

THE TWO WAYS OF THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH

APPENDIX A

A BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I would love to be able to trace my lineage back to Adam but can't. From Genesis I can go forward from Adam to Noah and be certain of my beginnings since Noah was the only one to survive the flood (together with his wife, his three sons and their wives). Since Adam was 930 years old when he died and Noah was born 126 years later and was 600 years old when the flood came, I am confident that my lineage for the first 1656 years of man's sojourn on planet earth was well known to everyone. Everyone in the world has come from the same "stock" whether they want to admit it or not. We are all relatives.

It appears from Genesis that the average life expectancy was about 900 years before the flood came (see Gen. 5) so that Methuselah, as well as many others, would have known both Adam and Noah and would have been able to transmit historical data, as well as values and thoughts, faithfully from generation to generation. In Methuselah's case, he was contemporary with Adam for the first 243 years of his life and contemporary with Noah for the last 600 years of his life (he lived to be 969 years of age and died just before the flood.)

Attempts to distort or falsify records for the first 1600 years of man's stay on earth would have been challenged by many eye witnesses and so I am confident that my "beginnings" are as stated in the first eight chapters of Genesis. The record is not unclear. It may be difficult for some to believe, but that is a secondary consideration. The record is clear.

With the flood came the condensing of all of man's imperfections, (starting with the first sin), in the genetic "pool" of Noah and his progeny. Consequently, "post-flood" man lived to be only about a hundred years of age and the last 4,500 years of my "family tree" are much more difficult to trace than the first 1,500. I'd like to say that I came out of Shem rather than Ham or Japheth but to say so would be the merest speculation. (There is only a 33% chance that I would be right. However, that is considerably better than the fantastic odds required to show that I came out of "The Big Bang" or some "Black Hole in Space" that evolutionists would ask us to swallow.) I can't even get back two hundred years from the present with any surety let alone back to Shem. I rest in the belief that I came from "a long line of love".

My father came from Swedish parents and lived to be 87. He died recently in the same home he lived in with my mom for 54 years. His parents came from Sweden when they were young. My mom is 81 and is in good health, as are two of her sisters who are 80 and 87 years old. Her mom died at 95. My great uncle, Oscar Anderson, lived to be 99 and told me shortly before his death that he suspected some French blood in the Anderson line since a great, great, grandmother of mine had the name Severena. My grandfather on my mom's side of the family was an Englishman and my grandmother was German.

Into such a heritage I was born on July 14, 1943. This means that July 13, 1943 is ancient history to me. But, I was not born into a vacuum. And, although the second world war was raging (as one auuthor commented, by this time the powers that be had the nerve to number their wars) and decisions of major impact on the world were being made, of much more significance to me was my family and a distance of about two miles to St. John's Lutheran Church in South Euclid, Ohio (an eastern suburb of Cleveland). About half way from home to church lived my grandmother, and my mom was born about one block from the church. "The Church" was the center of life, around which life revolved.

"The Church" had a history also. It was 90 years old when I arrived on the scene. Established in 1853 at the intersection of two Chippewa Indian trails, the membership soon made the commitment to build a

school. St. John's Lutheran School came into being and was the school where I received my first eight years of education, as did my two brothers and two sisters. My mother went to school there when she was a child as did my grandmother before her. My great grandmother's family name appears on the membership list of the church in connection with the passing of the churches constitution in 1860. And so, "church and school" were tied together in my mind from the time I was born.

The school was not without its precarious times. In 1918, in the midst of a national debate and court battle over whether parochial schools should have the right to exist, the South Euclid Board of Education tried to "cash out" the school and use it for state purposes. But, the church asserted its right by saying, "We mean to maintain our own school, and we shall need those buildings." In 1923, the Supreme Court reaffirmed the right of parents to send their children to schools of their own choosing. And so, the school was still there to provide for me a Christian education, based on Christian principles, and taught by Christian men and women. Perhaps their views and methods differed from my views today, but I cannot question their motivation. It certainly was not money and I conclude that it must have been love (dispite examples of harshness or wrong doctrine to which all of us fall victim from time to time). My experience at St. John's church and school are among the priceless treasures of my life.

Undoubtably the most significant experience of my childhood years was an event that happened as I walked through the field across from our house one day when I was in the seventh or eighth grade. At the time, I did not appreciate the significance. In fact, it would be almost ten years later before I did. While walking across the field, I began to speak in languages unknown to me and thought to myself, "Why, I can speak in any language I want to!" After rejoicing in my discovery for perhaps ten minutes or so, another thought came to mind, and that was, "I'd better not tell anyone about this or they will think I am crazy and put me in a nut house."

Looking back over the years and the conflict that developed between me and my family and church over the matter of speaking in tongues, I conclude that my family would surely have done exactly as I thought they would. For, speaking in tongues was not mentioned in church or school and certainly was never discussed or considered, at least to my knowledge. Years later, a cousin of mine asked our pastor about speaking in tongues and his reply was, "That is why we have missionaries," a total denial of the validity of speaking in tongues. However, by this time I was an adult and had learned much from the scripture regarding speaking in tongues, what it was, what it was for, how it was to be used both in private and in public, and most importantly, that it was a manifestation of the spirit rather than a special gift and, as such, every Christian could speak in tongues if he or she chose to do so. (I also learned that Martin Luther spoke in tongues.)

I had no trouble accepting the truth that every Christian could speak in tongues because I had done so when I was twelve or thirteen years of age. Certainly it could not be dependent on knowledge, experience, or special privilege. I certainly had not "earned the right" to speak in tongues. Nor was I "controlled" or "possessed" when I spoke in tongues. I could speak or not speak as I chose. Nor did I hear a voice from heaven, or see a sign, or feel anything other than wonderful. The only thing I had "trouble" with years later was accepting that the "unsaved" could not speak in tongues. It was just to easy! However, my senior year in college I discussed the matter with many classmates in order to satisfy myself and not once did any of those who did not believe in Jesus Christ speak in tongues. At times they said I was crazy when I spoke in tongues for them. But when I would reply, "O.K. then, you speak in tongues if it is not a manifestation of the spirit of God!", they never did (and I assume they could not or they would have.) Since then I have witnessed thousands of people who did speak in tongues but never have I witnessed anyone speak in tongues who said he was not a Christian. I concluded from all this that speaking in tongues was indeed a wonderful thing that all Christians could do if they so desired. But, I'm getting ahead of my story.

High school was a continuation of my Lutheran training at Cleveland Lutheran High School East, where I graduated in 1961. Unlike my two brothers, I LOVED high school. It was a time to flex my physical, social and mental "muscles" and so I played football and basketball, ran the mile on the track team, was president of my class for two years and vice president the other two, and got mostly A's and B's in my class work. The graduation speech I gave was entitled, "The Value of a Christian Education." My mom

had brought me up well. At the time I suspected that I was one of those "big fish in a small pond", but looking back on the makeup of the school, and seeing that it's students came from all over the east side of Cleveland, perhaps the pond was bigger than I supposed. In numbers we were small, but in purpose our view was as big as the promises of God. The experience was another of the priceless treasures of my life.

College was my first experience with "a government school". Rutgers University, first called Queens College when it was started in 1766 (to compliment Kings College, later to be known as Harvard), had become the State University of New Jersey in the 1950's and by the time I got there in 1961, the freshman class was 1,500 students. The adjustment from 69 students in my high school graduating class to 1,500 freshmen at Rutgers was a challenge (as was being 500 miles away from home for the first time in my life). It seemed that the more people in attendance, the less people I knew. And, by the time I graduated in 1966 with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, I don't think I'd made as many friends at Rutgers as I had among the 250 or so students while at Lutheran High.

My field of study in college was exciting because in the sciences, all was law and order. My perception of a Creator, as the "Divine Hand" or "Spiritual Authority", that made all things by the council of His own Will and caused them to behave according to fixed patterns, stood me in good stead in learning physics, chemistry, thermodynamics, and the like. For, in these subjects, all was according to principle and law.

The heresies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, promoted by arrogant men that did not like to admit that God was superior to them, were thrown off by me as so much drivel. After all, the concept that order could come out of disorder and life out of non-life, with nothing but statistical improbability to guide them, was contrary to all my experience and observation (and contrary to "The Increase in Entropy Principle" as well, which assumes that disorder derives from order unless some "energy" is put into the system.) We may not understand some of the laws and principles that control what happens, but to dismiss the creator and assume that the creation came about with no motivator and no purpose seems to be an act of folly rather than an act of wisdom.

The language of mathematics was a tool that allowed sharp and clear expression and communication of concepts. It was a language that left little room for debate (except to perhaps debate if a user understood the language). Such was not the case with Psychology and Philosophy. These courses may have helped me to shed the "Lutheranisms" I had learned, but they could not shake the reality in my mind of a Creator, even though that reality may have been covered with the veneer of Lutheran dogma. In other words, the "Cult" of Lutheranism gave way but the "Christianity" of Lutheranism did not. (I use "cult" in its basic sense as a system of religious worship or ritual and not in any derogatory sense. It does, however, also serve to caution those in the Lutheran church that would point their finger at other Christian groups and derogatorily call them "cults". Such accusations are not defensible, by Lutherans or any other "old time" religious groups that at times try to intimidate and slander newer groups of Christians.)

My senior year in college marked a quantum leap in my understanding of the Scriptures. My cousin married a girl whose father was a bible teacher and after hearing him teach a few times, I cut a final exam and drove 600 miles to take his class (which was held three hours a night, six nights a week, for two weeks). I was thrilled to find that the Bible was indeed understandable and could be studied as one would study mathematics or physics. And, as with these other disciplines, I found that danger did not lie in studying the Bible too closely but rather in not studying it at all. The Bible was "Solid as a Rock" just like the Creator was "Solid as a Rock". To me, the question became, "How much of the Word of God do I know and how much can I learn?" rather than "Is the bible God's Word?" From the brilliance of its contents, any question of God's authorship was removed. By far, it was the most informative and rewarding book I ever studied.

And, as with my studies in engineering, my main interest in the Bible was the workability of what I had learned. I had entered the "perilous times" of Paul's letter to Timothy. There was a war going on and it was being fought in earnest. The prize was the hearts and minds of the people on planet earth. Some of the characters in this war are described by Paul as follows, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural

affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, dispisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." (II Tim. 3:2-5) Paul's instruction is, "from such turn away" because among other things, they are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7). To study machines without any thought of designing them or using them would have been folly to my way of thinking. So also, to search out God's Word without a view to His power being manifested would have been folly to my way of thinking. Those who had a form of godliness but denied the power thereof became no different in my mind than those who totally denied God.

The other side in this war consisted of those who stood for the Gospel and wanted it known. Finding the one side and resisting the other became a life's work. My first response to an extensive introduction to God's Word was anger at the church and schools I had attended for the first twelve years of my education. (Ironically, I was not angry at the universities I attended which didn't even attempt to instill godliness in its students.) In grade school and high school I had learned Christian morality and many of the stories in the Old Testament and the Gospels. I had not learned much about Paul's epistles, speaking in tongues and the other eight manifestations of the spirit, the grace of God and the power of God.

Certainly, the bible was not given "equal time" with all the other things we studied. (And from what friends have told me, it evidently is not given "equal time" in seminary either). Miracles in daily life were seldom, if ever, pointed out to me. Healing was attributed only to doctors rather than allowing that God could and would heal today. In short, I concluded that the bible was at the side of the church I had grown up in instead of being at the center where it belongs (but at least it was at the side and not nonexistent).

Theological double talk like "three in one", so central to some that they "believe" a person cannot be "saved" without accepting the "Trinity", seemed much more important to some than an understanding of who Jesus Christ was and what He did. The placebo of theology took the place of an extensive knowledge of the truth. Such theology had the effect of moving the debate away from God's Word and an understanding of Jesus Christ rather than moving the debate to God's Word so that people would have a common ground upon which to build their knowledge and their relationships.

The rigidity of Lutheran theology became unacceptable to me and I "moved on" in my quest for an understanding of the things of God. Over the years, my youthful zealousness mellowed and my anger toward the church in which I was raised abated. Nevertheless, there are rigid theologies in the Lutheran church that hide great truth and cause people to think the bible is complicated rather than simple. I will continue to resist and challenge such theology. It is part of the Bondage church that has come down to us through James the brother of Jesus and reduces to a question of who is the authority and who is not rather than the question, "How well do we know Jesus Christ and how much do we serve Him?"

For seven years, from 1966 to 1973, I worked to promote an organization that I am now ashamed to even name. I traveled extensively teaching bible classes and in the process met many wonderful people of all ages and every conceivable background. It was a wonderful time, filled with action, filled with deleverance, filled with discovery, filled with joy. The bible class my cousin's father-in-law had taught for perhaps fifteen years (to an average of about 50 new people a year) answered many questions and above all taught people how to study the bible themselves. To me, it was wonderful and so I promoted the idea of placing the entire thirty six hour class on film so that three or four people could sit through it wherever they might be located. I was instrumental in raising the money to produce the class on film and when it was finished I left my engineering job and spent full time promoting the class and traveling around the country with the films.

By 1973, about 9,000 people a year were taking the class instead of 50 people a year. But, disasterous change was taking place within the organization as well. Where there had been no perception in my mind of "superior- subordinate" relationships but rather "fellowlaborer" relationships, all kinds of petty jealousies became apparent. Out and out lies were told to further programs developed by the organizations president and I could not in clear consience condone, ignore or support such obvious abuse of Christian stewardship. The issue of "authority" superceded all other issues. Reliance on the power of God went out

the door- especially in the area of finances. The organization became the object of service rather than a vehicle of service. Money flowed in graciously (at least at times) but flowed out reluctantly. Ignorant arrogance and "pecking order" replaced God's love and grace. The concept of "a man of God" gave way to "The man of God" which in turn gave way to "The Man".

Some of the friends I had made while there left before I did. Some left later. Some never left and to them we all became devils. We were the enemy as were all people who had never even heard of the organization. The term "cult" became popular by the middle or late 70's and the organization I had been associated with grew in notoriety as time went by. Although I never lost a night's sleep over it, I did wrestle for years over how so much good could grow side by side with so much evil.

When I left, I was certain that either truth would have to give way in the organization or else their practice would have to change. But, I was wrong. And gradually I came to realize, as Thoreau said, that "there is not an instant's truce between virtue and vice." Both always seem to be found together. Regardless of the organizations I had been affiliated with in my life, all had truth and all had error right along side the truth. There may have been differences in the degree of error and the extent of bondage, but truth and error seem to exist side by side in every organization. In the case of the Lutheran church, I suspect that Martin Luther would be appalled at some of the theology and some of the theologians in the Lutheran church today. In the case of the later organization I was associated with, the offensiveness became so obvious as to need no further comment.

One well known biblical scholar recently wrote me that, "The struggle for Christian liberty has to be renewed in each generation within the church." He said, "There are too many Christians who are afraid to enjoy the liberty with which Christ has set them free, and they are afraid to let other Christians enjoy theirs; they PREFER to live by rules and regulations." And so it is. As one of the founders of this country replied when asked what kind of government was formed, "You have a republic if you can keep it!" "Give me liberty, or give me death" is not some idle boast. It is a thoughtful statement showing the supreme value of liberty. If safety, security, lack of conflict, and the like are valued more highly than liberty, we can be sure that we will lose our liberty. This applies to churches as well as governments. However, if liberty is asserted throughout the land, bondage must back up. Our choice is to "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free" or to sell our birthright for a transient showing of "unity" and a deceptive perception of "peace". The Prince of Peace is the bringer of peace, not man's philosophies, man's systems or man's money.

For the past seventeen years I have associated myself with many religious and political groups and have seen the same conflicts within all of them. To me, they all boil down to the same essence. Did grace and truth come by Jesus Christ or did it not? We choose to believe it did or deny it. People in every organization in the world must accept or deny it. When Jesus Christ returns, He will assert the truth of the matter. Until then, John 1:17 is very clear, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." We can choose to assert this reality by our actions, decisions and relationships, or we can consider it not worth defending. Or, worse yet, we can dismiss it as irrelevant or untrue. Those who choose one way will always clash with those who choose the other. How we carry on in the conflict determines who wins in our day by day lives. We lose if we are tricked into moving away from the Word of God. We win when we assert the truth of God's Word, but we only win if our motive is love.

To round out this short autobiography, I worked on various engineering projects in this country and overseas in the middle seventies and then went back to school and received a Master of Education degree from Wright State University in 1976 (with certification to teach Chemistry, Physics and General Science in secondary schools in Ohio). The following year I taught chemistry at Wright State while studying in the graduate school of Chemistry. For the following five years I ran a business in western Ohio reclaiming metal values from industrial residues to provide revenue to pursue further my interest in the ministry of God's Word.

In the late seventies I became politically active with such groups as Right to Life, Moral Majority, The Ohio Committee to Restore the Constitution and the Christian school movement. During this time I

learned how the political system in this country had been fractured over the years so that no direct link was maintained between precinct committeemen at one end of the spectrum and national government at the other. In trying to find out who the culprits were (so as to help effect their replacements,) I finally concluded, after serving as ann aide in the Ohio Senate for a time, that the problem does not rest in Columbus or Washington, D.C., but rather in the hearts and lives of the people of this couuntry. As a nation, we cannot prosper if our lives are not guided by God's truth. Selfishness and "the dole" are always destructive, individually and collectively.

By the early 1980's I gave up persuing political solutions to spiritual problems. Spiritual problems require spiritual solutions, and I am convinced that only a massive dose of God's Word, taken by the citizens of this country, can remedy the terminal illness this country faces. It will take a miracle from a miracle working God. And, I trust that there is a relationship between people expecting deliverance (and conditioning their minds to God's truth) and God's providing that deliverance. Surely, God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. But, if we as a nation do not ask and do not think, it seems to me that our willful disobedience shackles God's love and hides his goodness.

Since the early eighties, I have taught from time to time in high schools on a temporary basis and love the intellectual honesty of students in their teen age years. They, for the most part, are not afraid to challenge the teacher at every opportunity, and I love such challenge. But, even better, is the challenge of finding and living God's Word and teaching his grace to individuals and small groups. God's favor has been wonderful in allowing me to do so as my first priority in life.

Since I never married, my compensation comes in the form of less structure and less demands on my time than that which a family brings. Therefore I am able to travel and my needs are relatively few. If you have benefited from this book, pray forme, as Paul says, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19). I would love to hear your thoughts regarding the book. And, if you are able to take the time to write, my address is in the front of the book.

As regards giving and receiving, this book is given as a gift of love. To the extent that I am able, I will continue to send it to anyone who wants to read it. I have nothing that I did not first receive and am confident that Christians can and should live on the higher level of "freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8) rather than conforming to the "lets make a deal" world, whose focus is on getting rather than giving. (Some preachers even promote the idea of "give to get" as though man has something to bargain with in dealing with God.) I have no objection to "marketing" this book if such a method would aid its distribution. However, I have no intention of doing so myself.

I would of course be thankful for any help you can give me. However, this is a very sensitive matter to me as I know that only gifts given with love can prosper. God loves a cheerful giver, not gifts given out of compulsion or a feeling of necessity (II Cor. 9:7). I must rely on God's abiding grace to provide for all my needs according to His riches in glory and therefore hope that you will consider my needs after, and not before, all the others you see around you. To the extent that you are willing and able to help meet all these other needs, please do so. And, if love compells you to give to me also, I will thrill in His love and His provision. Thank you for taking the time to read my book and may His grace abound to you yet more and more in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.