

Baptists Before the Reformation

THE
CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS;
OR,
THE BAPTISTS BEFORE THE REFORMATION.

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INTRODUCTION TO 1986 EDITION

“A rose by any other name still smells as sweet.” Baptists may not have always been referred to by their enemies as Baptists. They have been called Montanists, Novations, Paulicians, Henricans, Waldenses, Anabaptists, heretics and schismatics. Whatever name they have been persecuted under; they have continued to smell a sweet savour unto God.

We submit that modern day sovereign grace, landmark, missionary Baptist Churches are identical in doctrine, baptism, and polity with those churches of Christ which existed long before the Reformation, which never adopted the heresies of Rome, indeed which were originally organized and authorized by Jesus Christ.

It is strange that when you speak with many so called fundamental Baptist preachers today you discover that their knowledge of church history extends back to Billy Sunday, D. L. Moody, and Sam Jones. Mentioning the names of J. R. Graves, J. M. Pendleton, John Gill, or Dr. John Clarke will draw a blank stare. Even worse would be some of the names mentioned in this book such as Montanus, Novation, and Donatus the Great. The great Baptist preachers of the past have been all but forgotten by those who wear their name. The greater pity is that the doctrines which those preachers preached have been forgotten also. Today one may call himself a Baptist and yet be against every doctrine that our Baptist forefathers lived and died for.

We hope that “The Church in the Wilderness” will find a good circulation not only among Baptist preachers but among those many members of Baptist churches who know not their glorious ancestry. We hope that the republication of this book will awaken many to the fact that Baptists are not protestants, but rather have a history that antedates both the reformation and the heresy of Catholicism.

Medford Caudill, Goshen, Indiana, January 1986

THE WORK OF THE BAPTIST BOOKSHELF

Rev. xii. 6: The woman fled into the wilderness.

The Acts of the Apostles are the most wonderful chapter in church history. Inspired by the great commission, as flaming heralds, the apostles bore the glad tidings to all nations; Bartholomew, east to India; Thomas, north to Parthia; Paul, west to Italy and Spain; while the rest labored within this wide circumference, Peter in Babylon, Philip in Phrygia, and Mark the Evangelist at Alexandria. Before the first generation had passed away, Asia, Africa, and Europe had heard the word; and churches were established in the chief provinces and cities of the Roman Empire. Planted in the centres of population, these churches stood as outposts of the sacred army that sought new conquests and universal empire.

But opposition to the new and aggressive religion, in the heart of man, in the customs of society, in false faiths, in jealous despotisms, grew by corruption of the religion itself, and was embodied in Antichrist-the great Dragon which persecuted the church with inappeasable rage, opening the dungeon, lighting the fagot, inventing the horrors of the Inquisition, enlisting armies to ravage the lands of the faithful, to burn down their dwellings, and drive them from their homes. Persecution followed persecution with increasing severity, and it seemed as though the new faith would be exterminated. Diocletian boasted that it was, and recorded his boast on a tablet of brass.

But it was explicitly promised that the church should not be destroyed. She did not perish, but was only hidden in the wilderness to which she had fled to escape the rage of the dragon, to be nourished there a time, times, and half a time, until she might reappear among the cities, states, and empires of the world unchallenged by Antichrist. During this long period her history is obscured, her character defamed, and her identity denied. The envious world followed her with vulgar hate, as it followed Christ, traducing, crucifying him. The Papacy hurled anathemas against her as against states and empires, schools of science and philosophy, and the champions of the rights and liberties of men. Chroniclers, reflecting popular prejudice, overawed by the prestige of the hierarchy, and misled by the decisions of its courts, have totally misrepresented her.

In the destruction of her own annals, left without a defence, save in the fragments of her history and doctrine gleaned from the forced concessions of her accusers and the decrees of courts condemning her, the church has been defamed without a hearing by partisan historians. Essential errors exposed in some of them discredit their testimony. Mutual contradiction of others sets them aside. The severest accusations of others appear in the light of modern times the brightest encomiums. The portraits of blameless lives, exalted character, and sound doctrine in others contradict their recorded calumnies. While all the authorities cited against the church and the communities sheltering her, must be regarded as prejudiced and unreliable. No Protestant would trust Eck as a biographer of Luther the reformer, nor Archbishop Laud as annotator upon the character of Cromwell and the Puritans, nor Cardinal McCloskey as

historian of American Protestantism. No Baptist concedes that Richard Baxter and Dr. Featley are reliable witnesses against Knollys and the early English Baptists, or Cotton Mather and Dr. Dexter against Roger Williams and the early American Baptists, or Pastor Stephan against Oneken and the modern German Baptists.

Yet the world has continued to condemn ancient Christian communities unheard, upon the testimony of their persecutors. Protestants are asked to believe Catholic authorities against ancient Protestants, who may be shown to be as worthy exemplars of Christianity as themselves. Baptists are expected to trust implicitly Pedobaptist authorities, defaming our ancestry and denying our identity and succession, in order to vindicate their own.

They cannot, without imperilling their right to be, admit our apostolic origin and succession. We cannot, without imperilling our right to be, relinquish that claim. If Pedobaptists are compelled to deny our succession, we are compelled to affirm it. When another Carlyle shall arise to hurl back the slanders of history and reverse the judgment of mankind in respect to the church in the wilderness, as the great Scotchman did for Cromwell and the Puritans; when the apostolic order shall be restored over lands once its home,—then these communities shall be honored as the connecting link in the great chain of Apostolic or Baptist Churches.

In all the wide range of traditional reproach and prejudiced authorities, there is found no presumption in favor of the extinction of the Apostolic or Baptist Church before the Reformation; but, on the other hand, there is the strongest presumption of its continuance, sheltered in the wilderness, to our times.

The simplicity of the Apostolic or Baptist Church, the normal outgrowth of social piety, makes its continuance wholly probable. True and unbiased believers would naturally fall into its order, fellowship, and discipline. So that the existence of true believers, flee from foreign dictation, would seem to prove the existence of this church. If they could not meet openly in the face of persecution, they might in solitudes; if not in the city, in the seclusion of the country; if not by day, under cover of the night; if not in a public building, in a private dwelling, as in apostolic times; if not in large numbers, two or three, met in Christ's name, might constitute an Apostolic or Baptist Church. Nothing seems more improbable than that such a form of association, everywhere available and everywhere needed, should ever become extinct.

Considered as a divine ordinance, the continuance of the Apostolic or Baptist Church is made as probable as that of civil government or of the family, ordained of God. If only a casual assembly was provided for, it might have ceased to be, but the New Testament Church was organized to last to the end of time. Its existence today allows the natural inference that there never has been a time since its establishment when it did not exist.

It is not necessary to our purpose to prove its existence in great numbers, nor is it a part of our plan to trace a circumstantial agreement with modern representatives of the Baptist name. Nor

would we deny occasional errors and excesses in this long period. For the people throughout the world to-day embraced under the family name Baptist are not circumstantially agreed either in doctrine or practice; and no one would hold himself responsible for the eccentricities of all regular Baptist churches. We shall merely endeavor to trace certain grand distinguishing principles, which belong in their entirety to no denomination but our own.

Some Baptists seem to think that our denomination belongs to those Protestant bodies that were produced by the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and that we have no historical connection with any people before that time; as though the Baptist denomination were like Melchisedec, without father, without mother, without descent, and having no beginning of days; as though it were some new species of Christians, instead of being an off-shoot of the apostolic stock.

No; God cannot be without a people, nor Christ without a kingdom. He, who gave the moon and stars to rule the night, never left the world without a ray of the fadeless light of truth to break through its gloom. Mighty as were the forces arrayed against his people—powers of church, powers of state, powers of the wicked one—mightier still were their patience and the divine help. They lost everything but their faith. But God's chosen people never saw worse days under the new dispensation than under the old; yet even bloody Jezebel could not find the seven thousand whom the Lord had kept in Israel, all the knees which had not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which had not kissed him.

But you ask, what are the names of these witnesses for Christ, these martyr communities, the reformers before the Reformation, these Baptist successors of the apostles? It was scarcely fifty years after the death of the last of the apostles when a warm, enthusiastic preacher, named Montanus, arose in a little hamlet of Phrygia to rebuke the vices of priests and people. As the Phrygians were a very temperate people, quite averse to theatrical displays and the sports of the circus, his preaching was very popular. So great was the number of his followers in this province of Asia Minor, that the Imperial edicts against them could not be executed. While in the extreme west, the historian tells us, his moral principles obtained an influence which seemed almost a complete victory. Montanism became the name of a movement that was great in its principles if not in its author; that included Tertullian among its adherents, and Irenaeus among its defenders; and promised, before temporal power interfered in behalf of the hierarchy, to impress its character on Christendom.

A century later than Montanus, there was converted at Rome, on what seemed his dying bed and amid severe spiritual conflicts, a distinguished Pagan philosopher named Novatian. The genuineness of this conversion was attested, not only by his learned treatises—which, in Neander's estimation, rank him as the most distinguished of the early theologians at Rome—but by his life of stern self-denial and his death by martyrdom. He renewed the moral protest of Montanus; and, in response to his call, congregations of the faithful, called after him Novatians,

sprang up in every province of the Roman Empire, from Armenia to Numidia and Spain.

Fifty years later, at the opening of the fourth Century, there appeared in northern Africa a man of great integrity and firmness of purpose, of wonderful activity and administrative ability, erudite and expert in letters, and of wild and fiery eloquence, whom his devoted followers called Donatus the Great. Such was the inspiration of his leadership, that, though he died in exile, his disciples, called by his name, set up pulpit against pulpit in every city, until Augustine complained that the Catholic churches were deserted and no candidates for the ministry could be found. At least half; Cramer says more than half; North Africa joined the Donatists. On one occasion two hundred and seventy, on another four hundred and ten, Donatist pastors were assembled together. Though under the ban of the Emperors and the anathema of the Popes, they continued to spread. Neither land nor sea, says Augustine, deterred their missionaries. They survived the invasion of the Barbarian Vandals, for Gregory the Great renewed the conflict with them, and they are not lost to history until the Moorish conquest.

About the time of this conquest we read of the conversion, in Armenia, the scene of the successes of Montanus and Novatian, of one Constantine, who, like the great Augustine, had been a learned Manichean. He was converted by the means of two manuscript rolls of the New Testament, which were presented to him by a Christian deacon, who, on his return from captivity in Syria, had enjoyed his hospitality. Constantine was so delighted with his new treasure, that he utterly discarded his Manichean books. The writings of Paul so fascinated him, that he changed his name to Sylvanus, one of Paul's companions, and called the churches he established Ephesus, Corinth, etc., after the places where Paul had preached. This devotion to Paul gave them the name of Paulicians. Constantine was so much revered for his talents and piety, that it was extremely difficult to obtain any one to execute the death sentence upon him; and the Imperial officer who had charge of the execution was so much affected, that he himself was converted, and, like Paul, became the leader of those he persecuted, and in five short years followed the old preacher in a martyr's death. But the Paulicians survived the death of their leaders, and covered Asia Minor. It is estimated that one hundred thousand of their number were slain in the crusades raised against them by the Byzantine Emperors. Some of them fled to the Saracens for safety, and received cities to dwell in. A remnant was transported in A. D. 970, across the Hellespont to Thrace, to serve as guards on the frontier. Hence they carried missionary operations into neighboring Bulgaria, that had just received the gospel; and there they maintained their existence at least until the fifteenth century, when they are referred to in the proceedings of the Council of Basle. At home they were known as Bogomiles; but when they emigrated in the eleventh century to Italy and France, they passed by the name of their home, and were called Bulgarians. But, chameleon-like, their names were changed to suit the soil, and they were soon known as Albigenses, from the city of Albi; Pickards, from the French district of

that name; Vaudois, from the Alpine valleys; or Bohemian brethren, from that distant land: or, to reflect their manner of life, they were known as Tisserands, or Weavers; Insabbati, from their wooden shoes; Passagini, or Wanderers; Cave-dwellers; and Turlupini, or Wolves, from their out-cast life.

Or they bore the names of distinguished leaders, such as Petrobrusians, from Peter de Bruis, a converted priest, converted by reading the Scriptures, who made evangelistic tours through southern France for twenty years, until he was burnt at St. Giles. Some were called Henricians, from Henry of Toulouse, once a monk of the celebrated monastery of Clugny. He was an untiring student of the Scriptures, an affluent and ardent speaker, a rigid moralist, a bold reformer.

Though banished by the clergy, the people welcomed and defended him. He was twice arrested, for when he escaped from imprisonment the first time, it was only to preach again; and the last time he was taken and condemned to life-imprisonment, though his term was ultimately shortened by a command that he should be brought in chains to Toulouse, the scene of his early labors, and there committed to the flames.

The name most familiar to us is Waldenses, probably derived from Peter Waldo, a rich burgher of Lyons. Waldo was so much affected at a banquet by the sudden death of a friend, that he sold his goods and gave to the poor, and then gathered about him a company of poor but pious men, known as the Good Men, or Poor Men of Lyons, who traversed the land as lay-preachers. These people, under these different names, thronged Lombardy with its powerful cities; Piedmont with its secluded valleys, and inaccessible mountain fastnesses; and Provence with its independent estates of noble men. In Bohemia, far away from Rome, eighty thousand found a refuge. In the diocese of Padua, they had forty-one schools; in two others, ten each; and throughout Italy no city was left unvisited by their preachers; even Rome, the heart of the Inquisition, was entered. In France, they constituted the ruling population of a thousand cities, and in the country the castles of the nobility were open to them. Their schools received the patronage of the rich; their industrial and commercial intercourse developed the Languedoc, the first modern language of Europe; and their domestic and knightly virtues furnished the theme that inspired the Troubadours. The Bishop of Carcassonne petitioned the Pope to recall him from his fruitless field. Bernard reported from his visit to these districts, that he found churches without people, people without priests, priests without honor, the sacrament neglected, feast days unobserved, and children unbaptized. Abelard says: "Our age is so imperilled by heretics, that there seems to be no footing left for the true faith." Knighton, the English chronicler, says: "Half England became Lollard; you could not meet two men on the street but one was a Lollard." Hallam, the historian of the Middle Ages, says: "An inundation of heresy broke, in the twelfth century, over the church, which no persecution was able thoroughly to repress, till it finally overspread half the surface of Europe." William Neubrigensis, a contemporary, says: "They were multiplied as

the sands of the sea.” The Papacy was then at the height of its power, holding all Europe as its fief; kings as its vassals, crowns as its gifts; and, conscious of its strength, was sending its chivalrous servants to wrest the Holy Land from the Saracens. At that moment, the Papacy found a foe, worse than the Turk, to contend with at home, and one that was undermining its influence, until it seemed on the point of dying from sheer popular neglect. It was only by proclaiming the same crusades against the heretics that had been raised against the infidels, and by laying waste the Eden of southern France, and depopulating her teeming cities, that the peril was escaped, and the Reformation postponed for three centuries. To finish in detail the work of extermination, the Dominican Friars were organized into bands of inquisitors, and armed with full powers of Church and State to detect and utterly destroy the heresy. Though hundreds of thousands of innocents perished, enough remained to form the wave upon which Wycliffe arose in England, Huss in Bohemia, and Luther in Wittemberg.

Let us now attempt to trace a succession of the distinctive principles of the Apostolic or Baptist Church in these communities.

I. We clearly trace among them the polity of the Apostolic and Baptist Church. Independence of State and hierarchy was universally maintained, and no higher authority than the local church was acknowledged. Insubordination to bishops and councils was their conspicuous and unpardonable offence. Errors of doctrine and even immoralities might be tolerated, but schism was anathematized and persecuted to the death. They maintained, therefore, a position of irreconcilable hostility to the established order.

The Montanists universally rejected the authority and ridiculed the pretensions of Rome. The Novatians not only refused subjection to her authority, but even denied the validity of her sacraments and ordination. The Donatists maintained total separation from her. They would not submit to edicts of emperors, nor to the more than imperial power of the eloquence of Augustine, nor would they accept the concessions of ecclesiastical councils; but maintained, as at the great conference with the Catholics at Carthage, that the “Catholic is not the true church of Christ.” When the Emperor Constantine tried to conciliate them by presents, Donatus replied to the envoy in the memorable words : “What has the emperor to do with religion?”

The Paulicians jealously guarded the equality of the ministry and the supremacy of the membership. The Bogomiles, absenting themselves from the assemblies of the hierarchy to attend upon the ministry of men who were distinguished from the congregation neither in dress nor manner of life, rejected the rights and orders of the established priesthood, citing against them the woes pronounced by the Saviour, while humbly claiming the beatitudes for their persecuted brethren. The Petrobrusians and Henricians, impervious to the appeals of Peter Venerable, expostulating with them against neglecting Catholic worship, persisted in their neglect, maintaining independent worship and discipline, even to martyrdom.

The first thesis of the Albigenses at the Conference of Montreal, A. D. 1206, like that maintained by the Donatists against Augustine eight hundred years before, declared that the Roman Catholic Church was not the bride of Christ, but the harlot of Babylon. Another declared that the Roman Catholic polity is neither good, nor holy, nor established by Christ. When, at the close of the Conference, they were condemned by the Bishop of Orleans as schismatics, destroying the unity of the church, in holy indignation they denounced him as a heretic, a heartless persecutor, a ravaging wolf, the priests as false witnesses, the Pope as Antichrist. Hume says: "These most innocent and inoffensive of mankind were denounced as heretics by the Pope, because they rejected the rights of the church and opposed the influence of the clergy." They maintained the two apostolic offices in the church, and the independence of its worship and polity, but acknowledged no bishop but Christ.

The Waldenses were excommunicated by Pope Lucius III for rejecting the Lordship of Antichrist, all clerical titles and offices not contained in the New Testament, and insisting on their independence in worship and discipline. The Lollards maintained the same strenuous protest against the encroachments of the Papacy in England, demanding freedom of worship and the independence of the churches. It was only to maintain religious rights that this and earlier communities entered into local and general movements for civil liberty. Resistance to the State for the sake of religious liberty is not only the seed of all ecclesiastical reforms, but the germ of civil liberty and free institutions. There never can be free states without free churches. Civil liberty can only keep pace with religious liberty. Civil rights can never be maintained, except as they are claimed as God-given and inalienable. It was thus that these religious communities, forced into intense and irreconcilable antagonism to the Papacy in spite of their peace principles, became most prominent in all movements for civil liberty throughout Europe. It was in the preaching of John Ball, the mad Lollard of Kent, that "England first listened to the knell of feudalism and the declaration of the rights of man." The prominent part of the Lollards in the uprising of the English peasants in the fourteenth century was taken by the Taborites in the Hussite wars of the fifteenth century, and by the Anabaptists in the German Peasants' War of the sixteenth century, and by the English Baptists in the English Revolution of the seventeenth century, and by American Baptists in the American War of Independence of the eighteenth century, all primarily in pursuit of soul liberty and church independence. The famous Twelve Articles which united the peasantry of Europe as around a Common standard, and in comprehensiveness of statement and religious spirit is equal to any declaration of rights ever written, flowed, says Stern, from the pen of Hubmeyer, a Baptist preacher. The man whose name is synonymous with this movement, loved by the people for his stern virtues and resistless eloquence, hated by the nobles and devoted by them to hideous torture, was Thomas Munzer, another Anabaptist preacher. Though the undisciplined hordes of

peasants were easily routed with bloody slaughter, their principles of civil and religious liberty, inspired by faith and defended by the Scriptures, had been forced upon the attention of the world. In the long and bloody wars for the independence of the Netherlands, William the Silent found through the darkest hours in the Dutch Baptists the most generous support. In the triumphant uprising of the English people against royal and prelatical tyranny, Cromwell elevated Baptists to the highest positions in field and cabinet. In the formative period of the American Constitution, it was a petition of a Baptist Association in Virginia that secured the recognition in that document of complete religious liberty. Thus free States have arisen through free churches. Civil liberty has been established through religious liberty. The Dutch republic and civilization, Magna Charta and English liberties, and the Declaration of Independence and the free institutions of America have arisen from the defence of religious liberty and independent churches. So pregnant has been the principle of church independence, maintained by martyr communities before the Reformation, and identifying them in the succession of Apostolic and Baptist Churches.

II. We further trace in these communities the distinctive doctrinal basis of the Apostolic or Baptist Church. Their doctrines were drawn directly from the Bible, as the true and only source of faith. So exclusive was the devotion of the Paulicians to the Scriptures that they received the designation of Bible worshippers. In the controversies of Peter Venerable with the Petrobrusians, the old monk was willing to argue from the word of God, though he could not understand why those who despised the Church Fathers, the masters of the world, should reverence apostles or prophets. The Waldensians sought for the knowledge of holy Scripture more than for gems or gold; were the first to translate it into a modern language for the people; and, on account of the scarcity of copies, were accustomed to commit large portions of it to memory. One of the inquisitors relates, that he had met a poor rustic who could repeat the book of Job without omitting a word; and that it was not unusual for them to know all the New Testament, and most of the Old Testament, by heart. At the time of the Reformation, the memorizing of the New Testament was a regular requirement of students for the ministry. The hostile attitude assumed by the Roman Catholic Church toward the distribution or translation of the Bible, emphasized by Councils, that prohibited laymen from owning or even reading it, and decreed that the possession of a copy should be sufficient proof of heresy, unmistakably proves the Biblical character of these dissenters. Whittier has put into verse the story of a secret possessor of a precious manuscript, a travelling Waldensian merchant, who guardedly unfolds his treasure to a noble lady, to whom he had been exhibiting his costly silks and pearls:

“Oh, lady fair, I have yet a gem, which a purer lustre flings
Than the diamond flash of the jewelled crown on the lofty brow of kings;
A wonderful pearl of exceeding price, whose virtue shall not decay,

Whose light shall be as a spell to thee and a blessing on thy way.”

The cloud went off from the pilgrim’s brow as a small, meagre book,

Unchased with gold or gem of cost, from his folding robe he took.

“Here, lady fair, is the pearl of price, may it prove as much to thee.

Nay, keep thy gold, I ask it not, for the word of God is free.”

It was this book, the only pure reservoir, the only living fountain, of divine truth, that was their covenant and creed, their standard and appeal from tradition and the Fathers, from bishop, council, and pope. They recognized no higher tribunal, they would submit to no lower, than the word of God. It was this authority that compelled them to reject the unbiblical doctrines of Rome. “Their antagonism to the Romish Church,” says Mouston, “was based throughout on the Bible.” As the hierarchy added, from the inexhaustible storehouse of tradition, one unscriptural tenet after another, to the apostles’ creed, those communities protested.

When the noble sentiment of devotion to the memory of martyrs was transformed by the hierarchy into a degrading homage, the Montanists, while most conspicuous in the galaxy of martyrs, condemned it as unscriptural. When the hierarchy invented the confessional, in order to facilitate the return to the church of the multitude of miscreants and traitors unmasked by the Decian persecution, the Novatians, who nobly confessed the faith, condemned the new institution as unscriptural.

When the hierarchy began to canonize monks as saints, and to exalt a mode of life which, with its vow of chastity, reflects upon the divine order of the family, and favors unlawful and unnatural passions; with its vow of poverty, encourages the slothful and impoverishes the industrious with their support; and, with its vow of obedience, dethrones reason and conscience, and makes of man an abject slave of his superiors—the Donatists condemned monasticism as unscriptural. When the Byzantine Church so far forgot the ten commandments as to decree the worship of images, the Paulicians utterly opposed such a bold attempt to overthrow the Scriptures. When the Lord’s Supper was perverted from a simple memorial symbol to an actual sacrifice, and adored as the real presence of Christ, the Bogomiles denounced the Mass as a sacrifice of devils. When the doctrine of purgatory was announced, and prayers were offered for the dead, the Petrobrusians declared such intrusion of man into God’s sphere as totally unwarranted by Scripture.

When Pope Hildebrand made that mighty effort to reform the morals of the Clergy, by enforcing celibacy, and filled Europe with wailing women and children suddenly deprived of their natural protectors, Henry of Toulouse denounced celibacy, not only as unscriptural, but also as a perpetual source of evil, a cure worse than the disease. When the return of the crusaders from the Holy Land, the land of relics, gave an impulse to relic worship, the most absurd form of idolatry, the Albigenses rebuked the popular delusion. All these and other errors that had

accumulated by their day, were swept away by the Waldenses. In the language of one of their accusers: They believe that everything Catholics do or teach, is wrong; or as Buddeus expresses it: their only crime was the testimony they bore against the errors and superstitions of Rome. The only but sufficient explanation of such radical movements is found in the Bible. These communities were children of the Bible, and as such are descended from the same ancestry as modern Baptists—from the churches of the apostles. As successive impressions of the same steel plate do not differ, these communities, transcribed from the tables of the gospel and the law, must be the same in all ages. Wherever, then, we find religious communities maintaining the sole supremacy of the divine word, there must be Baptist churches; and such were these.

III. We trace further in these communities the discipline of Apostolic or Baptist churches. Long before the end of pagan persecution and the formal union of Church and State, under Constantine, there had been a constant influx of unconverted persons into the churches. During the lull of persecution, as in the second century—that peaceful period in the world’s history, when, as Gibbon says: “Emperors, guided by wisdom and virtue, ruled with absolute authority”—this movement awakened wide-spread alarm among the devout. The hierarchy was too eager for the accession of wealth and social influence; too intent upon universal dominion; too fixed in the determination to combine all parties and nations in Catholic unity—to regard the character of those entering her communion. But there were communities everywhere who antagonized this policy, and put character before numbers, sanctity before universality, truth before unity. Christendom divided on that issue; and the longer, the further were they divided. This is the significance of the Montanistic movement. It was a protest against the luxury and profligacy that were secularizing the church. It was the separation of a body, claiming to be spiritual, from the communion of Rome, that was condemned as carnal. It was the restoration of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, that had been supplanted by sacraments. It was the proclamation of the priesthood of all believers as opposed to any class priesthood, and the demand of the same high moral character from all professing Christians.

The Novatian movement has a similar significance. It was a protest against the lax discipline of the hierarchy. The Novatians forever excluded from church fellowship all who had denied the faith or were guilty of other gross offences, and for this reason were first called Puritans, or the pure.

The Donatist schism, though a half century later, had the same cause as the Novatian; namely, great laxity of church discipline after the last great persecution under Diocletian. The immediate occasion, however, was said to be the ordination of one traitor by another; but a local and personal dispute cannot explain a movement so wide-spread and enduring. Du Pin gives a true characterization of the Donatist controversy in these words: “The Donatists maintained that the true church ought to consist of none but holy and just men. They confessed that the bad might

be mixed in the church with the good, but only as secret sinners, not as open offenders.” While Augustine defended mixed membership, the Donatists did not shrink from the logical consequences of their radical position, but asserted that the toleration of known evil in a church, not only destroys the church, but contaminates every church in fellowship with it. One of their pastors was excluded for denying the truth of that position. When Augustine, in his argument, appealed to the presence of Judas among the twelve apostles; to the parables of the tares in the field, and the fish net,—he was reminded that Judas went out as soon as he was discovered; the fish were cast out as soon as they were caught; and that the field in which the tares grew is not the church but the world. When at length there occurred a division among the Donatists, the issue was made upon the question of enforcing a still stricter discipline.

The names given to the Paulicians, or lovers of Paul, and Bogomiles, or lovers of God, are an index to the character of their churches. They utterly abjured all fellowship with the Greek Church, yet their purity of life and devotion to principle extorted praise, even from their Greek historians. One of those pays them this tribute: “They were commanded to fast and keep unspotted from sin; to live pure and holy lives; to owe nothing, and yet show mercy; to be humble, studious of the truth, and charitable one toward another.”

The Petrobrusians believed in the spirituality and holiness of the church. A cathedral is not a church, they said; the word does not mean a structure of walls, but a congregation of the faithful. A church does not consist in a multitude of cohering stones, but in the union of a company of believers. Of the Henricians, who were just like the Petrobrusians, the Roman Catholic Saint Bernard bears testimony, that nothing could be more apparently Christian than their discourses, nothing more irreproachable than their habits.

Gerard, a representative of the Albigenses, told the Bishop of Cambray, that their doctrine was to forsake the world; to tame the lusts of the flesh; to earn their own living; to insult nobody, but to be charitable to all. The names given them, of the Good Men, or the Poor Men of Lyons, show the character they bore before the people; a character that could outlive the charges of hypocrisy made by their enemies. The charge brought by Alanus that they revived Donatism, shows that the old idea still survived at the end of a thousand years. While the other sects may not be equally esteemed by different historians, all writers, since the days of Bossuet, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant, unite in attributing to the Waldenses the most exalted character. This character is amply sustained by their own writings, which abound in exhortations to obedience, faith, love, chastity, and temperance. “They wanted to live literally according to the gospel,” and it was their stern morals, an inquisitor admits, that made their popularity so great. A commission of inquiry appointed by Louis XII returned with such a favorable report concerning them, that the king declared they were his best subjects. At the outbreak of the Reformation one of their number thus refers to their discipline: “Those who pertinaciously refuse to obey our

admonitions and doctrines we excommunicate from the company of the people and the hearing of the word, that they may be confounded.” The very charges against them, in reference to personal revelations and the community of goods, of opposition to war and oaths, to which the apostolic and modern communities are equally liable, only the more clearly attest their exalted life, character, and discipline. There was kindled in them a perpetual enthusiasm of truth, justice, goodness and holiness, fostered in their worship and resplendent in their lives, giving them rank in spiritual character, and power above modern denominations, and next to the apostolic churches. The spiritual character, associated with a discipline that was denied by the Papacy and national establishments, and made impossible by the existence of infant baptism, and therefore restored to its proper position as a fundamental article in the definition of the church in but one Protestant creed, distinguished these Communities as Apostolic or Baptist churches.

As from various types adjusted in stereotype plates is issued the same book in succeeding editions—the first not differing from the tenth edition—so the church, an impression or publication from these typical spiritual virtues, is the same in the first and the nineteenth centuries; and the church, which the Spirit and the word of God produced in the first and nineteenth, must have been produced in the intervening centuries. Their spiritual character, therefore, clearly identifies these communities in the succession of Apostolic or Baptist churches.

IV. We trace further in these communities the baptismal order of the Apostolic or Baptist Church. We take for granted, in addressing Baptists, that immersion is apostolic baptism. The question arises, how long did the apostolic practice remain in force? It is well known that the Greek Church, which is most familiar with the original language of the New Testament, has never to this day departed from that practice. The Latin Church observed it, except in cases of necessity, at least thirteen centuries. This is evident from the erection, from the fourth to the fourteenth century, of separate baptizing halls, or baptisteries, with deep pools. Of these, no less than sixty-four are found to-day in Italy alone. It is evident, further, from the deep fonts that are found in old cathedrals, and were used for the immersion of infants. The adherence to the apostolic practice is further shown by illuminated manuscripts; bas reliefs, such as that in the cathedral at Amiens, representing the immersion of a princess; and frescoes, such as that found in the ancient basilica of St. Clement at Rome, recently unearthed beneath the foundation of the modern church of the same name, representing the baptism of Jesus in Jordan.

The exclusive observance of immersion for so long a time is further proved by the action of councils and the decision of schoolmen. Thomas Aquinas, the chief of the schoolmen, who flourished about the year 1250, says, in his theology, that while immersion is not essential to the validity of baptism, still, as the old and common usage, it is more commendable and safer than

pouring. Ecclesiastical councils held just before and after the year 1300 oppose any recourse to pouring, except under stress of circumstances. But once subject to the control of circumstances, the old form was rapidly displaced; though a hundred years later, and seventy years before the Reformation, the Meldensian statutes still refer to pouring as the modern way.

But the old form, with the halo of age and tradition about it, with its baptisteries and deep fonts still standing, and frescoes and bas reliefs looking down from cathedral walls, was not treated with contempt, but was allowed, as in the catechism of the Council of Trent, the first place in the definition of baptism. The Reformers treated the old rite with the same respect. Calvin acknowledged its antiquity, though he thought, for reason of climate, pouring or sprinkling might be substituted just as well. Luther, whose little book on baptism, a translation of the Catholic ritual, contains the requirement to immerse, expressed lively regret that the original form had been set aside; and, in answer to inquiry, he does not hesitate to recommend the immersion of a converted Jewess, and his recommendation was adopted by all the Lutheran rituals that refer to proselyte baptism. In correspondence with Myconius, however, in reference to the baptism of infants in winter, Luther concedes the advisability of pouring. Luther concedes the advisability of pouring instead of immersing them. But Luther's in most intimate friend, Bugenhagen, coming from Pomerania, where immersion had tenaciously held its ground, wrote a book in favor of the universal restoration of the original mode. Indeed, the Saxon Confession of 1551, and the Smalcald Articles, give immersion as the only definition of baptism. The Protestant Liturgy of Austria prescribes at length an immersion service for proselytes; and the early Socinians of Poland were pronounced immersionists. In England, the Episcopal Liturgy of 1547 prescribed immersion, except in extreme cases; and the Westminster Confession of 1647 does not question the validity of immersion, and only denied its necessity by a tie vote.

Although immersion was thus everywhere received as the ancient and original mode, yet since the heathen nations of Europe had been formally Christianized, and the baptism of adults had consequently fallen into disuse, except in the rare cases of Jewish proselytes, the necessity of immersion, when infants were the only subjects, was no longer so apparent. The old privilege of pouring, for frail or dying infants, was therefore gradually extended, for convenience sake, to include all infants. Immersion was in transition to pouring, and, if not obsolete, was obsolescent, when the Reformation broke out. The Reformers, in adopting infant baptism from the Papacy, naturally followed the prevalent mode, which was pouring or sprinkling. But before the Reformation, or at least as long as immersion remained the undeviating practice of the hierarchy, it is hardly conceivable that those communities which separated from her for the sake of closer adherence to the Scriptures, should have known or admitted any other form.

Moreover, we are prepared to find among these Biblical communities what Antichrist lost, that is, the right subjects as well as the true form of baptism. We are unwilling to admit that infant

baptism, no trace of which is found in the New Testament, ever totally displaced believers' baptism. A modern Greek writer says: "There is no mention of infant baptism for two centuries, and it appears from the order of catechumens and examples of church Fathers and emperors, who were baptized as adults, that infant baptism did not exclusively prevail for many centuries." The earliest distinct reference in church history to infant baptism is a protest against it by the Montanist Tertullian. The Montanists established the precedent of ignoring the baptism of the hierarchy, and rebaptizing all who joined their communion. They were the first to protest against the perversion of baptism, and became Anabaptists.

The Novatians, who are identified by historians with the Montanists, are distinctly called Anabaptists; and as an evidence of their efforts to keep baptism in its original simplicity, they rejected the custom that arose, of pouring oil upon the head of the candidate and upon the water, as a superstitious rite.

As showing the universality and earnestness of the protest of the Donatists against disorderly baptisms, Augustine impatiently declares: "You think the whole world ought to be rebaptized." While Augustine, who used all his talents to corrupt this ordinance, admitted the validity of baptism, whatever the character of catechumen or priest, the Donatists guarded closely the Scripture form of ordinance; demanded holiness, not only of the candidate, but also of the administrator; and all those who had been baptized in the unholy Communion of Rome, whether priests or laymen, were rebaptized before being received into their fellowship. "Infant baptism is the only point of difference in doctrine between Augustine and the Donatists," says Bohringer, a late biographer of the great church Father, "and this grew out of the Donatist notion of the church." This is only a more confident statement of what Gottfried Arnold and Ivimey had said before in identifying the Donatists and modern Baptists.

The views of these bold Protestants of the West were shared by the Paulicians and Bogomiles, the dissenters of the East. They rejected the idea that there was saving power in baptism, that water could wash away sin, that either sacrament or priest could release a soul from bondage. When they receive a member, says Zigabenus, a contemporary, he is first thoroughly examined, then purified by fasting and prayer, after which he is immersed again. As we approach the Reformation, when infant baptism becomes the almost universal practice, opposition to it becomes still more marked, among the dissenting bodies.

Of the Petrobrusians, Neander says: With all the anti-hierarchical sects of this period, they rejected infant-baptism. The ground of this objection Basnage discovers in their opinion that faith is essential to the validity of a sacrament, an opinion which always and everywhere makes infant baptism impossible. In protesting against infant baptism, Peter de Bruis says: "Baptism without faith washes the body, not the soul, hence Christian baptism cannot be received in infancy. No one can be saved by the faith of another, therefore we wait for an age of faith, and

then baptize, not re-baptize, as we are falsely charged, those who are capable of knowing God and believing on his name.” The first error that Peter Venerable charges them with is the rejection of infant baptism, and Bernard alternately wails and rages at their neglect of the salvation of infants, a neglect which he calls diabolical.

The practice of the Albigenses is equally clear. Bossuet says, they took especial pains to assault the stronghold of infant baptism, and to restore the views of the Donatists. As Bossuet identifies them with the Donatists eight centuries before their day, Richinius, editor of Moneta, and Hurter, in his life of Innocent, point out a marked resemblance between them and the Anabaptists of three centuries later, thus making them a connecting link. At one of the first conferences with the Albigenses, held in 1176 at the town of Albi, from which they derived their name, the bishop condemned them expressly for refusing to baptize infants. They refused, they said, because infants cannot believe. In the acts of the inquisition of Toulouse, such testimony as this may be read: “Water baptism does infants no good, for instead of consenting to it, they cry out against it.” Those captured, tried, and burned at Cologne and called Anabaptists, maintained “that baptism was meant only for adults, because faith is joined to it in the Scriptures. But infants that cannot profess any faith, nor even ask for baptism, should be kept back until they reach years of discretion, and be baptized only upon profession of faith with their own lips.” Therefore, as we learn from Ermengard, Ecbert, and Evervin, they rebaptized those baptized in infancy.

As to the practice of the Waldenses, there has been more dispute. All admit that they re-baptized converts from the Papacy, but the point in dispute is, whether they did this, because they rejected infant baptism in toto, or simply because they ignored the validity of Roman Catholic baptism. That it was for the former reason is evident from the ancient Waldensian treatise on Antichrist, which charges that it is “Antichrist which teaches that children should be baptized into the faith, and attributes to baptism the work of regeneration, thus confounding the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration with this external rite, and on this foundation bases its orders and grounds Christianity.” The creed of the Bohemian Waldenses, published in 1532 (quoted by Starck) is equally explicit on this point of dispute: “It is clear as day that infant baptism does no good, and is not ordered by Christ, but invented by man. Christ wants his baptism based upon his word for the forgiveness of sins, and then he promises, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Of these same early Bohemian brethren, Camerarius relates, that “every new-comer was re-baptized upon profession of his faith and promise to observe the discipline and a holy life.” The same is true of the English Waldenses, then known as Lollards, for according to the testimony of the chronicler, Thomas Waldensis, they “acknowledged but two sacraments, and administered baptism only to adults.” Reinerus, a renegade Waldensian preacher, turned inquisitor, informs us of their practice in Italy. He says, they discarded godfathers and

confirmation, and denounced infant baptism as a useless ablution. To the same effect Richinius affirms, that in their opinion baptism was neither necessary nor useful for infants. In the full statement of Waldensian doctrine and practice made to Ecolampadius, the reformer of Basle, by George Maurel, a delegate from the old reformers to the new, occurs a confession that seems to offer further confirmation of the view we have taken. He says, that sometimes, in order to avoid detection, Waldensian parents offered their children to the Catholic priest to be baptized. The most natural inference from this statement is, that though they did not believe in infant baptism, rather than suffer unnecessary persecution they allowed it.

Thus we identify these communities in the baptismal order of the Apostolic or Baptist Church. As the naturalist admits of but one origin of any species, and assumes the descent of all varieties, however distributed by seas or continents, from the same original stock, so we recognize but one origin of the church, and assume a necessary descent of all true churches from the primitive institution. This assumption has been confirmed by the investigations especially of Mennonite and Waldensian historians. Halbertsma has proved the doctrinal agreement, and Ten Kate the historical connection, between the Mennonites and the Waldenses. By common consent the Waldenses can be traced three centuries and a half back of the Reformation, and according to their own writers three and a half centuries further back, while popular tradition and the opinion of their inquisitors place their origin fully twelve hundred years before Martin Luther. Claude Seissel, Archbishop of Turin in 1547, says, it is impossible to determine upon any date later than the days of Constantine. Rorengo, Grand Prior of St. Roc, in the same city, about 1632, declares the uncertainty of their origin, though in the ninth century they were not a new sect. Reinerus mentions their antiquity as the cause of their influence and the reason for their extermination. Ten Kate, Leger, and Franke date their origin in the epoch of Charlemagne, but Abbadie, Rieger, Campianus, and John Crispinus favor a period earlier than the eighth century; but whichever class of authorities we accept, we find these mountaineers of northern Italy appearing in time to fan the embers of Donatism into a flame, which was never after extinguished. But if this connection were interrupted, we have traced in the Orient an uninterrupted line of churches, Montanist, Novatian, Paulician, and Bogomile, which was transferred in the eleventh century to Western Europe and merged in the French Sects. It is apparently to this eastern line, that the Anabaptists, executed at Cologne in the twelfth century, belonged, for in their declaration to the inquisitors they maintained that in Greece, whence they had migrated, there had existed from the times of the apostles members of their sect. The quotations, from Mosheim, that "The origin of the denomination called Anabaptist, is hid in the remote depths of antiquity," and that from Drs. Ypeij and Dermout, viz.: "The Anabaptists may be considered as the only Christian community which has stood since the days of the apostles, and preserved pure the doctrines of the apostles through all ages," are familiar to every reader.

The Anabaptists of the Reformation period, that so suddenly flooded every land of Europe, can only be accounted for as the mouth of a mighty river whose sources lie in distant mountains, hidden by primeval forests.

If this succession did exist, the knowledge of the fact is of more than historical interest. The Saviour, though the Son of God, magnified his descent from David and Abraham; and every Christian church must feel the same interest in tracing its descent from Christ. Families or races, of low or doubtful origin, may willingly leave their ancestry unmentioned, but all are proud of honorable birth and illustrious ancestry. The great Scotch novelist represents Old Mortality traversing the land to restore the monuments of the heroes of Scotland, removing the moss from the tomb stones and deepening their inscriptions. This ennobling instinct is revered by all nations, and monuments are reared to their founders and defenders. Schools of philosophy, science, and art preserved by the brush or the chisel the faces, and celebrate with solemn ceremony the birthdays, of their distinguished representatives. The names of Luther, Calvin, and Wesley have been made familiar as household words by their loving followers. All monotheistic nations revere the prophets who handed down, through the dark days of exile and bloodshed, to the Christian era the covenant of Moses. Shall Christians ever forget to do honor to the equally glorious line of martyrs who handed down, through the dark ages to the Reformation, the covenant of Jesus? The Jews built tombs for the prophets whom their fathers had slain. The world returns to gather with care the ashes of her once despised martyrs. Shall Baptists, in the days of their prosperity, forget that they are enjoying the fruits of the sufferings of their ancestors? Would it not be cold selfishness, jealous conceit, arrogant ignorance, or base ingratitude if we longer stand listlessly by and listen to the names of Baptist martyrs cast out as evil? They were destitute, afflicted, tormented. They wandered about in sheep-skins and in goat-skins. They sought refuge in the dens and caves of the earth, because they kept the commandments of God and had the testimony of Jesus Christ. But rescued from reproach and oblivion, their names shall be enrolled among the most illustrious heroes. Suffering more than others, they shall be more glorified; and when, emerging from the generations and ages of the world, the redeemed shall be gathering to the scene of the last judgment, and the admiring inquiry is heard, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness leaning on her beloved?" then conspicuous among those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb will be our martyred Baptist ancestry; and above the Reformers and church Fathers, nearest to the apostles and prophets and their Lord, will appear our Montanus, Novatian, Donatus, Constantine, Peter de Bruis, Henry of Toulouse, Peter Waldo, and Walter Lollard, beloved brethren, who, like Paul and Barnabas, hazarded their lives for the name of Jesus.

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