

The Church

Of all the things the average Christian studies, church history is probably the least studied. Moreover, when it is studied, it is the history of the Roman Catholic Church and its children, the Protestants, that is the subject of study. However, there is an entirely different history of the church that, comparatively speaking, very few know about.

It is this little known history that is the history of the true New Testament church.

Now, I know that there are many who would argue the point and say that the Catholic Church is the true New Testament church. However, to be a true New Testament church, one must follow the New Testament. The Roman Catholic Church does not do this. I know because I own a copy of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and it deviates from the New Testament extensively. In fact, it deviates from the Catholic Bible extensively.

That aside, there have always been churches that did not deviate from the New Testament in their formation, polity, and doctrine. Generally speaking they have been known as Anabaptists. Beginning in the 1500's they became known simply as Baptists. But, even as the churches in the New Testament were not homogeneous in their character, neither have been those churches known as Anabaptist, or Baptist. Nevertheless, they have always shared some things in common, particularly the doctrines of salvation, baptism, church organization, the autonomy of the local New Testament church, the Lord's Supper, and missions. In addition, they have always looked to one single person as their founder and chief Shepherd – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Moreover, though generally known as Anabaptist (re-baptizer), they have been known by a host of other names given them by their enemies. Names such as Monatists, Novatians, Donatists,

Paulicans, Albigenses, Waldensians, Paterines, Cathari, Bogomiles, etc. The list is extensive and varied, ranging from simple names designating a particular teacher's following, to outright derogatory and slanderous names designed to totally discredit their doctrine and practice.

When attempts to discredit them failed, and members could not be persuaded to recant their doctrine, they were persecuted. At different times and places whole congregations were killed for simply following what the Scripture teaches about baptism and the Lord's Supper. Nevertheless, the Lord has preserved his church to this day.

All that being said, it should now be clear that a proper knowledge of the history of the Lord's church, as opposed to the false history that is commonly presented, is essential for understanding how precious proper Scriptural doctrine is. Moreover, the history of the Lord's true church and the preservation of the Scriptures are inextricably bound together. Without the different churches preserving the Scripture throughout the centuries since the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross, we would have no pure Scripture to read.

Finally, the testimonies of the saints that came before, ought to be an encouragement for us to do better than what we do. When we understand that many of them died rather than compromise, we ought to be moved to do likewise.

In Christ,

Paul W. Davis

*From the booklet **The Trail of Blood** by J. M. Carroll*

- *Cardinal Hosius (Catholic, 1524), President of the Council of Trent: "Were it not that the baptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife*

during the past twelve hundred years, they would swarm in greater number than all the Reformers.” (Hosius, Letters, Apud Opera, pp. 112, 113.) The “twelve hundred years” were the years preceding the Reformation in which Rome persecuted Baptists with the most cruel persecution thinkable.

- **Sir Isaac Newton:** “The Baptists are the only body of known Christians that have never symbolized with Rome.”
- **Mosheim (Lutheran):** “Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay secreted in almost all the countries of Europe persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of modern Dutch Baptists.”
- **Edinburg Cyclopedia (Presbyterian):** “It must have already occurred to our readers that the Baptists are the same sect of Christians that were formerly described as Ana-Baptists. Indeed this seems to have been their leading principle from the time of Tertullian to the present time.”
Tertullian was born just fifty years after the death of the Apostle John.

Baptists do not believe in Apostolic Succession. The Apostolic office ceased with the death of the Apostles. It is to His churches that He promised a continual existence from the time He organized the first one during His earthly ministry until He comes again. He promised—

“I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt. 16:18)

Then, when He gave the great Commission, which tells what His churches are to do, He promised—

“I will be with you always, even unto the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20)

This Commission—this work—was not given to the Apostles as individuals, but to them and the others present in their

church capacity. The Apostles and the others who heard Him give this Commission were soon dead—BUT, His Church has lived on through the ages, making disciples (getting folks saved), baptizing them, and teaching the truth—the doctrines—He committed to the Jerusalem Church. These faithful churches have been blessed with His presence as they have traveled the TRAIL OF BLOOD.

This history shows how the Lord's promise to His churches has been fulfilled. Dr. Carroll shows that churches have been found in every age which have taught the doctrines He committed unto them. Dr. Carroll calls these doctrines the "marks" of New Testament Churches.

"MARKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH"

1. Its Head and Founder—CHRIST. He is the law-giver; the Church is only the executive. (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18)
2. Its only rule of faith and practice—THE BIBLE. (II Tim. 3:15-17)
3. Its name—"CHURCH," "CHURCHES." (Matt. 16:18; Rev. 22:16)
4. Its polity—CONGREGATIONAL—all members equal. (Matt. 20:24-28; Matt. 23:5-12)
5. Its members—only saved people. (Eph. 2:21; I Peter 2:5)
6. Its ordinances—BELIEVERS' BAPTISM, FOLLOWED BY THE LORD'S SUPPER. (Matt. 28:19-20)
7. Its officers—PASTORS AND DEACONS. (I Tim. 3:1-16)
8. Its work—getting folks saved, baptizing them (with a baptism that meets all the requirements of God's Word), teaching them ("to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"). (Matt. 28:16-20)
9. Its financial plan—"Even so (TITHES and OFFERINGS) hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel," (I Cor. 9:14)
10. Its weapons of warfare—spiritual, not carnal. (II Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:10-20)

11. *Its independence—separation of Church and State. (Matt. 22:21)*

– *from The Trail of Blood*

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