

interest to the class.

THE APPLICATION OF HISTORY

While history is worthwhile by its content and kept interesting by the proper approach, it is given fullest utilization when it is applied. When applied in the life of the church it is meaningful and when not applied loses much of its significance. Since the reality of the application depends on what has been learned in the process, the logical question relates to what we have learned or are learning in our pursuit of the knowledge of the church. The learning will group itself under three basic headings in which historical matters offer insight for the church today.

(I) General Principle

A general principle may be called an operating procedure that is observed as acting consistently in a number of occurrences set in differing backgrounds. Although the participants change and the settings vary, the outcomes are essentially similar and the result of any situation in which the principle is apparent appears rather predictable. No doubt we must be prepared in these for the existence of the "exception that tests the rule," but we must remember the exception tends to show a degree of fallibility in our analysis: it does not entirely dismiss the entire process.

An example may be seen in Zinzendorf's "*Ecclesia in Ecclesiola*" policy for reforming the church. The idea of a concerted effort by an evangelical community working within a dying structure and thereby recovering it for the truth is an attractive idea championed by Zinzendorf, Wesley and others. The concept is a theme with some current evangelicals in the present day ecumenical systems of Christendom. But the judgment of history is that, as a general principle, it has not worked -- has not achieved the stated or the desired ends. Our observation is not that no gains have ever been made but that the total process has never been accomplished. The general principle might cause one to be concerned about the employment of one's own energies in such a project.

These general principles will fall in four major categories:

Precedents

From generalizations we learn the value and caution to be considered in the setting of a precedent. Alliances formed only for political advantage (as when Henry of Navarre returned to the Roman fold to secure the unification of France) rarely work for the realization of the desired result. The causuistic precedent set by such affairs has a tendency to become self-defeating. As precedent one learns not to compromise fidelity and truth for immediate gain or temporal advantage. Sadly, in the heat of battle, this is easily forgotten and that is why the lessons of history are