

CHAPTER EIGHT  
**THE LEGACY OF APOSTASY (2)**

*?Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, <This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. but in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.>*"

– Matthew 15:7-9

COMMUNION--The Lord's Supper

The unique tradition of the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper in present-day churches of Christ is proclaimed as "apostolic." The institution of the supper by Jesus at the Passover meal with His disciples, just before he was tried and crucified, is presented in the New Testament in very simple language (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20). Later, when the Apostle Paul rehearses what he had "received" of the Lord, the simple details remained (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Yet, shortly after the close of the Apostolic Age, the Supper began to change in form and purpose.

One of the earliest uninspired records of the Lord's Supper after the time of the Apostles is that of Justin Martyr (100?-165? AD). He wrote,

"After the prayers...we greet one another with the brotherly kiss. Then bread and a cup with water and wine are handed to the president (bishop) of the brethren. He receives them, and offers praise, glory, and thanks to the Father of all, through the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit, for these his gifts. When he has ended the prayers and thanksgiving, the whole congregation responds: 'Amen.' For 'Amen' in the Hebrew tongue means: 'Be it so.' Upon this the deacons, as we call them, give to each of those present some of the blessed bread, and of the wine mingled with water, and carry it to the absent in their dwellings. This food is called with us the *eucharist*, of which none can partake, but the believing and baptized, who live according to the commands of Christ. For we use these not as common bread and common

drink; but like as Jesus Christ our Redeemer was made flesh through the word of God, and took upon him flesh and blood for our redemption; so are we taught, that the nourishment blessed by the word of prayer, by which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation (assimilation), is the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus." (Schaff, History, Vol. 2, pp. 235-236.)

A conservative interpreter of the New Testament might read this statement and find it very similar to the descriptions of the Gospels, but he must also recognize some differences. No command or example in Scripture ever mentions or requires the presiding of a bishop at the table, or prayers through the name of the Holy Spirit, or mingling the wine with water, or carrying the emblems to the homes of the absent, or of assimilating the flesh and blood of Jesus (except in a spiritual sense, John 6:53-56, 63).

On the other hand, the liberal interpreter could find in Justin's description many precedents for departing from the stark descriptions of the New Testament text. He can use them to "romance" the institution, and build on its foundation a superstructure of liturgy and ritual. The seeds of "episcopacy" are found in Justin's statement, and suggestions of other additions to the Word. The Ante-Nicene "fathers" were quick to abandon the authority of Scripture to make way for the acceptance of innovation. Many unscriptural forms would come into practice in the centuries that followed, until the simple supper of the "upper room" would lose most of its primitive appeal and become a festival of pomp and circumstance. However, Schaff says,

"We are not warranted in carrying back to this period the full liturgical service, which we find prevailing with striking uniformity in essentials, though with many variations in minor points, in all quarters of the church in the Nicene age (*from 325 AD forward*). A certain simplicity and freedom characterized the period before us." (Ibid.)

It was this innovative "freedom" to add human touches to the Word which compromised the supper's apostolical form. No liturgical formulas for the "eucharist" were in place in the 2nd, and perhaps even into the 3rd century. Little "germs" of ritual are seen, germs which were later incubated into the epidemic infection of apostasy, but this is all. Schaff comments further,

"From scattered statements of the ante-Nicene fathers we may gather the following view of the eucharistic service as it may have stood in the middle of the third century, if not earlier.

The communion was a regular and the most solemn part of the Sunday worship; or it was the worship of God in the stricter sense, in which none but full members of the church could engage. In many places and by many Christians it was celebrated even daily, after apostolic precedent, and according to the very common mystical interpretation of the fourth petition of the Lord's prayer." (Ibid.)

The observance of the Supper on Sunday (the "first day of the week") has its precedent in Acts 20:7, but the presumption that apostolic precedent ordained a "daily" supper probably rested on the language of Acts 2:46. However, this verse speaks of "*breaking bread at home*," while apostolic teaching shows the Lord's Supper being taken in *assemblies* (1 Corinthians 11:17-20, 33-34). When Schaff says that the practice of daily communion was based on the "fourth petition of the Lord's prayer" ("Give us this day our daily bread"), he says it was a "mystical" interpretation. The mystical method of interpreting Scripture has led to hundreds of errors in Christianity, or has been used to justify those errors, and must be rejected as a sound method of exegesis. In the medieval Roman church, mystical interpretation was so extremely popular that its absurdities clouded all knowledge of truth. (One medieval preacher found source material for eighty seven allegorical sermons in the first three of the eight chapters of Song of Solomon! Schaff, *History*, Vol. 5, p. 641.) Mysticism eventually surrounded the figurative language of Scripture, transforming the Lord's Supper into a "sacrament." Schaff says,

"Ignatius speaks of this sacrament in two passages, only by way of allusion, but in very strong, mystical terms, calling it the flesh of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, and the consecrated bread a medicine of immortality and an antidote of spiritual death. This view, closely connected with his high-churchly tendency in general, no doubt involves belief in the real presence, and ascribes to the holy Supper an effect on spirit and body at once, with reference to the future resurrection, but is still somewhat

obscure, and rather an expression of elevated feeling, than a logical definition." (History, Vol. 2, p. 242.)

Schaff says that Justin Martyr and Irenaeus held similar views, but that even their language tended to be figurative rather than literal. He says that we cannot safely interpret their words as suggesting an early belief in either the later Catholic doctrine of *transubstantiation* (the miraculous change of the bread and wine to the flesh and blood of Christ), or the even later Lutheran concept of *consubstantiation* (The *presence* of the flesh and blood in an ill-defined mystical sense).

Tertullian and Cyprian, in contrast to these early writers, held more closely to the biblical principle of a *symbolic* presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and the fruit of the vine, or an "emblematic representation" (Ibid., p. 243). These contrasting views set the pattern for the extended, and often heated disputes over the "eucharist" in the centuries that followed.

We can be certain that Christ intended for the bread and the cup to serve as simple reminders of His body and blood, rather than as elements destined to be substantially transformed. It is true that when he instituted the supper, he used the expressions "This is my body...this is my blood," but he was standing before them in physical flesh and blood. Therefore, he was suggesting that the bread and the fruit of the vine were to be, figuratively, "representations" of his body and blood sacrificed on the cross for our sins.

As the concept of *transubstantiation* gained popularity, however, medieval Catholic schoolmen, who were fond of debating questions until every detail of the subject was exhausted, raised serious questions about whether the Apostles at the last supper ate of the real body and blood of Jesus, or only emblems. Some, basing their contentions on reason, argued that it was impossible that the living flesh and blood of Jesus was present in the bread and wine used at the Last Supper. However, some of their contemporaries "boldly affirmed" that not only did the Apostles eat of the literal flesh and blood of Christ at the Last Supper, but "that Christ partook of his own body and blood" (Ibid.)! Thomas Aquinas quoted with approval the lines;

"The King, seated with the twelve at the table, Holds Himself in His hands. He, the Food, feeds upon himself." (Ibid.)

This final development of the Catholic doctrine of *Transubstantiation* took many years, and had to pass through the preceding conceptual stages of *mutation*, *translation*, *transfiguration*, and *transformation*. But Schaff says of these earlier concepts,

"But closely as these and similar expressions verge upon the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, they seem to contain at most a *dynamic*, not a substantial change of the elements into the body and blood of Christ. For, in the first place, it must be remembered there is a great difference between the half-poetic, enthusiastic, glowing language of devotion, in which the fathers, and especially the liturgies, speak of the eucharistic sacrifice, and the clear, calm, and cool language of logic and doctrinal definition." (History, Vol. 3, p. 495.)

Transubstantiation could not claim strong support among such famous Catholic scholars as the 4th Century Augustine, but in the 9th Century, and again in the 11th Century, the controversy came to a head. The principle 11th Century controversialists were Berengar (advocating a "spiritual" view of the supper), and Lanfranc de Bec, one of his students who forsook the teaching of his mentor in this matter (perhaps to be on the "popular" side of the issue). Under fire for his views, Berengar's courage waned, causing him to yield to the angry fulminations of a synod of bishops in 1059, but he later exclaimed, "Human wickedness extorted from human weakness a different *confession*, but a change of *conviction* can be effected only by the agency of Almighty God" (Schaff, History, Vol. 4, pp. 557-558.) After escaping from the threats of the Council, he persisted in his opposition to the concept of transubstantiation, until Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII), who had been steering the church toward a rigid, doctrinaire, monarchical papacy, withdrew his protection in order to establish his own reputation for "orthodoxy." Berengar faded from the scene, but his writings were preserved, and influenced later reformers, such as Wyclif.

Sentiment in the hierarchy was now ready for the declaration of transubstantiation as the doctrine of the Roman Church, and this was done officially under Pope Innocent III, and the 4th Lateran Council, in 1215 AD. The decision left no room for dissent. The famous 13th Century scholar, Duns Scotus, was forced to compromise. Though he declared that the doctrine of transubstantiation could not be proved from Scripture, or even

from reason, He said he would accept it on the "authority of the Church" (Schaff, History, Vol. 5, p. 689). When challenged to justify this inconsistent stance, he answered that an invisible change of substance is possible, because "God can do what to us seems to be most unreasonable" (Ibid., p. 718). It should not surprise us that teachers of that day often displayed a readiness to accept church authority over Scripture and reason, since the probing eyes and ears of the Inquisition were everywhere, enforcing the false traditions of Catholicism with fire and sword.

With superstition firmly in the saddle, and using sharp spurs, Romanism went to extreme in the practice of the eucharist. As early as the 5th century, mystical treatment of the fruit of the vine had prompted some priests to withhold the cup from the laity. This was denounced by the Roman bishop, Gelasius I (492-496 AD). However, by the 13th Century, when mysticism reigned triumphant, it became the *rule* to withhold the cup, "due to the fear of profanation by spilling the consecrated blood of Christ" (Ibid., p. 724.) Councils and Popes, each claiming to be infallible, contradicted each other, but they eventually denied to the people the right to partake of its reputed "mystical" benefits.

When the reformers, Wyclif and Huss, made their appearance in the 14th Century, the sentiment among their followers was that the cup should be shared by the laity. Huss agreed, and complied in Bohemia, though this brought him under indictment by the hierarchy. Even after the trial and burning of Huss, the Bohemian church continued in the practice, until their "heresy" was violently crushed by Catholic "crusaders." Thus war settled the issue in the Roman Church, and today, in order to maintain the superstitious tradition of *transubstantiation*, strict rules are enforced among Catholics. The "host" (bread) must not be chewed when placed in the mouth by the priest, and the "wine" is cautiously offered only to communicants who would like to receive it. Other options are receiving the "host" alone, or dipped in the wine. These rules allegedly keep Catholics from "desecrating" the flesh and blood of Jesus.

In the 16th Century Reformation, Luther and Zwingli rejected transubstantiation, but found themselves holding slightly different views. In a search for unity among the leaders of the Reformation, they met and debated their differences at Marburg (1529 AD). Luther contended for the "mystical" view of "Consubstantiation," the "presence" of the flesh and

blood "with" the bread and wine. Zwingli repeatedly pointed to John 6:63 to show that the "eating of flesh and drinking of blood" in the context were to be understood spiritually, not literally, and that the Supper was therefore only a spiritual act, a commemoration of the death of Christ. As we have shown, the Scriptures support this "spiritual" interpretation of Zwingli, when interpreted logically, objectively, and as literally as the language of the text permits.

The cup was restored to the laity among the Protestants, when they escaped from Romish tyranny. Many earnest students returned to the Scripture and discerned the lesson in the words of the Lord, when He said He would *"not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until"* He would *"drink it new"* with the disciples in the *"kingdom."* This showed that at the last supper, the cup was *"fruit of the vine,"* not actual blood, and that when the Lord's Supper would be eaten in the kingdom, the cup would still be *"fruit of the vine,"* No change in "substance" was intended or destined to occur.

The Anabaptists of the 16th Century led the way in simplifying the observance of the Supper even more. Schaff tells us,

"The Lord's Supper was administered by the Baptists in the simplest manner, after a plain supper (in imitation of the original institution and the Agape), by a recital of the words of the institution, and the distribution of bread and wine. They reduced it to a mere commemoration." (History, Vol. 8, p. 79.)

The so-called "Agape" was a traditional communal supper, based on a literal interpretation of Jude 11, and drawing inferences from other verses. But Anabaptists were also influenced in their conclusions by the speculative writings of the Ante-Nicene "fathers." The Anabaptists had come far in restoring the New Testament practice, but still needed to learn two things: that the Apostles taught the early Christians to eat "at home," if they were "hungry" (Acts 2:46, 1 Corinthians 11:22, 34), and that the post-apostolic "fathers" often taught error.

### THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

Another Catholic concept that was rejected by the 16th Century Reformers was that the "Eucharist" was a "sacrifice." Schaff says that early in the history of Christianity, men

began to inject a sacrificial element into the service:

"The consecrated elements were regarded...as representing at once the natural and the spiritual gifts of God, which culminated in the self-sacrifice of Christ on the cross...Upon this followed the idea of the self-sacrifice of the worshipper himself, the sacrifice of renewed self-consecration to Christ in return for his sacrifice on the cross, and also the sacrifice of charity to the poor. Down to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the eucharistic elements were presented as a thank-offering by the members of the congregation themselves, and the remnants went to the clergy and the poor....In later times the priest alone offered the sacrifice." (History, Vol. 2, pp. 245-246.)

He says, further,

"This subjective offering of the whole congregation on the ground of the objective atoning sacrifice of Christ is the real centre of the ancient Christian worship, and particularly of the communion. It thus differed both from the later Catholic mass, which has changed the thank-offering into a sin-offering, the congregational offering into a priest offering; and from the common Protestant cultus, which, in opposition to the Roman mass, has almost entirely banished the idea of sacrifice from the celebration of the Lord's Supper..." (Ibid., p. 246)

He could have said, also, that this "Ante-Nicene" version of the Lord's Supper differed greatly from the Apostolic teaching; a simple service of remembrance and fellowship with Christ and his body, the church (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

It is evident from Scripture that Christ certainly never intended to be "sacrificed" on an altar on any regular basis. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus, "*through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption*" (Hebrews 9:12). His sacrifice was made "one time for all time," differing from those of the Old Testament. If this difference had not been established, the Hebrew writer says, "*then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*" (Hebrews 9:26). This *single* sacrifice is to be remembered each Lord's Day (Acts 20:7), in the assemblies

of the church (1 Corinthians 11:33).

The development of the "Sacrifice of the Mass," Schaff says, was tied to other evolving apostate elements in the early church. There was a persistent tendency to look back into the Old Testament at the precedents found there. The Gentiles also carried their pagan customs into the church. Both systems had literal altars, sacrifices and priests. So, Schaff says that in early Christianity "The ideas of priesthood, sacrifice, and altar, are intimately connected, and a Judaizing or paganizing conception of one must extend to all" (Ibid., p. 247).

The 16th Century Reformers rejected the regular sacrificial element in the Roman Eucharist. In an attempt to purge themselves of the *daily* eucharistic observance of Romanism, the Lord's Supper was held *irregularly* among most Protestant churches, or on specified traditional feast days. By the last part of the 18th Century, those associated with the Haldane brothers of Scotland began to teach the people in their independent churches to commune every Lord's Day (Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, p. 179). They saw that the Scriptural examples of taking it the "first day of the week" (Acts 20:7), or on the day of "assembly" (1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33), suggested no formula for selecting or excluding any certain "first day." Their view of Scripture, though imperfect, still permitted very little innovative freedom. Therefore, communion on *every* first day was considered the only practice acceptable in the sight of God, and the "safe course."

Thomas and Alexander Campbell, who were strongly impressed by the scriptural arguments of the Haldanes and other independents, adopted many of them in their own battle for a return to "Ancient Order." The consequence of this return is that the Lord's Supper is again observed as the simple and beautiful commemoration of the death of Christ, unencumbered with mystical, allegorical, and sensual traditions. Christians should be wary of any modern revival of similar interpretations and descriptions of the supper, opposing them as destructive of the "traditions of the Apostles."

#### WORSHIP--Instruments of Music

The early church worshipped in a simple manner. It is very strange that its music was not influenced by Judaism, since nearly every other aspect of the formation of the apostate church was influenced in various ways and measures by Jewish tradition and Mosaical

legal concepts. The custom of Judaism since the reign of King David (about 1000 BC) had been to use all sorts of instruments of music in the worship, because they were authorized by God through the prophets (see 2 Chronicles 29:25-28). Yet, for hundreds of years after the close of the Apostolic Era, no reference to instrumental music is found in the contemporary histories and the writings of the early "church fathers."

To account for the lack of their use in the early church, we must remember that the worship of Christianity was very different from that of Judaism. Where the Jews congregated for their ritual worship in great convocations before the Temple in Jerusalem, the Christians were scattered in smaller conclaves (local churches) throughout the whole world (compare John 4:19-21). Their worship was not in pomp and ceremony, but in quiet assemblies of the faithful, where joint prayer, communion, and singing were the rule. They followed the teaching of the Apostles regarding musical worship (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16), using their own hearts as the divinely prescribed instruments of music.

Roman Catholicism began to use musical instruments about 658 AD, under the influence of Pope Vitalian I (657-672). However, Schaff says that the Eastern and Western churches had differing views:

"The attitude of the churches toward the organ varies....The Greek church disapproves the use of organs. The Latin church introduced it pretty generally, but not without the protest of eminent men, so that even in the Council of Trent [16th Century] a motion was made, though not carried, to prohibit the organ at least in the mass. The Lutheran church retained, the Calvinistic churches rejected it, especially in Switzerland and Scotland; but in recent times the opposition has largely ceased." (*History*, Vol. 4, p. 439.)

The introduction of instrumental music into the Latin church became one reason for the final breach between it and the Greek church in 1054 AD. (The tradition of A Cappella music persists today in some branches of the Greek Orthodox Church, especially in Russia.) Yet, even after this major schism, some Roman Catholic scholars, like Thomas Aquinas (1225-74 AD) opposed its use. He is reported to have said, "Our church does not use musical instruments...that she may not seem to Judaize." (Bingham, *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3, p. 137. Quoted by M. C. Kurfees in his book on Instrumental

Music, p. 176.) On the same basis, Thomas Aquinas should have opposed Roman sacerdotalism and all its trappings, but he was a hostage to the inquisition, just as much as others in his day, and dared to oppose the authority of the Roman Church only in those things which it treated as of little consequence.

We have already noted the differing attitudes of Luther and Zwingli in chapter five. Luther was willing to retain certain practices of Romanism because he treated them as matters of indifference, but Zwingli's reformation went deeper, and was therefore more "radical." He was unwilling to retain anything that did not find its precedent in Scripture, so he caused the removal of all vestiges of Roman Catholic style worship, including instruments of music from the reformed churches of Switzerland. Schaff says,

"The churches of the city were purged of pictures, relics, crucifixes, altars, candles, and all ornaments, the frescoes effaced, and the walls white-washed, so that nothing remained but the bare building to be filled by a worshiping congregation. The pictures were broken and burnt, some given to those who had claim, a few preserved as antiquities. The bones of the saints were buried. Even the organs were removed, and the Latin singing of the choir abolished, but fortunately afterwards replaced by congregational singing of psalms and hymns in the vernacular." (History, Vol. 8, p. 58)

Free from the tyranny of the Inquisition, Protestants struggled against many other entrenched traditions of Rome, succeeding in some, and failing in others. Several reformers (such as Beza, Wesley, etc.) followed Zwingli in speaking against instrumental music as a discardable trapping of Rome, but their voices were not respected enough, nor was there sufficient respect for God's Word, to keep it from gradually returning to use in all the Protestant churches.

The 19th Century "Restorationists," however, driven by the concept that no revelation from God can be treated indifferently, and loyal to the biblical principle of treating God's silence as prohibitive, studied the issue again, returned to apostolic authority, and practiced only vocal music until the lively spirit of restoration gave way to the destructive spirit of digression. As the more "visible" secondary cause of the major division over the Missionary Societies in the middle of the 19th Century, instruments of music were carried into the

meeting houses of churches of Christ, beginning in Kentucky about 1860. A decade before this, however, there was a flurry of articles on the subject in journals published by the brethren. When Alexander Campbell declared that instruments of music in worship were as out of place as "a cowbell in a concert," the controversy quieted down for a while. By the 1870's, however, the new apostasy was in progress, and those churches which accepted the Missionary Society as a "human addition to divine work" also accepted the organ as a "human addition to divine worship" (see West, Search for the Ancient Order, Vol. 2, p. 80).

The more conservative brethren, falling back again on the principle of rejecting anything that cannot be proved by Scripture, as Zwingli had done, withdrew from the "organ brethren," later identified as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

This historic controversy is not quieted, yet. The more liberal members of churches of Christ today often express the opinion that the use of instruments of music in the worship should be consigned to the realm of "expediency" rather than of "faith." However, any such decision destroys the authoritative fabric of Scripture, allowing loopholes through which many other innovations can enter the church. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is the ultimate example of this process. Its unchecked dash toward liberalism has caused it to become indistinguishable from other denominations that have little or no concern about divine approval of their organization, work, and worship.

This controversy serves an end far beyond determining the content of worship in the Lord's church. It has to do with the proper interpretation of the word of God. For this reason, it needs to be discussed frequently, so that the principles of "rightly dividing the word" can be kept before the hearers, especially God's people