

# Baptist History

A  
Chronological  
Summary of  
Baptist Church History  
Since the  
Time of Christ



Compiled by  
Scott K. Childs

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# Introduction

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The history of Baptists is a subject that is very difficult to write about since few books deal with the subject before the year AD. 1000. Enemies of the Baptists wrote much of the available information, thus, it is often bias and incorrect. In this book we will attempt to give an accurate description of Baptist history. We will show that, in every generation since the time of Christ, some “Baptist” churches (though often not Baptist by name) have followed the Bible doctrines that govern biblical Baptists today.

For the sake of ease we have not included “AD.” before the dates written in this book. All the events mentioned in this book took place after the time of Christ unless indicated otherwise with a “BC.”

We will be examining New Testament church history from the time of Christ to the present. To do so, we must know what we mean when we say “church.” The English word “church” is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia* that is literally any called out assembly that meets regularly. In the spiritual sense it refers to a local organized autonomous band of immersed believers. This congregation has New Testament officers and practice New Testament ordinances. They are also actively engaged in carrying out the Great Commission.

While Jesus was yet on the earth He layed the foundation for the first New Testament church (1 Corinthians 3:11). Jesus said that He would do this in Matthew 16. *“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* Matthew 16:17-18. Christ began this work somewhere around the year 28-30. The foundations for local church ministries were layed as He preached to the multitudes the message of salvation. He also taught His disciples to preach the Word and evangelize unbelievers. His example and teachings confirmed the importance of believer’s baptism by immersion in water as an act of obedience and public testimony of one’s faith. Christ instituted the memorial of the Lord’s Supper just prior to His death. He also charged believers to handle differences biblically and to practice church discipline when necessary.

The teaching that the first church was made fully functional during Christ’s ministry is conjecture. The Scriptures simply do not state. In many ways the Gospels describe a transitional period between the Dispensation of Law and the Church Age. However, we do know that at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came down upon the first believers to help and empower this infant church. God gave the Holy Spirit and the Bible to guide and direct the doctrines and practices of this church. Through the Holy Spirit’s ministry, this local assembly flourished and multiplied. Throughout the following centuries, these churches established thousands of other local New Testament churches throughout the world.

To trace this New Testament church through the ages of history, we must know the foundational truths that govern it. Not every “church” that emerged was truly a New Testament church. New Testament Churches always believed and practised the following basic doctrinal truths that biblical Baptists adamantly hold today.

1. The **BIBLE** was given to man by inspiration of God. Because it is God’s Word, it must be our supreme and ultimate rule for doctrine and practice. Any time we have a question concerning doctrine or practice we must find the answer in the Bible and follow its guidance (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Hebrews 4:12; Acts 17:11; Psalm 119:105).
2. **SALVATION** is a gift received by grace, through personal faith in Christ’s substitutional atonement for every man’s sin (1 Peter 3:18). Without this salvation, God must condemn all men to an eternity in a literal hell (Revelation 21:8). Salvation, having truly been received, cannot be lost (John 5:24).
3. Salvation then baptism must precede **MEMBERSHIP**. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone and baptism must be by immersion following salvation (Ephesians 2:1-10; Acts 2:41).
4. Every local church is to be **AUTONOMOUS** (self-governing and self-propagating). Christ alone is the head of every local church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23). No human authority has the right to control the belief and preaching of a local church. Each local church has the authority to scripturally discipline members that refuse to confess sin (Matthew 18:15-19). It has the authority to send forth missionaries (Acts 13:1-3). It has the authority to receive the tithes and offerings of God’s people for the furtherance of God’s work (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Romans 15:25-26; Malachi 3:8-10; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; 1 Corinthians 9:13-14).
5. Christ left two non-sacramental **ORDINANCES** for local churches: **believers’ baptism** as a symbol of the death and resurrection of Christ; and the partaking of unleavened bread and grape juice as symbols of Christ’s death, better known as the **Lord’s Supper**. Jesus gave believers in the local church the ordinance of baptism (Matthew 28:19) and the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), and commanded that they be observed.
6. New Testament church teachings are **EVANGELISTIC** and **NON-CHARISMATIC**. Evangelism is a central theme of the Bible (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). In general Charismatic teachings wrongly magnify emotion above conviction; magnify the Holy Spirit above Christ; magnify experience above the Bible; magnify gifts above evangelism (1 Corinthians 14:33).
7. Every genuine Christian is a **PRIEST** before God (1 Peter 2:5, 9). As a priest, every Christian may commune directly with God in prayer (Hebrews 4:14-16); and he is urged to intercede for others (Ephesians 6:18). He can pray anywhere and confess sin without human help (1 John 1:9). He may read the Bible and



## 6 ♦ Baptist History

- receive instruction and knowledge directly from it (John 14:26).
8. Every genuine Christian has **SOUL LIBERTY**. Soul Liberty is the belief that every individual, whether a believer or an unbeliever, has the liberty to choose what he wants to believe. No one has the right to force his belief on another. However, only the Bible is true and those who choose contrary to the Bible will be held accountable by God (Philippians 2:12-13; Romans 14:12).
  9. God has appointed the offices of **PASTOR** and **DEACON** for the leadership of the local church. The pastor is to be the head of the church, under Christ (Ephesians 4:7-12; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). The deacon is a servant of the pastor to help minister to the physical needs of the church (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). The lives and testimonies of the pastor and deacon must be in accord with the qualifications outlined in Scripture.
  10. The New Testament church must practise both **ecclesiastical** and **personal SEPARATION**. Ecclesiastical separation is the separation of church and state. In other words, the church cannot receive power or authority from the government. Likewise, the government does not have the right to control the beliefs and practices of the local church (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:3-4).

Ecclesiastical separation also forbids the local church to cooperate in any way with churches, who condone, endorse, or tolerate sinful practices, or doctrines contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. This includes ecumenical meetings and the modern charismatic activities (Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 13-14).

Personal separation means that members of the church must strive to abstain from all sinful practices (1 Thessalonians 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:22).

Every true New Testament church since the time of Christ has believed and practised these ten basic doctrinal truths to which biblical Baptists adhere today. Many of these churches went by names other than “Baptist,” yet for the sake of identification we could call them “Baptist” churches. We must remember, it is not the name nor the historical succession that makes a group of Christians a New Testament “Baptist” church, but the doctrine that they believe and practice.

<b>B</b>	Bible is supreme and ultimate authority
<b>A</b>	Attonement is by faith in Christ alone
<b>P</b>	Public Immersion of believers & Symbolic Lord's Supper
<b>T</b>	Teachings are Evangelistic & Non-Charismatic
<b>I</b>	Independent, Self-governing, & Self-propagating
<b>S</b>	Soul Liberty & Priesthood of all believers
<b>T</b>	Two leaders: Pastor then Deacons
<b>S</b>	Separation: Personal and Church

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Define the word “church according to its original meaning.
2. In your own words, summarize the ten doctrinal truths that a religious group must believe and practice to rightly be called a New Testament Church.

# Chapter 1

First Century, Years 30-100

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In Acts chapter one we read that Jesus ascended back into heaven. His work on earth was complete and He had prepared His disciples for the work they must do. In Matthew 28:19-20 Christ divided this work into three responsibilities. 1) They were to bring men to Christ. 2) They were to baptize converts by immersion in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. 3) And they were to teach these new believers to live by the Word of God. These three responsibilities are as vital for biblical churches today as they were in the first century. Evangelistic preaching must be preeminent if people are to repent and trust in Christ's substitutional death as payment for their sin. Once saved, they must be instructed to follow the Lord in baptism by immersion as a picture of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Following baptism they must be taught the Word of God so that they might grow spiritually.

Ten days after Christ ascended into heaven He sent the Holy Spirit down to fill the believers that were in the first church that He had established. This took place on the day of Pentecost that was "the second of three great annual festivals, the others being the Passover and Tabernacles."<sup>1</sup> While Christ was on the earth, He laid aside his attribute of omnipresence thus limiting Himself to one location at a time. Now that the Holy Spirit had come, He was always present with every Christian. Through the power of the Holy Spirit they could fulfill the work that Christ had left for them to do.

It was at this time that the Holy Spirit empowered Peter to preach a powerful message following which three thousand people accepted Christ. After their salvation they were baptized and were added to the congregation that was there in Jerusalem. They remained strong in doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayer. These practices of the first church in Jerusalem have remained the practices of every truly "Baptist" church to this day.

In only a short time the church that was at Jerusalem grew to several thousand members (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1). Some have estimated that their number may have reached as many as twenty-five to fifty thousand members. Acts chapter six tells us that the number of the disciples was multiplied making it difficult for the pastors to minister to all of the physical needs of the membership. Consequently, they appointed seven deacons to help the pastors. This enabled the pastors to have more time to read the Word, to pray and to prepare messages to preach.

God richly blessed this first church, but the blessing of God nearly always provokes opposition from Satan.<sup>2</sup> Acts chapter seven gives us the narrative describing the stoning of Stephen. John the Baptist and Christ had previously died at the hands of the enemy, but Stephen was the first martyr for the cause of Christ after Pentecost.

First century believers faced great persecution. Many spent time in prison while

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1. Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 414.

2. 2 Timothy 3:12

others died as martyrs. Instead of defeat, God turned this seemingly bad situation into a means of propagating the Gospel to the far reaches of the known world. Christians were forced to flee Jerusalem for their lives. As they did they carried with them the message of salvation through Christ. These persecuted Christians established many new churches and Christianity multiplied (Acts 11:19-26). Under these circumstances that Philip went and preached at Samaria and led many people to Christ (Acts 8).

It appears that Saul of Tarsus was the instigator of the mob that stoned Stephen. He was also the ringleader of the persecutors who imprisoned and killed many other Christians. He obtained permission to travel north to Damascus to incarcerate the believers. As he neared the city of Damascus, God caused him to see a bright light from heaven that temporarily blinded him. During this encounter he talked with Christ and accepted Him as his Saviour. Christ instantly changed his life.

Shortly after his conversion Saul began to preach salvation through the same Christ he had previously hated. As a result it was not long before the Jews sought to take his life.

After some time, Saul went to Antioch in Syria. Antioch was a city of nearly 500,000 people. It was a city permeated with many idols and sinful activities. It was in this place that Saul began his ministry. The Lord saved many people and strengthened the infant church in Antioch numerically and spiritually. It was at Antioch that the believers were first given the name “Christian” by their enemies because they were followers of Christ in both doctrine and practice.

Somewhere around the year forty-five a severe famine struck Judea. The church that was in Antioch took up offerings to help the needy Christians in the Jerusalem church. They chose Saul and Barnabas to deliver the financial offering to them.<sup>3</sup>

### Paul’s First Missionary Journey

After returning to Antioch, the church in Antioch sent Saul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey to Galatia. Saul (who now used the name Paul) and Barnabas chose John Mark to go with them on this journey. Having departed from Antioch in Syria, they walked to the seaport town of Seleucia. From there they sailed to the town of Salamis on the Island of Cyprus (Acts 13:2-4). Most likely they walked across the island preaching the gospel as they went. Upon reaching the western end of the island they preached the gospel in the seaport city of Paphos (Acts 13:5-6).

From Paphos they travelled by ship to Perga a mainland town in the province of Pamphylia (Acts 13:13). While in Perga, John Mark, for an unknown reason, deserted them and went back home. Leaving Perga they



Paul preached with zeal

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3. Proverbs 19:17



walked over the mountains to the town of Antioch in the district of Pisidia (Acts 13:14). After preaching the gospel in Antioch they went to the town of Iconium (Acts 13:50-51). Shortly afterwards they went to the town of Lystra. The angry mob at Lystra stoned Paul and left for dead. God raised him and enabled him to carry on (Acts 14:5-19). When they left Lystra, they went to the town of Derbe (Acts 14:20).

Having completed their ministry in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. They strengthened those who had trusted Christ and to ordain pastors in every church that they had established (Acts 14:22,23). At this time they again crossed the mountains and travelled back to the town of Perga. After preaching the gospel in Perga they went to the port town of Attalia where they boarded a ship and sailed back to Antioch in Syria. Upon returning they reported of their first missionary journey to the church at Antioch (Acts 14:25-28).

### **Paul's Second Missionary Journey**

After two years and four months Paul prepared to make his second missionary journey. This time he did not travel with Barnabas as they strongly disagreed over John Mark accompanying them. Instead Paul chose another comrade, Silas.

This time, rather than going by ship, Paul and Silas travelled by land. They went through the country of Syria and the province of Cilicia strengthening the churches scattered throughout the region. Eventually they came to the towns of Derbe and Lystra (Acts 15:40-16:3). While in Lystra they met a young man Timothy, who joined them in their travels.

After leaving Lystra they travelled across the interior of Galatia until they came to the coastal town of Troas. While in Troas, the Holy Spirit directed them to go to the country of Macedonia. From Troas they went straight to Neapolis and on to Philippi, a leading city in that region. While at Philippi that Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison for preaching the gospel. God miraculously intervened to release them and the jailor and his family were saved (Acts 16:11-39). After departing from Philippi they went to the town of Thessalonica. The men of Thessalonica did not harken to the preaching of God's word so they travelled on to the town of Berea. Facing persecution, Acts 17:10-15 records that Paul moved on to the city of Athens. After a time in Athens and in Corinth they sailed across the Aegean Sea to the town of Ephesus. When they left Ephesus, they sailed on a straight course towards Jerusalem, landing in Caesarea and travelling on foot to Jerusalem. Once finished in Jerusalem, they again returned to their sending church in Antioch of Syria to report God's blessing during this second missionary journey.

### **Paul's Third Missionary Journey**

After a brief stay in Antioch Paul desired to make another missionary journey (Acts 18:22-21:20). Travelling on foot through Galatia, Paul preached in Derbe, Lystra, and Antioch as well as many other places. He travelled over to Ephesus, then up to Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. He visited the believers in Corinth and then returned

through Macedonia to Troas. Working his way through the islands that are off the west coast of Asia he visited Assos, Miletus and Rhodes. From there he sailed across the Mediterranean Sea to the town of Tyre, then south to Ptolemais, and eventually south to the town of Caesarea. From Caesarea he travelled by land to Jerusalem.

### **Paul's Trip to Rome**

Paul was not in Jerusalem long when trouble broke out. His enemies tried to kill him and he ended in jail. After a two year imprisonment (Acts 24:27) and much deliberation, he was sent to Rome for his trial. En route to Rome a storm wrecked his ship which resulted in an opportunity for him to lead many souls to Christ while shipwrecked on the island of Malta (Acts 27).

After two years of imprisonment in Rome it appears that Caesar released Paul. It was only a short time and he was imprisoned again. This time it is believed that Nero, the emperor of Rome beheaded Paul sometime around the year 63.

In the year 95 a great time of persecution arose under the Emperor Domitian. This persecution did not last for a long time, but it was very grievous. Domitian executed several thousand Christians in the country of Italy alone. It was at this time that he exiled the Apostle John to the Island of Patmos.

Before the end of the first century all twelve of the apostles and several noted Christians had died at the hands of their enemies. Matthew died in the country of Ethiopia. Mark died when his persecutors tied a rope around him and dragged him down the road until dead. They hanged Luke. They nailed Peter to a cross. They beheaded James. They stoned Philip. Bartholomew was skinned alive. Thomas was shot with a spear. They beat James the less to death. And they shot Jude with spears.<sup>4</sup>

Three other outstanding Christians of the first century were Ignatius (67-110), Polycarp (69-167), and Papias (70-155). Ignatius was a preacher at Antioch. When he refused to give an offering to the idols, the emperor Trajan sent him to Rome where wild beasts killed him for the entertainment of 80,000 spectators.<sup>5</sup>

Polycarp was the pastor of the church at Smyrna while Apostle John was still alive. When he was very old, the enemies of Christianity took him to an oval to kill him. Just prior to his death he said, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me any wrong: how, then, can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?" They burnt him with fire and shot him through with a spear while the spectators watched.<sup>6</sup>

For a long time the Christian Jews worshipped on both Saturday (Jewish Sabbath) and on Sunday. It appears that it was near the year 100 that the Christians began to meet primarily on Sunday. The New Testament teaches us that one day is no holier than another. The activities of every day should be holy and glorifying to God. The Christians choose Sunday as a day set aside for worship to commemorate the Lord's resurrection.

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4. J. M. Carroll, *The Trail of Blood*, p. 11.

5. Thomas Armitage, *The History of the Baptists*, p. 158.

6. Armitage, p. 158.

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. What were the outstanding characteristics of the first century Christians? How can you apply these characteristics to your life today?
2. When forced to leave town, what did the early Christians do about going to church? Would you do the same?
3. Who gave believers in Christ the name “Christian?” Why? Do people call you a Christian because they see Christ in you?
4. Why did Paul return to Lystra after being stoned there?
5. Which Emperor exiled John to the Island of Patmos?
6. How determined were the early Christians to follow Christ? Give some evidence. Are you that determined?

## Chapter 2

Second Century, Years 100-200

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The Roman Emperors during the second century varied greatly in their attitude towards Christians. None were entirely favourable towards them. Though the first three were a bit tolerant, the latter two grievously persecuted believers.

In the year 107 the Emperor Trajan killed Simeon, the brother of Jesus, by crucifixion on a cross. Trajan also killed Ignatius by throwing him to the wild beasts. Hadrian, persecuted only a few Christians, but was generally not too cruel. Antonius Pius, was quite favourable towards the Christians, although he did take the life of a few. It was at this time that Polycarp was martyred. Markus Aurelius, violently persecuted the Christians. Many were burned at the stake, others were beheaded, and many were thrown to the

wild beasts. Septimius Severus, persecuted the Christians even to a greater degree. He primarily persecuted those who lived in Egypt and in North Africa.<sup>7</sup>

A major question that arose among the Christians between the years 100 and 200 was the question, “What is truly the Word of God?” The issue was not over the Old Testament Scriptures, for that has been settled years earlier, but centred on the writings of the apostles. All the apostles were dead by this time, leaving behind only their writings. Many intense discussions and arguments arose over this issue.

During the second century, Christians in the early churches studied the writings of apostles to determine which writings were God’s Word and which were not. They examined them for errors in history, geography, and theology. A key test was *apostolic authorship*. If an apostle or a close associate did not write a document, they rejected it. A second test was *content*. If the content of a document did not agree perfectly with apostolic doctrine, it was set aside. A third test was *the response of the churches*. If churches were not universally being taught and blessed by the book, it lost its credibility.<sup>8</sup>

“Probably Paul’s Epistles were first collected into one volume; but within half a century after the death of John, the four Gospels were publicly read in the Churches of Syria, Asia Minor, Italy and Gaul, and all the New Testament books were collected by about AD. 150.”<sup>9</sup> “By the second century AD., the complete canon exactly as we have it today was popularly recognized.”<sup>10</sup>

During the second century no churches practised the baptism of babies. All

### 2nd Century Roman Emperors

Trajan . . . . .	98-117
Hadrian . . . . .	117-138
Antonius Pius . . . . .	138-161
Markus Aurelius . . . . .	161-180
Commodus . . . . .	180-192
Pertinax . . . . .	193
Didius Julianus . . . . .	193
Septimius Severus . . .	193-211

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7. Halley’s Bible Handbook, p. 762.

8. John F. MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos*, pp. 74-75.

9. Armitage, p. 155.

10. MacArthur, p. 72.

churches still believed that salvation must come before baptism.<sup>11</sup>

It was during the second century that some churches began to slightly change their beliefs concerning the Lord's Supper. Christ gave the Lord's Supper Himself for remembering His death till He returns. This was its only purpose. Yet, some erring churches began to claim that the Lord's Supper aided salvation.<sup>12</sup> If this were true, Christ died in vain. This false teaching was laying the groundwork for a works salvation.



Christians given to the lions in the Roman Amphitheater

Another error began to surface in the second century as well. It was the formation of a hierarchial religious system. Some large churches wanted to control the

smaller churches. The pastors and leaders of these large churches met and formulated laws by which they wanted all the churches to abide.<sup>13</sup> This was completely contrary to the Word of God in 1 Peter 5:3, *“Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”*

We must remember that Christ did not begin one huge church. It was His desire that each town have a local church of their own. He desires that each local church be autonomous and have their own pastor and deacons.<sup>14</sup>

As we have seen, it was during the second century, sometime before the year 200, that some churches began to embrace false practices. A few of them even began to adopt heathen religious practices as part of their services. This corrupted the doctrine and practice of these churches. They began to formulate manmade laws for their services such as washing their hands and removing their jackets before prayer. Some began to imitate sun worshippers and face the rising of the sun when they prayed. A few believers even raised their hands when they prayed to represent Jesus hanging on the cross. It was at this time the ritual of making the “sign of the cross” during prayer came into existence. Some confused Christians did this religiously before they went to sleep, upon getting up, when they dressed, when they washed, and at many other times.<sup>15</sup>

Adding more confusion to the heresies of that century, some erring churches decided to administer the ordinance of believers' baptism only on Easter and Pentecost. Though all “Christian” churches still practised baptism by immersion, some went so far as to begin to make baptism the channel for regeneration.<sup>16</sup> This was completely contrary

11. Armitage, p. 185.

12. Armitage, p. 166.

13. Carroll, p. 12.

14. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5

15. J. M. Cramp, *Baptist History: from the Foundation of the Christian Church to the Present Time.* p. 19.

16. Armitage, p. 160.

to the doctrines of the New Testament.<sup>17</sup>

Resulting from the increase of false doctrine, we begin to see the first clear distinction between churches. Part remained true to biblical teachings and others added the traditions of men. Though several churches did begin to error, many remained true to the Word of God.

Had we lived in the second century, prominent Christian leaders such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, and Hippolytus would have been well-known to us.<sup>18</sup>

When he was young, Tertullian lived in the town of Carthage in North Africa where he became a lawyer. In approximately 190, he received Christ as his Saviour. Eventually he became the pastor of the church in Carthage and the author of many books. He was a preacher of righteousness who urged Christians to separate from the many worldly and erring practices that were creeping into many churches. Around the year 200 Tertullian became a Montanist. The Montanists were a group of Christians that rightly stood against the ecclesiastical errors of the day, yet held several false doctrines concerning the Holy Spirit. (See chapter three for more information on Montanists.)<sup>19</sup>

**Prominent Christians**

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Justin Martyr . . .	100-167
Irenaeus . . . . .	130-200
Tertullian . . . . .	160-240
Origen . . . . .	203-254
Hippolytus . . . .	198-239

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Persecution against those who wanted to follow Christ became frequent towards the close of the second century. Following the tide of the day, many Christians followed their compromising church leaders and surrendered to mounting pressures to forsake sound doctrine. However, many still believed in soul liberty and the absolute authority of the Bible, though they were sliding towards a minority. These believers were willing to die rather than obey demands of the government contrary to Scripture. Many did die for the cause of Christ, yet their numbers multiplied. Tertullian said, “Our number increases the more you destroy us. The blood of the Christians is their seed.”<sup>20</sup>

As an example to this unwavering faith let us recount the story of the young Christian woman, Blandina, who was martyred at Lyons, France in the year 177.

“She was a poor slave-girl, fifteen years of age, who was put to every torture, that her Christian mistress might be implicated. She was kept in a loathsome dungeon, and brought into the amphitheater every day to see the agonies of her companions as they were roasted in the iron chair, or torn to pieces by lions. Her spirit was clothed with superhuman endurance, for although racked from morning till night, so that her tormentors were obliged to relieve each other for rest, her constancy vanquished their patience, her only answer being: 'I am a Christian, no wickedness is done by us.' Then they took her into the circus and suspended her on a cross, within reach of the wild beasts, to frighten her fellow-confessors. The multitude howled for her life and a lion

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17. John 14:6; Matthew 3:11; Romans 6:1-4  
 18. Halley, pp. 763-174.  
 19. Armitage, p. 174.  
 20. Armitage, p. 173.

was let loose upon the poor child, but not a quiver passed over her frame. She looked into its mouth and smiled like a queen, and the monster did not touch her. Only a century before this, the first slave-girl was converted to Christ, at Philippi, and now her ennobled sister cast holy defiance at the empire, and serenely looked Europe in the face. Her calm soul told this great Power, that at last the weak were endowed with the omnipotence of the Gospel. Her intrepid spirit showed, for the first time, how Jesus could lift a worm into the empire of a human conscience; and could rebuke cruelty in the mute eloquence of love. The brightest page in the history of Rome was written that day, in the beams of that child's hope. Taken down from the cross she was removed to her dungeon, but finally brought back into the arena for execution. Her slender frame was a rare victim for the savage populace, and they gloated on her. But she flinched not, more than the angel in Gethsemane before the swords and staves of the Passover mob. She stepped as lightly as if she were going to a banquet. She was first scourged, then scorched in the hot chair, and at last cast before a furious bull, which tossed her madly. Even then a sharp blade was needful to take the lingering throb of life; and when her body was burnt to ashes it was cast into the Rhone. From that day, this harmless child-slave has been with her redeeming Master in Paradise."<sup>21</sup>

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How can we know that modern “revelations” are not from God nor equal with Scripture?
2. What were some of the major doctrinal errors that arose in some churches during the second century?
3. What wrong practices crept into erring churches during the second century?
4. Why were these practices wrong?
5. What were the commendable characteristics of the fundamental Christians during the second century?
6. What qualities do you see in Blandina’s life that need to be emulated?

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21. Armitage, p.169-170.

## Chapter 3

Third Century, Years 200-300

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As the third century opened, the Emperors were more lenient than they had been at the close of the second century. This toleration continued until the middle of the century when a decade of terrible persecution erupted. A few years of toleration followed, only to have persecution revive again towards the end of the century.<sup>22</sup> We must keep this summary in mind that we might better comprehend the religious milieu of this century.

By the third century, “the religion of great numbers had become a compound of Judaism and Paganism, with a slight seasoning of Christianity.”<sup>23</sup> Leaders had mixed much error with the truth that finding truth was very difficult in so many churches.

As we begin unfolding the history of this new century, we begin to read about a “Catholic” church. The term “catholic” means “universal” and was used by those advocating the need for universal control over the local churches. Those churches who wanted a hierarchal church government, as apposed to the autonomous church government taught in the New Testament, became known as “Catholic” churches. Originally, their beliefs were only slightly like those of the Catholic church we know today.

As the hierarchal system gained power, these erring churches began to persecute those who wanted to follow solely the teachings of the New Testament. Not only had the erring churches adopted the hierarchal system of church government, but they also began to adopt several other doctrinal errors. An example of these doctrinal errors may be found in the writings of Cyprian. As a forefather of the Catholic church, Cyprian revealed his church’s false doctrine when he wrote, “. . . man cannot have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother. . . . Where there is no Church, sins cannot be put away. . . There is no salvation in any except in the Church.”<sup>24</sup>

To persuade men to follow their pernicious ways, these erring churches began accepting people into their membership who had not been saved. Thus, in these churches, membership became an essential part of salvation.

The unscriptural evolution of the Catholic priesthood had its beginnings in this century as well. “Division in the Churches had opened the way for one pagan practice after another in government, as well as doctrine, until the spirit of old Roman imperialism gradually formed a priestly hierarchy. . . The only priests under the Gospel, designated as such in the New Testament, are the saints, the members of the Christian brotherhood.”<sup>25</sup>

Bible believing Christians suffered extensively during this period in history. It

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22. Armitage, pp. 172-173

23. Cramp, p. 24.

24. Armitage, pp. 179-180.

25. Armitage, pp. 180-181.



was this persecution that drove them to flee into various parts of the world where they established more New Testament churches.

Around the year 200 that Montanus, a Christian native of Phrygia, began to draw a following. Those who followed his teachings became known as Montanists. He preached against the errors of many churches of his day, especially concerning personal holiness.

Montanists believed that salvation through faith in Christ was a prerequisite to church membership. They believed that the Holy Spirit indwells all believers not just the church hierarchy, as many erring churches were teaching. They baptized only believers and they never baptized any babies. They believed that the Tribulation would come before Christ set up his earthly Kingdom on the earth.

Though the Montanists were correct in many of their teachings, they held to several incorrect doctrines. (1) They believed that since the Holy Spirit filled every Christian equally, both Christian men and women could preach God's word. (2) They believed that the Holy Spirit still gave new revelations to those Christians who walked close to him. The Holy Spirit inspired these messages and should supplement the New Testament. (3) They also believed that if a Christian fell into sin he would have to be rebaptized before being accepted back into the membership of their church.<sup>26</sup>

Whether all Montanists believed and practised these erroneous doctrines, cannot be positively detected. Though some Baptist historians would like to claim the Montanists as "Baptists," we question the validity of this claim. While some of them may have been Baptists, it is doubtful that all of them were.

We have already met Cyprian, who struggled for Catholic church authority. Now we will meet two other men who made a significant impact on church history during the third century. These men were Origen and Hippolytus.

The father of Origen taught him the Word of God and introduced him to Christ at a young age. Persecutors martyred his father when Origen was only 17 years of age. When he was grown, he wrote many books and worked as a scribe copying the Scriptures (the printing press had not yet been invented at this time).<sup>27</sup>

Hippolytus, who lived in Rome, was also an author of many books. His books were lost for centuries until their discovery in 1842. Nearly everything that we know about Christian history during the late second and early third centuries come from his writings. Among other things, his books reveal various corruptions that many churches of that era commonly practised.

Hippolytus' writings included several pages of information about Callixtus, the pastor of an erring church in Rome between the years 219-223. He was the first man to claim that he could forgive sin. He also propagated the dogma that a pastor could commit any sin known to man and still be qualified to remain as pastor.<sup>28</sup> This is completely contrary to the teachings of Scripture found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

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26. Armitage, p. 175; MacArthur, pp. 86-88.

27. Armitage, p. 185.

28. Armitage, pp. 182-183.

Infant baptism is another error that came into existence during the third century. Armitage claims that no record exists of any infant baptisms having taken place prior to the year 250.<sup>29</sup> In the year 252 there was a council held in Carthage where sixty-six pastors met with Cyprian, the pastor of the erring church in Carthage. It was during this council that they passed several new “church” laws. One of these laws permitted the baptism of babies who were eight days old in order to cleanse them from their sin. This was the first time recorded in history that churches permitted infant baptism.<sup>30</sup>

We must note that infant baptism did not become the norm until the fifth century.<sup>31</sup> Though the baptism of babies is unscriptural, those who practised it always baptized by immersion. This was the only acceptable form of baptism among all the churches. The unbiblical practices of sprinkling and pouring did not evolve until several years later.

In the political arena, Emperor Decius, who sat on the Roman throne from 249-251, greatly persecuted the Christians. Multitudes of unwavering Christians died during his reign. Those, who would not blaspheme Christ or offer incense to the gods, were subject to his wrath. “They were publicly whipped, drawn by the heels through the streets of cities, raked till every bone of their body was disjointed, had their teeth beat out; their noses, hands and ears cut off; sharp-pointed spears run under their nails, were tortured with melted lead thrown on their naked bodies, had their eyes dug out, their limbs cut off, were condemned to the mines, ground between stones, stoned to death, burnt alive, thrown headlong from the high buildings, beheaded, smothered in burning lime-kilns, run through the body with sharp spears; destroyed with hunger, thirst and cold; thrown to the wild beasts, broiled on gridirons with slow fires, cast by heaps into the sea, crucified, scraped to death with sharp shells, torn to pieces by the boughs of trees, and in word, destroyed by all the various methods that the most diabolical subtlety and malice could devise.”<sup>32</sup>

Emperor Valerian, who reigned during the years 253-260, also heavily persecuted the Christians. His desire and goal was to eliminate every Christian.

In 281, a man named Novatian began another religious group which became known as the Novatians. Many of his beliefs were very similar to the Montanists, however, he differed with their beliefs concerning the Holy Spirit. He believed strongly that Christians must live pure and humble lives. As far as we know all of his other beliefs were in correct line with the New Testament that is all except one—clinic baptism. Clinic baptism is the practice of baptizing one who is about to die to aid in his salvation. Apparently this is what took place in the life of Novatian when he was once near death.<sup>33</sup>

Historians disagree about whether the belief of clinic baptism was the norm or the exception among those known as Novatians. Novatians who had moved to other

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29. Armitage, p. 179, 185; Carroll, p. 12.

30. Armitage, p. 186; Cramp, p. 23.

31. Armitage, p. 188.

32. Armitage, p. 172.

33. Armitage, p. 177.

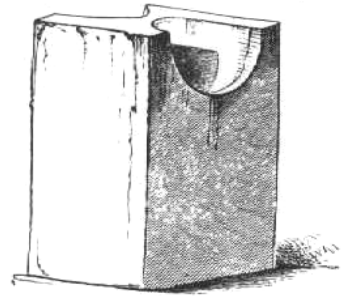
areas may not have believed the same as those who were with Novatian at the time of his baptism.

During the twenty-one-year reign of Emperor Diocletian, from 284-305, persecution of Christians was again intensified. He vigorously attempted to stamp out true Christianity by means of the most painful tortures possible.

Thus, by the close of the third century a growing number of churches taught that baptism saved the soul; that infants could be baptized; that the Catholic hierarchical priesthood can forgive sins; that only the Catholic church can offer salvation; and that all who were outside the Catholic church were heretics. "For this, Cyprian, a converted pagan rhetorician, and bishop of Carthage, is more to blame than any other man."<sup>34</sup>

All of the doctrinal changes that took place in "Christianity" during the third century did not come about in a month or even in a year. They were the result of a slow process over many years. In studying the history of the Baptists, we must always remember that we get most of our information about their ancestry from their enemies. These enemies have distorted, exaggerated or ignored many facts. Often they accused them of things they did not believe or practice. Though many Montanists and some Novatians followed false teachings, some of their number probably remained faithful to the Scriptures. Christians like Hippolytus condemned all errors opposed to the Scriptures, and bound every article of his faith to their teaching.<sup>35</sup>

During the first three centuries, congregations all over the East subsisted in separate independent bodies, unsupported by government and consequently without any secular power over one another.<sup>36</sup> It was through this quiet obscure line that God preserved the doctrines of the New Testament church.



The beheading block

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What were the major doctrinal errors that arose during the third century?
2. How did the Montanists and Novatians differ from Baptists?
3. When and where did infant baptism begin?
4. What evidence is there that some churches remained true to the Bible?
5. What would you identify as the underlying cause for the doctrinal corruption that began in this century?

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34. Armitage, p. 193.

35. Armitage, p. 191.

36. Carroll, p 13.

# Chapter 4

Fourth Century, Years 300-400

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As the fourth century commenced, another false religious belief came to prominence. The name of this belief was **Gnosticism**. In essence Gnosticism taught that man could obtain salvation only by acquiring secret knowledge. Gnosticism was not a new belief. Certain religious and philosophical perspectives of Gnosticism existed prior to the establishment of Christianity. Thus, Gnosticism received much of its reasoning from pagan philosophy. It began to infiltrate Christianity during the first century. “In different ways it denied the humanity of Christ, even to the extent of denying the reality of His human body.”<sup>37</sup> Paul wrote excerpts against this false religious belief in his books of first and second Corinthians, and Colossians. “By the end of the second century many of the Gnostics belonged to separate, alternative churches or belief systems viewed by the church as heretical. Gnosticism was thus a major threat to the early church; and the early church leaders, such as Irenaeus (died about 200), Tertullian (died about 220), and Hippolytus (died about 236), wrote voluminously against it.”<sup>38</sup> Having declined in influence during the last century, the coals of Gnosticism were fanned into flames again during the fourth century.

Though the enemies of Christianity had severely persecuted believers from the time of Christ to the year 300, the worst was yet to come. This terrible persecution began on 23 February 303 in Nicomedia (the eastern imperial capital in Bithynia, northwestern Asia Minor). Diocletian the emperor of Rome, demanded the burning of all Bibles. “Because the Scriptures were regarded as the source of all Christian aggression, the aim of the persecutors was to destroy every copy, and the cry passed up and down the empire: ‘Burn their Testaments!’”<sup>39</sup>

There are two lessons we must learn from this. First, the Bible is our sword (Ephesians 6:17). The better we know it, the more effective we will be. Second, the Bible must be hid in our hearts (Psalm 119:11). Though men may destroy the printed page of Scripture, they cannot take what is in the heart.

Some Christians surrendered their Bibles to be burned, but many opted to die rather than to forfeit their Bible. This persecution lasted ten years, and was more severe than all that had gone before. No language can justly describe the brutality of this persecution under Diocletian, Galerius and Maximian, whom Christian historians have called the “three ravenous wild beasts.” “It is estimated that 17,000 suffered death in one month, that 144,000 were martyred in Egypt alone; and of the banished, and those condemned to the public works, no less than 700,000 died. In some provinces scarcely a

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37. Unger, p. 614.

38. *Gnosticism*, Holman Bible Dictionary, Computer Program.

39. Armitage, p. 196.

Christians was left.”<sup>40</sup>

**Constantine** conquered Rome in 312. In the year 313 he issued an edict that gave toleration to all religions. Tradition states that Constantine saw a vision of a cross in the sky with the writing inscribed on it “By this thou shalt conquer.” He took this to mean that he should give up paganism. By adding the spiritual power of the Christian religion to the temporal power of the Roman Empire he hoped to obtain the power to conquer.

In the year 313, Constantine called a council to which many churches, but not all, came. It was during this council that they formed a union between the church and the state. It was this union that dethroned Christ and enthroned Constantine as the head of the erring churches. This was the beginning step to the formation of what we know today as the Catholic church.<sup>41</sup> In the year 324 Constantine declared the Catholic church to be the official religion of the Roman empire.<sup>42</sup> Speaking of Constantine’s unholy union of church and state Carroll says, “A Hierarchy was formed. In the organization of the Hierarchy, Christ was dethroned . . . and Constantine enthroned. . . The Hierarchy was the definite beginning of a development which finally resulted into what is now known as the Catholic, or ‘universal’ church.”<sup>43</sup>

“The views entertained by the majority were called ‘Catholic,’ because they were said to be held by *all*, and ‘Orthodox,’ because they were assumed to be *right*. Those who differed from the majority were termed *heretics*.”<sup>44</sup>

Erring beliefs of the Catholic church went further astray. To encourage the pagans to join the Catholic church, Constantine decorated the church buildings with ornaments which he took from pagan religions. Monks and nuns were chosen to do work in the church. These monks and nuns were forbidden to marry. Those who served in their churches were considered more holy than those who attended their services. They began to worship the “saints” who had died. These and many other beliefs were initiated which are contrary to the teachings of the New Testament.

As we have pointed out, many churches followed the hierarchal Catholic church headed by Constantine. They liked the idea of all their churches having one head which dictated their every move. Many faithful churches realized that hierarchal church government was anti-biblical and did not cooperate. These non-compromising churches held firmly to the truth of the Word of God.

During the latter part of the fourth century, Catholic churches began calling pastors, priests. They adopted this name from a combination of the Jewish religion various pagan religions.<sup>45</sup> Let us never forget that all true Christians are priests before

40. Armitage, p. 196.

41. Carroll, p. 15.

42. Armitage, p. 197.

43. Carroll, p. 15.

44. Cramp, pp. 38-39.

45. Halley, p. 761.

God, not just pastors (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:5-6).

Prior to the late 300's, most of the persecution of Christians had come from either the Jews or the pagan emperors. The Roman government had been against Christianity and had persecuted and killed thousands of Christians. Now Constantine in his zeal to propagate the Catholic church began to use his power to force Christians to join his church. Christians, who were determined to remain true to the teachings of Scripture, refused to join. As a result the Catholic church began their persecution of all those who did not believe like themselves.<sup>46</sup>

Constantine thought he was doing Christians a favour by uniting "Christianity" with the government and creating the Catholic church. In actuality this move was only another step away from the Bible. It more clearly distinguished the difference between those churches who practised the doctrines of the New Testament and those who were following erring doctrine. Those wishing to remain true to God's Word had to remain separate. The same is true today. As churches join the compromising ranks of ecumenical religion, remaining faithful to the doctrines of God's Word will require separation from those who waver (2 Thessalonians 3:6,14; Matthew 18:17; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:9,11; Titus 3:10).

Somewhere around the year 311 another religious group, called the **Donatists**, began in North Africa. We know little of their origin. They had a desire to follow the true teachings of the New Testament and to live holy lives. Many of their major doctrinal beliefs were similar to the Montanists and the Novatians. Though some would accuse them of practising infant baptism, no clear evidence that they did exists. Some historians also accuse them of practising baptismal regeneration. As far as we can tell some Donatists believed much as independent Baptists of today.<sup>47</sup>

The Donatists took a strong stand against those who surrendered their Bibles to Diocletian. Some went so far as to excommunicate such "Christians." This became a very hotly disputed issue among their membership. Once Constantine was in power some Donatists took this issue to court before him. Constantine was not pleased to think this kind of feuding was taking place nor did he like the fact that many of them were rebellious towards the Catholic church. As a result instead of helping settle their dispute, they became a target of his persecution.

One well-known leader of the Catholic church at this time was **Augustine**. He lived from the year 354-430. "[He] taught the unchristian doctrine that heresy should be suppressed by the civil magistrate, and invoked the imperial sword against the Donatists."<sup>48</sup> He and his party were the aggressors against the Donatists.

Now that governmental hatred for the Scripture had subsided, it was now legal to own and read the Bible. This freedom sparked an era in which men actively translated and copied the Bible. A man who was most active in this work at this time was a man by

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46. Carroll, pp. 16-17.

47. Armitage, pp. 200-201.

48. Cramp, p. 47.

the name of **Jerome**, who lived from the year 331-420. He translated the Bible from the Greek and Hebrew into Latin. His Latin Bible had become known as the “Vulgate.” Much of his translation is accurate, but one error stands out boldly—transliteration. This means that he coined new words which sounded like the words in the Greek or Hebrew to disguise their true meaning.

“Amongst many Greek words which he transferred instead of translating them, was the family of words relating to baptism, making them cluster around the verb *'baptizo:'* so that, those who knew the Latin only, could not possibly tell what those words meant. This new-coined method of keeping back the meaning of God's commands has debauched the consciences of translators, and perverted many versions from Jerome's time to our own, by copying his pernicious example, and refusing to translate the exact sense of these words into the mother-tongues of those for whom their translations have been made.”<sup>49</sup>

Thankfully this was not the character of all the translations that were made during the fourth century. For example, the “Gothic,” by Ulphilas, is declared by scholars to be a very accurate translation. He was a Goth, “an East Germanic people from Scandinavia.”<sup>50</sup> He made a translation of both the Old and New Testaments. Fragments have been found. These fragments are very valuable antiquity because they were translated from the Greek text. In his translation, the Greek word *baptizo* is translated *daupjan* which means to dip.<sup>51</sup>

By the end of the fourth century the Catholic church, and some of those who did not merge with the Catholics, had accepted many heretical doctrines. These false doctrines include: (1) the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; (2) the doctrine of infant baptism; (3) the belief that the bones of the dead “saints” are holy; (4) the belief that the cross is a holy symbol; (5) the belief that a priest can forgive sins (see Callixtus, 3<sup>rd</sup> century); and (6) the belief that religious leaders are more holy than other church members. Many of these erroneous beliefs were adopted from various pagan religions.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What was wrong with the gnostic beliefs that were common in this century?
2. What was the approximate total number of Christians killed by Emperor Diocletian and why?
3. How did the reign of Constantine positively and negatively affect Biblical Christianity?
4. Describe one harmful feature of Jerome's translation.

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49. Armitage, p. 209.

50. The Angus & Robertson Dictionary, p. 432.

51. Armitage, pp. 209-210.

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5. What are some specific character qualities that we can learn from “Baptist” Christians during the fourth century?



# Chapter 5

Fifth Century, Years 400-500

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The fifth century marks the time that baptismal regeneration became the widely accepted practice among all Catholic churches and some non-Catholic churches. They believed that baptism would take away every sin. Thus, the moment a person received baptism, they became as clean as Adam before he sinned. Baptism was that which would make a person clean enough to stand before God. Consequently, some Catholic churches began to postpone baptism until just before death. By waiting until this time they believed that the sins of a lifetime could be washed away.<sup>52</sup>

This groundless belief in the cleansing ability of baptism in no way follows the true teachings of the Bible. 1 John 1:7 says, *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”* It is only the blood of Christ that cleanses and saves. Baptism can save no one.

Baptismal regeneration is wrong because it replaces the work of Jesus Christ in paying the price for man's sin and purchasing salvation. If baptism could take away sin, then Jesus died for no reason upon the cross. Catholics of the fifth century believed very strongly in this doctrine and all those who disagreed were forced to keep quiet or be prepared to die a martyr's death. *“The century opened with an intolerant bitterness on the part of the orthodox toward all who differed with them, not only in opinion, but in forms of expression. All dissent must seal its lips or bite the dust. At the close of the fourth, ‘heresy’ became a capital offence, punishable with death in some cases.”*<sup>53</sup> It became the overwhelming desire of the Catholic church to see every “heretic” die.

In the year 415 Honorius, the Roman Emperor, issued an edict which outlawed the Donatist believers, making it illegal for them to meet and worship as they wished. Actually, this law was prohibiting them from worshipping as a New Testament church. Because of this law, the Catholic church began a great persecution against the Donatists. *“Gibbon tells us that 300 of the Donatist bishops and thousands of their ministers were stripped of their property, banished to the islands, or obliged to hide themselves in the wilds of Africa.”*<sup>54</sup> Augustine led the hostility against the Donatists at Carthage. He misused the words of Christ ‘Compel them to come in’ to advocated forcible means to reclaim them.<sup>55</sup>

In an attempt to awaken the people from their apathy, the Catholic leader Augustine intensified another false doctrine that Clement of Alexandria had developed in the third century. This false doctrine was the belief in purgatory. The actual belief in

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52. Armitage, pp. 211-212.

53. Armitage, p. 213.

54. Armitage, p. 213.

55. Armitage, p. 214.

purgatory was that if a man sinned after having received baptism, he must go to an intermediate state between heaven and hell for cleansing. Purgatory was a place of torment, but it was only temporary, and lasted only long enough to pay for the sins which followed baptism. “Augustine thought that the dead must be saved either by water in this world, or fire in the next.”<sup>56</sup> This inaccurate belief in purgatory made infant baptism absolutely necessary, for if one was not baptized when he died he would miss purgatory and go directly to hell.

In 416, at the Council of Milevium, Catholic Bishop Taylor decreed: “Whoever denies that new-born infants are to be baptized, to take away of original sin—let him be anathema.”<sup>57</sup> This new Catholic law contradicted the direct command of the New Testament for only believers to be baptized. Note what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:” This was repeated by Philip in the book of Acts 8:36-37, “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

A genuine faith in Christ that changes a person’s character has always been the scriptural prerequisite for baptism. No example may be found in the entire Bible of anyone receiving baptism without first placing their faith in Jesus Christ the Messiah. Even those who John baptized were believing in the coming Messiah of whom John was the forerunner. Babies are not able to believe in Christ; therefore, it is wrong for them to be baptized.

Some Catholics would argue that babies can believe by proxy. “Augustine is the first to assume that the sponsors of babes took upon themselves the child’s Christian responsibilities, by answering the baptismal questions in place of the babe.”<sup>58</sup> To say this, one must redefine the word “belief.” The biblical “belief” is always a personal faith. Belief by proxy is an extra-biblical belief that is not even logical. It is impossible for an adult can believe for a baby. Salvation is a personal decision.

Within a short time compulsory infant baptism became the law of the State. Those who would resist it were left with no choice in the matter other than to defy the government and suffer the consequences.<sup>59</sup> Loyal Christians, of course, refused to comply with this new law. They continued to practice biblical baptism of only true believers. For this, they were persecuted, refused the name “Christian,” and labelled “heretics.”

During the Catholic Council held at Chalcedon in 451, another entirely new

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56. Armitage, p. 215.

57. Cramp, p. 48; Armitage, p. 216; Carroll, p. 17.

58. Armitage, pp. 217-218.

59. Carroll, pp. 17-18; Armitage, p. 218.

doctrine was added to the rapidly growing list of Catholic doctrines. This doctrine was that of “Mariolatry,” or the worship of Mary, the Mother of Jesus.<sup>60</sup> In the minds of many Catholics, Mary became another mediator between man and God. She supposedly takes the petitions of the saints to Christ who then takes them to God.

Though many false beliefs were prevalent during the fifth century, many remained true to the teachings of the Scriptures. The name “Baptist” had not yet begun to be used to describe these Bible believers. Instead they were known by the names of their leaders. The most prominent groups of loyal Christians during the fifth century were the Novatians, Montanists, Donatists, Paterines. No doubt variations of these groups differed somewhat in their doctrine and practice as do those claiming the name “Baptist” today, but many of them were loyal to the Scriptures. As the Catholic church persecuted these Christians, they scattered throughout the world.

Between the years 426 and 1626, the Catholic church became extremely intolerant of any other religion that differed from theirs. This time of great persecution has become known as the “Dark Ages.” In describing the unbelievable persecution that loyal Christians endured at the hand of the Catholic church Carroll states: “If fifty million died of persecution during the 1,200 years of what are called the “Dark Ages,” as history seems positively to teach—then they died faster than an average of four million every one hundred years. That seems almost beyond the limit of human conception.”<sup>61</sup> This is an average of more than 40,000 every year, or 114 every day for 1,200 years.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why did some people postpone baptism until they were near death?
2. Describe in your own words the doctrine of purgatory.
3. How did the new doctrine of purgatory make infant baptism absolutely mandatory in the eyes of the Catholics?
4. Give biblical evidence that a baby cannot believe by proxy.
5. What new law adopted in 416 increased the persecution of the nonconforming churches?
6. Define “Mariolatry.”
7. What effect did the Dark Ages have upon those who wanted to follow the New Testament?

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60. Carroll, p. 21.

61. Carroll, p. 26.

## Chapter 6

Sixth Century, Years 500-600

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During the next 1,200 years of history, very little information about those who faithfully followed the Scriptures is available. This is primarily true because the Catholic church considered them all to be heretics, and she did everything possible to destroy them and their writings. These faithful Christians were not able to worship in public places and thus their churches were forced to become “underground churches.” They were forced to move from place to place to hide from those who hunted them. Many Christians did not have their own house. Rather, they hid themselves in the bush, in the mountains, in the valleys, and in caves of the earth. This difficult type of lifestyle explains why we have so little written by Bible believers about themselves. Information, available today about these Christians, is mostly the bias view of those who hated them.

During the sixth century the Catholic church continued to move further from the truth of the Scriptures. As this took place, it widened the gap between the Catholic church and those who faithfully followed the Bible. This of course resulted in an increase of persecution.

Increased persecution caused the gospel to spread more rapidly. By the year 600 the gospel of Jesus Christ had spread throughout most of Europe. Groups of true believers existed in England, Wales, Spain, France, Italy, Africa, and many other countries.

Hiscox records that when Austin, a Catholic missionary, visited Wales at the close of the sixth century, “he found a community of more than 2,000 Christians quietly living in their mountain homes.” These Christians totally rejected the Roman Church’s authority. These believers rejected the popish ordinance of Easter and the baptism of infants. Though he laboured diligently, Austin utterly failed to bring them back under the papal yoke. When the Saxons, invaded shortly thereafter, they cruelly put many of these believers to death.<sup>62</sup>

Around the year 600 another false religion emerged in the country of Arabia. Its founder was a man named Mohammed who was born in Mecca. Mecca had become a city of refuge to many religious groups who fled the persecuting hand of the Catholic church. Jews and all sorts of “Christians” lived in Mecca among the heathens. Mohammed decided to unite these religions by forming a new religion that was a combination of them all. “He tampered with Christianity and Judaism, mixing certain elements of these weighty and ancient faiths with a curious compound of pagan superstitions. The admixture under his weird alchemy came forth an eclectic faith from genuine, spurious and apocryphal writings, the Bible, the pagan traditions and the reveries of the Talmud. What did not suit his purpose he threw aside.”<sup>63</sup> Out of this combination

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62. Hiscox, Edward T. *The New Directory for Baptist Churches*, pp. 506-507.

63. Armitage, pp. 232-233.

of plagiarized materials he formulated the religious book of his new religion, the Koran.

In only a short time this new religion grew immensely. The followers of this Moslem religion (as the followers of Mohammed had come to be called) began to destroy every other religion but their own. They fought and conquered the town of Jerusalem, the countries of Syria, Egypt, Persia, Spain and much of north Africa.

### **STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. Describe the lifestyle of many nonconforming Christians during the Dark Ages.
2. What was one primary reason that the gospel continued to spread quickly during the sixth century?
3. How did the Moslems get their religious book the Koran?

# Chapter 7

Seventh Century, Years 600-700

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Again during this century very little information is available about those who stood true to the New Testament. This void of information is primarily due to the aggressive persecution by Catholic and Muslim leaders against biblical Christians. Keeping historical records was the least of their concerns as these Christians lived in seclusion. They had to live rather nomadic lives and continually hide from their enemies to stay alive. We must continually remind ourselves that, but for God's grace, we too might be enduring similar circumstances. Though presently enjoying the comforts of religious freedom, we must prepare ourselves for the day that we may lose this freedom. The Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:12 alerts us to this. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." We are not exempt.

In the midst of this harsh persecution another group of Christians sprang up who wanted to follow the true teachings of the New Testament. The year was approximately 660 when a young man from Armenia, whose name was Constantine, lodged a Christian man who was fleeing from his persecutors. To thank Constantine for his hospitality, this Christian man gave him a copy of the New Testament. After reading the New Testament through many times, the Spirit of God convinced Constantine of his sin. He accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour and began following the teachings of the New Testament. He began to preach what he had learned and soon gathered a following. His followers became known as **Paulicians**. Paulicians believed in the priesthood of every believer, and encouraged the young and old alike to read the Bible. They taught that the only way of salvation was through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. In harmony with the Scriptures, they rejected the worship crosses, images, dead saints, and Mary as practised the Catholics of their day. They also rejected the belief that Mary remained a virgin until her death.<sup>64</sup>

Evidently some Paulicians had a false belief about baptism. Speaking of the Paulicians, the historian Neander claims they rejected the celebration of both baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>65</sup> Others claim they believed that baptism was spiritual and not a literal immersion in water, and thus did not administer baptism at all.<sup>66</sup>

Spiritualising the ordinances was not the practice of all Paulicians. Cramp affirms that some did believe and practice the biblical baptism of believers by immersion in water. In actuality, they rejected the unauthorised additions applied to the ordinances and the current opinions regarding their purpose and saving power. "While some

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64. Armitage, pp. 237-238; Cramp, p. 60. **See the following Scriptures for:** Bible reading, 2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 119:105; Idol worship, Exodus 20:3-5; 1 John 5:21; Perpetual virginity of Mary, Matthew 1:25.

65. Neander, Qtd. in Armitage, p. 238.

66. Cramp, p. 61; Armitage, p. 283. Note that this teaching is similar to the Quakers and the hyper-dispensationalists of our day. Gibbon, as quoted by Armitage, page 237, says, I am confident that they gloried in their affinity to the Apostle to the Gentiles (Paul). **Biblical Baptism is by immersion in water;** Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38-39.

wandered into errors and excesses, the remainder pursued a scriptural course.”<sup>67</sup>

It is often difficult to detect if a group of believers was truly “Baptist” or not. The Baptist historian Thomas Armitage addressed this subject. He said, “A Baptist proper, in modern parlance, is one who rejects the baptism of babes under all circumstances, and who immerses none but those who personally confess Christ under any circumstances; and those who are thus properly immersed upon their faith in Christ, we have a right to claim in history as Baptists to that extent, but no further.”<sup>68</sup>

The Paulicians became known by many different names. In Italy they were called Paterines and Cathari. The name Cathari was a generic name that applied to any group of believers who wanted to follow the New Testament in a pure way. In Germany they received the name Gazari. In France they were known as Albigenses.<sup>69</sup>

The number of Christians among the Paulicians grew rapidly and very large. Because of their witness many men and women received Christ as their Saviour and became followers of the Paulicians. In 690 as an attempt to counteract this growth, the enemies of the Gospel caught Constantine, their founder, and stoned him to death. Another man took over the ministry left by Constantine, but within a short time he too was captured and burned at the stake. This however did not stop their growth. The Paulicians continued to multiply and let their light shine for Christ for several hundred years.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How was the founder of the Paulicians converted?
2. What does this say about the impact our witness can have in history?
3. Some Paulicians were accused of what false doctrine?
4. Recite one verse to show how do we know that this doctrine is false?
5. What evidence is there that this accusation may not be true?
6. By what other names were the Paulicians known?

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67. Cramp, p. 62.

68. Armitage, p. 283.

69. Christian, Vol. 1, p. 54.

# Chapter 8

Eighth Century, Years 700-800

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During the eighth century the Paulicians continued to have a strong influence for Christ, but another group of Christians arose at this time as well. They became known as the **Bogomiles**. They were actually a break off from the Paulicians. They were first found in Thrace, north and east of Greece. It appears that they believed as “Baptists” in the doctrines of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Some historians, however, believe that the Bogomiles like some Paulicians, believed that baptism was only spiritual.<sup>70</sup> They rejected infant baptism and the worship of Mary and the saints. They practised local church autonomy without a hierarchial church government.

We cannot be positive however, that some did not exist who held the false doctrine of spiritual baptism. If some Paulicians from which the Bogomiles broke, practised spiritual baptism, it is possible that some may have clung to this teaching. Thus, we cannot dogmatically declare that all Bogomiles were in every way just like New Testament Baptists.

The Bogomiles carried the burden of intense persecution just as did the Paulicians. Because of this great persecution many Bogomiles fled into Europe, carrying the message of the Gospel with them.

In 732, a battle commenced in France between the French and the Muslims. This battle became known as the “Battle of Tours.” Charles Martel commanded the armies of France against the Muslims and after a hard-fought battle, defeated them. This was a very important historic victory because it kept the Muslims (known also as the Moors) from advancing into Europe. Had France not stopped them, Europe may have become Muslim rather than Christian.

In 754, Pope Steven II declared that baptizing babies by means of pouring water over them was acceptable if they were too sick to be immersed. Catholics still immersed all healthy babies. Immersion remained the law for healthy babies well into the ninth century. Before 754, immersion was the only accepted mode of baptism performed by the Catholic church.<sup>71</sup>

Catholics held their Seventh Council in Nicea in the year 787. This was the Second Council held in Nicea. It established two new doctrines for Catholic churches. These new doctrines were the worship of images and the saints. Though these were not new to their practice, the Catholic

***Infallible recipe for the suppression of heresy***

If it is propagated by preaching, silence the preacher: if he will preach, put him out of the way. If it is propagated by writing, burn the books; should the author still persist, burn *him* too.

Cramp, p. 69

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70. Christian, Vol. 1, p. 58.

71. Cramp, p. 68.



church formally recognized these false doctrines at this time.<sup>72</sup> Image worship is in direct disobedience to the first and second of the ten commandments. *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.”* (Exodus 20:3-5).

In his book *Trail of Blood*, Carroll describes some measures that the Catholic church used to try to control the spread of New Testament Christianity during this and other centuries. He writes, “It is well to note also that in order to prevent the spread of any view of any sort, contrary to those of the Catholics very extreme plans and measures were adopted. First, all writings of any sort, other than those of the Catholics, were gathered and burned. Especially this was true of books.” The second measure was to accuse all who refused to join the Catholic faith of being heretics. The third measure was to condemn the heretics.<sup>73</sup>

Describing the new law of 787, Cramp said it forbid all persons to conceal heretical books. “Bishops, priests, or deacons, disobeying the canon, were to be deposed; monks or laymen, excommunicated. . . Their books were carefully gathered and burned, and it was made a crime to conceal them.”<sup>74</sup> This explains again the reason that it is so difficult to obtain accurate information about those who held to doctrines different from the Catholic church.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What new group of Christians emerged during the eighth century?
2. From whom did this new group break?
3. What great battle took place in 732 and what was the significance of this battle to us today?
4. What was one measure the Catholic church used during this century to control the spread of opposing beliefs?

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72. Carroll, p. 20.

73. Carroll, p. 22.

74. Cramp, p. 69.

# Chapter 9

Ninth Century, Years 800-900

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It has been said that during the first part of the ninth century there was a man named Claude, who was a pastor in Turin, Italy. He loved the Lord and preached righteousness and opposed prevailing corruptions. Through both his preaching and writing he propagated his doctrine of the Kingdom. The valleys of Piedmont were filled with those who followed his teachings. He was known as a light in the midst of darkness.<sup>75</sup> Whether Claude was truly a New Testament “Baptist” in his doctrine cannot be positively determined, but we do know that he stood for truth and against the corruption of the Catholic church.

Around the year 810 a man named Sergius was converted to Christ after the faithful witness of a Paulician woman. She had urged him to study the Scriptures for himself to discover God’s truth about salvation. This he did, which led him to Christ. Cramp notes, “The genuineness of his conversion was proved by his eminently holy life and incessant zeal.” He fellowshipped with the Paulicians, and eventually became a leader of that movement. He travelled widely throughout much of Asia Minor and preaching Christ and calling on people to abandon the follies of corrupted religion. God granted him liberty to preach for 34 years, and many men and women accepted Christ through his preaching.<sup>76</sup>

At this time the Paulicians were the most prominent group of Christians who were faithfully proclaiming the Word of God. The Roman Catholic church continued to persecute them with vigour. “The storm raged with such terrific fierceness during the first half of the ninth century, that utter extermination seemed inevitable.” Under the authority of Empress Theodora intensified. From 832 to 846 she authorized the execution of 100,000 Paulician men and women by the sword, by hanging, or in the flames, simply because they refused to conform to Catholic doctrine. Consequently many Paulicians took up arms to defend their families and their homes,<sup>77</sup> while large numbers of others fled to Bulgaria.<sup>78</sup>

In the year 869 the Catholic church divided into two parts, the Greek Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Since then, there have been several attempts to

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75. Hiscox, p. 498.

76. Cramp, p. 58; Armitage, p. 239.

77. Was it wrong for them to take up arms to defend themselves? Does the Bible teach us to be pacifists? Does the command not to kill prohibit self defence? Let’s examine this touchy issue in the light of Scripture. After God gave the 10 Commandments, He ordered Israel to kill all the evil people in Canaan (Num. 31:7; Josh. 11:20; Deut. 20:16-18). By this, God was clearly distinguishing between hateful murder and purging of evil. The LORD also defended Israel against attacking armies, killing thousands (2 Ki. 19:34-35). We are told in the New Testament to love our enemies, yet Jesus told His disciples to buy swords for defence (Lu. 22:36). The LORD prohibits Christians avenging evil (to even the score), while promising that He will eventually avenge all evildoers (Rom. 12:19). We must conclude that there is no biblical prohibition of self defence.

78. Cramp, p. 59; Armitage, p. 240.

solve their differences but to no avail.<sup>79</sup>

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who was the most prominent group of New Testament Christians during the 9th century?
2. What person instituted the greatest persecution against Christians during the 9th century?

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79. Carroll, pp. 21-22.

# Chapter 10

Tenth Century, Years 900-1000

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This century is marked by a grave absence of historical information. Persecution during the previous century had taken its toll on biblical Christianity. As at other times, true biblical Christianity had not ceased to exist, but had been so severely persecuted that those left were in hiding to protect their lives. Lacking godly influence, the Catholic church increased in wickedness. Without the indwelling of the Spirit of God, these religious people continued to slide further into the depths of depravity.

Near the close of the tenth century, another group of Christians became well-known as the **Peterines**. Basically they were the same in doctrine as others who desired to follow only the New Testament. They followed the true teachings of salvation and lived godly lives. They spread throughout much if not all of Europe.

The Paulicians and Bogomiles continued to be an influence for Christ during this century. Though greatly persecuted, those surviving remained faithful to the Lord and continued to multiply in number. As multitudes were martyred for their faith, the testimonies of these martyrs drew others to Christ. Thus, biblical Christianity continued to propagate.

The purity of life, displayed by these New Testament believers, starkly contrasts the corruption of the Catholic church. The Baptist writer, Hiscox, describes this Catholic corruption by saying, “There were no vices, however gross and degrading, which the clergy, from the highest to the lowest, from pope to priest, did not practice with greediness and impunity.”<sup>80</sup> Genuine Christianity always produces purifying change.<sup>81</sup>

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What new group of New Testament Christians emerged during the 10th century?

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80. Hiscox, p. 500.

81. 2 Corinthians 5:17. Has there been a definite change in the purity of your life since you accepted Christ? If not, you need to reevaluate your salvation. Carefully read through the book of 1 John and note the emphasis on a changed life as a proof of salvation.

# Chapter 11

Eleventh Century, Years 1000-1100

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Sometime after the year 1000 a new group of Christians arose in southern France. At the first they were known as the **Publicani**, but because they lived near the town of Albi they later became known as the **Albigenses**. The Albigenses may have actually lived in this area for several centuries prior to this time and only gained recognition during the eleventh century. Though we know biblical Christianity had spread to France before this time, we have no concrete evidence as to the exact date the Albigense sect commenced.

Detecting the exact tenets and practices of the Albigenses is difficult, but historians often group them with the Cathari (pure). As far as we know, their beliefs were very similar to those of the Paulicians, Bogomiles and Peterines. They did not take oaths, nor did they believe in baptismal regeneration.<sup>82</sup> They lived pure lives and exalted celibacy. These godly believers trained their children in principles of the Bible.<sup>83</sup> They spent no money on buying indulgences, and thought it wrong to join monasteries. Albigenses cheerfully paid their rates and taxes, were quiet, thrifty people, and the land was the better for them. In some areas they increased so rapidly that the Catholic priests were forced to leave their empty churches and the Albigenses took possession, forming schools and congregations of their own. Consequently, the Catholic hierarchy hated them, and pronounced many curses upon them. Four different Catholic councils condemned them, but their attempts to destroy them were thus far unsuccessful.<sup>84</sup>

Even in the midst of persecution and much hardship, the Gospel was spreading throughout the world. By 1025, the Bogomiles, a branch of the Paulicians, had spread to the city of Orleans, France. Just ten years later, they had spread to The Netherlands, and to Turin, Italy by 1051. By the end of this century Catholics banished them from their homeland of Bulgaria and drove them west in great multitudes. Despite this persecution, they continued to increase in numbers.<sup>85</sup>

In the year 1095 the first crusade began. The crusades were a series of wars led by the Catholics against the Muslims to try to recapture Palestine for “Christianity.” A total of seven crusades were fought. The first crusade lasted until 1099.<sup>86</sup>

“Not all crusaders joined the expeditions for religious reasons. The French knights wanted more land. Italian merchants hoped to expand trade in Middle Eastern ports. Many priests and monks wanted valuable religious relics. Large numbers of poor

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82. John 1:12; Acts 16:31; 1 Corinthians 1:17.

83. Principles are a standard or rule for personal conduct, moral rules, or general truths. They must be taught by example, word, and discipline. Some such principles would include: Obedience, respect, hard work, study, prayer, submission, honesty, generosity, forgiveness, promptness, prudence.

84. Armitage, pp. 278-279; Cramp, pp. 87-88.

85. Armitage, p. 278.

86. Halley, p. 766.

people joined simply to escape the hardships of their normal lives.”<sup>87</sup>

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Where were the Albigenses first located?
2. Why do you suppose the Albigenses exalted celibacy?<sup>88</sup>
3. Describe in your own words “baptismal regeneration.” Look up Bible verses to refute it.
4. What are indulgences? Why is it wrong to buy indulgences?
5. List five Bible principles that parents ought to teach their children.
6. What were the crusades?

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87. The World Book Encyclopaedia, Vol 4, p. 1160, 1988.

88. Consider the great persecution they were facing and the prevalent immorality of the Catholic leadership.

# Chapter 12

Twelfth Century, Years 1100-1200

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It was approximately the year 1104 when a man named **Peter of Bruis** began a new religious group with the desire wholly to follow the New Testament. Peter of Bruis began this new group in France. From the available information, it appears that Peter of Bruis was truly a “Baptist”. He had formerly been a Catholic priest, but through reading the Scriptures he repented of his sins and accepted Christ as his personal Saviour. Severing himself totally from the Catholic church, he followed only the teachings of the New Testament. He only practised baptism by immersion following conversion and rejected infant baptism, preaching strongly that the Bible did not teach infant baptism. His ministry continued for twenty years, and was influential in leading many men and women to Christ. In 1126, while preaching in a place called St. Giles, the Catholic church arrested and burned him at the stake. After his death, his followers became known as the **Petrobrusians**. Armitage states that “in the Petrobrusians we find a sect of Baptists for which no apology is needed.”<sup>89</sup>

After the Catholic church martyred Peter of Bruis, another man from Lausanne, Switzerland rose in his place. This man's name was **Henry of Lausanne**.<sup>90</sup> While Peter was still alive Henry had been one of his disciples and a strong preacher of righteousness. Henry probably left Switzerland due to persecution. Relocating his ministry in Manes, France he ministered there and in several other large towns in France. In 1134 his enemies captured and imprisoned him. He escaped and fled to Toulouse and Albi where he continued preaching the gospel. In 1148 Pope Eugene III sent out a spy to find Henry. Within a short time the Catholics captured him. They condemned Henry to confinement and hard labour in a monastery where he soon died.<sup>91</sup>

In approximately 1146 we find congregations of New Testament “Baptists” in both Cologne and Bonn, Germany. Catholics called them the Cathari. As we have mentioned in chapter seven, this was a generic name that they applied to any group of believers who wanted to live purely by the New Testament. These German Christians openly spoke out against infant baptism and the erroneous doctrine of purgatory. They believed, as the Scriptures teach, that people will either spend eternity in Heaven with God or in Hell separated from God. One of their enemies said, “If you ask them of their faith, nothing can be more Christian; if you observe their conversation, nothing can be more blameless; and what they speak they prove by deeds.” The enemies of biblical Christianity terribly persecuted these believers. Persecutors burnt several of these German “Baptists” in 1163 for refusing to heed the words of a monk sent to convert

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89. Armitage, p. 284; see also Cramp, p. 122.

90. Henry of Lausanne lived from 1116-1148.

91. Armitage, pp. 287-291; Cramp, pp. 108-111.

them.<sup>92</sup>

It was also around this time that another man from Brescia, Italy began to preach. We knew this man as **Arnold of Brescia**. Though he was a good man in many ways, he partly disagreed with Baptist doctrine for he did not want to leave the Catholic church. His goal was rather to bring the Catholic church back to the teachings of the New Testament.<sup>93</sup> He was actually one of the first reformers. In 1155 the Catholic church hung him in the city of Rome. After he was dead, they burned his body to ashes and spread these ashes in the Tiber river.<sup>94</sup>



Arnold of Brescia

Historians have suggested that members of the “Baptist” group found in Germany fled to England, for “in 1159 a group of thirty men and women who spoke German were arraigned before a Council of clergy at Oxford. They were found guilty of hopeless heresy, and Henry II ordered their foreheads branded with a red-hot iron; they were to be whipped through the streets of the city, their clothes to be cut off at their girdles, and then to be turned into the open fields, all persons being forbidden to give them shelter or relief. This was in the depth of winter, and every one of them perished with hunger and cold. These appear to have been the first heretics deliberately murdered in England for what Newbury calls ‘detesting holy baptism’ as practised by Rome”.<sup>95</sup>

In 1160 a man named **Peter Waldo**, a merchant of Lyons, in southeastern France, received Christ as his Saviour. He was a man of unusual character and extreme humility. He spent much time reading the Bible and preaching God’s Word. At first he did not want to separate from the Catholic church, but through reading the Scriptures, the errors of that religion became increasingly evident. In 1176 the Catholic church excommunicated him because he, being a layman, was preaching things contrary to Catholic doctrine. As Waldo grew in the Lord, his beliefs became very similar to those of a Baptist. Being excommunicated from the Catholic church did not stop Peter from preaching. He continued his preaching in both France and Italy. Those who followed his preaching were known as Waldensians.<sup>96</sup>

Waldo and his followers were the objects of much persecution. For a time their obscurity protected them against the curses of Rome. After a while, Waldo moved farther north but his ferocious persecutors drove him into the country of Bohemia. It seems

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92. Armitage, pp. 280-282; Cramp, pp. 114-115.

93. The Bible teaches separation from false doctrine: Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10.

94. Armitage, p. 291.

95. Armitage, p. 282.

96. Armitage, pp. 294-297.



likely that Peter Waldo died of old age in Bohemia. Through these times of persecution the Waldensians spread throughout much of the known world.<sup>97</sup>

Neither Waldo nor the Waldensians believed in infant baptism. However, as they were separated and spread throughout many different countries, some Waldensians may have adopted this false doctrine. Cramp points out that “some have represented them as being originally all Baptists. Others, on the contrary, persist in affirming that they were all Paedobaptists. Neither statement is correct. . . . A number of them, particularly in the early part of their history, judged that baptism should be administered to believers only, and acted accordingly; others entirely rejected that ordinance, as well as the Lord’s Supper; a third class held to Paedobaptism.” As for the Waldensians in the valleys of Piedmont, “there is reason to believe that originally the majority of them were Baptists, although there were varieties of opinion among them.”<sup>98</sup>

Many Waldensians were employed as peddlers of wares. As they travelled around selling their wares, they were active witnesses for Christ.<sup>99</sup> Armitage reports that, “they were content in poverty, avoided lying, profanity and theft, and were diligent in business. They were shoemakers, weavers and other artisans; temperate in eating and drinking, and they led godly lives. Their converts were made by the Bible and religious books. They went as peddlers to a cottage or a nobleman’s castle, offering fabrics or jewelry for sale; and when asked if they had anything else, they answered; ‘Yes, great rarities; I have one precious stone through which you can see God, and another that kindles love to him in the heart.’ With that these peddlers brought out the precious roll of Holy Writ.”<sup>100</sup>

In 1180 Cardinal Henry initiated a crusade against the Albigenses in Southern France and surrounding areas. His desire was to exterminate them altogether. This crusade lasted for many years. Pope Innocent III promised to give a special blessing to every person who would use their sword to help kill the Albigenses. As a reward he also promised them the possessions of the “heretics.”

The Catholic soldiers went into every town looking for Albigenses to capture and put to death. “Towns were sacked, seven castles surrendered to the pope, and five hundred villages, cities and fortresses fell.” They slew thirty thousand in the town of Beziers. “Seven thousand took refuge in the Church of St. Magdalene. There were many Catholics in the town, and the ‘Holy Legate’ was asked how these should be spared, when he commanded: ‘Kill them all, God will know his own!’” “They killed women and children, old men, young men, priests, all without distinction.”<sup>101</sup> The Albigenses continued to carry the burden of severe persecution for many years until around the year 1250 when their enemies overcame them and they became nonexistent.

It was during this century that the Catholic church carried out the second and

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97. Armitage, p. 298.

98. Cramp, pp. 120-121.

99. Cramp, p. 84.

100. Armitage, p. 301.

101. Armitage, p. 279.

third crusades against the Muslims. The second crusade took place between the years 1147 and 1149. Forty years later, the third crusade began in the year 1189 and ended in 1191.<sup>102</sup>

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Peter of Bruis began what new group of Baptist believers? What did they believe?
2. For what was Peter of Bruis executed?
3. What makes a person a Baptist? Study Titus 1:9; Jude 1:3; Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 4:13.
4. What indication is there that Arnold of Brescia was **NOT** a Baptist?
5. Peter Waldo formed what new “Baptist” group?
6. What did Cardinal Henry do to try to get rid of the Waldensians?

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102. Halley, p. 766.

# Chapter 13

Thirteenth Century, Years 1200-1300

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Innocent III was the Pope of the Catholic church from the years 1198-1216. He was more powerful than any other preceding Pope. Some historians claim he was the most powerful man in history. He declared himself to be the “Vicar of Christ” which literally means that he replaced Christ on the earth. The kings of Germany, France, England, and nearly every governmental leader in Europe bowed to his wishes.<sup>103</sup>

In 1215 Pope Innocent III held a Catholic church council. During this council another new and false doctrine arose: the doctrine of transubstantiation. This false teaching claims that the prayer of a priest can literally change the juice and bread of the Lord's Supper into the actual blood and body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another false teaching that received its formal acceptance at this meeting was that of auricular confession—confessing one's sins into the ear of a priest.<sup>104</sup>

Innocent III declared that the words of the Pope were equal in authority with the words of God. He forbid the reading of the Bible in the common languages. These and many other dreadful deeds were the acts of this ungodly man, but the most devastating of all his acts was when he laid the groundwork for the Inquisition. The Inquisition was a church court designed to convict, torture, and destroy all those who did not follow the teachings of the Catholic church. All this was done in the name of Christ. In describing the Inquisition, Carroll related, “For real barbarity there seems to be nothing, absolutely nothing in all history that will surpass it. I would not even attempt to describe it.”<sup>105</sup>

“The pope, finding that these cruel means had not the intended effect, sent several learned monks to preach among the Waldenses, and to endeavour to argue them out of their opinions. Among these monks was one Dominic, who appeared extremely zealous in the cause of popery. This Dominic instituted an order, which, from him, was called the order of Dominican friars; and the members this order have ever since been the principal inquisitors in the various inquisitions in the world. The power of the inquisitors was unlimited, they proceeded against whom they pleased, without a consideration of age, sex, or rank. Let the accusers be ever so infamous, the accusation was deemed valid; and even anonymous informations, sent by letter, were thought sufficient evidence. To be rich was a crime equal to heresy; therefore many who had money were accused of heresy, or of being favourers of heretics, that they might be obliged to pay for their opinions.”<sup>106</sup>

Pope Gregory IX passed an edict in 1227 stating that every Waldensian must

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103. Halley, p. 776.

104. Carroll, p. 28; Collier's Encyclopaedia, Vol. 13, p. 32.

105. Ibid.

106. Fox's Book of Martyrs, p. 72.

die. This heightened the persecution against them and many of them lost their lives. He took a similar measure against the Cathari who lived in Germany, causing many of them to suffer unmercifully and die for the cause of Christ. The Inquisition was about to be born.

Secular history records the birth of the Inquisition in much the same way as do church historians. “The Council of Toulouse in 1229 enacted a decree that may be considered the final development toward the institution of the Inquisition itself. It suggested that the bishops of southern France establish in each parish a committee consisting of the parish priest and several reputable parishioners to discover the heretics (Albigensians) in the parish. They were to visit and inspect the homes of suspects and to apprehend the guilty and all who harbored them. The dwellings of the heretics were to be destroyed, and their other belongings were to be confiscated.”<sup>107</sup> A heretic in the Middle Ages was anyone who believed and practised religion in any way contrary to the teachings of the Catholic church.

The formal founding of the Inquisition took place under Pope Gregory IX. “In 1231 he created a special court to investigate suspects and force heretics to change their beliefs. . . . Working in secret, the inquisitors often misused their power. Some suspects were tortured, and heretics who refused to change their beliefs were sentenced to die by burning.”<sup>108</sup>

Although the Inquisition was first instituted against the Albigensians in southern France, it also sought to destroy the Waldensians dwelling in the same area. “By the middle of the thirteenth century the Inquisition had spread to the rest of France, to the Low Countries, to Aragon in Spain, and to Sicily and northern Italy.” The inquisitors accepted the testimony of criminals, heretics, excommunicants and even children to condemn a heretic. “If the judges failed to obtain a voluntary confession from a person about whose guilt, they were certain, they applied various means of torture, usually the rack.” “Major penalties involved excommunication, exile, permanent imprisonment, confiscation of property, or death. . . . Often the cells were underground dungeons, and prison conditions were generally deplorable. . . . The death penalty, usually burning at the stake was carried out by the civil authority to which the inquisitorial court had given the condemned heretic.”<sup>109</sup>

The Inquisition lasted for nearly 500 years and poured out much indignation upon the followers of New Testament Christianity. The French Albigenses experienced the most intense persecution under this new phase of the Catholic church tyranny. Halley agrees that the Inquisition in Spain, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands also murdered thousands of Christians.<sup>110</sup>

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107. Collier's Encyclopaedia, Vol. 13, p. 38.

108. World Book Encyclopaedia, vol. 10, p. 277, 1988.

109. Collier's Encyclopaedia, Vol. 13, pp. 38-39.

110. Halley, p. 777.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who first claimed to be the Vicar of Christ?
2. What is the meaning of transubstantiation?
3. What was the inquisition? How long did it last?

# Chapter 14

Fourteenth Century, Years 1300-1400

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A very well known man of the fourteenth century is John Wycliffe [also Wickliff]. He was a lowly, daring farmer's son who lived from 1324-1384, and became known as the “Morning Star of the Reformation.” The Reformation was a time during the sixteenth century when many rebelled against the teachings of the Catholic church and tried to bring her back in line with Biblical principles.<sup>111</sup>

“Little is known of Wycliffe's life before 1356, when he was on the faculty of Merton College at Oxford University [England]. Except for brief absences, he was connected with Oxford until he retired about 1382.”<sup>112</sup>

Conditions in Europe during the 1300's were not good. A plague called *black death* killed about a fourth of Europe's population; the French and English were at war with each other; and considerable struggles existed between the religious leaders and the governmental leaders.<sup>113</sup>

Because of the religious and political unrest Wycliffe in his lectures and books spoke against the corruption that was present in the Catholic church. He disagreed with many common teachings of the Catholic church. He did not believe in transubstantiation. He believed that the Bible ought to be the only rule for faith and practice. Although he did not believe that infant baptism should be mandatory, he did not oppose it altogether.<sup>114</sup> For these reasons the Catholic church hated him. Wycliffe actually laid much of the ground work for the Reformation that followed many years later. The Pope would have killed him for these “heretical” beliefs had he had many close friends among the governmental leaders who kept this from taking place.

One of Wycliffe's greatest accomplishments in life was the translation of the Bible into the common English tongue of the people. This he completed in 1382. This was the very first Bible ever translated into English. The final revisions on it were not completed until 1388 shortly after his death.

Though Wycliffe was a great man in many respects, he was not a Baptist. Armitage states, some “find a resemblance between some of Wickliff's views and those of the Baptists, and others have claimed him as a Baptist. But it were more accurate to say that many who carried his principles to their legitimate results became Baptists.”<sup>115</sup> He practiced infant baptism and remained a Catholic priest until the time of his death.<sup>116</sup>

Those who followed the teachings of Wycliffe became known as Lollards. Some of them practised infant baptism as did Wycliffe, while many of them turned from

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111. Goadby, p. 12.

112. World Book Encyclopaedia, Vol. 21, p. 516.

113. World Book Encyclopaedia, Vol. 21, p. 516.

114. Armitage, p. 325.

115. Armitage, p. 315.

116. Halley, p. 785; Cramp, p. 117; Armitage, p. 325.

this incorrect belief and practised baptism of believers only.<sup>117</sup>

The Lollards travelled around and preached in much the same manner as did the Waldensians. Occasionally they preached in church buildings, but often they conducted their preaching in market places and other places where people gathered. They carried copies of the Bible for people to read. This stirred much interest in reading the Word of God. Though this was still considered an illegal practice, some men would read by candle light from dark until dawn, while others listened on.<sup>118</sup>

Many men and women left the Catholic church and followed the Lollards. These departures infuriated the Catholics. In the year 1400 the Catholic church initiated a campaign against them and burned many at the stake. “The seeds, however, were scattered, and Wickliffe’s opinions were so prevalent that it was said if you met two persons upon the road, you might be sure that one was a Lollard.”<sup>119</sup> Catholics imprisoned scores of Lollards in London and in many other towns. It was primarily the Lollards who prepared the hearts of Englishmen to separate from the Catholic church during the years of Reformation that followed. It appears that the beliefs and practices of many Lollards were very similar to those of New Testament Baptists.

In the fourteenth century, many Waldenses emigrated to Calabria in the southeastern toe of Italy. They settled in waste lands and made several wild and barren spots both beautiful and fertile. The Calabrian lords were highly pleased with the Waldenses, as they were honest, quiet, and industrious. However, the priests of the country exhibited several negative complaints against them. Unable to accuse them of anything bad deeds, they accused them of things they neglected to do: for not being Roman Catholics; not making any of their boys priests and girls nuns; for not going to Mass; for not giving wax tapers to the priests as offerings; for not going on pilgrimages and for not bowing to images.<sup>120</sup>

When persecution began, these Waldensian Christians fled to the forests. Catholic soldiers hunted them like wild animals, with no regard for age or gender. “Some they caught and hanged up upon trees, cut down boughs and burnt them, or ripped them open and left their bodies to be devoured by wild beasts, or birds of prey. Many they shot at a distance, but the greatest number they hunted down by way of sport. A few hid themselves in caves, but famine destroyed them in their retreat; and thus all these poor people perished, by various means, to glut the bigoted malice of their merciless persecutors.”<sup>121</sup>

The Waldensians also abounded in Austria near the end of the fourteenth century. Hundreds of them lost their lives to the Inquisition, but endless numbers evaded the inquisitors.

The Bohemian Brethren multiplied greatly during this time. Some historians

117. Armitage, p. 325.

118. Cramp, p. 98.

119. Fox, p. 187.

120. Fox, p. 132.

121. Fox, p. 134.

estimate that nearly one fourth Bohemia's population had become believers in Christ. This became such a worry to the Catholics that King Ottocar II applied to the pope to extirpate them. A very influential man in spreading the Gospel in Bohemia during the fourteenth century was John Huss. He lived from 1369-1415, and was one of Wycliffe's students. He exposed and denounced the corruption that was in the Catholic church. This corruption included the doctrinal errors of paying for indulgences for the dead, purgatory, and worshipping of saints.<sup>122</sup> Eventually the Catholics burned him and many of his followers at the stake as heretics.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Whom do we know as the "Morning Star of the Reformation?"
2. What doctrinal beliefs help us to know that Wycliffe was not a Baptist?
3. In what way did many Lollards differ from their founder Wycliffe?
4. Describe the plight of the Waldensians during this century.
4. Who was John Huss?

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122. Halley, p. 785.



# Chapter 15

Fifteenth Century, Years 1400-1500

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As the reformation neared and the number of true believers in Christ multiplied, identifying those who truly held Baptist doctrine is difficult. While many English Lollards held similar beliefs to the Baptists, many were unwilling to break ties completely with the Catholic Church.

Sometime early in the fifteenth century the Parliament of England enacted a law for the burning of heretics, making the nation responsible for their murder. “The English sheriffs were forced to take an oath to persecute the Lollards, and the justices must deliver a relapse heretic to be burned within ten days of his accusation.”<sup>123</sup>

On 1 March 1409 the Catholics arrested a Lollard named John Badly. “He said that he believed in the omnipotent God in Trinity, but if every wafer used in the sacrament were Christ's veritable body, soul and divinity, there were 20,000 gods in England.”<sup>124</sup> They condemned him to die on 16 March. He was then bound with chains and placed in an empty wooden barrel and burnt in Smithfield, England.

“Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, in consequence of his attachment to the doctrines of Wickliffe, was accused of heresy, and being condemned to be hanged and burnt, was accordingly executed in Lincoln's Inn Fields, A.D. 1419.”<sup>125</sup> We know little about John Oldcastle, “a Welshman of great ability and consecration to Christ,” but historians say that just before his death he fell down devoutly upon his knees and asked God to forgive his enemies. He was hanged over a fire by chains until consumed in the fire.



John Badly

In the year 1428, out of hatred and vengeance for the Lollards and their leader John Wycliffe, Pope Martin V ordered that Wycliffe's bones be dug up and burned. They then scattered his ashes upon the waters.

By the year 1430 the Catholic Inquisition has spread to Switzerland where it continued for many years. During this time they severely persecuted the Waldensians. Two primary beliefs that caused the Catholics to hate the Waldensians were their rejection of purgatory and their insistence that buying of indulgences did nothing to help the

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123. Armitage, p. 323.

124. Armitage, p. 323.

125. Fox, p. 248.

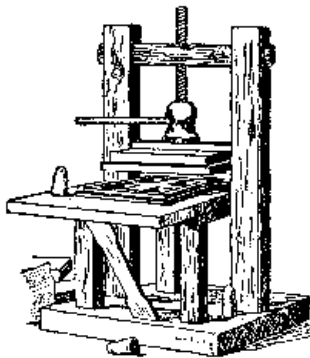
dead.<sup>126</sup>

Savonarola lived during the latter 1400's. He was another man who loved the Word of God and spoke out eloquently for reform in the Hierarchy of the Catholic church. He was born on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1452 in Ferrara, Italy. He was a devout Catholic, but he despised the corruption that was in the Catholic church. Savonarola never became a "Baptist," but he did preach strongly that the Catholic church must return to the doctrine of the New Testament. Consequently, the Catholic church hated him. In the year 1498 Pope Alexander VI decreed that Savonarola must die. On the 23rd of May 1498 they burned him at the stake in Florence, Italy.<sup>127</sup>

Another historical event that caused a revolutionary change in the printing of Bibles was the invention of the printing press in 1450.<sup>128</sup> With the help of the printing press copies of the Bible could be more accurately and quickly produced.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. For what "heretical" belief was John Badly burned at the stake?
2. What were John Oldcastle's last words before he was roasted over the fire?
3. What fifteenth century invention revolutionized the copying of Bibles?



Early Printing Press

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126. Armitage, p. 312.

127. Armitage, p. 319-321; Carroll, p. 31.

128. Cramp, p. 76.

# Chapter 16

Sixteenth Century, Years 1500-1600

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To make the history of this century easier to follow, we will divide our survey into countries. The main events of Baptist History will be discussed within the realms of each prominent country during this century.

## Germany

The famous reformer, Martin Luther, was born in 1483 and lived until 1546. When he was eighteen years old, he entered the University of Erfurt planning to become a lawyer. Four years later, after an intense religious experience, he entered a Catholic monastery. In the year 1507 the Catholic church ordained him a priest.<sup>129</sup>

In 1508, while studying the Epistles of Paul, Luther discovered that justification from his sins could only come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This discovery changed the course of his life. He soon realized that the doctrine of the Catholic church was wrong, and he set out to bring it back into line with the Bible.

On the 31st of October 1517, Luther posted his famous Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Castle church in Wittenberg, Germany. These theses challenged many Catholic doctrines and initiated the Reformation period. In 1521, Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther from the Catholic church.

Around 1530, Luther began a new church in Germany that became known as the Lutheran church. This was the first church to break directly away from the Catholic church.<sup>130</sup> The Lutheran church was the first Protestant church. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a Protestant as “a member or adherent of one of the Christian churches deriving from the reformation.”<sup>131</sup> A Protestant church was one that protested against the Catholic church and broke away from it. It is vitally important that we remember that Baptists are not Protestants. Baptists were never part of the Catholic church and thus did not protest against it nor did they break away from it. As we have clearly seen, some have held Baptist beliefs in every age since Christ’s time.

Though it believed several biblical doctrines including justification by faith in Christ, the Lutheran church retained many beliefs of the Catholic church,. Luther never became a follower of sound New Testament doctrine. Thus, the Lutheran church’s hatred for the Baptists was similar to the Catholic church’s.<sup>132</sup>

Though the Baptists were not an active part of the Reformation, the partial religious toleration that came as a result benefitted them immensely. They were one of the most influential groups who preached the gospel in Germany during the years of the

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129. World Book Encyclopedia, Vol. 12, p. 531.

130. Carroll, p. 32.

131. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, p. 559.

132. Christian, Vol. 1, p. 86.

Reformation. Consequently, during this century the number of Baptists increased greatly in Germany.

Though the slaughter of New Testament Christians carried out by the Catholic Inquisition had slowed considerably, some were still suffering persecution and even martyrdom. In the year 1524 at least two Baptists were killed for their faith.

Michael Satler had been a Catholic monk, but he received Christ as his Lord and Saviour and became a Baptist preacher. On the 26th of May 1527 the Catholics martyred him in Rottenburg, Germany. Seven times they pierced him with a red-hot iron before they snuffed out his life. After his death they burnt his body to ashes. The Catholics apprehend his wife along with the wives of several other men whom they killed. They tied the hands and feet of the women, and threw them into the river to drown.<sup>133</sup>

In 1528 the Catholics beheaded Leonard Schoener. He too had become a Christian and a Baptist preacher.<sup>134</sup>

The Baptists in Salzburg, Germany became known as “The Garden Brethren” because they met for services at night in the gardens to hide from their persecutors. also suffered much persecution. One example of this persecution was when the Catholics arrested a young Baptist lady who was only sixteen years of age. They condemned her because she would not renounce her faith in Christ. Her tormentors held her under water until she drowned.<sup>135</sup>

The enemies of Biblical Christianity martyred approximately 350 men and women for their faith in Christ during the year 1529 in the province of Palatinate. While they were killing one group, those who remained in prison awaiting their execution were singing songs of praise.

People called many Baptists of this time Anabaptists because they baptized converts whom doctrinally erring churches had already “baptized.” One very important fact that we must note at this time is that not all Anabaptists were Baptists. Anabaptist and Baptist are not synonyms. Anyone who chose to “rebaptize” a proselyte was considered an Anabaptist. Though many Anabaptists in Germany remained true to the New Testament, it must be admitted that sizable numbers of them began to adopt false doctrines. One such man was Thomas Munzer. Munzer was the ringleader of the terrible time of turmoil known as the Peasant's War. Though he used the name, he was not truly a Baptist in doctrine and practice. Nonetheless the Baptists received much of the blame for the Peasant's War, and suffered much persecution as a result.<sup>136</sup>

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133. Cramp, p. 137.

134. Cramp, p. 138.

135. Cramp, p. 139.

136. Cramp, p. 137.

In the year 1532 another problem arose which brought shame to the name Baptist. A pastor in the Lutheran church in Munster, Germany whose name was Rothmann, preached boldly the Word of God. As a result he proselyted most of the Catholics in the city of Munster. One of his wrong practices was that of claiming to receive information from God through dreams and from the “spirit.” He believed and taught that these revelations were superior to the Word of God.

In the year 1532 Rothmann declared himself to be an Anabaptist. He had two men who were his assistants whose names were Bakhold and Mathiesen. Eventually their influence became stronger than that of Rothmann and they took charge. They killed all of those in the town of Munster who were not of their persuasion and began many wicked vices. This did not prevail for a long period because forces gathered around the city and kept them from coming out for supplies. As a result many of them died of starvation. Eventually a great fight arose and these fanatical leaders were killed.<sup>137</sup>

This trouble that arose in Munster was a shame to the Baptists, but we must remember that these rebels were not Baptists. They only claimed to be Anabaptists.<sup>138</sup>

By the year 1557 many Baptists resided in the country of Germany. More than fifty Baptist churches were present in Germany and some of them had memberships of 500 and 600 people.

### Switzerland

In Switzerland we find another famous reformer of the sixteenth century whose name was Zwingli. Zwingli was born in 1484 and died in 1531. He was nearly an exact contemporary of Luther. He too tried to

reform the Catholic church. At one point in his life he nearly became a Baptist. He believed that the Bible was to be the sole guide to doctrine. However, he could not bring himself to believe all of the New Testament doctrines as did the Baptists. For instance, he did not believe that baptism was an ordinance for believes only. He also did not believe in separation of church and state.<sup>139</sup>

Baptists arrived in Switzerland somewhere around the year 1523. They won



Martyrdom by drowning

137. Cramp, p. 223 f.

138. Armitage, p. 371.

139. Cramp, p. 151.

many men and women to Christ, but in 1525 persecutions arose. In 1526 religious leaders passed a law condemning anyone who administered or received baptism by immersion to death by drowning. Zwingle was also among those who persecuted the Baptists. He was actually an instigator behind this new law.

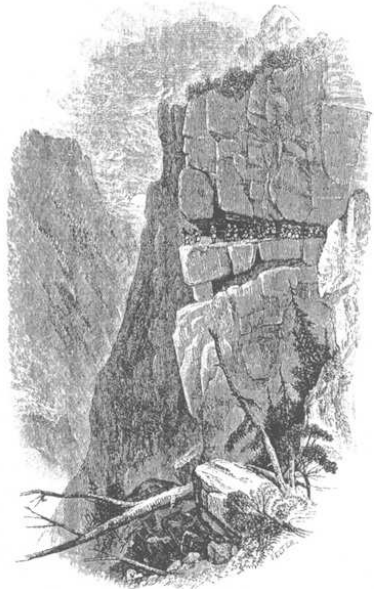
It was around this time that Zwingle and other reformers formed a Protestant Inquisition. They formed this Inquisition to arrest, convict and kill those who did not follow the sentiments of the reformers.<sup>140</sup> They killed many Baptists at this time. Many who escaped death were whipped and scores of others were condemned to long prison sentences. Erasmus, a man who was alive at this time, said, “The Anabaptists were numerous everywhere, even though they had no church buildings. Their conduct was righteous, but they suffered more persecution than any other religious group.”<sup>141</sup>

Conrad Gerbel was a Swiss Baptist of this era. When he was young, he became a close friend of Zwingle. Having just become a Baptist and he tried to convince Zwingle to do the same, but without success. He was a faithful preacher and established many Baptist churches.<sup>142</sup>

Another Swiss Baptist of this century was Felix Mantz. He too had been a friend of Zwingle, but in 1522 he changed his thinking concerning the church-state relationship and the practice of infant baptism. It was at this time that he became a Baptist. He too tried to persuade Zwingle to abandon his unbiblical doctrine, but was not able to convince him. On 5 January 1527, the Protestant Inquisition arrested him, tied him hand and foot, and cast him into the river where he drowned. At his martyrdom many men and women trusted Christ and joined the Baptists.<sup>143</sup>

George Jacob Blaurock was another Swiss Baptist who was a converted Catholic monk. He left the monastery and joined Zwingle longing to find peace in his heart. He did not find that peace through Zwingle's doctrine. It was not until he heard a Baptist preacher that he truly made peace with God and became a Baptist.<sup>144</sup>

A Swiss Baptist in this era that stands out above the rest is a man named Balthazar Hubmeyer. He was born in 1480. In 1512 he became a Catholic priest. In 1522 he departed from the Catholics and



Cave of Castelluzzo

140. Armitage, p. 332.

141. Cramp, p. 153.

142. Armitage, p. 334.

143. Armitage, p. 335.

144. Armitage, p. 336.

began following Luther. After some time he left Luther and followed Zwingli. He became a very close friend of Zwingli. In the year 1525, Hubmeyer began to realize that Zwingli had not forsaken all of the false teachings of the Catholic church. Wanting to follow only the teachings of the New Testament, he left Zwingli and sat under the teachings of the Baptists. Before long he received Christ as his Saviour and followed the Lord in believers' Baptism by immersion. Once grounded in the doctrines of the New Testament he became a Baptist preacher and won many to the Lord.<sup>145</sup>

The Waldensians suffered greatly at this time. "The most dreadful of all their persecutions began in 1560, when many of their villages were deserted. The old, the feeble, women and children, fled to the forests, the rocks, the highest peaks of the mountains. Untrained peasants were obliged to form themselves into small brigades. Tottering old men and boys organized themselves into guards and sentinels, and accomplished immortal exploits by their skill and fortitude against veteran invaders."<sup>146</sup> The leaders of the Inquisition determined to destroy the Waldensians completely. "Many of them were frozen to death, others were cast from high precipices and dashed to pieces. Some were driven into caverns, and by filling mouths of their caves with fagots were suffocated. Others were hanged in cold blood, ripped open and disembowelled, pierced with prongs, drowned, raked limb from limb till death relieved them; were stabbed, worried by dogs, burned, or crucified with their heads downward. Fox relates one case in which four hundred mothers who had taken refuge in the Cave of Castelluzzo, some 2,000 feet above the valley, entered by a projecting crag, were smothered with their infants in their arms."<sup>147</sup>

## Scotland

In the year 1560 John Knox established the first Presbyterian church in Scotland. In the year 1592 the Presbyterian church became the State Church of Scotland. We know very little about the Baptist influence in Scotland at this time.

## The Netherlands

In 1525 many Baptists fled to the country of The Netherlands to hide from their persecutors. They had a desire to worship God in peace. They had one problem that prevented this; they could not keep their faith to themselves. They preached the gospel to the lost which eventually stirred the attention of the Catholic church and persecution began.

King George V passed a law that condemned all who believed differently than the Catholic church. The Baptists especially felt this persecution. The first Baptist the King George V killed was a woman named Weynken Claes. He had her suffocated and then burned her on the 20th of November 1527. Two other Baptists died under this law

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145. Armitage, p. 336.

146. Armitage, p. 310.

147. Armitage, p. 311.

during the year 1527 as well. In 1531 persecutors beheaded a Baptist named Sicke Snyder.<sup>148</sup>

On the 10th of June 1535 the town of Brussels passed a law that condemned all Baptists to death by fire unless they recanted their beliefs. Even if they did recant their beliefs they would still put them to death, but by another means. The law granted an incentive for neighbours to report the hiding places of the Baptists —once they put the Baptist to death the informer received part of the property belonging to the Baptist.

In 1537 a Baptist evangelist named Menno Simon began travelling around preaching and establishing Baptist churches. He also wrote several books to strengthen the believers.

When Menno was a young man, he was a Catholic priest. He heard the testimonies of those whom they were torturing and killing for their faith. Their testimonies caused him to begin questioning the doctrines of the Catholic church and he soon turned to Christ for salvation. After he became a Baptist preacher the Catholic church offered a large reward to the person who could capture Menno, but the Lord protected him.<sup>149</sup> Observers heard Menno say: “What misery and anxiety have I felt in the deadly perils of persecution for my poor sick wife and little children! While others lie on soft beds and cushions, we must often creep away into secret corners. While others engage in festivities to the music of life and trumpet, we must look around whenever a dog barks, fearing the spies are on our track.”<sup>150</sup>

When Menno was a very old man, friends gave him a place to live in the country of Fresenburg. He lived out the remainder of his days there in peace. It was here that he built a workshop for printing books. He died on the 15th of January 1561 in his house.<sup>151</sup>

In September of 1540 Catholics passed another similar law. This time they had pictures drawn of the most wanted Baptists and posted them on the gates of all the towns to aid in their capture.

In the year 1550 the Catholic Inquisition came to The Netherlands. They systematically slaughtered many Baptists. In a matter of twenty-five years more than 50,000 Christians died, many of whom were Baptists.<sup>152</sup> Between the years 1560 and 1563, persecution was so severe that it was nearly impossible for the Baptists to escape. It is hard to conceive how any of them managed to survive. Nevertheless, the Lord took care of a remnant of them and again their numbers began to grow.<sup>153</sup>

## Poland

During the sixteenth century the number of Baptists in Poland increased rapidly. Historian Wells reports that on the Christmas Day of 1565, forty-seven Baptist pastors

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148. Cramp, p. 166.

149. Cramp, p. 172.

150. Armitage, p. 424.

151. Cramp, p. 186.

152. Armitage, p. 411.

153. Cramp, p. 169.



gathered in Poland. Many of these Baptist pastors were mighty preachers.<sup>154</sup>

## England

We do not know exactly when the first Baptist arrived in England. Some have guessed that it was in the year of 1523, others suspect that it was before that time.<sup>155</sup>

In 1534 King Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife Catherine, but was forbidden to do so by the Pope. This angered Henry so he separated from the Catholic church and began a church of his own that became known as the church of England or the Anglican church. Most of the beliefs of the Anglican church were very similar to those of the Catholic church. The main difference is that the King was the head of the church rather than the Pope.<sup>156</sup>

During his reign King Henry VIII passed two laws that prohibited Baptists from residing in England. The first law forbid preaching in pubs and taverns. It also gave all Baptists ten days to leave the country. The second law stated that all those who received “rebaptism” must leave England within twelve days. If they did not leave, they would put them to death. History records that the English killed ten Baptists during the year of 1535 and another fourteen during 1536.

When Edward VI became king in 1547, he chose thirty-one men to act as inquisitors to persecute all who did not follow the Anglican church.

In 1553, Mary, the daughter of Henry and Catherine, became queen. She was angry that her father had divorced her mother and started the Anglican church. She determined to take England back into the Catholic church. To accomplish her wishes she beheaded many Anglican church members. Consequently she has earned the infamous title “Bloody Mary.” Not only did she kill Anglicans, but many Baptists lost their lives at her hand as well.<sup>157</sup>

In 1558, Elizabeth, who was the child of Henry and his second wife Anne Boleyn, became queen. She was of her father's persuasion religiously and again revived the Anglican church. Within four years she began to persecute the Baptists. Although she persecuted them, the Baptists continued to grow in number.

A man of this era by the name of Robert Brown broke away from the Catholic church. He began a new church known at first as the “Brownists”, but later as the Congregational church. The Congregational church adopted many beliefs of the Baptists, but they held on to the belief in infant baptism.

## Summary of the Baptists during the Reformation

During the Reformation some Baptists helped those who wanted to pull away from the Catholic church. However, in the end they suffered at the hands of the very

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154. Wells, p. 117.

155. Cramp, p. 204.

156. Carroll, p. 33; Halley, p. 791.

157. Carroll, p. 34.

Reformers they had helped.

All the leaders during the Reformation left the Catholic church, but they established state churches of their own. Luther began the Lutheran church that became the state church in Germany. Zwingli or Calvin began the Presbyterian church that became the state church in Switzerland. John Knox established the Presbyterian church as the state church in Scotland. King Henry VIII began the Anglican church and established it as the state church of England.<sup>158</sup>

All these new churches were Protestant churches because they protested against the Catholic church and broke away from it. We must remember that though they did break from the Catholic church they did not leave behind all of her false doctrine. Reformers clung to the following false doctrines of the Catholic church: the union of church and state; hierarchal church government; infant baptism by sprinkling; baptismal regeneration; and the practice of persecuting those who differ in belief. Every Protestant church in existence today had their origins in the Reformation. In every era since the time of Christ, some Christians have believed as biblical Baptists do today. Men have not always known them as Baptists. In fact, they knew few of them prior to the Reformation as Baptists, but their beliefs were in line with the teaching of the New Testament. This is the reason Baptist churches are not a Protestant churches. The Baptists never broke from the Catholic church. They simply remained true to the Word of God when the Catholic church chose to follow false doctrine back in the fourth century.<sup>159</sup>

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who was the famous 16th century reformer who lived in Germany?
2. What is a Protestant? Why are biblical Baptists not Protestants?
3. What does the name Anabaptist mean and who were they?
4. Describe the problem that arose in Munster, Germany that brought shame to the Baptists?
5. Who helped to establish the Protestant Inquisition in Switzerland?
6. Who was the famous reformer in Scotland?
7. Who was the Baptist evangelist from The Netherlands who started many Baptist churches?
8. The inquisition in The Netherlands murdered approximately how many Christians?
9. What was the main reason that King Henry VIII began the Anglican church?
10. What is the main way in which the Congregational church differs from the Baptist church?

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158. Carroll, p. 32.

159. Wells, p. 114.

# Chapter 17

Seventeenth Century, Years 1600-1700

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Before the Reformation the Baptists had primarily one major enemy: the Catholic church. Now that several other churches had broken off the Catholic church, they had several enemies. All the Reformation churches persecuted the Baptists for their stand on the doctrines of the Bible.

Baptists were widespread during the seventeenth century. However, we will centre our attention on those who lived in England and America as they were the most active during this era.

## England

At this time we will turn our attention first to the Baptists in England. King James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne and became King James I of England from 1603-1625. He stated that he wanted religious toleration for all religions. Unfortunately his actions did not fully back up his words. He also became a persecutor of the Baptists. Busher, a concerned Baptist, wrote to King James I describing the persecution his Baptist colleagues were experiencing in English prisons. But his letter did not affect the situation.<sup>160</sup>

Though King James I had many vices, he did make one contribution that was very worthwhile: he ordered the translation of the Bible into English.

“At the Hampton Court Conference of 1604 the Puritan leader Reynolds made the suggestion—which was first opposed and then adopted by the conference with the enthusiastic approval of James I—that there should be a new translation of the Holy Scriptures in English to replace the different versions in common use. Fifty-four men, including 'High Churchmen' and Puritans, the greatest Hebrew and Greek scholars of the age, formed six companies to undertake the task.”<sup>161</sup>

“These men were the greatest scholars of their day or any day, so erudite and learned that scholarship of today pales in comparison. To illustrate; John Boys, one of the translators was able to read the Bible in Hebrew at the age of five years! He was a proficient Greek scholar at the age of fourteen and for years he spent from 4 o'clock *in the morning* till 8 o'clock at night in the Cambridge library studying manuscripts and languages.”<sup>162</sup>

Because of this translation project, completed in 1611, the King James version of the Bible was produced. This translation in the English language far surpassed any

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160. Goadby, p. 80.

161. *How we got our Bible*, Pamphlet No. 15. Trinitarian Bible Society, p. 6.

162. Fuller

other previous English translation from the same Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and has yet to be surpassed today.

Thousands of Baptists lived in England during this century. They opposed infant baptism. They disagreed with the baptisms practised by both the Catholic and Anglican churches. Many Baptists disliked being called “Anabaptists.” The term “Anabaptist” insinuated that they were baptizing the second time, when they believed that the “baptism” of churches of different faith and practice was not baptism at all. Biblical baptism is only by immersion after conversion.<sup>163</sup>

One prominent Christian of this era was John Smyth. Previously he was a pastor of an Anglican church. After leaving the Anglican church he became a Brownist. One major problem that he had with the Brownists was that they did not baptize those who came to them from erring churches. Consequently he left the Brownists and was baptized Scripturally. Some historians claim that Smyth baptized himself, but we do not have enough clear evidence to sustain such a claim.<sup>164</sup> Armitage states that Smyth did not agree in some fine areas with the Baptists of his day. He believed that the Apostolical Church model was lost, and determined to recover it. Evidently for the most part Smyth was a Baptist.<sup>165</sup>

King Charles I, the son of James I, was king in England from 1625 until 1649. He, like his father, was not too tolerant of the Baptists. Within twelve months of his coronation he imprisoned a Baptist pastor named Thomas Brewer. Brewer was kept imprisoned for fourteen years.<sup>166</sup> Thomas Lamb was another Baptist who suffered during this period. While he was in prison his wife and eight children suffered greatly, but upon his release he immediately resumed preaching.<sup>167</sup>

The Presbyterian church was becoming strong in England at this time, and they too persecuted the Baptists. In May of 1645 England adopted a law forbidding those who were not Presbyterians from holding a public office. They also strictly forbid all the Biblical preaching in non-Reformation churches.<sup>168</sup>

In 1649 the authorities amended the laws of England to allow religious toleration. In a very short time many Baptist churches sprang up in every corner of England. Oliver Cromwell was in leadership in England at this time and it was a time of significant toleration for the Baptists. Unfortunately this time of religious freedom was short-lived.<sup>169</sup>

In the year 1660 King Charles II began to reign over England and continued until 1685. He initiated severe persecution against the Baptists. In a short time he filled all the prisons. The Baptist church buildings were broken down and their belongings

163. Christian, Vol. 1, p. 218.

164. Cramp, p. 254.

165. Armitage, pp. 453-454.

166. Goadby, p. 81.

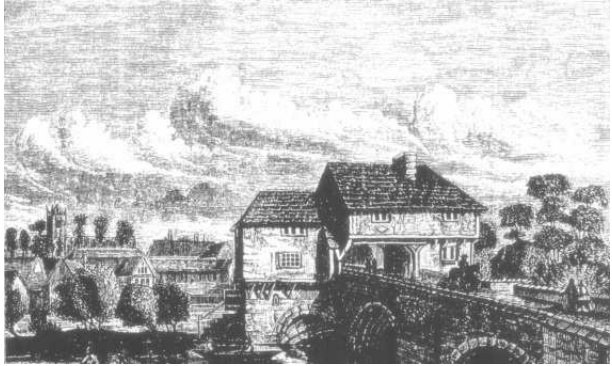
167. Goadby, p. 84.

168. Goadby, p. 87.

169. Goadby, p. 92.

were confiscated. Those whom he did not imprison were beaten and persecuted. The Baptists were forced to meet in barns and in fields and forests. Many people became informers for the government, revealing the meeting places of the Baptists. Charles II was hardly a friend of the Baptists.

John Bunyan was a Baptist who lived in Bedford, England. He was born in 1628. During his youth he was a wild sinful young man. He served in the English army as a soldier after which time he married a poor, godly, orphan girl. Bunyan began to read and study the Bible which deeply convicted his sinful heart. When he was twenty-five years of age, he accepted Christ as his



The prison on Bedford Bridge

Saviour. Within a short time he was baptized by immersion and became a member of the Bedford Baptist Church. Two years later in the year 1655 he began to preach the Word of God.

In the year 1660 the English government imprisoned Bunyan for preaching the gospel in churches other than the Anglican church. He remained in prison in Bedford for six years. Shortly after they released him, he returned to preaching. Shortly afterwards they again imprisoned him for another six years. In the year 1672, they released and he returned to preaching. Again they imprisoned him, but this time it was only for a few months.<sup>170</sup>

While in prison, Bunyan wrote his book, *Pilgrim's Progress*. *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory about a man who became a Christian and the struggles that he faced after becoming a Christian. Men have translated it into many languages and it is one of the most widely read books in the world.

From the year 1672 until the time of his death in 1688, Bunyan was the pastor of the Bedford Baptist Church. He was a powerful preacher. History records that thousands often came to hear him preach. John Bunyan is one man whom we can proudly call a Baptist.<sup>171</sup>

King James II began his reign in 1685 and reigned until 1688. He was a Catholic. Surprisingly, he passed a law permitting religious toleration. His main thinking behind this was to reestablish the Catholic church in England. When this became evident, those in opposition forced him to flee for his life. After he left the

170. Armitage, p. 476.

171. Cramp, p. 379.

country, William of Orange became the ruler of England.<sup>172</sup>

William of Orange opposed all persecution for religion. With the continuous and determined efforts of Baptists, Quakers and some Independents, religious liberty appeared to be near. Religious toleration was, at least in part, achieved with the passing of the “Toleration Act of 1689.” Roger Williams was one of those who worked hard to see this law passed. Though this law did stop most of the religious persecution, Williams was disappointed that it did not establish true religious liberty.

### **America**

After America’s discovery by Columbus in 1492, many Catholics went to both South and Central America to do missionary work. Among those who went to establish colonies in North America were many Baptists. No one can be positive of the exact time that the first Baptists arrived in America. We do know that they arrived with others who were searching for true religious liberty.

The Congregational church established a settlement in the area that is now Massachusetts. The Presbyterian church established settlements in New York and New Jersey. The Anglican church established settlements in Virginia and South Carolina. None of these settlements provided religious liberty, and thus all persecuted the Baptists.

We have already mentioned that John Smyth became an independent as he wanted to follow the teachings of the Bible. This took place about the year 1606. His followers were divided into two congregations, one of which he was the pastor and the other of which John Robinson was the pastor. In 1607 Smyth took his congregation to Holland to escape persecution. A year later Robinson and his congregation followed Smyth to Holland. In the year 1620 part of Robinson’s congregation again moved, this time to North America where they landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts.<sup>173</sup> It is difficult to say just how closely Robinson’s church followed Baptist doctrine, but they did greatly want to remain separate from those who did not follow the Bible. Upon their arrival in America they became known as the Pilgrims.

Pastor Robinson remained in Holland with the other half of his congregation. Therefore, William Bruster became the leader of the Pilgrims. They did not have an official pastor until the year 1629 when Pastor Ralph Smith joined their congregation.<sup>174</sup>

In 1628 another group of people established the settlement of Boston, Massachusetts. Boston is found close to Plymouth. These settlers had a great desire to reform the Anglican church, though they did not want to separate completely from those religions who did not follow the Bible. They became known as the Puritans.<sup>175</sup> They began a new church known as the Congregational church.<sup>176</sup>

In the year 1638 or 1639 Roger Williams began a Baptist church in the

172. Armitage, p. 553.

173. Torbet, p. 34.

174. Newman, p. 4.

175. Christian, Vol. 2, p. 15.

176. Newman, p. 13.

settlement called Providence, Rhode Island. Williams had previously been a Puritan at Boston. However, he changed his thinking and was baptized by immersion and became a Baptist.<sup>177</sup> This enraged the Puritans they forced him to leave Boston and move to Providence.<sup>178</sup>

In the year 1644 another man named John Clark established a Baptist church in Newport, Rhode Island.<sup>179</sup> Somewhere around the year 1647 Roger Williams developed some unusual doctrines and left the Baptists. Clark remained true to the Bible and continued his work with the Newport Baptist Church.<sup>180</sup>

Clark made a trip back to England to try to obtain the authority to establish Rhode Island as an official colony. In the year 1663, after several years of work, he obtained the legal paperwork he needed. The Colony of Rhode Island became the first place in the world where the government permitted every person to worship as their conscience directed them. They forbid all religious persecution. Clark became the governor of this colony. He was the first strong Baptist leader in North America.

The Congregational church in Boston did not believe in true religious toleration. Thus, they persecuted anyone who did not believe like them.<sup>181</sup>

The Baptists in North America grew in number rapidly, and by the year 1700 there were sixteen Baptist churches established. The following is a list of those towns that had Baptist churches and the year in which Christians established them.<sup>182</sup>

Some of those who established these Baptist churches were John Myles, William Screen, Thomas Duncan, Elias Each, and Samuel Jones. John Myles was a Baptist pastor in the country of Wales. He and some members of his church went to America in 1663. They began the First Baptist Church in Swansea, Massachusetts.<sup>183</sup> William Screven established the first Baptist church in South Carolina.<sup>184</sup> Thomas Dungan was a Baptist pastor who was influential in leading Elias Keach to the Lord. His church was responsible for sending out Keach as a Baptist evangelist.<sup>185</sup> Elias Keach travelled around New Jersey and Pennsylvania and many other places preaching the Gospel. He also wrote several books. He died in 1701 when he was only thirty-four years old.<sup>186</sup>

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177. Armitage, p. 659.

178. Armitage, pp. 627-640.

179. Newman, p. 9; Armitage, p. 671.

180. Newman, p. 16.

181. Newman, p. 22.

182. Christian, Vol. 2, p. 25.

183. Torbet, pp. 204-211.

184. Armitage, p. 704.

185. Armitage, p. 708.

186. Armitage, p. 708.

Providence, Rhode Island . . . . .	1639
Newport, Rhode Island . . . . .	1644
Newport, Rhode Island . . . . .	1656
Swansea, Massachusetts . . . . .	1663
Boston, Massachusetts . . . . .	1665
North Kingston, Rhode Island . . . . .	1665
Newport, Rhode Island . . . . .	1671
South Kingston, Rhode Island . . . . .	1680
Tiverton, Rhode Island . . . . .	1685
Middletown, New Jersey . . . . .	1688
Lower Dublin, Pennsylvania . . . . .	1689
Piscataway, New Jersey . . . . .	1689
Charleston, South Carolina . . . . .	1690
Cohansey, New Jersey . . . . .	1691
Swansea, Massachusetts . . . . .	1693
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania . . . . .	1698

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. Though King James I was not very tolerant of Baptists, what one good thing did he do?
2. Why did the Baptists not like being called “Anabaptists?”
3. List two reasons that we must question whether John Smyth was a Baptist.
4. How did King Charles II treat Baptists?
5. Who is the famous Baptist of Bedford, England and for what is he most famous?
6. Why was King James II forced to leave England?
7. What was the main difference between the Pilgrims and the Puritans?
8. Who was the first Baptist in America who remained true to the Word?
9. How many Baptist churches were established in America by the year 1700?



# Chapter 18

Eighteenth Century, Years 1700-1800

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## England

After King William of England passed a law in 1689 providing religious toleration for all denominations, the Baptists lived in relative peace for some time. Actually, this time of peace did not help them. In fact it hurt them. It was no longer costly to stand for Christ. They began to become apathetic towards reaching the lost for Christ. As a result their numbers began to decline. Many Christians during this time went back to their old way of life and became very indifferent towards the things of God.

Another factor that encouraged this lethargy among the Christians was the Calvinistic teachings that were prevalent during this time. Calvinism in its ultimate form is the belief that God elected some men to be saved and others to go to hell. Those, whom God elected to be saved, will be saved no matter what they do. Those whom God elected for hell cannot be saved no matter what they do. This kind of thinking is not biblical and it relieves men of their responsibility to tell others about Christ. Romans 10:13 records God's universal offer of salvation, "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" Mark 16:15 reminds us of the Christian's witnessing obligation, "*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*"

Unfortunately this type of ultra Calvinism became common among many Baptists and many Reformation churches. As a result the outreach of the gospel in Europe nearly died out during the later part of the seventeenth century. We can be thankful that a change in this downward trend began in the eighteenth century.

During the eighteenth century God used several men to revive the preaching of the Gospel in an evangelistic manner. God saved hundreds during this time that became known as "The Great Awakening."

Three men who were very instrumental in this time of revival were two brothers John and Charles Wesley and their friend George Whitfield, all of England. While studying to become preachers in the Anglican church they heard the gospel and accepted Christ as their Saviour. They came to realize that many teachings of the Anglican church were not in harmony with the Scriptures. According to Carroll, these three men seemingly had no desire to be the founders of a new denomination. They did, however, greatly desire to begin a revival of pure religion and a genuine spiritual reformation in the Church of England. The doors of their own churches were soon closed to them and they frequently held their services out in the open fields or in private homes.<sup>187</sup>

From their preaching a new church was born which became known as the Methodist church. The Methodist church preached salvation by faith in Christ alone, but they continued to hold to the unbiblical practice infant baptism by sprinkling. We do not

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<sup>187</sup> Carroll, p. 42.

know it exactly when the Methodist church officially began. However, we know that Methodists officially organized the first Methodist Episcopal Church in America, in Baltimore in 1784.<sup>188</sup>

Although these men were not Baptists, their preaching did stir revival fires in the hearts of many Baptists. As a result the Baptists began again to preach more aggressively the gospel of Christ.

In 1793 William Carey who was a Baptist from England became a foreign missionary to India. Many men criticized him and thought he was crazy, but he went believing that God was leading him. He was greatly used of God to reach many Indian people for the Lord. “He translated no fewer than twenty-four different versions of the Scriptures, with little aid from others, into the tongues spoken by one third of our race”.<sup>189</sup>

## America

This revival crossed the Atlantic Ocean spreading to America somewhere around 1726. Leaders in the American revivals include Frelinghuysen, Gilbert Tennent, and Jonathan Edwards. During the years 1736 and 1737, John Wesley preached in the American colony of Georgia. In 1739 and 1740 George Whitfield preached in many colonies of America.<sup>190</sup>

During this period many men and women from within Congregational churches who accepted Christ as their Saviour and were baptized in Baptist churches. There were even times when entire Congregational congregations were converted and became Baptists.<sup>191</sup>

One new practice that became common among the Baptists sometime after the year 1700 was that of forming associations for fellowship among Baptist churches. The first association to form was the Philadelphia Association that organized in 1707. They started another association in South Carolina in 1752. When they were first organized, these associations had good motives. They encouraged the Baptists to get together for fellowship and to work together to encourage the government to pass laws for religious freedom. These associations did not control those Baptist churches who were members. Unfortunately this eventually changed and the associations became more demanding.<sup>192</sup>

In 1751 Isaac Backus was baptized and eventually became a powerful Baptist preacher. At this time the number of Baptist churches in America was just more than fifty. Backus was determined to unite the Baptists in practice as evidently some differences in belief had arisen.

By the year 1776 (the year America declared Independence), the number of Baptists churches in America had increased to around 472, and to approximately 1,152

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188. Carroll, p. 42.

189. Armitage, p. 582.

190. Torbet, p. 211.

191. Torbet, p. 223.

192. Wells, p. 131.

by 1795.<sup>193</sup> The area of Virginia became a self-governing colony in 1606. Shortly after that, laws forbidding all religions except the Church of England were adopted. They persecuted and imprisoned those who were Baptists. In 1775 the Baptists were finally successful in getting this law reversed. In 1784 the Baptists rebelled against a tax that funded the Anglican church. The Anglicans took them to court and won the case.

In 1786 Thomas Jefferson drafted a law that they passed allowing all residents of the state of Virginia freedom to worship as they pleased without persecution.<sup>194</sup>

Baptist churches became very numerous as pioneers pushed farther and farther west. Baptist settlers established the first Baptist church in Boonesburo, Kentucky sometime between 1769 and 1775. Daniel Boone and his family founded this settlement.<sup>195</sup>

In 1781 pioneers established a Baptist church in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. They started another Baptist church in Bradstown, Kentucky in the same year. In the year 1785 a revival swept through the state of Kentucky during which time the Baptist churches became larger and more in number.<sup>196</sup>

As settlers pushed westward, they established a Baptist church in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1790. The number of Baptists in the state of Ohio was few until after a revival that swept the area in 1825.<sup>197</sup>

The Baptists during this era in America still suffered much. Other religions incited some of their suffering, but the Indians caused much of it. It was many years before the Baptists could worship as they pleased in peace. In 1791 legislators passed which a law promised the freedom of religion to all men and women in the United States. The Baptists played a key role in getting this law drafted and passed.<sup>198</sup>

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What happened in the early 1700's because of the religious toleration in England?
2. Briefly describe Calvinism.
3. Who were the three men who started the Methodist church?
4. Where did William Carey minister? Explain some of his opposition and his accomplishments.
5. What was the new practice among Baptist churches that began in the 1700's?
6. List two groups that caused the Baptists in America to suffer during this era.

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193. Torbet, p. 243.

194. Wells, p. 127.

195. Torbet, p. 229.

196. Wells, p. 129f.

197. Wells, p. 130.

198. Carroll, p. 51.

# Chapter 19

Nineteenth Century, Years 1800-1900

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## United States of America

We will begin the nineteenth century in the country of the United States of America. During the nineteenth century the Baptist movement grew immensely in the United States and had begun to lose its impact in many other countries. While the majority of Baptists lived in America, many could still be found in England, Australia, Africa, India, Prussia, Germany, France, Switzerland, Denmark, and Sweden.<sup>199</sup>

Many revivals took place in America between 1795 and 1842. It was at this time that the camp meetings were very popular. Christians built many large meeting houses to accommodate the thousands who attended these meetings. Many of these meetings would last for at least one week and sometimes for several weeks. Preachers faithfully preached God's Word at these revival campaigns and thousands turned to Christ.<sup>200</sup>

By the year 1802 the population of the United States had increased greatly. Scores of settlers had moved from the eastern coast farther inland to settle the new frontiers. Many Baptist missionaries travelled with them to establish churches in these new areas. Some missionaries went ahead of the settlers and worked among the American Indians to win them to the Lord.<sup>201</sup>

These pioneer missionaries faced many difficult challenges. Many of them travelled as much as 4,200 miles (7,000 kilometres) in a year. Travel was done mainly on horseback, though many walked. Often it became necessary for them to swim across the larger rivers. Not only did these missionaries win many to Christ, but often they were a great help to those who came behind them to settle these new areas.<sup>202</sup>

In 1812 two Congregational missionaries left America and set sail for the country of India to help William Carey in his ministry. The names of these men were Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice. During the many months at sea en route to India, they spent many hours studying the Bible. During their studies they became convinced that infant baptism was not practised in the Bible, and that Bible baptism was by immersion of believers only. Upon arriving in India, Adoniram and Ann (also known as Nancy)<sup>203</sup> Judson sought baptism by immersion. This decision was not made lightly. In a letter to a friend dated September 7, 1812, Ann wrote,

You may, perhaps, think this change very sudden, as I have said nothing of it before; but, my dear girl, this alteration hath not been the work of an hour, a

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199. Cramp, p. 472.

200. Torbet, p. 298.

201. Torbet, p. 246.

202. Torbet, p. 362.

203. Anderson, p. 73.

day, or a month. The subject has been maturely, candidly, and, I hope, prayerfully examined for months. . . . We procured the best authors on both sides, compared them with the Scriptures, examined and reexamined the sentiments of Baptists and Pedobaptists, and were finally compelled, from a conviction of truth, to embrace those of the former.<sup>204</sup>

On 6 September, 1812 William Ward baptised them in Calcutta's Lal Bazar Chapel. This now aligned them with the Baptists. Nearly two months later, on the first of November, Rice was baptized by immersion.<sup>205</sup> Having left America as Congregationalists, the Congregational churches in the United States fully supported them. They wrote letters to their supporting churches informing them that they were no longer of their persuasion doctrinally. The Baptists quickly rallied around and formed "The Baptist Missionary Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in India and Other Foreign Parts." Through this society they channelled their mission support.<sup>206</sup> Judson faced many obstacles in India that ultimately forced him to leave India and begin a work in Burma. He spent many years in Burma and was influential in winning many to the Lord.

Judson's conversion to Baptist doctrine "triggered a chain of events in America that led to the formation of the General Missionary Convention in 1814, the first national body of Baptist in America. Judson thus helped inaugurate the great era of Baptist missionary organizations in America."<sup>207</sup> The purpose of the General Missionary Convention (commonly called the Triennial Convention)<sup>208</sup> was to aid in sending missionaries to foreign countries.

From 1816 on through the 1830s, a man named Alexander Campbell led a major schism in Baptist circles. His troublesome doctrines attracted many unstable Baptists. These doctrines eventually led to the formation of the Church of Christ movement of today.<sup>209</sup> This movement includes the Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ.

Campbell had a Presbyterian background in Ireland. After searching the Scriptures on the subject of baptism, he was immersed in 1812 and the next year joined the Redstar Baptist Association in Pennsylvania. However, time revealed that Campbell's beliefs were not as Baptist as some first thought. The primary doctrinal error he promoted was that baptism washes away sin and is essential to salvation.<sup>210</sup> In reality this doctrine is no different from baptismal regeneration.

Baptists in America had a growing zeal for missions, both home and abroad, during the early part of the 19th Century. They were spreading to almost every state in

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204. McBeth, pp. 207-208.

205. Anderson, pp. 146-148.

206. Torbet, p. 249; supported also by Armitage 814f.

207. McBeth, p. 205; The full name being, "The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions." Torbet, p. 250.

208. Mc Beth, p. 204; Thus called because its meetings were held every three years. Torbet, p. 250.

209. McBeth, p. 241.

210. McBeth, p. 241; For more detail, see Torbet, pp. 270-276.

the Union by 1836. In that year, a representative of the Baptist Union in England reported that “no other denomination is diffused so generally throughout the Union. . . . By 1844 the total [Baptist] membership [in America] was 720,046 with 9,385 churches and 6,364 ministers. This represented an increase of 360 per cent in thirty years.”<sup>211</sup>

The General Missionary Convention had its share of problems, one of them being the very fact that it was a convention rather than an association. Conventions tend to exert more authority over those who are members than do associations. When the Triennial Convention met in 1841 both those for and those against slavery were prepared for a battle. A compromise was reluctantly agreed upon and the issue was temporarily set aside.<sup>212</sup> In 1845 tensions mounted as problems increased between those who owned black slaves and those who did not. In general churches in the North opposed slavery, while churches in the South defended it. These tensions grew until several Southern churches, where slavery was the most common, broke away from the convention. They began their own convention which they named the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>213</sup>

In 1846 and the years that followed, “Old Landmarkism” was generated by Dr. James R. Graves of Memphis, Tennessee and Dr. J. M. Pendleton of Bowling Green, Kentucky. They taught that “apostolic Christians were Baptists, hence everyone who was not a Baptist could not rightly be considered Christian.” They opposed all non-Baptist baptism and strictly limited the Lord’s Supper to members of the church administering the Supper.<sup>214</sup> “Landmarkers also believed that Jesus and His apostles established Baptist churches, and that Baptist churches, under whatever name, have an unbroken historic succession from the New Testament to the present.”<sup>215</sup> The effects of this movement caused considerable disturbance in the Southern Baptist Convention during the 1850’s. According to McBeth, “No movement in the nineteenth century had a more profound impact in shaping Southern Baptist identity and intense denominational loyalty than the Landmark movement.”<sup>216</sup> At the same time, this movement was very divisive and damaging among Baptists in the South.

While the Landmark doctrines may be logical, they are not completely biblical. Though “fundamental” Baptist doctrine is patterned after the New Testament, a person can be truly saved without becoming a Baptist. The doctrine and practice of a church make it a “Baptist” church not the name alone. Thus, a church, sound in biblical doctrine and practice, without the name “Baptist” is still a Baptist church. Yet, to claim that Jesus and His apostles established Baptist churches is adding to the Scriptures. While we find no reason not to believe churches have always existed that faithfully believed and practised New Testament church doctrine, no one can prove the Landmarker’s claim of an unbroken chain of “Baptist” churches.

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211. Torbet, p. 253.

212. Torbet, p. 289.

213. Wells, p. 131; McBeth, p. 251.

214. Torbet, p. 281.

215. McBeth, p. 316.

216. McBeth, p. 316.

During the mid 1800's the train became a popular mode of transportation. As train tracks advanced farther and farther west, it became easier to carry the gospel into these new areas and for the establishment of Baptist churches. In 1848 missionaries established the first Baptist church in the state of Oregon. In 1849 missionaries preached throughout the states of Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa. In 1854 they started a work in the state of Kansas. Another work was established in Nebraska in 1856. In 1864 missionaries began preaching in Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Idaho. They spread as far as Washington State in the year 1870.<sup>217</sup>

The Civil War (1861-1865) was a time of terrible fighting between the northern and southern states in America. This bitter unrest greatly hindered the spread of the gospel, especially in the south. Many missions were cut off from supplies and inflation combined with the decrease of financial support crippled the work of many missionaries.<sup>218</sup>

Throughout the remainder of the century, both the Northern and Southern Baptists continued developing their home missions among the Indians and Negroes. Several Baptist women's organizations were formed and educational schools were established.



Early Train

## Europe

Though many well-meaning Baptists claim their roots in the Reformation, Baptist are not Protestants. They never broke from the Catholic church or any other church. McBeth reports that “most historians agree that Baptists originated as a separate denomination in the early-seventeenth century.”<sup>219</sup> While it may be true that the Baptist “denomination” originated at that time, historical evidence reveals that churches practising Baptist doctrine had previously existed for over 1500 years. True biblical Baptist doctrine is synonymous with New Testament doctrine.

Johann G. Oncken (1800-1884) is known by some historians as the “Father of Continental Baptists.” Again, we are here referring to the denominational name as we have in previous centuries already mentioned other “Baptists” in Europe. In 1834 Oncken had a major part in establishing a Baptist church in Hamburg, Germany. This is the oldest surviving Baptist Church in Europe.<sup>220</sup>

Persecution arose over Oncken's Baptist teachings and he was disowned by all his friends in Germany and labelled a heretic. In 1835 Oncken was appointed as a missionary agent by the Triennial Convention in America.<sup>221</sup>

Charles H. Spurgeon is one of the most well-known Baptist in the country of England. Spurgeon was born in Kelvedon, Essex, England 19 June 1834. Both his father

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217. Torbet, p. 362.

218. Torbet, p. 369.

219. McBeth, p. 347.

220. McBeth, pp. 347-348.

221. Torbet, p. 172.

and his grandfather had been preachers in the Congregational church. In 1849 he heard a Methodist preacher preach and he accepted the Lord as his Saviour. After his conversion he read many books written on the subject of baptism, and in the year 1850 he went to a Baptist church and was baptized by immersion. His mother was greatly grieved to think that he had become a Baptist. When he was only eighteen years of age he became the pastor of the Baptist Church at Waterbeach. God greatly blessed him and in 1853 he became the pastor of the very large New Park Street Chapel. During his years of service he helped to establish several orphanages and a college to train men to preach the Word of God. Spurgeon will go down in history as one of the greatest Baptist preachers who has ever lived.<sup>222</sup>

More than a great preacher, Spurgeon was a man who walked with God. We can sense this in his following quotation.

If we have not the Spirit of God, it were better to shut the churches, to nail up the doors, to put a black cross on them, and say, 'God have mercy on us!' If you ministers have not the Spirit of God you would better not preach, and you people would better stay at home. I think I speak not too strongly when I say that a church in the land without the Spirit of God is rather a curse than a blessing.<sup>223</sup>

Spurgeon was a Baptist in the truest sense of the word. In a public service held to commemorate the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he spoke clearly of Baptist origins.

We believe that the Baptist are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the reformation, we were reformers before Luther and Calvin were born; we never came from the Church of Rome, for we were never in it, but we have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves. We have always existed from the very days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river which may travel under ground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents. Persecuted alike by Romanists and Protestants of almost every sect, yet there has never existed a Government holding Baptist principles which persecuted others; nor, I believe, any body of Baptists ever held in to be right to put the consciences of others under the control of man. We have ever been ready to suffer, as our martyrologies will prove, but we are not ready to accept any help from the State, to prostitute the purity of the Bride of Christ to any alliance with Government, and we will never make the Church, although the Queen, the despot over the consciences of men.<sup>224</sup>

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222. Armitage, pp. 596-597.

223. A. M. Hills. *Holiness & Power*, p. 26.

224. C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (1861; reprinted., Pasadena, Tex.: Pilgrim Publications, 1969), 7:225, quoted in *This Day in Baptist History* by E. Wayne Thompson and David L. Cummins, p. 135.



Men call Spurgeon the “Prince of Preachers.” They generally recognize him as one of the greatest preachers the world has ever known. He published more than 1900 different sermons during his lifetime. At the time of his death in 1892, thousands mourned.<sup>225</sup>

## Australia

At this time we will turn our attention to the Baptist movement in Australia. The first preacher endeavouring to start a Baptist church in Australia was a man named John McKaeg. He began his work in Sydney in 1831.<sup>226</sup> He became the founding pastor of the Bathurst Street Baptist Church incorporated formally on November 17, 1836.<sup>227</sup> When he established this church, he allowed those from any religious background to become members. He did not insist that they accept Christ as their Saviour nor that they be baptized by immersion. Consequently, we can safely say that McKaeg was not a true New Testament Baptist. During 1851, William Hopkins Carey, the grandson of William Carey, began a Baptist church in Parramatta, near Sydney.

In 1834 Henry Dowling began the first Baptist churches in Tasmania. Through his efforts he started churches in both Hobart and Launceston. Though neither survived, the efforts of his son-in-law reestablished them some forty years later, William Gibson. These works in Tasmania grew abundantly in the years that followed.<sup>228</sup>

“The first Baptist church in South Australia dates its beginning from the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. W. Finlayson on February 14, 1837.” They ministered primarily to the Aborigines. It seems they held to biblical Baptist church polity, as some dissension arose over the Lord’s Supper and membership. Sometime before 1843 another church, practising open membership, was established. Open membership allowed people to join who had not been baptized by immersion. In 1863 the Baptist churches of South Australia formed the South Australian Baptist Association. In the year 1926 they changed this name to the Australian Baptist Union.<sup>229</sup>

The first Baptist services in Victoria were held in Melbourne in 1838. The first Baptist layman to preach in that city was Thomas Napier. In December 1842, John Ham arrived in Melbourne en route to Sydney. The Baptists persuaded him to stay and become the permanent pastor of their small, but growing church: the Collins Street Church.<sup>230</sup>

Christians established the first “Baptist” church in Queensland in Moreton Bay in the year 1855. Sadly, they too allowed people to join their membership without being immersed after salvation. They only insisted that the pastors be baptized. Unfortunately this seems to have been the practice of many Baptist churches throughout Australia’s

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225. Cover Leaf, *Lectures To My Students*, by C. H. Spurgeon, Zondervan, 1977.

226. Torbet, p. 160; Ken Manley, *Who Are The Baptists?*, p. 6.

227. Torbet, p. 160.

228. Torbet, pp. 161-162.

229. Torbet, pp. 163-164.

230. Torbet, p. 162.

history. We must remember that just because a church uses the name “Baptist” does not mean that they are Baptist. A church is not Baptist if it does not follow all of the New Testament doctrines. Baptist churches and those of like doctrine and practice have upheld these doctrines down through the centuries.

The Baptists did not establish any works in Western Australia until the year 1894. The first man to start a Baptist church in Western Australia was J. H. Cole, a lay preacher who came from Victoria. He established the first Baptist church in Perth.<sup>231</sup>

### **New Zealand**

New Zealand received its first Baptist church in the town of Nelson in 1851. The number of Baptists in New Zealand did not increase very rapidly, though today a considerable number call themselves “Baptists.” In 1882 the Baptists formed the Baptist Union in New Zealand.<sup>232</sup>

### **Statistical Information**

In 1890 approximately 28,953 Baptist churches existed in the United States, 1,998 in England, 590 in Wales, 398 in Sweden, 764 in Asia, 138 in Australia, and ninety-four in Africa. Many other Baptist churches existed in other countries but their numbers were not as numerous.<sup>233</sup>

## **STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. What took place in the early 1800's that greatly advanced the cause of Christ in the United States?
2. What significant event took place in Judson's life as he sailed to India?
3. Who was Alexander Campbell?
4. What issue was the core reason for the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention?
5. What type of transportation most helped the advancement of the gospel during the middle 1800's?
6. Who was the well-known Baptist preacher in England during the 1800's?
7. What was the main problem among many nineteenth-century Baptists in Australia?

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231. Torbet, p. 165.

232. Torbet, pp. 166-167.

233. Armitage, p. 955.

# Chapter 20

Twentieth Century, Years 1900-1993

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Since this is only a survey of Baptist History, we will not include comprehensive details of every branch twentieth century of Baptist heritage. Continuing our chronological survey, we will identify major events and organizations in each decade.

In 1905, a group of Baptists in North America formed an organization called Baptist World Alliance. Its object was to “unite Baptists throughout the world and thereby to create and express a Baptist world consciousness.”<sup>234</sup>

During 1907, the Northern Baptist Convention was established at Washington, D. C.<sup>235</sup> Beale states that “from the very establishment of the Northern Baptist Convention. . . there were liberals in its highest places of leadership.” He also points out that when the twentieth century began there “was not a single NBC seminary untainted by liberalism.” Most of the conservative Bible-believing preachers in the convention did not recognize the extent to which modernism had invaded their schools.<sup>236</sup>

By 1919 Northern Baptist fundamentalists became alarmed by several problematic issues within the NBC. Denominational control was growing, theological modernism was increasing in their schools, and the absence of a unified confession of faith were among these growing concerns.<sup>237</sup>

In 1920 some conservative Baptists within the Northern Baptist Convention banded together to take action against the invasion of compromise within the NBC. Consequently, they formed the Fundamentalist Fellowship of the Northern Baptist Convention.<sup>238</sup> However, “the [Fundamental] Fellowship did not satisfy those who wanted militant action, so some withdrew to form the Baptist Bible Union in 1923.”<sup>239</sup>

With the help of W. B. Riley and T. T. Shields, J. Frank Norris tried to unite Baptist fundamentalism into one nationwide movement. This effort faced much opposition. Thus, during 1928, after the Baptist Bible Union collapsed, Norris assisted in establishing the World Baptist Fellowship.<sup>240</sup>

In 1932 another association emerged out of the fundamentalist controversy within the Northern Baptist Convention. This association took the name, General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (North). The GARBC was in reality a reorganization of the Baptist Bible Union after they fell on hard times.<sup>241</sup> According to Torbet, the GARBC was “intended to be a fellowship with a minimum of organization, rather than a convention.” The organization took a premillennial position on future

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234. Torbet, pp. 168, 538.

235. Torbet, p. 538.

236. Beale, p. 185.

237. Beale, p. 186.

238. Torbet, p. 429.

239. McBeth, H. Leon, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, Broadman Press, Nashville, 1990, p. 567.

240. McBeth, pp. 578-179.

241. McBeth, p. 567.

events and encouraged its affiliates to support “approved” mission agencies.<sup>242</sup>

“At the annual pre-convention meeting in May, 1947, at Atlantic City, New Jersey” The Conservative Baptist Fellowship of Northern Baptists (previously called the Fundamental Fellowship of the Northern Baptist Convention) organized The Conservative Baptist Association of America. The CBA of A was composed of “autonomous Baptist churches without regard to other affiliations.”<sup>243</sup> The mission and purpose of this association were to provide biblical Baptist fellowship, to promote interest in sound biblical institutions, to encourage the formation of evangelistic agencies and institutions, to provide spiritual assistance for local churches, and to present a positive testimony to New Testament Baptist heritage.<sup>244</sup>

As modernism increased in the NBC the number of churches who broke fellowship with them also increased. 1948 marked the year that the Minnesota Baptist Convention, established in 1859, officially cut its relationship with the Northern Baptist Convention. Today we know the MBC as the Minnesota Baptist Association. “The MBA owns and operates Pillsbury Baptist Bible College, established in 1957 in Owatonna, Minnesota.”<sup>245</sup>

In 1950 the NBC changed their name to the American Baptist Convention.<sup>246</sup> In that same year a group of churches broke from the World Baptist Fellowship and formed the Baptist Bible Fellowship International.<sup>247</sup> They wanted “more responsible leadership. . . less sensational methods, more biblical doctrines, and a denominational school and newspaper” with a more positive witness.<sup>248</sup>

In 1951 the Conservative Baptist Fellowship of Northern Baptists became simply the Conservative Baptist Fellowship. “The organization finally declared itself independent in 1955.” A few years later, in 1967, it became the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship of America (FBF). The FBF took a strong, militant, separated position.<sup>249</sup>

Separation continued in 1966 when more Baptists left the Conservative Baptist Association of America and formed the New Testament Association of Independent Baptist Churches. Its leaders have included Earle E. Matteson, B. Myron Cedarholm, Richard C. Weeks, Virgil Arrowood, and Clarke Poorman.

Though we have not yet mentioned the Southern Baptist Convention (est. 1845)<sup>250</sup> we must not overlook their existence. For years, many in the SBC stood for the truth of the Word of God. However, the results of an opinion survey taken in 1968 reveals a new philosophy among many SBC. “They no longer opposed strongly the practice of ‘open communion,’ although most of them were not yet ready to accept ‘open

242. Torbet, p. 434.

243. Torbet, p. 436; McBeth, p. 575; Beale, p. 297.

244. McBeth, p. 576.

245. Beale, p. 284.

246. Torbet, p. 539.

247. Beale, p. 363.

248. McBeth, p. 579.

249. Beale, pp. 290-291.

250. McBeth, p. 443.

membership.’ More than half of the pastors favored accepting government loans for church colleges and hospitals.”<sup>251</sup>

The American Baptist Convention (formerly the NBC) changed their name again in 1972. It became known as the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.<sup>252</sup>

Again in 1979 we see another departure from the Conservative Baptist Association of America. These separatists formed the Independent Fundamental Baptist Association of Michigan. The leaders of this movement included Harry Love and Roy Shelpman.<sup>253</sup>

## Conclusion

In keeping with the history of the Baptists since the time of our Lord, biblical Baptists during the twentieth century have continued to separate from error. As softening and modernism emerged in an association, those who stood firmly on the Book eventually separated.

Today, moral and theological issues bring new challenges to those who are determined to remain biblically unmovable. Christian views on hot issues like divorce, modern translations, and modesty, are being subtly eroded by television and video productions, “scholarly” opinions, and humanistic relativism. Thus, fewer and fewer pastors have the courage to stand for truth. Though separation has always been a radical, many now consider it fanatical.

Many “Baptist” churches have departed doctrinally from the teachings of New Testament. These deviations are often found in ecclesiology, the second coming of Christ, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Scores are departing from the Baptist distinctives as they become more ecumenical in their associations. And multitudes are broadening their definition of modesty.

As in every generation, some still uncompromisingly hold to the doctrines, principles, standards, and church distinctives found in the Bible. Not every church that professes to be “Baptist” is truly a Baptist church. Only those churches who hold to the New Testament church distinctives outlined in the first chapter of this book can rightly use the name “Baptist.”

We have noted that it was not until the fourteenth or fifteenth century that the derogatory name “Baptist” was the identifying label given to churches that followed New Testament church doctrine and polity. Thus, a church may be Baptist in doctrine, polity, and practice without using the name “Baptist” in their title. However, since much confusion exists in religious identification today, a truly “Baptist” church ought unashamedly to identify with those of like doctrine and practice and be a Baptist Church. Why call it a red flower if it is really a rose?

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251. Torbet, p. 494.

252. Torbet, p. 541.

253. Beale, pp. 296-297.

## What Is A New Testament Church?

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A careful study of the history of the Baptists will show that many of our spiritual forefathers did not use the name “Baptist.” How then can one determine if a church is following the teachings of the New Testament? We included the following series of questions for that purpose. This information is presented in a very readable and practical manner. It can be of great help to Christians who are searching for a church that truly follows the New Testament.

The following information derived primarily from the book *Growing Up God's Way* by John A. Stormer and is used by permission. Some statements and questions have been slightly modified by the author.

### **A New Testament Church Will Shape Our Lives**

1. If a church is doctrinally sound, the new Christian will be taught and will learn sound Biblical doctrine.
2. If a church emphasizes soul-winning, the new Christian's concern for lost people will grow. The know-how to help them find Christ will be learned through the preaching of a godly pastor and the example of faithful believers.
3. If a church teaches holy living, and how to use the Bible to establish godly standards of dress and appearance, amusements, habits, customs, etc. the new Christian will be trained and challenged to build Biblical standards in his life, home, and family.
4. If a church is controlled by love and the members “love one another as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it,” the new Christian will be loved and will learn to love and do the works of love.
5. If God's power is being manifested through the lives of the pastor and people, the new Christian will be challenged also to seek to have God's power in his life.
6. If a church does the Biblical job of “perfecting the saints for the work of the ministry,” the new Christian will find himself being challenged and trained to do God's work in the church and in the community.
7. If a church administers the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper Biblically and safeguards their meaning, the new Christian will never forget the new life received by trusting Christ and the need to live a holy life in fellowship and communion with the Lord and His people.
8. If a church operates a Christian day school or strongly supports a school operated by another Bible-believing church, the church is likely to be concerned about the Christian growth and development of all the children in the church.

### **Sound Doctrine**

How sound a church is doctrinally demands special scrutiny. It is essential that the pastor, the church itself, and any organizations with which it is affiliated hold to the

sound doctrines of the Word of God and teach them. To determine whether a church is sound in doctrine and practice, ask the pastor and/or the leadership of the church these questions:

1. Are all the Words in the Bible God's Words? Is the Bible totally and completely true and without any errors or mistakes? (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
2. Did God make the world and everything in it including man in six actual days—resting on the seventh? (See Genesis 1:1-2:3)
3. Was Jesus Christ miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit and actually born of a virgin? (See Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38)
4. Is Jesus Christ God? (See John 1:1,14; 10:30; and 14:7-9)
5. Was it necessary for the Lord Jesus to die on the cross and shed His blood to pay for man's sin? (See Hebrews 9:22)
6. Did the Lord Jesus actually arise from the dead, coming out of the tomb *bodily* on the third day (not just in Spirit)? (See Luke 24:36-45)
7. Are Heaven and Hell real places with Heaven having streets of gold and Hell being a place of torment with real flames which will burn forever? (See Revelation 20:10-15 and 21:21)
8. If a person dies without being born again by believing and receiving Christ as Saviour, will he burn forever in Hell? (See John 14:6; Revelation 20:10-15 and Mark 9:42-48)
9. Can a person be saved by faith in Jesus Christ *alone* without adding baptism, good works, church membership, etc. to his faith? (See Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; and John 14:6)
10. Even though a person can be saved without these things should he be baptized [by immersion by a New Testament church], join a [New Testament] church, and do good works once he is saved? (See Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 10:25; and Ephesians 2:10)
11. Once a person has been saved by trusting Jesus Christ is he saved forever even though he may sin and fail sometimes? (See John 6:37 and 10:27-29)
12. Will Jesus Christ take all of His saved people out of the world before the seven year time of great trouble when the Anti-Christ will rule over the world? (See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)
13. Do you believe that after this seven years, the Lord Jesus will come back to earth with His people, put down all wickedness and rule and reign over the earth for 1000 years? (See Revelation 20:1-6)
14. If there is agreement with all of these truths, do all the denominations, associations, fellowships or conventions the church is affiliated with hold to them, teach them in their schools, etc? (See Amos 3:3)

### Other Doctrinal Questions

If a church is sound doctrinally, all of these questions will be answered with a strong “Yes.” There are a few other questions which should be answered with a definite

“No.” They include:

1. Does anyone in a leadership position in your church (or any organization with which your church is affiliated) have doctrinal views differing from these sound Bible positions you profess? (See Amos 3:3 and Acts 20:26-31)
2. Do you believe that a person has to speak in “tongues” to be saved or to show that he is filled with the Holy Spirit? (See 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 29-31 and 13:8-10)
3. Can anyone pray or get blessings from God by going through anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ? (See 1 Timothy 2:5)
4. Does your church teach or believe that any book, writings or teachings other than the Bible are inspired by God and therefore equal to the Bible? (See Revelation 22:18-19)
5. Do baptism, the Lord's Supper or church membership help a person to be saved or help to keep them saved? (See Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:8-9)
6. Does your church permit women to be preachers? See 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12)
7. Is your church or your denomination (if your church is not completely independent) a part of the liberal, Bible-denying National or World Councils of Churches? (See 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

If a church and its leaders cannot answer “Yes” to the first set of questions and “No” to the second, they have departed in some way from sound Bible doctrine and practice.

### **Additional Tests**

A church can be completely sound in doctrine and still fail to be a true, *living* New Testament body of believers. Several additional tests are needed.

1. God has said that the church is the institution that He has established to win the lost and to teach them to do the work of the ministry. *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”* (Ephesians 4:11-12)
2. A church is also to provide fellowship and an atmosphere where Church members are encouraged to put into practice what they have been taught. Hebrews 10:23-25 says that once we have been saved: *“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;”* (for he is faithful that promised;) *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.* (Hebrews 10:23-25)
3. A church is to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15; John 13:34-35).
4. A church must be a warring church. The Bible says; *“Ye that love the LORD,*



*hate evil.*” (Psalms 97:10) A church that truly stands for the Bible must actively oppose evils such as abortion, drugs, alcohol, communism and socialism, immorality, pornography, homosexuality, the occult, etc. However, even as it stands against these evils, the church must be careful to remember that the battle is not against the individuals who are promoting the evil. The war is with Satan and the forces of darkness. Ephesians 6:12 identifies the real enemy, saying... *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:12)

All of these functions will result from continual, consistent preaching of God's Word. The Apostle Paul told timothy... *“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine”* (1 Timothy 4:13). In a true New Testament church, the pastor should read the Scriptures, and explain them to the people. This is done through verse-by-verse chapter-by-chapter, book-by-book teaching of the Bible. In addition there must also be exhortation. This is strong preaching in which the congregation is challenged to apply in their lives what they have been taught. Reading and exhortation is followed by doctrine. Doctrine is teaching which shows how the verse-by-verse teaching and the life applications fit into God's overall scheme of things as revealed in the entire Bible.<sup>254</sup>

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254. Stormer, pp. 153-159.

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