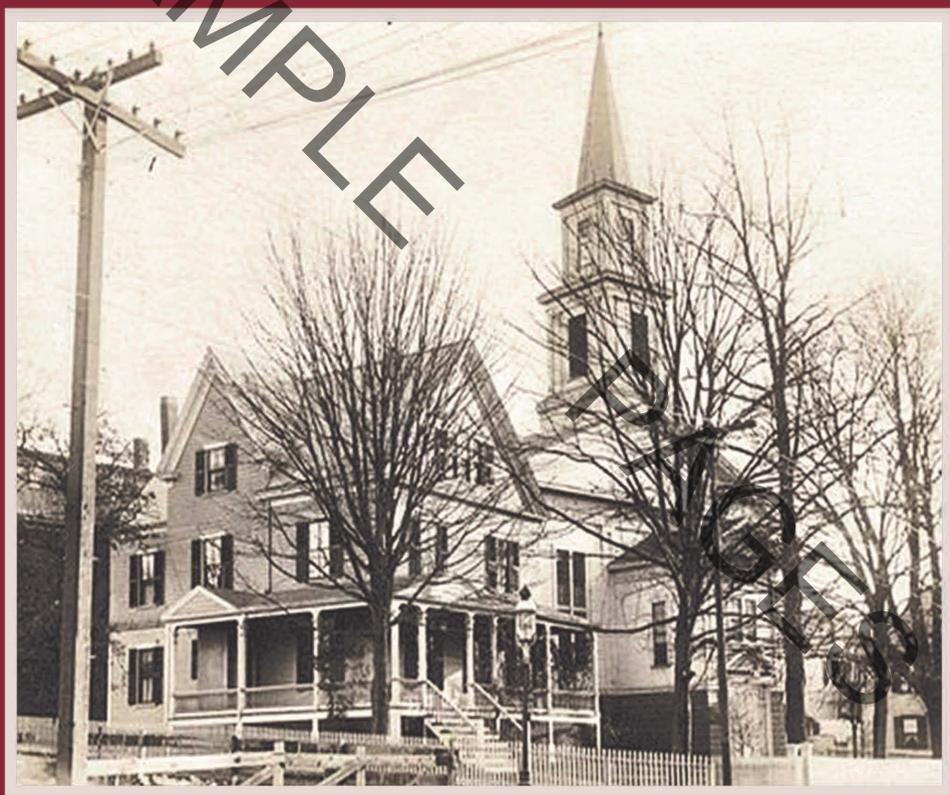


A HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS

TOGETHER WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THEIR
PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

VOLUME 1



JOHN T. CHRISTIAN, A.M., D.D., LL.D.

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The cover picture is the church Dr. Clarke founded and remains active as a Reformed Baptist Church and carries the name of United Baptist Church, John Clarke Memorial in honor of its founder.

PREFACE

IN ATTEMPTING to write a history of the Baptists no one is more aware of the embarrassments surrounding the subject than the author. These embarrassments arise from many sources. We are far removed from many of the circumstances under survey; the representations of the Baptists were often made by enemies who did not scruple, when such a course suited their purpose, to blacken character; and hence the testimony from such sources must be received with discrimination and much allowance made for many statements; in some instances vigilant and sustained attempts were made to destroy every document relating to these people; the material that remains is scattered through many libraries and archives, in many lands and not always readily accessible; often, on account of persecutions, the Baptists were far more interested in hiding than they were in giving an account of themselves or their whereabouts; they were scattered through many countries, in city and cave, as they could find a place of concealment; and frequently they were called by different names by their enemies, which is confusing. Yet it is a right royal history they have. It is well worth the telling and the preserving.

It must be borne in mind that there are many sources of Church History. Broadly speaking we have Eastern and Western; and a want of discrimination in these sources, and frequently an effort to treat Eastern and Western churches as identical, has caused much confusion. A right understanding of these sources will clear up many dark corners. For example it is undoubtedly true that the Waldenses originated in the West and the Paulicians in the East, and that they had a different history. In later centuries they came in contact one with the other, but in origin they were diverse. Any effort to treat them as one and the same people is misleading. In my judgment both parties were Baptists. The above distinction will account for many minor differences, and even to-day these sources will be found coloring Baptist history.

It may be thought by some that on account of its length the chapter on "The Episode of John Smyth" is out of proportion with the rest of the book. It must be remembered, however, that any information in regard to the complicated history of the Nonconformists of that period is welcome. As a matter of fact several subjects are here grouped; and as all of them require notice it is believed that unity of thought, as well as length of discussion, is preserved by the method here adopted. Many questions were then raised for the first time among English Baptists which find expression to-day among all schools of Baptists.

The question has often been asked: "Were all of the ancient parties mentioned in these pages in absolute or substantial accord with all of the doctrines and customs of modern Baptists?" The question can be answered with unerring accuracy: certainly not. Nor is there anything strange in the reply. It is well known that Baptists, Mennonites, and Quakers in their history have much in common, but while they agree in many particulars there are essential differences. There are marked differences among modern Baptists. Even a superficial examination of the views and customs of Russian, English and American Baptists would reveal to an observer this fact. We need not go beyond the history of American Baptists for a convincing example. At first, Arminian doctrines largely prevailed in this country; at a later date, Calvinistic principles prevailed. Oftentimes the same persons have changed their opinions. Many of the Baptists in Virginia were Arminians, but after passing over to Kentucky some of them became rigid Calvinists. Inside the Baptist denomination to-day there are persons, and doubtless churches, who are Arminian, and there are other persons and churches who are Calvinists. There are also Unitarians and Higher Critics, as well as Evangelicals among Baptists. One who has a mind for such things could magnify these differences to an indefinite extent.

Adequate reasons might be assigned for all of this. Baptists have never had a common creed, and it is equally true that they have never recognized any authoritative creed. They desire no such standard. Their attitude toward free speech and liberty of conscience has permitted and encouraged the largest latitude in opinions. Yet none of us would care to increase these differences or make more acute the variations.

One who stops here would have only a superficial understanding of the history and polity of Baptists. Their ties of organization are so slender, their government so democratic in nature, and their hardy independence so universal, that it has been a wonder to some historians and a mystery inexplicable to those who have not understood their genius, how they have retained their homogeneity and solidarity. But holding as they have ever done the absolute and unconditional authority of the New Testament as the sole rule of faith and practice in religious matters, they have had with them from the beginning a powerful preventive to error, and a specific corrective when there has been an aberration from the truth.

All of these things, and more, must be taken into account when we come to consider the various parties and persons discussed in the pages of this history. These parties were persecuted, scattered and often segregated. They lived in different lands and frequently had no opportunity to compare notes. There were great controversies, and frequently new roads were to be blazed out, intricate doctrinal problems to be solved, and complicated questions to be

adjusted. In the insistence upon some great doctrine, it may have happened that some other doctrine of equal or relative importance did not sustain its proper position for a time. Wrong views were sometimes maintained, false doctrines introduced and defended. Much allowance must always be made, especially in considering the doctrinal views of Baptists, for the fact we are frequently indebted to a zealous and prejudiced enemy for much of our information. It is not safe without support to trust such testimony.

Many examples might be introduced to show that some of these parties might not be recognized by some Baptists now-a-days. The Montanists, the Novatians, and the Donatists held diverse opinions, not only from each other, but from the teachings of the New Testament; but they stressed tremendously the purity of the church. It is possible that the Paulicians were Adoptionists. There have always been different views in regard to the birth of Jesus. Some of the Anabaptists held that Jesus was a man, and that he did not derive his manhood from Mary, but passed through her as a channel. The Adoptionists held that Jesus was endowed with divinity at his baptism. Most modern Baptists hold that Jesus became incarnate at his birth. There were some Baptists who held the vagaries of Hofmann and other Baptists who followed the more sane and rational course of Hubmaier. No effort is here attempted to minimize, or to dismiss as trivial, these variations.

Perhaps absolute and unconditional uniformity is unattainable. Such uniformity was never, perhaps, more vigorously pressed than it was by Archbishop Laud, with a dismal failure and the tragic death to the prelate as the result.

The wonder, however, is not that there were variations in these diverse conditions, but that there could be any homogeneity or unity. Through all of the variations, however, there has been an insistence upon some great fundamental truths. There has ever appeared the vital necessity of a regenerated life; a church pure and separate from the ungodly; believers' baptism; a simple form of church government; the right of free speech and soul liberty; and the permanent and paramount authority of the New Testament. Whatever may have been the variations in any or all of these parties, on the above or kindred subjects, the voice of the Baptists has rung out clear and distinct.

The testimony here recorded has been taken from many sources. I doubt not that diligent search would reveal further facts of the highest value. As a matter of fact I have a great accumulation of material which would extend into several volumes. In my judgment a Commission should be appointed with ample means to make a thorough search in the Archives of Europe.

I am well aware of the imperfections of this book, but it presents much data never before found in a Baptist history. I have throughout pursued the scientific method of investigation, and I have let the facts speak for themselves. I have no question in my own mind that there has been a historical succession of Baptists from the days of Christ to the present time. It must be remembered that the Baptists were found in almost every corner of Europe. When I found a connection between one body and another that fact is stated, but when no relationship was apparent I have not tried to manufacture one. Straight-forward honesty is the only course to pursue. Fortunately, however, every additional fact discovered only goes to make such connections probable in all instances.

I have an expectant attitude toward the future. I heartily welcome every investigation, for truth has nothing to fear from the light.

THE AUTHOR

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A HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS

CHAPTER 1. — THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES

The Great Commission — A Definition of a Church — A Voluntary Association — A Church Not National or General — The Officers of a Church — The Ordinances — The Proper Subjects of Baptism — The Form of Baptism — The Lord's Supper — The Ordinances as Symbols — The Churches Missionary Bodies — The Continued Existence of the Churches.

AFTER, our Lord had finished his work on earth, and before he had ascended into glory, he gave to his disciples the following commission: "All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Amen" (⁴¹²¹⁸Matthew 28:18-20). Under the terms of this commission Jesus gave to his churches the authority to evangelize the world.

A New Testament Church is a company of baptized believers voluntarily associated together for the maintenance of the ordinances and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The distinctive characteristics of this church are clearly marked in the New Testament.

Such a church was a voluntary association and was independent of all other churches. It might be, and probably was, affiliated with other churches in brotherly relations; but it remained independent of all outward control, and was responsible to Christ alone, who was the supreme lawgiver and the source of all authority. Originally the teachers and the people conjointly administered the affairs of the church.

In the New Testament sense of the church there can be no such an organization as a National or General Church, covering a large district of country, composed of a number of local organizations. The church, in the Scriptural sense, is always an independent, local organization. Sister churches were "united only by the ties of faith and charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution" (Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, I. 554. Boston, 1854). Gibbon, always artistic in the use of material, continues: "Such was the mild and equal constitution by which the Christians were governed for more than a hundred

years after the death of the apostles. Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic; and although the most distant of these little states maintained a mutual, as well as friendly, intercourse of letters and deputations, the Christian world was not yet connected by any supreme or legislative assembly” (Ibid, 558).

The officers of the church were first, pastors, indifferently called elders or bishops, and, secondly, deacons. These were the honorable servants of a free people. The pastors possessed no authority above their brethren, save that by service they purchased to themselves a good degree of glory.

The more recent Episcopal writers, such as Jacob and Hatch, do not derive their system from the ancient Scriptural form of government, but always acknowledge the primitive congregational form of government, and declare that episcopacy is a later development. In the New Testament, elder and bishop are different names to describe the same office. Dr. Lightfoot, the Bishop of Durham, in a very exhaustive discussion of the subject, says:

It is clear, that, at the close of the Apostolic Age, the two lower orders of the three fold ministry were firmly and widely established; but traces of the episcopate, properly so-called, are few and indistinct. ... The episcopate was formed out of the presbyterial order by elevation; and the title, which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief of them (Lightfoot, Commentary on Philippians, 180-276).

Dean Stanley represents the same view. He says:

According to the strict rules of the church derived from those early times, there are but two orders, presbyters and deacons (Stanley, Christian Institutions, 210).

Richard B. Rackham (The Acts of the Apostles cii), A.D. 1912, says of the word bishop (episcopos)

We may say at once that it had not yet acquired the definite sense which it holds in the letters of Ignatius (A.D. 115), and which it still holds to-day, viz., of a single ruler of a diocese. From ~~4208~~ Acts 20:28, ~~50106~~ Titus 1:6, 7, and comparison with ~~54082~~ 1 Timothy 3:2f., we should conclude that episcopus was simply a synonym for presbyter, and that the two offices were identical.

Knowling (The Expositors Greek Testament, II. 435-437) reviews all of the authorities, Hatch (Smith and Cheetham, Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, II. 1700), Harnack (Gebhardt and Harnack, Clement of Rome, ed. altera, 5), Steinmetz, etc., and reaches the following conclusion

This one passage (~~4208~~ Acts 20:28) is also sufficient to show that the “presbyter” and the “bishop” were at first practically identical.

Jerome, at the end of the fourth century, reminds the bishops that they owe their elevation above the presbyters, not so much to divine institution as to ecclesiastical usage; for before the outbreak of controversies in the church there was no distinction between the two, except that *presbyter* was a term of age, and *bishop* a term of official dignity; but when men, at the instigation of Satan, erected parties and sects, and, instead of simply following Christ, named themselves of Paul, of Apollos, or Cephas, all agreed to put one of the presbyters at the head of the rest, that by his universal supervision of the churches, he might kill the seeds of division (Hieron. Comm. ad Tit. i. 7). The great commentators of the Greek Church agree with Jerome in maintaining the original identity of bishops and presbyters in the New Testament. Thus did Chrysostom (Hom. i. in Ep. ad ^{<5011>}Philippians 1:11); Theodoret (ad ^{<5001>}Philippians 1:1); Ambrosiaster (ad ^{<4011>}Ephesians 4:11); and the pseudo-Augustinian (Questions V. et N.T. qu. 101).

There were two ordinances in the primitive church, baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Baptism was an outward confession of faith in Christ. It thus expressed a belief in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and a subsequent resurrection of all believers through the eternal Spirit.

Only believers were baptized and that upon a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. The church was composed of believers or holy persons. The members were called in the New Testament “beloved of God, called to be saints”; “sanctified in Christ Jesus”; “faithful in Christ”; “God’s elect, holy, and beloved.” The conditions of membership were repentance, faith, righteousness, and the initiatory rite of baptism, which was symbolical of the changed life.

In this connection it is interesting to note that all the Pedobaptist Confessions of Faith include only believers in the definition of the proper members of a church. The following definition of a church is taken from the Augsburg Confession of Faith of the Lutheran Church. It fairly represents all the rest. It says:

To speak properly, the church of Christ is a congregation of the members of Christ; that is, of the saints, which do truly believe and rightly obey Christ.

So universal is this definition of a church in all of the Confessions of Faith that Kostlin, Professor of Theology in Halle, says: “The Reformed Confessions describe the Church as the communion of believers or saints, and condition its existence on the pure preaching of the Word” (Kostlin, Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopaedia, I. 474).

The above definition, consistently applied, excludes infant baptism, since infants are incapable of faith, which always, in the New Testament, is a

prerequisite to baptism. The New Testament teaching is quite clear on this point. John the Baptist required that those who were applicants for baptism should experience repentance, exercise faith, make a confession of sin and live a righteous life (^{<4182>}Matthew 3:2; ^{<44904>}Acts 19:4). Jesus first made disciples and then baptized them (^{<30401>}John 4:1), and gave distinct commandment that teaching should precede baptism (^{<41289>}Matthew 28:19). In the preaching of the apostles repentance antedates baptism (^{<44238>}Acts 2:38); the converts were filled with joy, and only men and women were baptized (^{<4486>}Acts 8:5, 8, 12). There is no account or inference implying the baptism of an infant by Jesus or his apostles. This is generally conceded by scholars.

Döllinger, a Catholic scholar, Professor of Church History in the University of Munich, says: "There is no proof or hint in the New Testament that the apostles baptized infants or ordered them to be baptized" (John Joseph Ignatius Dollinger, *The First Age of the Church*, II. 184).

Dr. Edmund de Pressense, a French Senator and Protestant, says: "No positive fact sanctioning the practice (of infant baptism) can be adduced from the New Testament; the historical proofs alleged are in no way conclusive" (Pressense, *Early Years of Christianity*, 376. London, 1810).

Many authors of books treating directly on infant baptism affirm that it is not mentioned in the Scriptures. One writer only is here quoted. Joh. W.F. Hofling, Lutheran Professor of Theology at Erlangen, says: "The sacred Scriptures furnish no historical proof that children were baptized by the apostles" (Hofling, *Das Sakrament der Taufe*, 99. Erlangen, 1846. 2 vols.).

A few of the more recent authorities will not be amiss on this subject. The "Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics," edited by Professor James Hastings and Professor Kirsopp Lake, of the University of Leyden, says: "*There is no indication of the baptism of children*" in the New Testament.

The "Real Encyklopadie fur Protestantische Theologie and Kirche" (XIX. 403. 3d edition), the great German encyclopaedia, says:

The practice of infant-baptism in the apostolic and post-apostolic age cannot be proved. We hear indeed frequently of the baptism of entire households, as in ^{<44152>}Acts 15:32f; 18:8; ^{<40116>}1 Corinthians 1:16. But the last passage taken, ^{<46714>}1 Corinthians 7:14, is not favorable to the supposition that infant baptism was customary at that time. For then Paul could not have written "else were your children unclean."

Principal Robert Rainy, New College, Edinburgh, Presbyterian, says:

Baptism presupposed some Christian instruction, and was preceded by fasting. It signified the forgiveness of past sins, and was the visible point of

departure of the new life under Christian influences and with the inspiration of Christian purposes and aims. Here it was the “seal” which it concerned a man to keep inviolate (Rainy, Ancient Catholic Church, 75).

The form of baptism was dipping, or an immersion in water. John baptized in the river Jordan (^{<41005>}Mark 1:5); and he baptized in Aenon near to Salim “because there was much water there” (^{<41023>}John 3:23). Jesus was baptized in the Jordan (^{<41009>}Mark 1:9), and he “went into the water” and he “came up out of the water” (^{<41016>}Matthew 3:16). The symbolical passages (^{<45003>}Romans 6:3, 4; ^{<51012>}Colossians 2:12), which describe baptism as a burial and resurrection make it certain that immersion was the New Testament act of baptism.

This, indeed, is the meaning of the Greek word *baptizein*. The word is defined by Liddell and Scott, the secular Greek lexicon used in all colleges and universities, “to dip in or under the water.” In the lexicon of J.H. Thayer, the standard New Testament lexicon, the word is defined as an “immersion in water.” All scholarship confirms this view. Prof. R.C. Jebb, Litt. D., University of Cambridge, says: “I do not know whether there is any authoritative Greek-English lexicon which makes the word to mean ‘sprinkle’ or to ‘pour.’ I can only say that such a meaning never belongs to the word in classical Greek” (Letter to the author, September 23, 1898). Dr. Adolf Harnack, University of Berlin, says: “Baptism undoubtedly signifies immersion. No proof can be found that it signifies anything else in the New Testament, and in the most ancient Christian literature” (Schaff, The Teaching of the Twelve, 50).

Dr. Dosker, Professor of Church History, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, says:

Every candid historian will admit that the Baptists have, both philologically and historically, the better of the argument, as to the prevailing mode of baptism. The word *baptizo* means immersion, both in classical and Biblical Greek, except where it is manifestly used in a tropical sense (Docker, The Dutch Anabaptists, 176, Philadelphia, 1921).

Nothing is more certain than that the New Testament churches uniformly practised immersion.

The Lord’s Supper shows forth the death of the Saviour till he shall come again. It is a perpetual memorial of the broken body and the shed blood of the risen Lord. In the Scriptures the Lord’s Supper is always preceded by the net of baptism, and there is no account of any person participating in the Supper who had not previously been baptized. That baptism should precede the Lord’s Supper is avowed by scholars of all communions.

Dr. William Wall sums up the entire historical field when he says: “*For no church ever gave the communion to any persons before they were baptized. ...*

Since among all of the absurdities that ever were held, none ever maintained that any person should partake of the communion before he was baptized” (Wall, *The History of Infant Baptism*, I. 632, 638. Oxford, 1862).

The Baptists have always insisted that the ordinances were symbols and not sacraments. Indeed this is the heart of their contention.

President E.Y. Mullins has concisely stated the historical contention of Baptists in the following words:

They have seen with great vividness and clearness of outline the central spiritual elements of Christianity. With a like vividness and clearness they have perceived the significance of the outward forms. For them it has seemed as if the very life of Christianity depended upon keeping the spiritual and ceremonial elements in their respective places. Christian history certainly justifies them in their view. Forms and ceremonies are like ladders. On them we may climb up or down. If we keep them in their places as symbols, the soul feeds on the truth symbolized. If we convert them into sacraments, the soul misses the central vitality itself, spiritual communion with God. An outward religious ceremony derives its chief significance from the context in which it is placed, from the general system of which it forms a part. If a ceremony is set in the context of a spiritual system of truths, it may become an indispensable element for the furtherance of those truths. If it is set in the context of a sacramental system, it may and does become a means for obscuring the truth and enslaving the soul. It is this perception of the value of ceremonies as symbols and of their perils as sacraments which animates Baptists in their strenuous advocacy of a spiritual interpretation of the ordinances of Christianity (McGlothlin, *Infant Baptism Historically Considered*, 7).

The early churches were missionary bodies. They were required to carry out the great commission given by our Lord. In obedience to the missionary programme laid out by the divine Lord, the disciples in a few generations preached the gospel to the known world.

The first church was organized by Jesus and his apostles; and after the form of this one all other churches should be modeled. The churches so organized are to continue in the world until the kingdoms of this earth shall become the kingdom of our Lord, even Christ. Prophecy was full of the enduring character of the kingdom of Christ (^{<270244>}Daniel 2:44, 45). Jesus maintained a like view of his church and extended the promise to all the ages. He said: “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (^{<401618>}Matthew 16:18). The word church here is doubtless used in its ordinary, literal sense as a local institution; and in the only other passage where it is found in Matthew (^{<401817>}Matthew 18:17) it must be taken with the same signification. The great mass of scholarship supports the contention that this

passage refers to the local, visible church of Christ (Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew).

The critical meaning of the word does not differ from this (Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 197). The word “church” was used by our Lord and the apostles not so much in contra-distinction to the Jewish Theocracy, as to the Jewish synagogue, and the synagogue was always local (Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the New Testament Greek, 330, 331). The Roman Catholics have always denied the existence of a universal spiritual church (Alzog, Universal Church History, I. 108, 109). Until the German Reformation there was practically no other conception of a church. When Luther and others split off from the Roman Catholic Church, a new interpretation of this passage was adopted to suit the new views; so they held that ^{<4068>}Matthew 16:18 merely pointed to the ultimate triumph of Christianity. But manifestly this interpretation was remote from the meaning of the Lord.

Paul gives a large promise: “Unto him be glory in the church of Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (^{<4032>}Ephesians 3:21). Ellicott translates the passage: “To all the generations of the ages of ages.” The glory of Christ was to exist in all of the ages in the church. The church was, therefore, bound to exist in all of the ages. Even the redeemed in heaven are described in the Scriptures as a church.

The author believes that in every age since Jesus and the apostles, there have been companies of believers, churches, who have substantially held to the principles of the New Testament as now proclaimed by the Baptists. No attempt is made in these pages to trace a succession of bishops, as the Roman Catholics attempt to do, back to the apostles. Such an attempt is “laboring in the fire for mere vanity,” and proceeds upon a mistaken view of the nature of the kingdom of Christ, and of the sovereignty of God, in his operations on the earth. Jesus himself, in a reply to an inquiry put to him by the Pharisees (^{<4173>}Luke 17:20-24), compares his kingdom to the lightning, darting its rays in the most sovereign and uncontrollable manner from one extremity of the heavens to the other. And this view corresponds to God’s dealings in the spiritual realm. Wherever God has his elect, there in his own proper time, he sends the gospel to save them, and churches after his model are organized (William Jones, The History of the Christian Church, xvii. Philadelphia. 1832).

The New Testament recognizes a democratic simplicity, and not a hierarchial monarchy. There is no irregularity, but a perpetual proclamation of principles. There is no intimation that there was not a continuity of churches, for doubtless there was, but our insistence is that this was not the dominant note in apostolic life. No emphasis is put on a succession of baptisms, or the historical order of churches. Some of the apostles were disciples of John the Baptist

(^{<4013>}John 1:35), but there is no record of the baptism of others, though they were baptized. Paul, the great missionary, was baptized by Ananias (^{<4017>}Acts 9:17, 18), but it is not known who baptized Ananias. Nothing definite is known of the origin of the church at Damascus. The church at Antioch became the great foreign missionary center, but the history of its origin is not distinctly given. The church at Rome was already in existence when Paul wrote to them his letter. These silences occur all through the New Testament, but there is a constant recurrence of type, a persistence of fundamental doctrines, and a proclamation of principles. This marked the whole apostolic period, and for that matter, every period since that time.

This recurrence of type is recognized even where error was detected. The disciples desired Jesus to rebuke a man who walked not with them (^{<4020>}Mark 9:40), but this Jesus refused to do. The church at Corinth was imperfect in practice and life. The Judaizing teachers constantly perverted the gospel, and John the Evangelist, in his last days, combated insidious error, but the great doctrines of the atoning work of Christ, conversion and repentance, the baptism of believers, the purity of the church, the freedom of the soul, and the collateral truths, were everywhere avowed. At times these principles have been combated and those who held them persecuted, often they have been obscured; sometimes they have been advocated by ignorant men, and at other times by brilliant graduates of the universities, who frequently mixed the truth with philosophical speculations; yet always, often under the most varied conditions, these principles have come to the surface.

Baptist churches have the most slender ties of organization, and a strong government is not according to their polity. They are like the river Rhone, which sometimes flows as a river broad and deep, but at other times is hidden in the sands. It, however, never loses its continuity or existence. It is simply hidden for a period. Baptist churches may disappear and reappear in the most unaccountable manner.. Persecuted everywhere by sword and by fire, their principles would appear to be almost extinct, when in a most wondrous way God would raise up some man, or some company of martyrs, to proclaim the truth.

The footsteps of the Baptists of the ages can more easily be traced by blood than by baptism. It is a lineage of suffering rather than a succession of bishops; a martyrdom of principle, rather than a dogmatic decree of councils; a golden chord of love, rather than an iron chain of succession, which, while attempting to rattle its links back to the apostles, has been of more service in chaining some protesting Baptist to the stake than in proclaiming the truth of the New Testament. It is, nevertheless, a right royal succession, that in every age the Baptists have been advocates of liberty for all, and have held that the gospel of the Son of God makes every man a free man in Christ Jesus.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING AND REFERENCE:

George P. Fisher (Congregationalist), *A History of the Christian Church*, pp. 1-44.

Philip Schaff (Presbyterian), *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. I.

John Alzog (Roman Catholic), *Manual of Universal Church History*, 4 volumes.

Thomas J. Conant (Baptist), *The Meaning and Use of Baptizein*.

John T. Christian, *Immersion, the Act of Christian Baptism*.

Edwin Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*.

SAMPLE

PAGES

CHAPTER 2. — THE ANCIENT CHURCHES

Early Conditions — Isaac Taylor — Epistola ad Diognetum — The Beginning of — Dangerous Heresies — Baptismal Salvation — Metropolitan Bishops — Gregory the Great — The Baptism of Believers — The Fathers — The Early Councils and Infant Baptism — The Baptism of Adults Who Had Christian Parents — The First Law and The First Rule for Infant Baptism — The Testimony of Scholars — The Form of Baptism — Six Rituals on the Subject — The Christian Monuments — The Catacombs — The Baptisteries — Clinic Baptism — Religious Liberty — Tertullian, Justin Martyr and Lactantius — Constantine the Great Issues an Edict — Theodosius the Great Enforces Religion by Law.

THE period of the ancient churches (A.D. 100-325) is much obscured. Much of the material has been lost; much of it that remains has been interpolated by Mediaeval Popish writers and translators; and all of it has been involved in much controversy. Caution must, therefore, be observed in arriving at permanent conclusions. Hasty generalizations that all Christians and churches were involved in doctrinal error must be accepted with extreme caution. Strange and horrible charges began to be current against the Christians. The secrecy of their meetings for worship was ascribed, not to its true cause, the fear of persecution, but to a consciousness of abominations which could not bear the light. The Jews were especially industrious in inventing and propagating such stories. In this way discredit was brought on the Christian name.

It is certain, however, in the early days following the death of the apostle John, that the Christians lived simple and zealous lives. Isaac Taylor, who especially wrote against a superstitious overvaluation of the patristic age, gives a fine picture of early Christian life. He says

Our brethren of the early church challenge our respect, as well as affection; for theirs was the fervor of a steady faith in things unseen and eternal; theirs, often, a meek patience under the most grievous wrongs; theirs the courage to maintain a good profession before the frowning face of philosophy, of secular tyranny, and of splendid superstition; theirs was abstractness from the world and a painful self-denial; theirs the most arduous and costly labors of love; theirs a munificence in charity, altogether without example; theirs was a reverent and scrupulous care of the sacred writings; and this one merit, if they had no other, is of a superlative degree, and should entitle them to the veneration and grateful regards of the modern church. How little do many readers of the Bible, nowadays, think of what it cost the Christians of the second and third centuries, merely to rescue and hide the sacred treasures from the rage of the heathen (Taylor, *Ancient Christianity*, I. 37).

A most beautiful and pathetic picture is given by the author of the *Epistola ad Diognetum* in the early part of the second century. He says:

The Christians are not distinguished from other men by country, by language, nor by civil institutions. For they neither dwell in cities by themselves, nor use a peculiar tongue, nor lead a singular mode of life. They dwell in the Grecian or barbarian cities, as the case may be; they follow the usages of the country in dress, food, and the other affairs of life. Yet they present a wonderful and confessedly paradoxical conduct. They dwell in their own native lands, but as strangers. They take part in all things, as citizens; and they suffer all things, as foreigners. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every native land is a foreign. They marry, like all others; they have children; but they do not cast away their offsprings. They have the table in common, but not wives. They are in the flesh, but do not live after the flesh. They live upon the earth, but are citizens of heaven. They obey the existing laws, and excel the laws by their lives. They love all, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown, and yet they are condemned. They are killed and made alive. They are poor and make many rich. They lack all things, and in all things abound. They are reproached, and glory in their reproaches. They are calumniated, and are justified. They are cursed, and they bless. They receive scorn, and they give honor. They do good, and are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice, as being made alive. By the Jews they are attacked as aliens, and by the Greeks persecuted; and the cause of the enmity their enemies cannot tell. In short, what the soul is to the body, the Christians are in the world. The soul is diffused through all the members of the body, and the Christians are spread through the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, but it is not of the body; so the Christians dwell in the world, but are not of the world. The soul, invisible, keeps watch in the visible body; so also the Christians are seen to live in the world, for their piety is invisible. The flesh hates and wars against the soul; suffering no wrong from it, but because it resists fleshly pleasures; and the world hates the Christians with no reason, but they resist its pleasures. The soul loves the flesh and members, by which it is hated; so the Christians love their haters. The soul is enclosed in the body, but holds the body together; so the Christians are detained in the world as in a prison; but they contain the world. Immortal, the soul dwells in the mortal body; so the Christians dwell in the corruptible, but look for incorruption in heaven. The soul is the better for restriction in food and drink; and the Christians increase, though daily punished. This lot God has assigned to the Christians in the world; and it cannot be taken from them (*Epist. ad Diognetum*, C. 5 and 6 p. 69 sq. Otto. Lips., 1852).

Through all of this period there were doubtless many churches that remained true to the New Testament ideals. The more earnestly they adhered to Scriptural principles the less likely was mention made of them. It was the unusual and the heretical that attracted attention and was recorded in the histories of the times.

“For the first three centuries the Lord placed Christianity in the most unfavorable circumstances that it might display its moral power, and gain its victory over the world by spiritual weapons alone. Until the reign of Constantine it had not even a legal existence in the Roman empire, but was first ignored as a Jewish sect, then slandered, proscribed, persecuted, as a treasonable innovation, and the adoption of it made punishable with confiscation and death. Besides, it offered not the slightest favor, as Mohammedanism afterwards did, to the corrupt inclinations of the heart, but against the current ideas of the Jews and heathens it so presented its inexorable demand of repentance and conversion, renunciation of self and of the world, that more, according to Tertullian, were kept out of the new sect by love of pleasure, than by love of life. The Jewish origin of Christianity also, and the poverty and obscurity of a majority of its professors offended the pride of the Greeks and Romans” (Schaff, History of the Christian Church, I. 148).

In spite of these extraordinary difficulties Christianity made progress. The hindrances became helps in the providence of God. Persecution led to martyrdom, and martyrdom had attractions. Tertullian exclaimed to the heathen: “All of your ingenious cruelties can accomplish nothing; they are only a lure to this sect. Our number increases the more you destroy us. The blood of the Christians is their seed.” The moral earnestness of the Christians contrasted powerfully with the prevailing corruption of the age, and while it repelled the frivolous and voluptuous, it could not fail to impress most strongly the deepest and noblest minds. This progress extended to every part of the empire. “We are a people of yesterday,” says Tertullian, “and yet we have filled every place belonging to you cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum. We leave you your temples only. You can count your armies our number in a single province will be greater.”

Nevertheless, even before the death of the last of the apostles many dangerous and grievous heresies had sprung up in the Christian churches. A constant tendency to separate from the truth, as proclaimed in the Scriptures, was manifested in some places. The trend from the Word of God has been noted by the apostle Paul, and in some of his Epistles he combated error. Shortly after the death of the last of the apostles some dangerous heresies crept into the churches, and were advocated by many learned and distinguished men.

It is not to be understood that all, or even most of the doctrinal errors, which are found in later Roman Catholic history are to be found in this period. This is not the case. For example, the worship of Mary and of images, transubstantiation, the infallibility of the pope, and the immaculate conception are all of later date. The tendency was rather to lessen the demand for repentance and faith, the experimental ⁱⁿ religion, and rather to emphasize

external signs and symbols. It was imagined that the outward symbol could take the place of the inward grace. The point of departure probably had its largest expression in baptismal salvation, and the tendency of some churches toward episcopacy, and away from democratic simplicity.

One of the very earliest voices lifted against the abuses was that of the Shepherd of Hermas. The Shepherd says:

Customs have become worldly; discipline is relaxed; the Church is a sickly old woman, incapable of standing on her feet; rulers and ruled are all languishing, and many among them are corrupt, covetous, greedy, hypocritical, contentious, slanderers, blasphemers, libertines, spies, renegades, schismatics. Worthy teachers are not wanting, but there are also many false prophets, vain, eager after the first sees, for whom the greatest thing in life is not the practice of piety and justice, but the strife for the post of command. Now the day of wrath is at hand; the punishment will be dreadful; the Lord will give unto every one according to his works.

One of the earliest and most hurtful errors was the dogma of baptismal regeneration. This error in one form or another has marred the life and colored the history of all of the Christian ages. It began early and the virus may be traced to this day not only among ritualists, but likewise in the standards of evangelical Christians. Tertullian was influenced by it to oppose infant baptism, and under other conditions it became the frightful origin of that heresy.

Nevertheless, the churches continued to be free and independent. There were as yet no metropolitan bishops, and the office and authority of a pope was not yet known. Rome in those days had no great authority in the Christian world. "The see of Rome," remarks Cardinal Newman, "possessed no great mind in the whole period of persecution. Afterwards for a long time it had not a single doctor to show. The great luminary of the Western World is St. Augustine; he, no infallible teacher, has formed the intellect of Europe" (John Henry Newman, *Apologia pro Vita sua*, 407. London, 1864). Dean Stanley rightly adds: "There have been occupants of the sees of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Canterbury who have produced more effect on the mind of Christendom by their utterances than any of the popes" (Stanley, *Christian Institutions*, 241. New York, 1881).

There was, however, a constant tendency towards centralization. As the pastor assumed rights which were not granted to him by the Scriptures, some of the metropolitan pastors exercised an undue authority over some of the smaller churches. Then the churches in some of the cities sought the patronage and protection of the pastors of the larger cities. Finally Rome, the political center of the world, became the religious center as well. In time the pastor in Rome

became the universal pope. All of this was of slow growth and required centuries for its consummation.

Gregory the Great (A. D. 590-604) was “the first of the proper popes” and with him begins “the development of the absolute papacy” (Schaff, History of the Christian Church, I. 15). The growth of the papacy was a process of history. Long before this the bishops of Rome had made arrogant claims over other churches. Notably was this true of Leo I., A.D. 440-461.. All of this is conceded by Hefele. He says:

It is, however, not to be mistaken, that the bishops of Rome did not, everywhere, in all the West, exercise full patriarchal rights; that, to-wit, in several provinces, simple bishops were ordained without his co-operation (Hefele, I. 383).

The line of the absolute Mediaeval popes began with Gregory.

“Christianity in Rome,” says Gregorovius, “became in a very short time corrupt; and this is not to be wondered at, because the ground in which the seed of its doctrine had been sown was rotten and the least apt of all other grounds to bring forth good fruit.... The Roman character had not been changed from what it was of old, because baptism cannot change the spirit of the times” (Gregorovius, Storia della citta di Roma nel Medio Evo, I. 155).

Gregory objected to the title “universal bishop.” “I do not esteem that an honor,” he declares, “by which my brethren lose their honor. My honor is the solid Strength of my brethren. ... But no more of this: away with words which inflate pride and wound charity” (Gregory, Ep. 30. III. 933). Nevertheless, the conception of a local, independent church, by these and other means was partly overthrown; and much of the Christian world was called upon to suffer at the hands of a wicked and often ungodly hierarchy.

Believers’ baptism continued to prevail in the churches. Notwithstanding the efficacy which was supposed to exist in baptism, infant baptism was of slow growth. Even after its first appearance it was opposed by many, and for a long time was not generally practised.

The writers known as the Apostolic Fathers, Clement, Barnabas, Ignatius and the Pastor of Hermas, all required faith on the part of the candidate baptized. Clement does not mention baptism in his Epistle to the Corinthians; but he does exhort parents to “let your children be partakers of the Christian training” (Migne, Patrologiae gr.. I. 255).

Barnabas says: “Mark how he has described at once both the water and the cross. For these words imply, blessed are they who, placing their trust in the

cross, have gone down into the water; for, says he, they shall receive their reward in due time” (Migne, *Patrologiæ gr.*, II. 755).

Ignatius writes to Polycarp as follows: “Let your baptism be to you an armor, and faith as a spear, and love as a helmet, and patience as a panoply” (Ibid, V. 847). The order of baptism as well as the exhortation exclude infant baptism.

And the Shepherd of Hermas speaks of those who “have heard the word, and wished to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Ibid, *Patrologiæ gr.*, II. 906).

The Apostolic Fathers require that faith shall precede baptism and hence they know nothing of infant baptism.. Dr. Charles W. Bennett, Professor of Historical Theology in Garrett Biblical Institute, Methodist, says: “The Apostolic Fathers contain no positive information relative to the practice of the church of their time respecting infant baptism” (Bennett, *Christian Archæology*, 391. New York, 1889).

Passing to the second generation of the Fathers, Justin Martyr, A.D. 114-168, has sometimes been quoted as favoring the practice of infant baptism. After relating the evils of human nature and the bad habits of men, Justin declares that,

in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and ignorance, but may become the children of choice and of knowledge, and may obtain in water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; he who leads to the laver the person that is to be washed calling him by name alone (Migne, VI. 419).

It is now quite generally admitted that Justin knows only the baptism of adults, though he believed in baptismal regeneration.

The celebrated passage from Irenæus is as follows:

For he came to save all through means of himself, all I say, who through him are born again to God — infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child, for children; thus sanctifying those who are of this age, being at the same time made to them an example of youths, and thus sanctifying them to the Lord (Migne, VII. 783).

This passage is probably spurious. There is no proof, however, that it refers to baptism at all. Dr. Karl R. Hagenbach, for fifty years professor in the University of Basel, says that this passage does not “afford any decisive proof. It only expresses the beautiful idea that Jesus was Redeemer in every stage of life; but it does not say that he redeemed children by the water of baptism” (Hagenbach, *History of Doctrines*, 200. New York, 1869).

Origen, A.D. 185-254, is quoted in favor of infant baptism. His words are:

To these considerations it can be added, that it may be enquired why, since the baptism of the church is given for the remission of sins, baptism is given according to the observance of the church even to children (*parvulis*); for the grace of baptism would seem superfluous if there was nothing in children requiring remission and indulgence (Migne, XII. 492)

The same sentiment is found in his commentary on Romans.

The original Greek of Origen no longer exists, and there remain of the words of Origen only translations by Rufinus and Jerome in Latin. These translations are notoriously unreliable, and it is admitted that the ideas of a later age are freely incorporated in the writings of Origen. The children mentioned are not “infants,” for in the same work this word is used to describe Jesus at the age of twelve (Migne, XIII. 1849). All that can be claimed is that Origen refers to the baptism of children, not infants, as an apostolic tradition. This is not of much weight, when it is recalled that Origen refers to a number of things as of apostolic tradition which are not even mentioned in the Scriptures.

The earliest clear evidence of infant baptism is found in Tertullian who opposed it (A.D. 185). The first direct evidence in favor of it is found in the writings of Cyprian, in the Council of Carthage, in Africa, A.D. 253. In writing to one Fidus, Cyprian takes the ground that infants should be baptized as soon as they are born (Epistle of, Cyprian, LVIII. 2). This opinion, however, was not based upon the Scriptures, and did not meet with the approval of the Christian world.

The early councils of the church were all against infant baptism. The Council of Elvira or Grenada, A.D. 305, required the delay of baptism for two years (Hefele, History of the Councils, I. 155. Edinburgh, 1871). The Council of Laodicaea held A.D. 360, demanded that those who are “to be baptized must learn the creed by heart and recite it” (Hefele, II. 319). The Council of Constantinople decreed that persons should “remain a long time under Scriptural instruction before they receive baptism” (Ibid, II. 368). And the Council of Carthage, A.D. 398, decreed that “catechumens shall give their names, and be prepared for baptism” (DuPin, Bibliotheque universelle, c. 4. 282).

Many of the most prominent Christians, though born of Christian parents, were not baptized in infancy. The number of such persons is so great, and the details are so many, that mention can be made of only a few of them. The list would include the celebrated historian Eusebius, the emperor Constantine the Great, Ephrem. Syrus, and the great Augustine.

Basil the Great was born in the year 329, in a wealthy and pious family, whose ancestors had distinguished themselves as martyrs. His mother and

grandmother were Christians and four brothers and five sisters were well-known Christians: He was baptized when he was twenty-six years of age. In a remarkable passage, A.D. 380, he plainly indicates the drift of the times. He says:

Do you demur and loiter and put off baptism? When you have been from a child catechised in the Word, and you are not yet acquainted with the truth? Having been always learning it, are you not yet come to the knowledge of it? A seeker all your life long. A considerer till you are old. When will you make a Christian? When shall we see you as one of us? Last year you were staying till this year; and now you have a mind to stay till next. Take heed, that by promising yourself a longer life, you do not quite miss of your hope. Do you not know what changes tomorrow may bring? (Migne, XXXI. 1514).

All of this demonstrates that the early Christians continued to baptize upon a profession of faith, and that infant baptism had gained no permanent foothold till ages after the days of the apostles.

Infant baptism was not of rapid growth. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo-Regius, North Africa (A.D. 353-430) was not the first to practise it; but he was, though not himself baptized in infancy, its first and ablest defender. He developed the theological argument in its favor. The Council of Mela, in Numidia, A.D. 416, composed of fifteen persons, and presided over by Augustine, decreed:

Also, it is the pleasure of the bishops in order that whoever denies that infants newly born of their mothers, are to be baptized or says that baptism is administered for the remission of their own sins, but not on account of original sin, delivered from Adam, and to be expiated by the laver of regeneration, be accursed (Wall, The History of Infant Baptism. I. 265).

It is a suggestive fact prophetic of the future that the first council favoring the practice of infant baptism also accompanied this by a curse against those who dissented from the opinions of the council. It furthermore shows there were opponents of infant baptism in those days, and that the infant rite was not the universal custom of those times.

The first rule, to which reference is made as favoring infant baptism in Europe, was by the Spanish Council of Gerunda, A.D. 517. The Council was composed of seven men who subscribed to ten rules. The canon covering the point at issue here is Article V.:

But concerning little sons lately born, it pleaseth us to appoint, that if, as is usual, they be infirm, and do not suck their mother's milk, even on the same day in which they are born (if they be offered, if they be brought) they may be baptized.

The rule was that ordinarily catechetical instruction should precede baptism. In the case of infants who were sick, because of the fear that they would be lost in case of death without baptism, they were to be baptized in infancy. No provision was made for the baptism of infants who were in good health. It has also been seriously doubted whether this Council was ever held.

Charlemagne, A.D. 789, issued the first law in Europe for baptizing infants. He was engaged in a stubborn war with the Saxons, but their brave general Windekind, always found resources to defeat his designs. In the end his imperial majesty hit upon a method, which disheartened Windekind, by detaching his people from him, and which completely made an end of the war. This was by reducing the whole nation by a dreadful alternative; either of being assassinated by the troops, or of accepting life on the condition of professing themselves Christians by being baptized; and the severe laws still stand in the capitularies of this monarch, by which they were obliged, “on pain of death, to baptize themselves, and of heavy fines to baptize their children within the year of their birth.”

That this is a correct interpretation of the attitude of the early churches there is not the shadow of a doubt. All historians confirm, this contention. A few high authorities are here quoted.

Dr. Adolph Harnack, of the University of Berlin, says of the post-apostolic period:

There is no sure trace of infant baptism in the epoch, personal faith is a necessary condition (Harnack, *History of Dogma*, I. 20 note 2).

He further says:

Complete obscurity prevails as to the Church’s adoption of the practice of child-baptism, which, though it owes its origin to the idea of this ceremony being indispensable to salvation, is nevertheless a proof that the superstitious view of baptism had increased. In the time of Irenaeus (II. 22, 4), and Tertullian (de bapt. 18), child-baptism had already become very general and was founded. on Matthew 19: 14. We have no testimony regarding it from earlier times (Ibid, II. 142).

And finally he says that it:

was established in the fifth century as the general usage. Its complete adoption runs parallel with the death of heathenism (Ibid, IV. 284).

Professor H.G. Wood, of the University of Cambridge, says:

We are, as Harnack says, “in complete obscurity as to the Church’s adoption of the practice.” The clear third century references to childbaptism interpret it

in the light of original sin, and if the adoption of the practice is due to this interpretation, it is almost certainly a late second century development. ... References to original sin in Clement of Rome or other writers earlier than Cyprian cannot be held to imply a knowledge of the custom of infant baptism. Moreover, the idea that infants needed to be baptized for the remission of sins is contrary to all that is known of early Christian feeling toward childhood. ... Even in the third century infant baptism cannot be described as a Church custom. That the Church allowed parents to bring their infants to be baptized is obvious; that some teachers and bishops may have encouraged them to do so is probable, though there is no reason to suppose that Tertullian's position was peculiarly his own. But infant baptism was not at this time enjoined, or incorporated in the standing orders of the Church (*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 11.).

Dr. F.C. Conybeare says that "the essential thing was that a man should come to baptism of his own free will." He further says:

On such grounds was justified the transition of a baptism which began as a spontaneous act of self-consecration into an *opus operandum*. How long after this it was before infant baptism became normal inside the Byzantine church we do not know exactly. ... The change came more quickly in Latin than in Greek Christendom, and very slowly indeed in the Armenian and the Georgian churches (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, Article on Baptism).

Andre Lagarde says:

Until the sixth century, infants were baptized only when they were in danger of death. About this time the practice was introduced of administering baptism even when they were not ill (Lagarde, *Latin Church in the Middle Ages*, 37).

These facts are altogether against the idea that infant baptism was the practice of the ancient churches. In its introduction it met with the greatest opposition, and it was only under the anathema and by the point of the sword that infant baptism was pressed upon the unwilling Christians; and the same intolerance has followed its history to the present time.

Of the form of baptism practised in the ancient churches there is not a particle of doubt. It is certain that immersion was the universal rule, save in the case of a few sick persons.

There are six elaborate descriptions or rituals of baptism which have come down to us. They were all well known in the churches and all of them prescribe immersion.. They are the so-called Egyptian Acts (Gebhardt and Harnack, *Texts and Researches*, VI. c. 4 (28)); the Canon Hipolyte, the third century (Hipolyte, Bk. VII. (29)); the Apostolic Constitutions or Canons, in the

Greek, the Coptic, and the Latin versions, A.D. 350-404; Cyril of Jerusalem, A.D. 286 (Migne XXXIII. 43); Ambrose of Milan, A.D. 397 (Bunsen, *Analecta*, II. 465), and Dionysius Areopagita, A.D. 450. These rituals were largely used in the churches and represent the universal practice of immersion.

Of this practice of immersion there is proof in Africa, in Palestine, in Egypt, in Antioch and Constantinople and in Cappadocia. For the Roman use of immersion we have the testimony of eight hundred years. Tertullian bears witness for the second century (Tertullian, *De Bapt.*, c. 4); Leo the Great in the fifth century (Fourth Letter to the Bishop of Sicily); Pope Pelagius in the sixth century (*Epist. ad Gaudent*); Theoduff of Orleans in the eighth century; and in the eleventh century—the Romans dipped the subject “only once” (Canisius, *Lectioes Antiq.*, III. 281). These examples settle the use of the Italians.

There is also the testimony of the early Christian monuments. At first the Christians baptized in rivers and fountains. This, says Walafrid Strabo, was done with great simplicity (Migne, CXIV, 958). Later, on account of persecutions, the Christians hid themselves; and the Catacombs furnished many examples of baptisteries. Dr. Cote, who lived many years in Rome, and closely studied the baptismal question, says: “During the dark days of imperial persecutions the primitive Christians of Rome found a ready refuge in the Catacombs, where they constructed baptisteries for the administration of the rite of immersion” (Cote, *Archaeology of Baptism*, 151. London, 1876). Even a brief description of these baptisteries cannot be given here, but one who has not studied the subject carefully will be surprised at their number and extent.

Afterwards when more liberty of worship was granted to the Christians many churches were erected. At first the baptistery was an independent structure, separate from the place of worship; but later it became the custom to place the baptistery in the church house itself. Such baptisteries were erected in almost every country where the Christian religion had spread. This was particularly true in Italy. Cote gives a list of not less than sixty-six baptisteries in that country alone (Cote, *Baptisteries*, 110). As late as the eighth and ninth centuries baptisteries continued to be in full use in Italy. Baptisteries were erected in Italy as late as the fourteenth century, while immersion continued in the Cathedral of Milan till the close of the eighteenth century.

These baptisteries were decorated and naturally many of the emblems, mosaics and paintings were intended to illuminate the form of baptism. The so-called Christian Art was found in the Catacombs, on the interior of churches and on church furniture and utensils. The oldest pictures do not date before the time of the Emperor Constantine (Parker, *The Archaeology of Rome*, XII. 11. Oxford, 1877); many of them have been constantly repaired, and some of the most famous ones have been so changed that they have lost their original character

(Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *History of Painting in Italy*, I. 22). No certain conclusions can be drawn from this source, but the teaching of all early art indicates immersion as the form of baptism. The pictures represent river scenes, the candidate stands in the water, and every circumstance points toward the primitive act of baptism. The unanimous opinion of the professors of archaeology in the great universities is that the ancient pictures, in the Catacombs and elsewhere, of baptism, represent the rite as administered by immersion (See *Christian's Baptism in Sculpture and Art*. Louisville, 1907).

Affusion for baptism was of slow growth. Possibly the earliest mention of affusion is found in the famous Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Bryennios, *Didache ton Dodeka Apostolon*. Constantinople, 1883), which is variously claimed to be a production of the first to the seventh century.

Novatian (A.D. 250) presents the first case of clinic baptism on record. He had water profusely poured upon him while sick in bed, but his baptism is distinctly called "an abridgement" or "compend" (Eusebius, *The Church History*, 289. New York, 1890). Affusion is a mere substitute for immersion. France was the first country where affusion was permitted to persons in the full enjoyment of health (Wall, *The History of Infant Baptism*, I. 576). The first law for sprinkling was obtained in the following manner: "Pope Stephen III., being driven from Rome by Astolphus, King of the Lombards, in 753, fled to Pepin, who, a short time before, had usurped the crown of France. Whilst he remained there, the monks of Cressy, in Brittany, consulted him, whether, in cases of necessity, baptism, performed by pouring water on the head of the infant, would be lawful. Stephen replied that it would" (Edinburgh Encyclopaedia, III. 236). It was not, however, till A.D. 1311, that the Council of Ravenna decreed: "Baptism is to be administered by trine aspersion or immersion" (Labbe and Cossart, *Sacrosancta Concilia*, II. B. 2, 1586. Paris, 1671). Soon after this sprinkling became customary in France.

For the first thirteen centuries immersion was the normal practice of the Christian world. "Baptism by immersion," says Dollinger, "continued to be the prevailing practice of the Church as late as the fourteenth century" (Dollinger, *The History of the Church*, II. 294. London, 1840-42). Immersion was practised in some parts of Germany in the sixteenth century. In England immersion was the practice for sixteen hundred years.

At the time of the birth of Jesus religious liberty was unknown in the world. Even the ancient republics never recognized it. Socrates, with all of his moral heroism, never arose above the assumption, that impiety should be punished with death. In his defense before his judges he says:

My duty is to persuade you, if I can; but you have sworn to follow your own convictions in judging according to the laws — not to make the laws bend to

your partiality. And it is your duty so to do. Do not, therefore, require of me proceedings dishonorable in reference to myself and impious in regard to you, especially at a time when I am myself rebutting an accusation of impiety advanced by Miletus (Grote, History of Greece, VIII. 656).

It was fully agreed by all Pagan nations that the state had a right to regulate all matters connected with religion; and the citizen was bound to obey.

Early did the Christians avow and amplify religious liberty. The blood of persecution brought to the front this doctrine. Tertullian boldly tells the heathen that everybody has a natural and inalienable right to worship God according to his own conscience. His words are

However, it is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according to his own convictions; one man's religion neither harms nor helps another man. It is assuredly no part of religion to compel religion — to which free-will and not force should lead us — the sacrificial victims even being required of a willing mind. You will render no real service to your gods by compelling us to sacrifice. For they can have no desire of offerings from the unwilling, unless they are animated by a spirit of contention, which is a thing altogether undivine (Tertullian, ad Scapulam, c. 2).

Justin Martyr affirmed similar opinions (Apol. I.c. 2. 4, 12), and later Lactantius says

Religion cannot be imposed by force; the matter must be carried on by words rather than by blows, that the will may be affected. Torture and piety are widely different; nor is it possible for truth to be united with violence, or justice with cruelty. Nothing is so much a matter of free will as religion (Lactantius, Instit. div. V. 20).

Dr. Baur, commenting on these statements, says:

It is remarkable how already the oldest Christian Apologists, in vindicating the Christian faith, were led to assert the Protestant principle of freedom of faith and conscience as an inherent attribute of the conception of religion against their heathen opponents (Baur, Gesch. der Christl. Kirche, I. 428).

Hase says:

Thus did the church prove, in a time of unlimited arbitrary power, the refuge of popular freedom, and saints assumed the part of tribunes of the people (Hase, Church History, sec. 117, p. 161, 7th edition).

This is hardly a Protestant doctrinal tenet, but it does belong to the Baptists. Protestants have been all too ready to persecute.

When Constantine, after the victory of Milvian Bridge, on the Tiber, October 27, 312, became emperor he issued a decree of toleration. The famous edict of Milan was issued by Constantine and Licinius. It is of so much importance that the law is here transcribed in full. It is as follows:

Perceiving long ago that religious liberty ought not to be denied, but that it ought to be granted to the judgment and desire of each individual to perform his religious duties according to his own choice, we had given orders that every man, Christians as well as others, should preserve the faith of his own sect and religion. But since in this rescript, in which such liberty was granted them, many and various conditions seemed clearly added, some of them, it may be, after a little retired from such observance. When I, Constantine Augustus, and I, Licinus Augustus, came under favorable auspices to Milan and took under consideration everything which pertained to the common weal and prosperity, we resolved among other things, or rather first of all, to make such decrees as seemed in many respects for the benefit of every one; namely, such as should preserve reverence and piety toward the deity. We resolved, that is, to grant both to the Christians and to all men freedom to follow the religion which they choose, that whatever heavenly divinity exists may be propitious to us and to all that live under our government. We have, therefore, determined, with sound and upright purpose, that liberty is to be denied to no one, to choose and to follow the religious observance of the Christians, but that to each one freedom is to be given to devote his mind to that religion which he may think adapted to himself, in order that the Deity may exhibit to us in all things his accustomed care and favor. It was fitting that we should write that this is our pleasure, that those conditions being entirely left out which were contained in our former letter concerning the Christians which was sent to your devotedness, everything that seemed very severe and foreign to our mildness may be annulled, and that now every one who has the same desire to observe the religion of the Christians may do so without molestation. We have resolved to communicate this most fully to thy care, in order that thou mayest know that we have granted to these same Christians freedom and full liberty to observe their own religion. Since this has been granted freely to them, thy devotedness perceives that liberty is granted to others also who may wish to follow their own religious observances; it being clearly in accordance with the tranquillity of our times, that each one should have the liberty of choosing and worshipping whatever deity he pleases. This has been done by us in order that we might not seem in any way to discriminate against any rank of religion. And we decree still further in regard to the Christians, that their places, in which they were formerly accustomed to assemble, and concerning which in the former letter sent to thy devotedness a different command was given, if it appear that any have bought them either from our treasury or from any other person, shall be restored to the said Christians, without demanding money or any other equivalent, with no delay or hesitation. If any happen to have received the said places as a gift, they shall restore them as quickly as possible to these same Christians; with the

understanding that if those who have bought these places, or those who have received them, demand anything from our bounty, they may go to the judge of the district, that provision may be made for them by our clemency. All these things are to be granted to the society of Christians by your care immediately and without any delay. And since the said Christians are known to have possessed not only these places in which they were accustomed to assemble, but also other places, belonging not to individuals among them, but to the society as a whole,, that is, to the society of Christians, you will command that all of these, in virtue of the law which we have above stated, be restored, without any hesitation, to these same Christians; that is, to their society and congregation; the above mentioned provision being of course observed, that those who restore them without price, as we have before said, may expect indemnification from our bounty. In all these things, for the behoof of the aforesaid society of Christians, you are to use the utmost diligence, to the end that our command may be speedily fulfilled, and that in this also, by our clemency, provision may be made for the common and public tranquillity. For by this means, as we have said before, the divine favor toward us which we have already experienced in many matters will continue sure through all time. And that the terms of this gracious ordinance may be known to all, it is expected that this which we have written will be published everywhere by you and brought to the knowledge of all, in order that this gracious ordinance of ours may remain unknown to no one (Eusebius, The Church History, X. 5).

Of this decree Mason says:

It is the very first announcement of that doctrine which is now regarded as the mark and principle of civilization, the foundation of solid liberty, the characteristic of modern politics. In vigorous and trenchant sentences it sets forth perfect freedom of conscience, the unfettered choice of religion (Mason, Persecution of Dioclesian, 327).

A forced religion is no religion at all. Unfortunately, the successors of Constantine from the time of Theodosius the Great (385-395) enforced the Christian religion to the exclusion of every other; and not only so, but they enforced so-called orthodoxy to the exclusion of every form of dissent, which was punished as a crime against the State. Absolute freedom of religion and of worship is a fact logically impossible on the churchstate system. The government of the Roman empire was too absolute to abandon supervision of religion, so that the edict of Constantine was only temporary. Further, the rising power of episcopacy fitted into the monarchical system. Many of the bishops and monks were “men in black clothes, as voracious as elephants, and insatiably thirsty, but concealing their sensuality under an artificial paleness.”

The first blood of heretics shed by a Christian prince was by Maximus, A.D. 385, in the Spanish city of Treves. This act was approved by the bishops, with a single exception, but the Christian churches recoiled from it with horror.

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SAMPLE

PAGES

CHAPTER 3. — THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CORRUPTION

Incorruptible Churches — The Testimony of Bunsen — The Montanist Churches — Their Anabaptism — The Spread of the Movement — The Novatian Churches — Robinson Traces Them to the Reformation — They Were Called Anabaptists — The Donatist Churches — Their Origin — Rejected Infant Baptism — Benedict — Lincoln — Augustine — Liberty of Conscience — Neander — Their Attitude Toward Liberty — Their Protest.

AT first there was unity in fundamental doctrines and practices. Step by step some of the churches turned aside from the old paths and sought out many inventions. Discipline became lax and persons of influence were permitted to follow a course of life which would not have been tolerated under the old discipline. The times had changed and some of the churches changed with the times. There were those who had itching ears and they sought after novelties. The dogma of baptismal regeneration was early accepted by many, and men sought to have their sins washed away in water rather than in the blood of Christ. Ministers became ambitious for power and trampled upon the independence of the churches. The churches conformed to the customs of the world and the pleasures of society.

There were, however, churches which remained uncorrupted, and there were faithful men who raised their voices against the departure from apostolic practice. An account will be given of some of the early reformers who offered their protest and called the people back to the simplicity of the gospel.

Chevalier Christian Charles Bunsen, while Prussian ambassador to London, walking in the light and breathing in the atmosphere of a purer age, held holy communion with the early churches. He used these earnest words:

Take away ignorance, misunderstanding, and forgeries, and the naked truth remains; not a spectre, thank God, carefully to be veiled; but an image of divine beauty radiant with eternal truth! Break down the barriers which separate us from the communion of the primitive church — I mean, free yourselves from the letter of the later formulas, canons, and conventional abstractions — and you move unshackled in the open ocean of faith; you hold fellowship with the spirits of the heroes of Christian antiquity; and you are able to trace the stream of unity as it rolls through eighteen centuries in spite of rocks and quicksands (Bunsen, Hippolytus, 4).

The first protest in the way of separation from the growing corruptions of the times was the movement of the Montanist churches. This Montanus, the leader, was a Phrygian, who arose about the year A.D. 156. The most distinguished

advocate of Montanism was Tertullian who espoused and defended their views. They held that science and art, all worldly education or gay form of life, should be avoided, because such things belonged to paganism. The crown of life was martyrdom. Religious life they held to be austere. Against a mortal sin the church should defend itself by rightly excluding him who committed it, for the holiness of the church was simply the holiness of the members. With such principles they could not fail to come in conflict with the popular Christianity of the day. The substance of the contentions of these churches was for a life of the Spirit. It was not a new form of Christianity; it was a recovery of the old, the primitive church set over against the obvious corruptions of the current Christianity. The old church demanded purity; the new church had struck a bargain with the world, and had arranged itself comfortably with it, and they would, therefore, break with it (Moeller, Montanism in Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia, III, 1562).

Their contention was not so much one of doctrine as of discipline. They insisted that those who had “lapsed” from the true faith should be rebaptized, because they had denied Christ and ought to be baptized anew. On this account they were termed “Anabaptists,” and some of their principles reappeared in Anabaptism (Schaff, History of the Christian Church, II, 427). Infant baptism was not yet a dogma, and we know that it was rejected by the Montanists. Tertullian thought only adults ought to be immersed. The Montanists were deeply rooted in the faith, and their opponents admitted that they received the entire Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments, and they were sound in their views of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Epiphanius, Hoer, XLVIII. 1). They rejected episcopacy and the right of the bishop’s claim to exercise the power of the keys.

The movement spread rapidly through Asia Minor and North Africa, and for a time in Rome itself. It appealed very powerfully to the sternest moralists, stricter disciplinarians, and more deeply pious minds among all Christians. Montanism had the advantage of claiming divine revelation for stricter principles. Montanism had made so much stir in Asia Minor, before the close of the second century, that several councils were called against it, and finally the whole movement was officially condemned. But Montanism continued for centuries, and finally became known under other names (Eusebius, The Church History, 229 note 1 by Dr. McGiffert). In Phrygia the Montanists came in contact with, and probably in actual communion with, the Paulicians. We know that they were still in existence in the year 722 (Theophanes, 617. Bond ed.).

The rise of the Novatian churches was another outcropping of the old strife between the lax and strict discipline. In the year 250 Novatian strenuously opposed the election of Cornelius as the pastor of the church in Rome.

Novatian declared that he did not wish the office himself, but he pleaded for the purity of the church. The election of Cornelius prevailed, and Novatian carried many churches and ministers with him in his protest. The vast extent of the Novatian movement may be learned from the authors who wrote against him, and the several parts of the Roman empire where they flourished.

These churches continued to flourish in many parts of Christendom for six centuries (Walch, *Historie der Ketzereyen*, II. 220). Dr. Robinson traces a continuation of them up to the Reformation and the rise of the Anabaptist movement. "Great numbers followed his (Novatian's) example," says he, "and all over the Empire Puritan churches were constituted and flourished through two hundred, succeeding years. Afterwards, when penal laws obliged them to lurk in corners, and worship God in private, they were distinguished by a variety of names, and a succession of them continued till the Reformation" (Robinson, *Ecclesiastical Researches*, 126. Cambridge, 1792).

On account of the purity of their lives they were called the Cathari, that is, the pure. "What is still more," says Mosheim, "they rebaptized such as came over to them from the Catholics" (Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History* I. 203. New York, 1871). Since they baptized those who came to them from other communions they were called Anabaptists. The fourth Lateran Council decreed that these rebaptizers should be punished by death. Accordingly, Albanus, a zealous minister, and others, were punished with death. They were, says Robinson, "trinitarian Baptists." They held to the independence of the churches; and recognized the equality of all pastors in respect to dignity and authority.

The Donatists arose in Numidia, in the year 311, and they soon extended over Africa. They taught that the church should be a holy body. Crespin, a French historian, says that they held the following views:

First, for purity of church members, by asserting that none ought to be admitted into the church but such as are visibly true believers and true saints.

Secondly, for purity of church discipline.

Thirdly, for the independency of each church.

Fourthly, they baptized again those whose first baptism they had reason to doubt. They were consequently termed rebaptizers and Anabaptists.

In his early historical writings David Benedict, the Baptist historian, wrote with much caution of the denominational character of the Donatists. He followed closely the statements of other writers in his history; but in his last days he went into the original sources and produced a remarkable book called a "History of the Donatists" (Pawtucket, 1875). In that book he recedes from

his non-committal position and classes them as Baptists. He quite freely shows from Augustine and Optatus, who were contemporaries, that the Donatists rejected infant baptism and were congregational in their form of government.

Dr. Heman Lincoln dissented from some of the conclusions of Dr. Benedict and called them fanciful. But that they held some Baptist principles he did not doubt. He says:

It is evident that the Donatists held, at some period of their history, many of the principles which are regarded as axioms by modern Baptists. In their later history, after a stern discipline of persecution, they maintained, as cardinal truths, absolute freedom of conscience, the divorce of church and state, and a regenerate church membership. These principles, in whose defense they endured martyrdom coupled with their uniform practice of immersion, bring them into close affinity with Baptists (Lincoln, *The Donatists*. In *The Baptist Review*, 358, July, 1880).

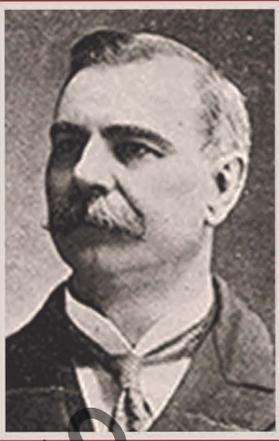
This is the position of an extreme conservative. Perhaps Dr. Lincoln underestimated the coloring which the enemies of the Donatists gave to the controversy, and he certainly did not give due credit to what Augustine says on infant baptism in his opposition to them. It has been affirmed that some of the Donatists placed too much stress upon the efficiency of baptism and affirmed episcopacy. This however is a matter of controversy of no great interest, and does not here concern us.

Governor Henry D'Anvers truly remarks:

Augustine's third and fourth books against the Donatists demonstrated that they denied infant baptism, wherein he maintained the argument for infant baptism against them with great zeal, enforcing it with severe arguments (D'Anvers, *A Treatise on Baptism*, 223, London, 1674).

Augustine makes the Donatists Anabaptists (Migne, *Patrologia Lat.*, XLII.). The form of baptism, according to Optatus, was immersion. Lucas O-siander, Professor in and Chancellor of the University of Tubingen, wrote a book against the Anabaptists, in 1605, in which he says: "Our modern Anabaptists are the same as the Donatists of old" (Osiander, *Epist. cent.* 16. p. 175. Wittenberg, 1607). These rigid moralists, however, did not count themselves Anabaptists; for they thought that there was one Lord, one faith, one baptism and that their own (Albaspinae, *Observat.* In Optatus, i). They took no account of the baptism of others, and contended that they were wrongly called Anabaptists.

The Donatists stood for liberty of conscience, and they were opposed to the persecuting power of the State Church. They were, says Neander, "the most important and influential church division which we have to mention in this



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(1854-1925)

In 1919, Dr. Christian became Professor of Church History at the Baptist Bible Institute, New Orleans, Louisiana (renamed the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1946). He played a major role in the controversies surrounding the restorationist views of Baptist history taught by William Heth Whitsitt (see The Whitsitt Controversy) in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary of Louisville, Kentucky. He wrote extensive rebuttals to Whitsitt's works and eventually published a history of the Baptists written from a successionist's perspective.

The John T. Christian Library of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is named in his honor. According to the seminary, "The basic collection came from the library of the outstanding church historian, John T. Christian, who was the first librarian of the seminary. He gave the school his personal library of 18,000 volumes when he joined the faculty in 1919." His personal papers are housed in the Archives at the John T. Christian Library, on campus at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

His work is highly acclaimed and recommended by those who are considered scholars in the area of Baptist history.

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