead, Bristol, preacher. In addition to meeting on the Lord's day, they met on Thursday evenings in private homes to discuss Scriptures and fellowship each other. Robert Purnell was one of the elders.

At first, they met at Friars Chapel under the protection of Oliver Cromwell who believed in relative freedom of religion. When Cromwell died, they met in private homes. Regardless, they were often discovered, arrested and imprisoned until they could pay a fine. If they learned ahead of time the authorities were coming, they would hide in a cellar or attic.

In 1661, Brother Ewins was arrested while preaching, and again in 1663. He was imprisoned on the fourth floor of the jail. On Sundays he would preach from the window.

Their records of 1665 say, "We had many disturbances and divers imprisoned, but the Lord helped us through it." Further, if anyone missed worship out of fear, the members considered them "disorderly". But persecution grew until "we were fain to meet in the lanes and highways for several months."

In 1658, persecution of Christians by the church of England began again. That same year, Roger Sawrey of London traveled to today's English Lake District in Cumberland Shire. He met two Anglican clergymen who were dissatisfied, William Campbell and George Malcom. At the time there were already two churches of Christ meeting in Cumberland, one in Broughton (begun in 1648) and one in Cockermouth (begun in 1641). These two congregations were forced to cease meeting, but later merged and, in 1662, began the Tottlebank and Wall End churches of Christ. At that time, there was also a congregation in Tavistock in Devonshire.

One of the debaters of the author of *The Dippers dipt or the Anabaptists dunckt and plunged over head and ears* was William Cuffin/Kiffin who preached at Devonshire Square. He had been baptized in 1639 and was a wealthy London merchant and friend of King Charles II. In 1664 he rescued twelve Christians who had been sentenced to death for participating in an illegal church. In 1667 the Broadmead congregation in Bristol moved to the second story of a large warehouse. Their minister, Brother Ewin, died in April 1670, and the authorities broke up a worship service, arresting some of the members and demanding fines. In 1671, Thomas Hardcaster became their preacher.

In 1672, King Charles II allowed "dissenters" to preach and hold meetings, but this new freedom only lasted a year. During that time, the St. Ives church of Christ in Cambridgeshire met in a chapel, part of a bridge over the Ouse River.

In 1678, our Brothers Ward and Blenkinsop started a congregation at Hawkshead Hill of Furness-fells in Lancashire.

The years 1682 and 1683 saw the church ravaged throughout Britain. Congregations of the church of Christ met in homes, fields, woods, or any other hiding place they could find.

POLAND

Although the church in Poland remained stable, in 1618 the Thirty Years War broke out with the Catholics, and in 1627, leading nobles who had become protestants were beheaded and protestantism was banned.

All the Brethren church buildings, Bibles and hymnbooks were destroyed, and its members forced to be Catholic or be forever exiled. They no longer existed as a single body of individual congregations known to each other.

But they did continue to exist, each in secret meetings in the forests. Among them was Bishop Johann [Jan] Amos Comenius [Komensky] who lived in the northern countries and wrote, collected money for sufferers, publicly appealed for religious liberty which can only come about through common education of everyone.

He moved easily among denominations, trying to bring them together, but this irritated many. He forever hoped that there might lie a “hidden seed” from which to renew a large body of Brethren. It happened in Germany.

The Mennonites were one such Anabaptist group. Another sprang up in Holland. Fleeing from Poland in the 1600s, the Socinians introduced their practice of baptism by immersion in their new country. It was adopted by the Arminian Collegiants.

At that time, the English General Baptists were living there, having been exiled from England and its Anglican church. The practice of immersion was taken over by these Baptists in their midst.

AMERICAN COLONY

As mentioned in the account of Britain, in late 1611, Edward Wightman, a member of the Burton-Upon-Trent church of Christ was convicted of heresy and was burned at the stake in early 1612 at Lichfield.

His widow and orphaned children moved to London where they attended the church of Christ at White Alley in Newgate. Later they moved to Rhode Island in America where they continued to worship with the church of Christ there.

In 1620, the *Mayflower* landed in America with several members of the Bell Alley and Southwark in London churches of Christ. The captain of the Mayflower, Christopher Jones, was from Southwark. Many passengers kept their ties with the church of England. But, within a few years, several of the other passengers separated and established the church of Christ.

The Broadmead church of Christ in Bristol, was founded in 1640. John Tombes was their preacher. In 1645, Tombes learned of problems of the churches of Christ in New England, America, regarding infant baptism, and wrote them to teach them further and encourage them. Brother Emlin, a minister of one of the churches of Christ in Boston and one other town, insisted on believer baptism. His letter mentioned that they were evangelizing Indians. At least one congregation was established within the Indian community in Massachusetts in the 1640s.

On May 28, 1665, a congregation from England was formed in Boston. They called themselves “Baptists”, this being before that denomination began, only trying to identify their belief in adult baptism.

18th Century

Mary was declared as the intercessoress between man and her Son, Jesus, and was the one who granted all favors. The reasoning was that Jesus was more likely to listen to his mother than common Christians on earth.

BRITAIN

In 1727, Thomas Lamb, preacher for the Bell Alley congregation in London, began preaching for the Bow Lane congregation, also in London.

In 1742, William Whitson, colleague of John Newton of science fame, was baptized for forgiveness of his sins. Ten years earlier, he translated *Josephus*. He lived in Rutlandshire where several congregations of the church of Christ existed.

The first congregation of Moravian Brethren New Testament church was established in London. From there they branched out to Yorkshire, Wiltshire and Ireland. John Cennick was their most powerful evangelist.

In 1749, the English parliament officially recognized the Moravian church “as an ancient protestant episcopal church” and gave these Christians colonization privileges. The congregations always remained small because of their emphasis in dividing up and sending missionaries out from them. By 1768, some 200,000 people died in witch hunts. Even reformers under Luther and Calvin supported it. The guide was always the same: If a witch practiced Mark 16:16, s/he was guilty of demon possession. John Wesley stated in 1768, “Giving up witchcraft was, in effect, giving up the Bible”.

In 1791, the congregation of the church of Christ at Morcott obtained a baptistry from Greetham.

GERMANY

In 1722, Count Zinzendorf allowed the Moravian Brethren to move onto his estate at Herrnhut Saxony. Several German Lutherans joined them. The count came to live with them and organize it according to the original beliefs of the Brethren and the New Testament pattern of the New Testament church.

In 1732, they decided missions was everyone’s responsibility. Missionaries were sent to Russia, Egypt, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Scandinavia, West Indies, and Georgia in the United States. They called their missionary work “diaspora” after the dispersion mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1, brethren ministering among the “scattered” everywhere.

Grimm, in his history of the New Testament church in Europe, concluded, “The small churches in Alsace-Lorraine had to endure their last persecution during the great French Revolution (1789-99). Here died the last three martyrs, beheaded as “anti-revolutionists” at Colmar under the terror reign of the former Roman Catholic priest, Eulogius Schneider.

He concluded, “The small congregation of the church of my ancestors in Alsace-Lorraine and other scattered churches in Poland, Ukraine, and Siberia, which remained through the centuries in close connection with one another, claimed to be the true church of Christ.”

SCOTLAND

In the 17th century in Scotland, protestant John Dury was wholly consecrated to the ideal of the unity of the church. He traveled tirelessly, attempting to influence leaders in all denominations to unite. He preached, he wrote, he argued, he dedicated his life to this.

Scotland had long been frustrated by monarchs coming out of England, especially those legislating their religion. By the 18th century, there were divisions primarily in the Presbyterian church based on how much control the government should have over them.

In 1728 John Glas became an Independent congregationalist, followers were called Glasites, adopted immersion of adult believers. About 1755, Robert Sandeman took over leadership of this independent group. (Keep in mind, independent religious groups were normally called by the name of their primary leader by outsiders.)

In 1749, John Erskine published his "Essay to Promote the More Frequent Dispensation of the Lord's Supper", eliminating all the extra days such as Lent, and instead, celebrating it every Sunday. Dr. John Mason agreed, and was sent as a missionary to America in 1761. His son, Dr. John Mason, preached and wrote the same beliefs.

In the mid-1760s, David Dale, father-in-law of the famous Robert Owen who first showed compassion on workers in factories, became independent and adopted weekly communion. In 1769, they built a meeting house, appointed elders, and became an independent congregation. In 1773, a Dr. Johnson, decided Christianity should be based exclusively upon the Bible, and eventually went out to be a missionary of religious reform.

A congregation of the Lord's church was established in Glasgow at Morrison's Court around 1775. By 1818, they had 180 members. A congregation of the church of Christ was established in Kirkcaldy in the middle 1780s. In 1798 they rented a meeting place at Kirk Wynd. In 1819, they built the Rose Street Chapel with a seating capacity of 200. A congregation was established at Leith Walk in Edinburgh around 1798. By 1818, they had 250 members.

In 1786, William Jones author of the *History of the Waldenses*, was immersed at Chester. He then returned to London, England.

Around 1793 in Rich Hill, the Haldane brothers began questioning church laws that were not borne out in Scripture. They adopted the Wesleyan system of lay-preaching and field preaching since the officially recognized clergy were hostile to their teaching the people what was in the Bible.

In 1798 James Haldane and others organized the Society for Propagating the Gospel, but remained in the church of Scotland. They insisted on evidence from the Bible for all things; without evidence there can be no faith (Hebrews 11:1 KJV). The following year they were excommunicated from the church of Scotland. They formed a congregational church.

Under the leadership of a Mr. Ewing, they began keeping the Lord's Supper every Sunday. Under the teaching of William Ballantine, they began having congregational elders as their only form of

rule. Under James Haldane, they ceased baptizing children; and shortly after began preaching immersion of believing adults.

The Haldanes regarded preaching Christ crucified as the great essential, and wished all differences about church order and ordinances to be matters of forbearance. Other ministers adopted these views—a Mr. Innes of Edinburgh, William Stevens of Edinburgh Seminary, a Dr. Carson, and Archibald McLean.

A Mr. Barclay founded a group called the Bereans, so called after the example of the church in Berea who “searched the Scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11.)

AMERICAN COLONY

Further tracing of the New Testament church ceases here, except to briefly show how, as congregations of the church of Christ in Europe faded away, the torch was picked up elsewhere. This time it was in America.

Again, this is a difficult task because people wishing to follow only the New Testament pattern were not organized beyond the congregational level. God knew who they were, but we do not always. It will be noted that many of the people in America who preached independence and following only the New Testament pattern were Scottish.

In 1790, a popular Presbyterian minister, James McGready in North Carolina, began preaching that congregations should be independent and should have only the Bible as its creed.

In 1793 in North Carolina and Virginia, James O’Kelly and some other Methodist preachers pleaded for a congregational system and that the New Testament be the only creed and discipline. Unable to convince their episcopate to abide by this, they seceded.

James O’Kelly’s group left their denomination at Manakin Town, North Carolina, in December of that year. At first they took the name “Republican Methodists,” but later resolved to be known as Christians only and to acknowledge no head but Christ, and have no creed or discipline but the Bible.

Not long afterwards, unknown to the groups in North Carolina and Virginia, up in Vermont Abner Jones, a Baptist, became greatly dissatisfied with sectarian names and creeds. He pleaded that these should be abolished. In September 1800, Abner Jones of Hartland, Vermont, seceded from their denomination and began meeting at Lyndon, Vermont. That group had 25 members. In 1803, he helped another congregation form at Pierpont, New Hampshire.

About that same time, not knowing about the others, a Baptist preacher named Elias Smith of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, influenced his congregation to secede and become an independent congregation of believers. Several other ministers, both from the Regular and the Freewill Baptists, soon after followed. Then others rose up all over the New England States, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Canada. They, too, went only by the name “Christian.”

Another movement, unbeknownst to the others, began down in Kentucky under the influence of a Presbyterian preacher, Barton Warren Stone, who in earlier years had also been a Baptist and a

Methodist. In 1801 Stone went to Logan County, Kentucky, to hear James McGready, visiting there from North Carolina.

Upon returning home to Cane Ridge, Kentucky, he preached the same thing. In August he held an outdoor meeting where more than 20,000 people attended. Methodist and Baptist preachers aided, several preaching in different parts at the same time.

Among other preachers led into the Bible-only movement were Presbyterians by the name of McNamar, Thompson, Dunlavy, Marshall, and David Purviance. The Synod at Lexington then suspended them and declared their congregations vacant.

At first, these independent congregations formed what they called the Springfield Presbytery, but later they decided it was unscriptural, so disbanded it, agreeing to take the name only of Christian. If anyone wanted to call their congregations by a name, they insisted it be the "Christian Connection." In 1808, some 150 years after the first-known New Testament Christians arrived in the New World, Thomas Campbell arrived in Pennsylvania from Scotland. He had been a Presbyterian preacher all his life; his father and grandfather had been Roman Catholics. Campbell was given a church to preside over in Pennsylvania.

In 1809 he was denounced by the Associate Synod of North America for preferring to discard their rules in order to bring people of all faiths together.

Thereupon, he reported to his congregation what happened, and they decided to cede with him. He then admonished them to have only one rule: "That rule, my highly respected hearers is this, that where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." He then went on to say that, "Whatever private opinions might be entertained upon matters not clearly revealed must be retained in silence, and no effort must be made to impose them upon others....Simply, reverentially, confidingly, all will speak of Bible things in Bible words, adding nothing thereto and omitting nothing given by inspiration."

They named themselves "The Christian Association." The Campbell biographer said "The idea that he should...be the means of creating a new party [denomination] was most abhorrent to the mind of Thomas Campbell." Thomas continued to inspire others to exist in independent congregations, influencing thousands over the next 40 years.

His son, Alexander, also became a minister of the simple Gospel, declaring the Bible the only possible creed of a Christian. Although he was no more important than any other Christian leader, he was editor of a Christian periodical and publicly debated all religious leaders, and even one famous atheist, so was more widely known than some of the others.

He became personal friend to Presidents James Buchanan and William Harrison, as well as Henry Clay, Secretary of State under President John Adams. He was the only minister ever to speak before both Houses of the U.S. Congress. And whenever preaching in the Washington D.C. area, many congressmen went to hear him. He and Barton W. Stone also influenced the beliefs of President Abraham Lincoln from Kentucky and Illinois.

By 1860, it was estimated that there were some half million people in North America embracing the restoration movement of being simple New Testament Christians.

~~Excerpted from *Worship Changes Since the First Century*

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