

**Series: Early Christians Speak**  
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**Confusion Between Old and New Testaments**

August Neander is a German Historian of yesteryear who wrote extensively about Early Church History. In his book *The History of the Christian Religion and Church: During the Three First Centuries*, he gives us a good overview of the departure in what might be called Church Government. He noted that it is particularly noted during the days of Tertullian,\* who he describes as standing “generally at the line of demarcation between the old and the new time of the Christian Church” (p. 110). Here is Neander’s observation, having surveyed carefully this period.

“The notions of the theocracy of the Old and of the New Testament, which were so decidedly kept distinct from one another by the apostles and the first Christians, became again gradually *interchanged and confused*; the source of theoretical and practical errors, which lasted through many centuries, and which (if we except the scattered witnesses to the truth in each century) was first again opposed by the pure light of genuine Christianity by means of the Reformation. As, in virtue of this interchange, many notions of government, foreign to the Gospel, were brought from the Old Testament into the Church of Christ, so also was the Old Testament notion of the priesthood introduced.”

Continuing, he reminds us that:

“This false conclusion was drawn, that there had been in the Old Testament a visible priesthood joined to a particular class of men, there must also be the same in the New, and the original evangelical notion of a general priesthood fell, therefore, into the background. This error is to be found already in Tertullian’s time, as he calls the bishop ‘*summus sacerdos*’ [This Latin phrase means “chief priest.” According to *McClintock & Strong’s Biblical Cyclopedia* it became in fashion in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and was used by later writers to refer to the Romish Pope] (de Baptismo, c. xvii), an appellation which was certainly not invented by him, but taken from a habit of speaking and thinking already prevalent in a certain part, at least, of the Church.”

\*Tertullian: Christian author from Carthage, Africa. The first church “father” to produce extensive writing in Latin. He lived from 155 AD – 240 AD.