THE LORD'S SUPPER
An Introduction
By Al Maxey

Probably no topic in Christendom has been the cause of more debate and controversy than the Lord's Supper. For almost 2000 years it has stirred the hearts and minds of men, and yet in every age it has been attacked, questioned, and modified. It has undergone such incredible changes in its observance and meaning that the 1st century Christians would scarcely recognize it today.

Paul Tillich writes that we are living in an age of the Church in which we are threatened with "the death of the sacraments." When something spiritually significant, like the Lord's Supper, becomes more ritual than reality, its death is most assuredly not far away.

The 20th century "is the age of inquiry rather than of conviction, and of interest rather than commitment. There are therefore fewer today who can bring to the Lord's Supper what the Lord's Supper demands" (William Barclay, The Lord's Supper, p. 14-15). Men are curious about it, but their hearts are not touched by it!

"Without instruction to precede it, the Lord's Supper degenerates into either formalism or superstition. It may well be true to say that the greatest failure of the present-day church lies in its failure to exercise a teaching ministry, and, where there is failure in teaching, there must also be devaluation of the Lord's Supper" (Barclay, p. 11).

In this study we will make an effort to fill that gap in teaching and help bring a clearer understanding of the Lord's Supper. We will trace its roots in the Jewish festivals, its practice in the early church, and its development and history since the 1st century. We will also examine the many false teachings, practices, and abuses which have surrounded it over the centuries, as well as some of the current issues in the church today. We will finally examine its purpose, meaning, and spiritual significance. Our goal: To come to a much richer and fuller understanding and appreciation of the Lord's Supper!

THE LORD'S SUPPER
Its Roots: The Jewish Passover

The Lord's Supper has its roots in the Jewish feast of Passover. On the night of our Lord's betrayal He observed His final Passover meal with His disciples (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23). Although there are some questions raised by John's written account as to whether this was actually a true Passover meal (John 13:1-4, 21-30; 18:28; 19:14, 31, 42), most scholars agree that even if it were not, it was at least a Passover-like meal, or perhaps an early celebration of the Passover meal. Either way, our Lord used this event, and its elements, as the background for the establishment of the Lord's Supper. Thus, it is beneficial for us to examine in some detail the Jewish feast of the Passover.

The biblical/historical narrative of the origin of Passover is found in Exodus 12 (see also: Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 2, Chapter 14, Section 6). God's people were suffering under Egyptian bondage, and God heard their cries and delivered them through the leadership of Moses. The 10th plague sent upon the land was the death of all the first-born, man and beast alike. The people of Israel were to kill a lamb at twilight and place its blood on their doorpost. "And when I see the blood I will PASS OVER you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:13).

The Israelites were commanded to "keep this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year" (Exodus 13:10). It was to be celebrated in the evening of the 14th day of the first month (Abib). "Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to
celebrate it as an eternal ordinance" (Exodus 12:14). "You shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever" (Exodus 12:24). "It is a night to be observed for the Lord for having brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:42). The Passover was eaten in the late evening (Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17; I Corinthians 11:23); it had to be eaten between 6 p.m. and midnight.

Jesus instructed Peter and John to "go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it" (Luke 22:8). There were six things necessary for the Passover meal which had to be prepared in advance. They were:

#1 --- The Passover Lamb --- It was to be a year old male without blemish (Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 22:17-25). It could be either a sheep or a goat, and was to be kept alive and observed for 4 days prior to its sacrifice on Passover to determine if it had any defect or illness (Exodus 12:6). It had to be cooked in a special way: It must not be boiled or stewed, but roasted with fire; nothing must touch it, not even water or the sides of a pot. It was fixed on a spit "which went through it from mouth to vent" (Barclay, p. 21). See: Exodus 12:8-9. NOTE: The minimum number of people who could eat the Passover lamb was twelve. Since the Passover was strictly a family feast, if the family was smaller than twelve they would invite friends or other families in to make up the necessary number. When the Lord's Supper was instituted there were thirteen present: Jesus and the twelve apostles.

#2 --- The Unleavened Bread --- This is bread made without yeast. The Israelites, when they left Egypt, left in great haste, "taking their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders" (Exodus 12:34). Thus, the unleavened bread represented the haste and sense of urgency with which they fled the land of slavery. (NOTE: Unleavened bread is used in the New Testament writings as a symbol of a purified life --- I Corinthians 5:6b-8).

#3 --- A Bowl of Salt Water --- This was to remind them of the tears they shed while in bondage, and also to remind them of the waters of the Red Sea through which God had brought them on dry land and in which God had destroyed the enemy army which pursued them.

#4 --- A Collection of Bitter Herbs --- These were to be eaten with the Passover meal (Exodus 12:8) to remind them of the bitter experience they had endured as slaves in the land of Egypt.

#5 --- The "Charoseth" (or: "Haroseth") --- This was fruit paste/sauce made of apples, dates, pomegranates, and nuts; running through it were sticks of cinnamon. The bitter herbs were dipped into this sauce and then eaten. The fruit paste was to remind them of the day with which they had made bricks in Egypt, and the cinnamon was to remind them of the straw which was needed to make the bricks, and which the Egyptians later withheld from them (Exodus 5:7-9).

#6 --- The Four Cups of Wine --- Although not mentioned in Exodus, the use of wine was considered by Jewish tradition to be essential. In the Jewish Talmud it states, "If he has not enough money to get four cups of wine, he must get it form the poor box or pawn his coat or hire himself out for four cups of wine." In the Orach Chayim it states, "Whosover has not got wine transgresses a command of the rabbis for they have said that there shall be no diminution from the four cups. And it is necessary to sell what he has in order to keep the command of the wise men." Each cup contained 1/16 of a "hin" = a little more than half a pint of wine. This was fermented wine which was then diluted in the proportion of 2 parts of wine to 3 parts of water. The four cups of wine were drunk at different points during the Passover meal, and symbolized the four promises of Exodus 6:6f. (NOTE: This part of the Passover celebration was never commanded by God; it was added by Jewish tradition. Nevertheless, our Lord utilized it in the institution of the Lord's Supper.)

From beginning to end, the Passover meal was a commemorative event reminding the people of Israel of their deliverance and redemption from Egyptian bondage. The meal itself was filled with symbolism and was a proclamation of what God had graciously done for them. The following is the order of events, and a brief description, of a typical Passover meal at the time of Christ Jesus:
#1 --- It began with the first cup, the cup of “Kiddush” (blessing, consecration), and was accompanied by a prayer of thanksgiving to God for delivering Israel from bondage and for allowing them to be His own chosen people.

#2 --- The person presiding over the feast would now wash his hands three times.

#3 --- Some of the bitter herbs (usually lettuce or parsley) were taken and dipped in the salt water and eaten. This represented the hyssop which was dipped in the blood of the lamb, and with which the lintel and the doorposts were smeared (Exodus 12:22).

#4 --- The Breaking of Bread. Three cakes of unleavened bread were on the table in front of the host. He took the center one and broke it into little pieces. The three cakes were said to represent the Trinity, with the center cake representing the Son/Messiah. When Jesus took this bread (probably the center cake) and broke it, He said, “This is My body.” This bread “was broken into little pieces to remind them that a slave never had a whole loaf, but only fragments to eat” (Barclay, p. 22).

#5 --- The Proclaiming. It was the duty of the father, at this point, to explain to his children the meaning of the Passover meal (Exodus 13:8).

#6 --- The Hallel (Praise God). This consisted of Psalms 113 through 118. At this time Psalms 113 & 114 were sung.

#7 --- The second cup, the cup of Deliverance (or Salvation) was drunk.

#8 --- It was now time for the meal itself to begin, so at this point all those who were going to be eating the meal washed their hands.

#9 --- After the saying of a prayer, the small pieces of the unleavened bread were distributed to those present who then ate them along with some more of the bitter herbs.

#10 --- The “SOP” --- Some of the bitter herbs were taken and placed between two pieces of unleavened bread. This was dipped into the fruit sauce (the “Charoseth”) and then eaten. It was this part of the meal that Jesus was referring to in Matthew 26:23; Mark 14:20; John 13:26.

#11 --- At this point the rest of the meal was consumed by those present, including the entire lamb, of which none was to be left over. Anything that remained had to be burned, as it was sanctified food and could not be consumed in an ordinary meal.

#12 --- At the conclusion of the meal the hands were again washed (this was a ceremonial cleansing of the hands), and the remainder of the Passover bread was brought out and eaten.

#13 --- There followed a long prayer of thanksgiving for the meal, which even to this present day contains a petition to God to send Elijah as the herald of the Messiah.

#14 --- Following this prayer, the third cup, the cup of Thanksgiving, was drunk. It was accompanied by this prayer: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast created the fruit of the vine.”

#15 --- The second part of the Hallel was now sung (Psalms 115 - 118), followed by “The Great Hallel” (Psalm 136).

#16 --- Then came the drinking of the fourth cup, the cup of Choosing, followed by two brief prayers. This concluded the Passover meal. "When the supper ended, various activities ensued. The young Jews usually
went into the streets to meet others; the old remained to talk about the Passover; the children fell asleep. Some went to the temple for prayers and singing” (Stephen Eckstein, The Pentateuch, p. 63).

"It can be seen at once that the keynotes of the Passover are memory, praise, and hope" (Barclay, p. 24-25). It is this meal that our Lord chose as the background for the institution of the memorial feast known as The Lord’s Supper.

THE LORD’S SUPPER
References, Establishment, Terminology

The References

"Apart from Paul and the synoptic gospels, the rest of the NT is virtually silent on the subject of the Lord’s Supper. There is no teaching on it anywhere else" (Zondervan’s Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 3, p. 982). This scarcity of material in the New Testament writings has led many to begin formulating and promoting their own teachings on the subject. The following are the direct references to the Lord’s Supper:

1. -- Matthew 26:26-29
2. -- Mark 14:22-25
4. -- I Corinthians 11:20-30 (cf. 5:6-8; 10:16-17, 21)

The bulk of this material deals with the establishing of the Lord’s Supper by Jesus Christ at the time of His last Passover meal with His disciples, although the apostle Paul does spend a good deal of time addressing the various abuses of this memorial which had arisen in the city of Corinth. These abuses will be examined later in this study.

The following references are possible allusions to the Lord's Supper found in the New Testament writings:

1. -- John 6:26-58
2. -- Acts 2:46; 20:7, 11
3. -- Hebrews 6:4; 13:10 --- Most scholars agree that these verses have nothing to do with the Lord’s Supper. Since a few teach that they do, however, they are listed here.
4. -- Jude 12 (cf. II Peter 2:13)

The Establishment

With regard to the establishment of the Lord’s Supper, the above passages reveal the following significant points:

#1 --- It was established by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who made use of some of the elements of the traditional Jewish Passover meal. The Messiah, who is now "our Passover" (I Corinthians 5:7), took these elements and gave unto them a new and deeper spiritual significance. They would become the emblems of a new "feast of remembrance," representative of a new covenant between God and mankind; one established by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

#2 --- The Bread. Jesus took it and said "This is My body." Jesus is our "bread of life" which has come down out of heaven (John 6). "The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh” (John 6:51). It was unleavened bread, which, in the NT writings, signifies symbolically that it was free of any impurities. Jesus, the bread of life, offered up His body as a sinless sacrifice (I Corinthians 5:8). The bread was broken and then given to His disciples which represents the physical abuse of Christ’s flesh before and during the crucifixion. This "broken bread" (our suffering Savior) is given to all who believe in Him (His disciples).
#3 --- The Cup which contained the "fruit of the vine," declares Jesus, "is My blood." It signifies the establishment of a new covenant between God and His people (Hebrews 9:11-12; esp. vs. 16-18). This blood is "for forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Because of the presence of the blood of the lamb on the doorpost of the Israelites, God passed over His people and did not strike them with the plague of death. Because of the shed blood of Christ, our Passover Lamb, God passes over spiritual Israel, and the plague of the "second death" will not befall them! The cup, together with its contents (the fruit of the vine, or "the blood of the grape"), symbolizes the shed blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

#4 --- "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19; I Corinthians 11:24). Just as the Passover meal was a remembrance of what God had done for Israel, so also would the Lord's Supper be a remembrance of what God, through Christ, had done for spiritual Israel. "The Lord's Supper is the Christian's memorial of what it cost God to deliver him from the slavery of sin" (David E. Hanson, Introducing The Church of Christ, p. 55).

The Terminology

There are several terms used with reference to the Lord's Supper in the pages of the New Testament writings. There are also a few terms used in the religious world, with which we have all become familiar, which are not specifically & directly used of this event. The following is a listing of these various terms:

#1 --- Communion. This is derived from a word found in I Corinthians 10:16 -- "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?" (NASB, NEB, LB, NAB, NWT, TEV, SEB, NCV, McCord, Williams). The NIV & RSV have "participation," and the Berkeley Version has "fellowship." The KJV, ASV, NKJV, and Lamsa, however, have the word "communion." This the Greek word koinonia, which means, "association, fellowship, close relationship; the common possession or enjoyment of something; a sign or proof of brotherly unity" (Arndt & Gengrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature, p. 438-439).

The meaning here is "a group of people bound together in a 'communion' or 'fellowship' by what they have in common with each other. The preposition 'of' (in the KJV) does not exist in the Greek text, but is an interpretation of the genitive case. It may also be interpreted to mean 'brought about by' or 'based upon.' Translated in this way Paul is saying, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not (does it not represent) the fellowship which is brought about by the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship brought about by the body of Christ?' The Lord's Supper, then, is understood to witness to the fact that Christians belong to a special family which includes the Son and the Father (cf. I John 1:3) and is marked by unity and love. It is a communion which required the death of Christ to create, and which is so close that it is as though believers were one body: 'For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread' (I Corinthians 10:17, KJV). Perhaps, then, this was the great disorder in Corinth which prompted what little teaching there is on the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians' sin was in not 'discerning the body' (I Corinthians 11:29), that is, in failing to understand the oneness of the body of which each person was a part" (Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 3, p. 985).

#2 --- Eucharist. This particular word is derived from a Greek word which appears several times in connection with the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17, 19; I Corinthians 11:24). It is the word eucharistos, which means: "To give thanks; to be grateful." In time, this word came to be applied to the Lord's Supper itself, instead of to the prayer of thanksgiving which preceded it. It first appeared in the writings of the early Christians as a designation of the Lord's Supper in the letters of Ignatius (martyred about 107 A.D.) to the church in Philadelphia and Smyrna. Irenaeus (martyred about 200 A.D.), in his work Against Heresies, wrote that once the official had consecrated the bread, "it is no longer bread but eucharist." Because of this emphasis and usage, in time the prayer of consecration & thanksgiving over the elements became, next to the actual receiving of the elements, the most significant part of the celebration....even becoming somewhat magical and mystical in nature.
#3 --- The Breaking of Bread. This phrase is found in two passages in the New Testament writings: "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). "And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread..." (Acts 20:7). Thus, the act of breaking the bread before partaking of it had come to be applied to this memorial meal (see: Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 10:16).

#4 --- The Lord's Table. The apostle Paul warns us that we "cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (1 Corinthians 10:21). See also: Luke 22:30.

#5 --- The Lord's Supper. This phrase is found only one time in the pages of the New Testament writings (I Corinthians 11:20 -- "Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper..."). The Greek word for "supper" is deipnon, which has reference to the main meal of the day, or to a more formal meal --- a feast or banquet. In the 1st century these were usually held in the evening when the day's work was done and the family was all together. The Greek word ariston signified a lesser meal taken early in the morning before beginning work (our breakfast), or at some point during the work day (our lunch).

Some scholars have suggested that because of this word, and because the early church took the Lord's Supper only in the evening (at least, there is no recorded example of them partaking of it at any other time), and because the Passover meal was required to be eaten between 6 p.m. and midnight, and since it was in the evening that Jesus established the Lord's Supper, that we MUST partake of the Lord's Supper only in the evening in order to truly follow the pattern given to us in Scripture. The Greek word deipnon, however, merely refers to the day's main meal, and has no inherent meaning as to the time of that meal. This is determined more by the culture or circumstances in which one lives. Some cultures have their main meal during the day and a lighter one in the evening. It is the fact of it being the MAIN meal that is stressed, not the time of day in which it might be observed, although in the time of Christ that main meal was observed in the evening.

In the first century, Sunday (the first day of the week) was a regular work day just like any other (it was hundreds of years later that Sunday was officially recognized as a day of rest). Thus, the early Christians were not able to meet together until the evening. At this time they would share a common meal together, and then in conjunction with that meal they would share the Lord’s Supper together. Probably if we thought of this event more in terms of our Lord's main meal, than in terms of a "supper," we would come closer to the actual idea being conveyed by this Greek word.

THE LORD'S SUPPER
Observance in the Apostolic Church

The Gospel records reveal very little about the future practice of the Lord's Supper. Their focus is primarily its establishment rather than its observance. Jesus Himself, when He established the Lord's Supper, did not even specify when it was to be observed (which day, what time of day, or even frequency: Daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly). The only statements made by Jesus in the Gospel records command its observance ("do this..."), specify its motivation ("...in remembrance of Me"), and discuss its spiritual significance ("this is My body....this is My blood.....the new covenant"). Jesus makes absolutely no statement at all with regard to regulatory matters. If one were to point to His example as being in any way regulatory (or a "pattern"), then the Lord’s Supper would be observed in the evening and on a Thursday. Such patternistic thinking, however, is unwarranted by Scripture!

Paul quotes Jesus as saying (although this appears nowhere in the Gospel records), "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (I Corinthians 11:25). Paul himself then writes, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (I Corinthians 11:26). "As often as" is a relative adverb in the original Greek. It is the word hosakis, and it "is only used with the notion of indefinite repetition" (Dr. A.T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p.
Was this the bread" is said to have occurred highly significant in that it is the of Troas was to "break bread." Most scholars believe this is a reference to the Lord's Supper. This passage is highly significant in that it is the ONLY place within the New Testament writings where the "breaking of bread" is said to have occurred on a specific day. There are still a lot of questions left unanswered, however: Was this the only day of the week the disciples in Troas met together? Was this the only day of the week that
they "broke bread" together? Was this the uniform practice in all congregations of the Lord's church? We're simply not told. Although there is considerable speculation connected with this event (and many have built an entire theology of practice & precept around this singular statement), all one can safely declare is that on that particular day in that particular city a group of disciples met together with Paul and they "broke bread." To go too far beyond that fact is to begin to walk on ever thinning exegetical ice!

The Agape

There is ample evidence that it was the practice of the apostolic church to celebrate the Lord's Supper in connection with a common meal, or a "fellowship meal." "Eating together had been a common religious activity of the Jews for centuries" (Ted H. Waller, *Worship That Leads Men Upward*, p. 52). The eating of a common meal in connection with a sacred observance was a very familiar activity to the Jewish people. Notice the following examples:

#1 -- The priests eating, as part of their own common meals, portions of the sacrifices brought to God (Leviticus 7:28-36).

#2 -- Melchizedek and Abram sharing bread and wine as the former blessed the latter (Genesis 14:18).

#3 -- The Passover meal was also a family meal in which all the food was to be consumed (Exodus 12).

#4 -- Moses & Aaron, Nadab & Abihu, and 70 of the elders of Israel "ate and drank" as they worshipped God on the mountain (Exodus 24:1-11).

#5 -- Isaiah's prophecy of a feast prepared by the Lord (Isaiah 25:6).

#6 -- See also: The feast prepared by "Wisdom" (Proverbs 9:1-6).

"The covenant meals of the OT are also instructive in the proper understanding of the Christian communion (examples: God and Abraham & Sarah -- Genesis 18; Jacob and Laban -- Genesis 31). In ancient times the sharing of a common meal was a deeply significant act. The fellowship aspect of these meals is of real importance...they represented what the participants had in common" (Wendell Willis, *Worship*, p. 38-39).

The fact that the Lord's Supper was apparently eaten in connection with a common meal is seen in I Corinthians 11. The eating of a meal together is recognized in almost all nations as a symbol of unity (Dick Blackford, *The Lord's Supper*, p. 13). "One of the simplest and the oldest acts of fellowship in the world is that of eating together. To share a common meal, especially if the act of sharing the meal also involves the sharing of a common memory, is one of the basic expressions of human fellowship.... The Lord's Supper began in the Christian Church as a meal in which physical as well as spiritual hunger was satisfied" (William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, p. 56).

The fellowship meal itself was known as *The Agape* (Love Feast) --- see: Jude 12. Although the "Love Feasts" themselves lasted for several centuries, it was apparently only for the first few decades that the Lord's Supper was connected with this fellowship meal. The reason? These meals were being abused (I Corinthians 11:17f; Jude 12; II Peter 2:13). It was these various abuses that Paul discussed in I Corinthians.

The Agape & The Lord's Supper Abused

Jude 12 speaks of men who are "hidden reefs ("spots; blemishes" -- KJV, NIV) in your love feasts." These were men who cared only for themselves, and fed themselves without fear. II Peter 2:13 (in some manuscripts) speaks of them as "reveling in the love feasts." This is probably describing much the same kind of abuse as was occurring in Corinth.
Christ shed His blood to break down all barriers and make us all into ONE BODY. The Lord’s Supper, to a large extent, was a celebration of that one body concept (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). The Corinthians had lost sight of that and were dividing over various issues & personalities, and this divisive spirit was being carried over into the "Agape" and the Lord’s Supper.

This "ought to have been a fraternal gathering, a bond of unity," but the conduct of some individuals "led to divisions. Groups were formed, and the general spirit of fraternity was broken" (Hasting’s Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, Vol. 3, p. 374). Instead of symbolizing the oneness of the Body of which each person was a part, "the fellowship meal at Corinth was the occasion for manifesting the opposite. The freemen despised the slave class, going ahead with the meal before the latter had opportunity to arrive (vs. 21). The wealthy scorned the poor, feasting to the point of gluttony while the latter went hungry (vs. 21-22). Thus, eating and drinking in an 'unworthy manner' (vs. 27), and not discerning the body rightly (vs. 29), may have meant for Paul: Partaking of the Lord’s Supper while holding each other in contempt and neither party striving to live up to the unity which took the Lord’s death to bring about" (Zondervan’s Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 3, p. 985).

These abuses, at least in part, led to the eventual separation of the Agape (Love Feast) and the Lord’s Supper into two separate events. Both have continued in various forms throughout the centuries, but were rarely ever again celebrated together.

NOTE: Aside from the above few passages, the New Testament writings are completely silent on the observance of the Lord’s Supper in the Apostolic Church. These few references constitute the entirety of the biblical teachings on this subject.

THE LORD’S SUPPER
An Historical Overview

"In the apostolic period the Eucharist was celebrated daily in connection with a simple meal of brotherly love (the Agape), in which the Christians, in communion with their common Redeemer, forgot all distinctions of rank, wealth, and culture, and felt themselves to be members of one family of God" (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 1 -- Apostolic Christianity, p. 473).

For many centuries, and in many different parts of the world, the Lord’s Supper continued to be celebrated with great frequency and great thanksgiving. "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 4th petition of the Lord’s prayer -- 'Give us this day our daily bread'" (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 2 -- Ante-Nicene Christianity, p. 236).

CYPRIAN (died 258 A.D.; beheaded for his faith during the bloody persecution of Emperor Valerian; a church leader in Carthage, North Africa) spoke in his writings of the "daily sacrifice" of the Lord’s Supper. So also did AMBROSE (died 397 A.D.), who was one of the most distinguished of the 4th century Church Fathers, and a leader of the church in Italy. CHrysostom (345 - 407 A.D.), the most popular and celebrated of the Greek Church Fathers, complained of the small number of people who showed up for the "daily sacrifice" of the Lord’s Supper. AUGUSTINE (354 - 430 A.D.; influenced by Ambrose in Milan; became one of the most influential leaders of the Western Church; lived at Hippo, North Africa) indicated that the observance of the Lord’s Supper varied from place to place. Early on there was no set pattern; some observed it daily, some weekly, some at other times. BASIL. (died 379 A.D.; one of the most noted church leaders in Asia Minor) wrote, "We commune four times in the week, on the Lord's Day, the fourth day, the preparation day, and the Sabbath."

These few references (a great many more could be cited) indicate sufficiently that in the early centuries of the church’s existence the frequency of observance was varied, and it was not considered a point of contention. The direct teaching of Scripture was "as often as," and in the early years this was complied with daily, as well
as less frequently, with such diverse practices not being made tests of faith or fellowship. The Lord said, "As often as," and they took Him at His word. It is a fact that the frequency has always varied over the centuries, but it was not until much later in history that a specific time was ordained by various groups as the only acceptable time to observe the Lord's Supper, and thus their preferences & perceptions were made precepts, tests of faith, and conditions of fellowship and even salvation.

Another major characteristic of the early observance of the Lord's Supper was its lack of formality & ritualism. It was observed very simply and in connection with a fellowship meal (The Agape -- "Love Feast" -- Jude 12). "The disciples followed their Lord's example, celebrating a love-feast, which would be enriched with memories of their Master and teaching from His nearest disciples, and closing with the more solemn thanksgiving for the broken body and the cup of blessing which Jesus had consecrated" (Hastings, Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, Vol. 2, p. 68). The Lord's Supper began, "we believe, as a fellowship meal -- the Love Feast" (William Barclay, The Lord's Supper, p. 57). The DIDACHE (The Teaching of the Lord by the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles, which was written sometime between 70 - 110 A.D.) also indicates (in chapters 9 & 14) that the Lord's Supper and the Agape meal were celebrated together. However, by the beginning of the 2nd century the Lord's Supper and the Agape began to be separated from one another in many places. This was due to several factors, primarily: The abuses that were creeping in (see: I Corinthians 11:17-34; Jude 12; Il Peter 2:13).

"At first the communion was joined with a 'Love Feast,' and was celebrated in the evening, in memory of the last supper of Jesus with His disciples. But as early as the beginning of the second century these two exercises were separated, and the communion was placed in the morning and the love feast in the evening" (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 2 -- Ante-Nicene Christianity, p. 239).

By the 4th century the abuses connected with the Love Feast were so numerous that it was finally prohibited in a great many locations. Because of these repeated abuses, it is not surprising to discover in church history that "the Eucharist has been detached from its setting as part of a common meal" (Hastings, Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, Vol. 3, p. 375). This process of dissociation proved to be slow, however, and varied in different places. IGNATIUS (died around 117 A.D.; torn apart by wild beasts in the Roman Amphitheater; a leader in the church at Antioch) wrote near the time of his death that the Lord’s Supper and the Agape were still very much united in some parts of Asia Minor and at Antioch.

As the Agape/Love Feast separated from the Lord’s Supper it began to undergo some changes. By the 3rd or 4th centuries it had become a charity meal in a great many places. AUGUSTINE describes it as a supper provided for the poor. CHRYSOSTOM says it is a meal provided by the rich for the poor and that it occurs following the Lord’s Supper. In the Didascalia it is described as a meal specifically for widows and the elderly women of the congregation.

By the middle of the 4th century the church leaders began to debate the worth of the Agape meal. The abuses seemed to be outweighing the benefits. The COUNCIL OF LAODICEA (367 A.D.) forbade its practice in the church, however the SYNOD OF GANGRA allowed it to remain. The SYNOD OF HIPPO (393 A.D.) and the SYNOD OF CARTHAGE (397 A.D.) both attempted to ban the Agape Feast and to insure that it was never linked with the Lord's Supper again. Finally, at the COUNCIL OF TRULLAN (692 A.D.) it was forbidden altogether as being sinful. "The Agape became a casualty because human nature debased a lovely thing until it became a handicap rather than a help to the Christian fellowship -- and it is one of the tragedies of the life of the Church that it should have been so" (William Barclay, The Lord’s Supper, p. 61).

As the church began to grow and develop, it became increasingly organized, and with the organization came the rise of ceremony, ritual, and tradition. This impacted every area of church life and practice, including the Lord’s Supper. No longer was it a simple memorial meal shared by Christian families in their homes and with fellow believers. Instead, it came to be viewed as a Sacrament, with a host of laws & regulations surrounding it. This "doctrine of the sacrament of the Eucharist" has taken this simple "feast of the Savior's dying love" and transformed it into the "innocent cause of the most bitter disputes and theological controversies" among God's people (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 3 -- Nicene & Post-Nicene Christianity, p. 492).
The elements of the Lord's Supper (the bread and fruit of the vine) were fought over: Does one use leavened or unleavened bread? This became a major point of controversy and division between the Roman and Greek churches. Does one use wine or grape juice? If one uses wine, does he mix it with water, and if so...how much? Does one stand, sit, or kneel when receiving the elements? All of these questions, and literally hundreds more, became points of division among the people of God!

In time, the elements were viewed as being sacred, thus requiring special laws to regulate their use. HIPPOLYTUS (died about 235 A.D.; martyred during the persecution of Emperor Maximius; he was from Rome) taught that believers must show the most intense reverence for the elements of the Eucharist. It should be received early in the day before any other common food was in the stomach; none of it must be dropped or spilt, which would defile it on a dirty floor. It was a common practice at this time for members of the church to take some of the bread home with them to use in a daily, family communion after morning prayers. This was known as Domestic Communion (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 2 -- Ante-Nicene Christianity, p. 239.... and: Henry Chadwick, The Early Church, p. 266). Hippolytus warned the members of the church that they must never "leave the sacred bread about the house where an unbaptized person, or even a mouse, might accidentally eat it." Later, it would be taught that should a mouse eat a crumb of the bread that had fallen to the floor, it would thereby receive eternal life! Thus, to keep from infesting Heaven, the elements had to be protected!

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM (active around 350 A.D.) began to develop an elaborate ceremonial system for the Lord's Supper. Those leading must ceremonially wash their hands; great care must be taken that none of the elements are dropped; the elements are referred to as "the fearful presence" upon the Holy Table. "The communicants are directed to receive the bread in hollowed palms, the left hand supporting the right" (Chadwick, The Early Church, p. 267). BASIL & CHRYSOSTOM both spoke of the Lord's Table as a place of "terror and shuddering." Before the end of the 4th century, in the Eastern churches, it was thought necessary to screen off the Lord's Table with curtains so that "common people" could not "look upon" the elements and thus defile them by their gaze.

This awe and fear (with its accompanying commandments & regulations & rituals) came from a rising belief that the elements in some mysterious way, after they had been blessed with prayer, were transformed into something more than mere bread and wine. Some taught that the elements literally became the body and blood of Jesus; others taught that Jesus merely indwelt the elements in some spiritual sense; still others felt that there was nothing special in the elements themselves, but that they merely represented the body and blood of Jesus. Thus, the seeds were being planted for what was to prove the biggest single controversy surrounding the Lord's Supper in church history.

IGNATIUS believed that the elements became the actual body and blood of Jesus, and that they had the power, when eaten, to impart eternal life. He referred to the elements as "the medicine of immortality; the antidote to death." Agreeing with this highly mystical view were: JUSTIN MARTYR (died about 165 A.D.) and IRENAEUS (died about 200 A.D.), just to name a couple. Men like TERTULLIAN (died about 230 A.D.) and CYPRIAN (died 258 A.D.) continued to teach that the elements were mere symbols.

JUSTIN MARTYR begins to develop the idea that for the celebration of the Lord's Supper to be valid it must be performed by a Bishop or other recognized church official. GREGORY OF NYSSA (331 - 394 A.D.; younger brother of Basil of Caesarea) taught that it was by "virtue of the priestly blessing" spoken in the presence of the elements that the elements were miraculously transformed into the glorified body of Christ.

With the sacramental view of the elements, and also the view that they were somehow more than mere bread & wine, came the sacrificial view of the Lord's Supper. This view maintains that since the elements actually become the body & blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is therefore an actual re-sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This was an "unbloody" re-sacrifice of our Lord for the forgiveness of sins; thus, the Lord's Supper had the power, when eaten, to forgive sins. This would later come to be called the Sacrifice of the Mass (or, just "Mass").
JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS (1834 - 1921; a prominent American Roman Catholic scholar; wrote The Faith Of Our Fathers (in 1826) in which he sought to explain the various doctrines of the Catholic Church) explains the Mass this way: "The sacrifice of the Mass is the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and the oblation ("offering of a sacrifice") of this body and blood to God, by the ministry of the Priest, for a perpetual memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The Sacrifice of the Mass is identical with that of the cross, both having the same victim and High Priest -- Jesus Christ. The only difference consists in the manner of the oblation. Christ was offered up on the cross in a bloody manner, and in the Mass He is offered up in an unbloody manner. On the cross He purchased our ransom, and in the Eucharistic Sacrifice the price of that ransom is applied to our souls."

For centuries the religious world debated the Lord's Supper. They debated whether the elements actually transformed into something other than what they were. If they did transform, then how did they do it? -- this they also debated. A memorial feast designed to stress our unity had become the battleground of the religious scholars, and it resulted in tremendous division in Christendom. BUT....the controversy had only begun!!

Throughout the coming centuries, and into the Middle Ages, the major controversy centered around the question concerning the nature of the elements. During this time three major views fought for dominance:

#1 -- The Conversion Conception. This view taught that the elements became the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. This view triumphed in the Eastern Church at this time. JOHN DAMASCENE (675 - 749 A.D.; one of the most honored theologians of the Eastern Church) said that the Holy Spirit performs a miracle on the elements at the moment when the priest consecrates them, thus "changing them into God's actual body and blood. The bread and wine are not merely figures of the body and blood of Christ (God forbid!), but the deified body of the Lord itself." Thus, the literal body and blood of Jesus are offered up again in the Lord's Supper.

#2 -- The Dyophysite View. This was also known as the "Two Nature View" or the "Spiritual View." The elements are said to have two natures: A physical nature in which they outwardly remain visible as bread and wine, and a spiritual nature in which they inwardly become the actual body and blood of Christ; this inward nature being visible only to the eyes of faith. Since this was the view strongly held by AUGUSTINE, the Western Church adopted this view for quite some time.

#3 -- The Symbolic View. This view stated that the elements are nothing more than what they appear to be: Mere bread and wine. However, they are representative of the body and blood of Christ. They are symbols of the reality, not the reality itself. As the struggle for dominance between the two previous views was being waged over the centuries, this latter view was largely overlooked.

PASCHASius RADBERTUS (800 - 865 A.D.; a devout, but superstitious, monk from France) was the first to clearly teach and write about the doctrine of Transubstantiation, which would later be adopted by the Roman Catholic Church. Although he never actually used the term itself (this would not occur for another two centuries), nevertheless he is the one credited with formulating the doctrine. In his book On The Body & Blood Of The Lord (831 A.D.) he writes, "The substance of bread and wine is effectually changed into the flesh and blood of Christ. After consecration there is nothing else in the Eucharist but the flesh and blood of Christ....the very flesh which was born of Mary, and suffered on the cross and rose from the tomb....although the figure of bread and wine remain to the senses of sight, touch, and taste."

The chief opponent of this view at this time was RATRAMNUS (died about 868 A.D.; a monk from the monastery at Corbie, France). His view was a cross between #2 and #3 above. He wrote that "the body and blood of Christ are mysteriously present, yet are not the same as that body which was hanging on the cross" (William P. Barker, Who's Who in Church History, p. 234). This man was also "the first to give the symbolical theory a scientific expression. He regarded the sacrifice of the mass not as an actual (though unbloody) repetition, but only as a commemorative celebration of Christ's sacrifice" (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 4 -- Medieval Christianity, p. 549, 551).
The belief that the elements actually became the body and blood of Jesus led to some of the most outrageous debates: What would happen if a mouse or insect consumed some of the elements? Would they live forever? What happens to the bread and wine after they enter the human body? Is the actual body and blood of Christ eliminated as common human waste? The advocates of transubstantiation insisted it was a "diabolical blasphemy" to even suggest that the Lord’s body and blood would be passed out of the human body as excrement. Those who dared to suggest such a thing were branded as heretics, and called Stercorianists. POPE SYLVESTER II (reigned from 999 - 1003 A.D.; the first Frenchman to be named Pope) declared that the elements are preserved inside one’s body until the final resurrection!

A couple of centuries later the controversy flared up again through the teachings of BERENGAR (1000 - 1088 A.D.; head of the Cathedral School at Tours, France; a forerunner of Christian Rationalism, he strongly criticized the authority of the Catholic Church). After much study he came to the conclusion that the doctrine of transubstantiation was "a vulgar superstition contrary to the Scriptures, to the fathers, and to reason…..an absurdity and an insane folly of the populace." His teachings produced an uproar in the religious world.

His chief opponent was LANFRANC (1005 - 1089 A.D.; a traditionalist whose friendship with William the Conqueror led him to England in 1070 A.D., where he became Archbishop of Canterbury, a position he held until his death). Berengar was condemned by several synods & councils of the Catholic Church:

#1 -- The Roman Synod under Pope Leo IX in April, 1050.

#2 -- The Synod at Vercelli, September, 1050.

#3 -- The Synod of Tours in 1059 under Pope Nicholas II (it was at this council that the rules for electing popes were formulated). Berengar, fearing death, recanted and admitted that a person actually chewed the very body of Christ with one’s teeth, and then he threw his books into the fire. Upon returning to France he immediately began speaking out again against the Catholic Church.

#4 -- The Synod of Poitiers in 1075, at which he was almost killed, and his friends withdrew from him in fear for their own lives.

#5 -- The Lateran Council of February, 1079, held in Rome under Pope Gregory VII, again forced him to recant or face death. Berengar recanted and returned home in defeat; broken by his cowardice in the face of death. He spent the remaining 9 years of his life as a hermit on a deserted island.

Berengar’s viewpoint, and his struggle with the Catholic Church, however, were not soon forgotten. Throughout the Middle Ages those who opposed transubstantiation were referred to as "Berengarians." Because of her struggle with this man, the Catholic Church began to formulate and solidify her doctrine on the Eucharist. In the first half of the 12th century we first encounter the word "Transubstantiation" --- first used as a noun by HILDEBERT OF TOURS, and first used as a verb by STEPHEN OF AUTUN. It became the official doctrine of the Western (Roman Catholic) Church at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 A.D., and THOMAS AQUINAS (1225 - 1274; his system of theology serves even to this day as the basis for all Roman Catholic theological instruction) became its champion. The Council of Trent, which met off and on from 1545 - 1563, again reaffirmed this doctrine.

With the triumph of the doctrine of transubstantiation came other subsequent abuses of the Lord’s Supper. This "sacrament" came to be viewed as the supreme religious function of the Church. The elements were adored, worshipped, and given almost magical powers; people claimed to be healed simply by eating them. The elements were also regarded as being so sacred that in time the cup was withdrawn from the people for fear they would spill a drop of it on the ground. (It was only in rather recent times that the cup has been restored to the laity.) The scholars defended this action by maintaining the whole of Christ was in either element, thus the laity did not need to partake of the cup, but only of the bread. Water was to be mixed with the wine which symbolized: (a) Water and blood came forth from Christ’s side on the cross, and (b) water =
God's people, wine = Christ; the two combined = the union of Christ with His people (the church). The Synod of Cologne (1279) and The Synod of Lambeth (1281) prescribed 2 or 3 drops of water per cup as being sufficient.

The Eucharist (the "Mass") was regarded as being able to confer grace. "As a sacrament it benefits those who partake; as a sacrifice its benefits accrue also to persons who do not partake, living and dead. It has the power to remove sins, both venial and mortal" (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 5 -- The Middle Ages, p. 720). It didn't take the priests long to realize that the Mass not only gave them great power over the laity, but that "each Mass had a marketable value" (Everett Ferguson, Church History: Reformation and Modern, p. 6). As one can imagine, numerous legends and superstitions arose concerning the Eucharist. For several examples, see: Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 5 -- The Middle Ages, p. 721 - 729.

The abuses of, and the numerous false and ludicrous teachings surrounding, the Lord's Supper played a major role in bringing about what has come to be called The Protestant Reformation. The major leaders of this movement of protest and reform were Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin. Each of these men held somewhat different views on the Lord's Supper.

MARTIN LUTHER (1483 - 1546). By the year 1520, Luther had rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, but he continued to believe that the actual body and blood of Christ were present in the elements. He developed the teaching (later called "Consubstantiation") which maintained that the real flesh and blood of Jesus joined with or mingled with the elements of the Lord's Supper. Thus, Luther believed that the presence of Jesus in the elements was real, but he did not believe it was the result of any "priestly miracle of consecration."

"The Lord’s Supper was for Luther a divine sign of the communion (fellowship of unity) of all believers with one another and Christ" (Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era: 1500 - 1650 A.D., p. 127). Luther sought to restore the Lord's Supper "to its primitive character as a commemoration of the atoning death of Christ, and a communion of believers with Him..... Luther observed a weekly communion as the conclusion of the regular service on the Lord's Day" (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 7 -- Modern Christianity: The German Reformation, p. 492).

ULRICH ZWINGLI (1484 - 1531). He sparked the Reformation in the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland about the same time Luther started the Reformation in Germany. (A man by the name of GUILLAUME FAREL (1489 - 1565) brought the Reformation to the French-speaking sections of Switzerland.) Zwingli rejected Luther's view as being too close to the Catholic view. He believed the elements were merely symbols, and that Christ was present in the elements only symbolically, and not literally.

Zwingli taught that every practice not clearly commanded in the NT writings should be abolished, thus he stressed the preaching of the Gospel, and observed the Lord's Supper in connection with an Agape (Love Feast), as he believed the Scriptures directed. This was to be a congregational observance, and not something a priest did alone in front of the congregation, he taught. The communion service was held very simply and solemnly, and was observed four times a year: At Easter, Whitsunday (Pentecost), the beginning of Autumn, and Christmas (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 8 -- Modern Christianity: The Swiss Reformation, p. 60 - 61, 247). The first celebration of this "reformed communion" was in April, 1525.

Zwingli also taught that the Lord's Supper was a sign of our unity with one another. "For Zwingli the sacrament creates union with each other, and renews union with Christ, and it does both by bringing to our remembrance, through the signs of the bread and the wine, the death and sacrifice of Christ. For Zwingli, the Lord's Supper is a memorial in which we find, through the remembrance stimulated by the signs of the bread and wine, closer union with each other and renewed union with Christ" (William Barclay, The Lord's Supper, p. 78).

JOHN CALVIN (1509 - 1564). Calvin was born, raised, and educated in France, but did most of his work in Geneva, Switzerland where he spent the last decades of his life. He established a school in Geneva from which
his converts spread out into all of Europe. Calvin has sometimes been called, "The only international reformer." Calvin agreed with Luther that the body of Jesus was really in the elements, but he felt it was there spiritually rather than physically. He considered Zwingli’s interpretation, that the elements were merely symbols and nothing more, "too profane." Calvin favored a weekly observance, but did not make this a point of contention, as he believed the statement "as often as" dictated a non-regulated, heart-felt observance. In most of the Calvinistic churches at this time it was actually celebrated "once a month in a simple but very solemn manner by the whole congregation" (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 8 -- Modern Christianity: The Swiss Reformation, p. 373 - 374).

Calvin made preaching the central element of the assembly, rather than the Lord's Supper (as a response to the Catholic Church, which had made the Eucharist the central element of the service). In the design of the church buildings following this time this emphasis can be clearly seen: In most Protestant church buildings the pulpit is in the center and the Lord's Table to the side (or below the pulpit), whereas in most Catholic church buildings the Lord's Table is in the center, and the pulpit is off to the side.

Although there was a great deal of agreement between these three great reformers, yet the few differences between them kept the Swiss & German Reformations from ever merging. The movements of Zwingli and Calvin, however, did eventually join forces, and after 1580 were known as the Reformed Church. This was basically because Calvin and Zwingli were willing to "agree to differ... for the sake of maintaining unity in what they considered the essentials" (Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era: 1500 - 1650, p. 195). Although Luther and Zwingli at first agreed to refrain from dispute over their differences and to study the matter together in Christian love, their differences soon became the cause of bitter disputes. Because they disagreed with him, Luther simply could not "recognize the Swiss as his brethren" (Grimm, p. 197). The disputing continued until it was finally brought to an unhappy end at The Marburg Colloquy (October 1 - 3, 1529) when the two reformers essentially admitted their differences could not be resolved and went their separate ways. Luther, convinced that the Swiss had perverted the entire Bible, refused to have any fellowship with them.

As for the Catholic view, it was again reaffirmed in The Council of Trent (1545 - 1563). It had not really changed, although further abuses continued to creep in. It was held that the Lord's original sacrifice on the cross "availed for original sin and that the sacrifice of the Mass availed for daily sins, deadly and venial alike" (William Barclay, The Lord's Supper, p. 87). This led to a traffic in Masses which Luther condemned in his sermon on "The Babylonish Captivity of the Church." Luther stated, "This abuse has turned a divine sacrament into an article of trade, the subject of bargaining and business deals, upon which the entire maintenance of priests and monks depends."

In a sense, all the Catholics had to do was sit back and let the Protestants fight it out among themselves. "The Eucharistic controversy broke the political force of Protestantism, and gave new strength to the Roman party" (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 7 -- Modern Christianity: The German Reformation, p. 630). The reformers became so intent with fighting one another, that they lost sight, to a large degree, of what it was they had originally sought to reform. Luther, who had a bad temper, was one of the worst. Calvin wrote, regretfully, of "the vehemence of Luther’s natural temperament, which was so apt to boil over in every direction," even to the point of "flashing his lightning upon the servants of the Lord."

John Calvin tried valiantly to unite the Reformation Movement, but with little success. In a letter dated November 25, 1544 to HEINRICH BULLINGER (1504 - 1575; he succeeded Zwingli upon the latter’s death in 1531, and carried on the Swiss Reformation; "in an age which emphasized differences, Bullinger sought for points of unity, did not demand rigid uniformity, and treated fellow Christians who differed with him with love" --- William Barker, Who's Who in Church History, p. 52), Calvin asked him to "keep silence" against the "fierce invectives...and harassments" of Luther. "You will do yourselves no good by quarreling, except that you may afford some sport to the wicked." Calvin said that if "they see us rending each other asunder" then the efforts to preach the gospel will be destroyed. "Even should he have provoked us, we ought rather to decline the contest than to increase the wound by the general shipwreck of the church!" The letter in its entirety is a monument to the peacemaking spirit of John Calvin, who said of Luther in this letter, "Even
though he were to call me a devil, I should still not the less esteem and acknowledge him as an illustrious servant of God!"

One of the most important things to come out of the Protestant Reformation was the return of the Scriptures to the common people. For centuries the Bible had been declared the exclusive right of priests and high church officials. It was chained to the front of the building, and for a common man to possess a copy of the Bible was punishable by death. Many men who translated the Bible into the common language of the day so that people could read it were burned at the stake!

However, when the Scriptures were finally given to the people, and the people began to study them for themselves, they not only realized that a great many falsehoods were being taught by the church leaders, but they also realized that many of the reformers had not gone far enough to restore the whole Truth. This led to what has been called The Radical Reformation. This consisted of various movements led by a host of "left-wing reformers." Most historians have lumped these various movements under the term The Anabaptists, because all these various movements had one point they all agreed on: Opposition to infant baptism.

The "Anabaptists" did not like the term (it came from a Greek word meaning "to baptize again") because they did not believe their baptism to be a second baptism. They preferred the name Baptists. These radical reformers were less interested in theology than in the practical application of biblical teachings. They insisted that the services of the church be very simple and that they contain nothing which could not be found in the primitive NT church. "The Lord's Supper was merely a remembrance, a meal of fellowship, signifying a union with Christ and the brethren. It should not be celebrated in a church building, for fear of encouraging 'false devotion,' but in private homes and in the evening according to Christ's example." (Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era: 1500 - 1650, p. 267). The "Anabaptists" left their imprint upon the teachings of many later groups, including: The Hutterites, the Mennonites, the Independent churches, the Quakers, and the Baptists.

The nature of religious practice in the United States owes its origin, to a large extent, to the religious controversies of 17th century England. These controversies dealt primarily with church organization and practice. Probably the group that most influenced later American thought and practice was The Puritans. Such groups as the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, parts of the Anglican Church, Congregationalists, and the Baptists find their roots in Puritanism. In 1628-1630 the Puritans arrived in America and established the Massachusetts Bay Colony with the intent upon organizing a "Godly commonwealth" in the wilderness of this new land.

In the religious history of America since that time many movements have risen and developed into new churches. Revivalism, with its stress on evangelism and emotionalism, resulted in the growth and expansion of such groups as the Baptists and the Methodists. Again, many of these groups owe much of their thinking and practice to the Puritans. At the center of the Puritan’s community life stood the meeting house which was filled with high square pews. These were purchased by the members. "Worship was simple, unadorned, edifying, and protracted. The principle service began at 9 o’clock in the morning. The emphasis fell upon the sermon, which generally lasted about one hour, though on occasion it might be stretched to two or three. There were two Sunday services, with an additional weekly afternoon meeting which featured an exposition of Scripture by the Minister. A Cappella congregational psalm-singing was a distinctive feature of Puritan worship with an elder or deacon pitching the tune and directing the singing. The Lord’s Supper was celebrated once a month, but as a memorial rather than a sacrament" (Clifton E. Olmstead, History of Religion in the United States, p. 78 - 79). In 1677, Solomon Stoddard, a Puritan minister, began to allow "unconverted church members” to partake of the Lord’s Supper “because it might serve as a means by which they would become converted." This practice came to be known as "Stoddardeanism."

The movement which most directly affects the Churches of Christ is one that has come to be called THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT. This was an effort to unite all the Christians who were scattered throughout the various groups and movements into one harmonious, loving fellowship of true believers, united around Christ rather than various creeds and practices of men. Although this goal was held in common by many men in many locations, it came to the fore with THOMAS CAMPBELL (1763 - 1854). Campbell was of Scotch-Irish
origins and was a minister for the Presbyterian church. He arrived in the United States in 1807. He was a scholar of the Word and came to "despise the trivialities which rent asunder the Christian community" (Olmstead, History of Religion in the United States, p. 308).

With regard to the Lord's Supper, he rejected the Presbyterian's "close communion" rule, and "invited all Christians to participate in the communion, regardless of the denominational connection" (Olmstead, p. 308). Charges were filed against him and the Synod advised him to find other employment. At this time Thomas Campbell became a "free-lance minister" and preached in various communities in private homes. His central theme was the sole authority of Scripture and the unity of all believers. In 1809, he and his followers organized the Christian Association of Washington, whose motto was: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." This was not viewed as a separate church, nor did it intend at this time to become one, but was seen as an independent society determined to achieve reform within the Christian community at large. That others might rally to this reformation cause, Campbell prepared his "Declaration and Address," which was published in September, 1809.

In October, 1809, his son, ALEXANDER CAMPBELL (1788 - 1866) came to America to join his father. Alexander was a scholar of the Bible in its original languages and assisted his father in preaching from house to house. In May, 1811 the Christian Association organized itself into an independent church which was named Brush Run Church. Thomas Campbell was elected as its Elder, Alexander was the Minister, and four deacons were chosen. "From its incipience the church observed the Lord's Supper weekly" (Olmstead, p. 309). From 1813 - 1830 the Brush Run Church was a part of the Redstone Baptist Association, but the Campbell's emphasis on baptism finally led to a split with the Baptists. The Baptists also favored a less frequent observance of the Lord's Supper than that favored by the Campbells. The Baptist practice is best stated as follows: "As to the time, place, and frequency of the ordinance, no Scriptural directions are given. These are left optional with the churches. They are usually observed on Sundays, but not necessarily. As to the Supper, our churches have very generally come to observe it on the first Sunday of each month" (Edward T. Hiscox, The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches, p. 20).

As a result of several issues which arose in the Restoration Movement which could not be successfully resolved among the members, a split occurred resulting in three new groups at the beginning of the 20th century: The Disciples of Christ, The Christian Church, and The Church of Christ. With regard to the Lord's Supper, the Churches of Christ, moreso than the others, have agreed with the personal preferences of the Campbells, and practice a weekly observance.

CONCLUSION

This, obviously, has been an EXTREMELY brief and incomplete examination of this topic as it spans the last almost 2000 years. Entire volumes would have to be written to adequately cover every aspect of this subject. However, this should at least serve as a skeletal overview of some of the major events, persons, and issues the people of God faced during their long history with regard to the Lord's Supper. Hopefully, it will also give us a better perspective of where we are today, and our place in the history of this important event....and help us realize that we are, afterall, to a significant degree, products of our historical development and of the practices, preferences, and perceptions of our forefathers in the faith.

THE LORD'S SUPPER
Its Purpose and Significance

Although much can be said about the history and development of the Lord's Supper over the centuries since its establishment, and although many questions are raised as to form, observance, ritual, tradition, etc., the most important thing to understand with regard to the Lord's Supper is its purpose and significance. If the
event is deprived of its true meaning it becomes little more than a hollow, pointless ritual kept alive merely by tradition.

It should also be pointed out that the Lord's Supper has a variety of purposes. It is multi-faceted and impacts every area of our Christian experience. "Representing the central action of Christianity it may radiate in the full circle of Christian experience. It may be gloriously joyful at a time of victory as worshippers give thanks for what God's sacrifice has achieved. It may be heavily sorrowful as in 'affliction of soul' saints find themselves guilty of sin and realize anew that this is what brought Jesus to the cross. It may be solemnly dedicatory as disciples find some new task for the Lord that is stretching and testing their faith, skill, and resources. The Lord's Supper should not be fenced off in a corner and separated from everything else that the church is interested in and doing. Rather, the Lord's Supper should be a part of all that is done" (Ted H. Waller, *Worship That Leads Men Upward*, p. 54).

It is also important that with an understanding of the purpose and significance of the Lord's Supper comes the putting of these understandings into action. The Lord's Supper is not a passive memorial, but rather an event that calls Christians to action! "To observe the rite of communion without living the purposes which this rite celebrates cannot avoid making our observance of the rite a pretense. Communing with Christ on Sunday cannot avoid giving the appearance to our young people of being a meaningless ritual if there has been no sharing with the cause of Christ during the week" (Waller, p. 45).

Jesus has always linked understanding with action. "Therefore everyone who hears (with understanding -- the Greek word akouo used with the Accusative Case) these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man..." (Matthew 7:24). Before we can act with wisdom we must first understand. Therefore, consider the following seven major purposes of the Lord's Supper as revealed in the sacred Scriptures:

#1 -- It is a Memorial of Christ Jesus

A "memorial" is "anything meant to help people remember some person or event" (Webster's *New World Dictionary of the American Language*). God has given many memorials to His people throughout the ages to help them remember significant events and people in their history. The *rainbow* and *Passover* are just two such memorials. So also is the Lord's Supper, which was instituted during a Passover meal.

After instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus told His disciples, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19; I Corinthians 11:24-25). This memorial should ever keep alive in our hearts and minds what Jesus Christ has done, and continues to do, for each of us! It is an act of remembrance that continually keeps before us both who He was and what He did, and makes us appreciate anew our relationship with Him.

Barclay writes that the greatest significance of this time of remembering is that "the memory turns into an experience and an encounter." In a very real sense we encounter our Lord face to face in this memorial; a personal experience with our Lord and His sacrifice that should "end in renewed dedication." "No such experience can end in anything other than a renewed pledge to the One whom we have encountered" (William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, p. 112-113).

#2 -- It is an Occasion of Thanksgiving

The word *Eucharist* comes from the Greek word eucharisteo, which means, "to give thanks." On the night that our Lord established the Lord's Supper, Scripture says that He "gave thanks" before distributing the elements (Matthew 26:26-27; Mark 14:22-23; Luke 22:17-19; I Corinthians 11:24).

*IGNATIUS* (died about 110 A.D.), in writing about the Lord's Supper, says, "Seek, then, to come together more frequently to give thanks and glory to God" (*Epistle to the Ephesians* 13:1). The earliest recorded Eucharistic prayers (recorded in the Didache) are almost entirely prayers of thanksgiving. Thus, the Lord's Supper should be a time when we each give thanks to God and to Christ for the love and sacrifice that made our redemption...
possible. This is a memorial feast in which our expressions of heartfelt thanksgiving are very much appropriate, and which thus give glory to our Savior.

#3 -- It is a Public Proclamation

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (I Corinthians 11:26). The Lord's Supper is an opportunity to teach: Ourselves, our children, and those outside the faith who are seeking for truth. Jesus said that the cup represented His "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). By partaking of the elements, we not only remind ourselves of His death, but also the significance of His death.....and in the process of reminding ourselves we also are proclaiming it (through our observance) to others.

It is also a proclamation of a NEW covenant or testament (Matthew 26:28; I Corinthians 11:25). In partaking of the Lord's Supper we declare to those around us that in Christ the OLD covenant has been displaced by a NEW covenant (see Colossians 2:13f). "He takes away the first in order to establish the second" (Hebrews 10:9). "So as the Lord's Supper is observed, it is a proclamation to the world that Jesus through His death fulfilled and took out of the way the Old Testament, sealed the New Testament with His blood and that is the one now in force" (A.G. Hobbs, The Lord's Supper: A Proclamation, p. 12). "It is the Word proclaimed in dramatic action" (Barclay, p. 110).

#4 -- It is an Expression of Confident Expectation

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (I Corinthians 11:26). In the gospel records Jesus says that He will not drink again of the cup until He "drinks it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16, 18), which most scholars feel refers to the end of time when He will sit down with His disciples at the great banquet in Heaven (Isaiah 25:6; Matthew 8:11; Luke 22:29-30; Revelation 19:9).

Christians are a people with a glorious future -- a future in Heaven! In the Lord's Supper we proclaim His death until He comes, which says that He is alive and He intends to return for His people! "Here in ringing tones there is expressed the eschatological hope of the Christian. In the Lord's Supper we at one and the same time remember the past sacrifice of our Lord and affirm our certainty of His coming triumph. There is nothing in the Christian worship which so looks to the past, the present, and the future, as the Lord's Supper does" (William Barclay, p. 110).

#5 -- It is a Time of Self-Examination

Paul tells the brethren in Corinth that many of them are spiritually ill (I Corinthians 11:30) because they have behaved in an unChristlike manner toward one another. It had become so bad that even though they partook of the elements of the Lord's Supper, it was not truly the Lord's Supper they were eating (I Corinthians 11:20). They were "coming together not for the better but for the worse" (I Corinthians 11:17), and Paul warns them: "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord" (I Corinthians 11:27). "For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly" (I Corinthians 11:29).

In light of the numerous abuses that were occurring, Paul says, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (I Corinthians 11:28). "If we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged" (I Corinthians 11:31). When we examine ourselves in light of Christ and His teachings, and when we discover sin in our lives, we must make the effort to rid ourselves of this. During the Passover all the leaven had to be cleaned out of the house. Now, "Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Corinthians 5:7-8).
#6 -- It is a Time of Sharing With Christ

"Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?" (I Corinthians 10:16). Some translations have participation (NIV, RSV), or communion (KJV, NKJV, ASV, Lamsa), or fellowship (Berkeley Version), but most translations use "sharing" here. This is the Greek word koinonia, which means "association, fellowship, close relationship; the common possession or enjoyment of something; a sign or proof of brotherly unity" (Arndt & Gengrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature, p. 438-439).

By partaking of the elements you enter into a close relationship with the One the elements represent...i.e.: Jesus Christ. In keeping with this thought, Paul warns the Corinthian brethren (I Corinthians 10:20) that in offering sacrifices to idols one becomes associated with demons. "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (I Corinthians 10:21). There is a very real sense in which the Lord's Supper is a visible sign of our relationship and fellowship with Jesus Christ.

When one "suffers as a Christian" and is "reviled for the name of Christ," then "you share the sufferings of Christ" (I Peter 4:12-16). Through baptism we are "united with Him in the likeness of" His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-11). In the same way, when we partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper we become sharers in His body and blood (His sacrifice on the cross). What most commentators believe this means is that we share or participate in the benefits that He confers through that sacrifice, of which these elements are symbolic. Just as we receive benefits from His death, burial, and resurrection through baptism,...just as we share His sufferings when suffering for His sake...so do we participate spiritually in His sacrifice through the observance of the Lord's Supper.

#7 -- It is a Demonstration of Unity

On the night of our Lord's betrayal and arrest He prayed that His people might be united (John 17). He suffered and died on the cross to break down the barriers of division, and put to death enmity and strife, to bring peace, and to reconcile all men "in one body to God through the cross" (Ephesians 2:13-18). Jesus died in order to create a unified body of believers!! Therefore, one of the major messages of the Lord's Supper, in which we remember that sacrifice, must be: UNITY!!

The Didache (which was written somewhere between 70 - 110 A.D.) points out that in the 1st century the idea of unity was well understood to be a vital part of the Lord's Supper. Notice a couple of the prayers that were given at the Lord's Table:

"As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let Thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom, for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever."

Didache 9:4

"Remember, Lord, Thy church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in Thy love, and gather it together in its holiness from the four winds to Thy kingdom which Thou hast prepared for it. For Thine is the power and the glory forever."

Didache 10:5
The apostle Paul pointed out the significance of unity as it relates to the Lord's Supper in the following statement: "Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). Even vs. 16 (which was examined under #6 above), which speaks of the Lord's Supper being a "sharing in Christ," can have the additional meaning of fellowship with one another. Although our fellowship is first of all with God through Christ Jesus, nevertheless, as a result of that primary fellowship, we additionally have fellowship with one another! "What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). In I Corinthians 1:9 Paul points out that we are "called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." He then immediately stresses that as a result of the primary fellowship we must be united and not divided!

"The Lord's Supper, then, is understood to witness to the fact that Christians belong to a special family which includes the Son and the Father (cf. 1 John 1:3) and is marked by unity and love. It is a communion which required the death of Christ to create, and which is so close that it is as though believers were one body" (Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 3, p. 985). "The Lord's Supper was designed to draw us together. It reminds us of the one thing we all have in common: A Savior who prayed for the unity of His followers on the night before His agonizing death. He died that men might be united as one body" (Dick Blackford, The Lord's Supper, p. 64).

The fact that Paul even discusses the Lord's Supper at all in the letter to the Corinthians is due to their lack of understanding on this one point of unity. The Christians in Corinth were divided; they were fighting with one another; there was strife, malice, envy, backbiting, hatred. They had become a group that was fragmented because they had focused on issues and personalities and one another's faults and failings, instead of focusing on Christ! "Therefore (as a result of this divisiveness) when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20). They were indeed consuming the elements, but they were not comming; they were not partaking of the Lord's special feast---that can only be done when there is unity and sweet fellowship between brethren!!

"This ought to have been a fraternal gathering, a bond of unity," but the conduct of some individuals "led to divisions. Groups were formed, and the general spirit of fraternity was broken" (Hastings's Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, Vol. 3, p. 374). Instead of symbolizing the oneness of the body of which each person was a vital part, the Lord's Supper was an occasion for manifesting just the opposite. Thus, their sin of eating and drinking "in an unworthy manner" (1 Corinthians 11:27), and "not discerning the body rightly" (1 Corinthians 11:29), "may have meant for Paul: Partaking of the Lord's Supper while holding each other in contempt and neither party striving to live up to the unity which took the Lord's death to bring about; and failing to understand the oneness of the body of which each person was a part" (Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 3, p. 985).

"What Paul condemns here is the very fact that the Corinthian Christians, when they come to the Lord's Supper, have divisions and factions through which all true fellowship is destroyed. It is in fact these divisions and factions which have moved Paul to write about the Lord's Supper at all. The further proof is that in the next chapter Paul goes on to write the famous passage about the Church as the body of Christ and the essential place of unity in it. Paul's whole point is that to dare to partake of the Lord's Supper while there are factions and sections and divisions in the Church, to dare to partake of the Lord's Supper unaware or forgetful of the fact that we are a body and the body of Christ, is nothing less than a blasphemy. And this leaves us facing the terrifying fact that it may well be that so long as the Church is divided at the table of her Lord every celebration of the Lord's Supper is a crime against her Lord!" (William Barclay, The Lord's Supper, p. 109).

"It seems impossible for one to eat the Lord's Supper in the right attitude and at the same time put the wheels in motion to split the church" (Olin Kern, The Lord's Supper, p. 8). "How can one proclaim His death 'till He comes (by eating the Supper) while at the same time encouraging religious division contrary to the unity for which our Savior prayed and died?! This is why the meaning of the Supper is contradicted when eaten in disunity! No church at any time or any place will ever be ripped apart by division when each member comes
to fully appreciate the divine love and unity which our Savior intended in instituting this *unity feast* (Dick Blackford, p. 64-65).

"Our Lord has given us a weekly lesson on *UNITY* when we, as one body, partake of the one bread. Unity is not limited to a few external acts that brethren may agree on! For if we do not see in our Lord's reminder (the Supper) the very epitome of love, then we are engaged in mockery. A couple may have a marriage license, ride in the same car, and eat at the same table. But if they continually fuss and fight, there is no unity ("You come together *not* for the better, but for the worse" -- I Corinthians 11:17). And if brethren meet in the same building and go through the proper motions of a worship service and then turn on each other and 'bite and devour one another,' do they really appreciate what our Lord sought to accomplish through His death (of which the Supper is a reminder)? Our candle becomes hidden under a bushel. The world will not even suspect that we are His disciples ("By *this* all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" -- John 13:35). There must be true care and concern and love for each other! *Think of this the next time you gather around the Lord's Table!!*" (Dick Blackford, p. 68).