

The Pilgrim Church - Part 1

by E.H. Broadbent

E.H. Broadbent's sermon explores the enduring legacy and challenges of the Pilgrim Church throughout history, emphasizing its adherence to New Testament principles.

Scripture: Matthew 18:20, Luke 4:16, Acts 1:8, Acts 13:15, Acts 15:21, Acts 18:2, Acts 20:28, Galatians 2:16, 1 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Peter 1:1

Topics: "Church History", "New Testament"

Description

E. H. Broadbent, in 'The Pilgrim Church', provides an account of the continuation of churches practicing the principles taught in the New Testament through succeeding centuries. The history of the Church, still in the making, is highlighted, with parts of it being written and added to as the long pilgrimage progresses. Broadbent's narrative includes the contributions of various authors and the experiences of churches striving to make the Scriptures their guide and act upon them as the Word of God. He discusses the formation of churches, the influence of Jewish religion, Greek philosophy, and Roman power, as well as the emergence of spiritual movements like the Montanists, Marcionites, Novatians, Donatists, and Manichaeans, each reflecting different responses to the evolving Church landscape.

Transcript

The Pilgrim Church

by E. H. Broadbent

BEING SOME ACCOUNT OF THE CONTINUANCE-----

THROUGH SUCCEEDING CENTURIES----

OF CHURCHES PRACTISING THE PRINCIPLES TAUGHT----

AND EXEMPLIFIED IN ----

THE NEW TESTAMENT

LONDON_PICKERING & INGLIS LTD.____

PICKERING & INGLIS LTD._29 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON E.G.4_229 BOTHWELL STREET,
GLASGOW, C. 2_Fleming H. Revell Company, 316 Third Avenue, New Jersey_Home Evangel, 418

Church Street, Toronto____

First Impression ...1931_Second ...1935_Third ...1946_Fourth ...1950_Fifth ...1955____

Preface

[To Pilgrim Church Index]

There is one history, which, though it contains the darkest tragedy, yet by common consent is called "The Good News", "The Glad Tidings", or by a name which it has captured and made its own: "The Gospel".

Its four historians are uniquely known as "The Four Evangelists", or tellers forth of the Good News. This history tells how, by a miraculous birth, God entered into a relationship to man which even creation had not established, and by a sacrificial death and mighty resurrection vanquished death, put away sin its cause, and to His glory as Creator added that of Redeemer.

The foundations of this history, the preparation for it, indeed the actual foretelling of it and evidences of its truth precede it in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Interwoven with these, inseparable from them, is the History of Israel, which is therefore itself one of universal value.

The History of the Church or company of those who by faith have received Christ and become His followers, is still in the making, not yet complete. On this account and because of its immense extent, although it is of supreme importance, parts only of it can be written and from time to time. First one, then another, must relate what he has seen or has learned from trustworthy records, and this must be taken up and added to as stage after stage of the long pilgrimage is traversed.

The following pages are a contribution to the unfolding story. Much that others have searched out and related has been made use of, repeated, woven in, so that this book is a compilation, to which is added the writer's individual share in the growing narrative. It is hoped and expected that the frequent quotations from and references to the works of several authors will lead the readers of this volume to turn to the books from which so much has been derived, and thus come to share more fully in the fruits of the patient labours and able expositions of their authors. An attempt is made in this book to introduce those who have not much time for reading or research, into some of the experiences of certain churches of God which, at different times and in various places, have endeavoured in their meetings, order, and testimony to make the Scriptures their guide and to act upon them as the Word of God, counting them as sufficient for all their needs in all their circumstances.

There have always been such churches; the records of most have disappeared, but what remain are of such volume that only a selection can be given.

General history is left out of account, except where the course of some of these churches requires reference to current events. Neither is any account given of what is usually understood by "ecclesiastical" history, except in its relation to the churches or congregations of believers carrying out the teachings of Scripture, which are the subject of this narrative.

Some spiritual movements are considered which only partially accepted the principle of taking the Scriptures as sufficient guide, because in their measure these too throw valuable light on the possibility of such a course.

In addition to the works mentioned below, and others also, advantage has been taken of the help so richly provided and placed within the reach of most by such works as the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" and Hastings' "Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics".

A beginner may look up the subject in one of these standard works of reference, where he will be directed to some of the literature considered as authoritative. In reading a selection of this he will be referred to the original authorities and also (as these are not always available) to their most trustworthy expositors. In the present volume the books used and referred to are mostly well known and accessible; sometimes a popular work has been chosen in preference to one more erudite, so that anyone interested may get fuller information more easily. Where books written in languages other than English are made use of, translations are referred to if they are to be had, but sometimes there are none, and then the original works are named for the benefit of those who can read them.

In the beginning of the History, "The Ante-Nicene Christian Library" provides a store of information from which much has been drawn. When the time of Marcion is reached, "Marcion Das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott" by Ad. v. Harnack is used, and for matters connected with the Roman Empire, "East and West Through Fifteen Centuries" by Br.-Genl. G. F. Young C. B. For Augustine "A Select Library of the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church" translated and annotated by J.

C. Pilkington, M. A. edited by Philip Schaff, is a guide. "Latin Christianity" by Dean Milman, helps in several periods. We are indebted to Georg Schepss for the true history of Priscillian and his teaching. His book, "Priscillian ein Neuaufgefundener Lat. Schriftsteller des 4 Jahrhunderts" describes his discovery in the Würzburg University, in 1886, of the important MS. of the Spanish Reformer. This MS. is examined and explained by Friedrich Paret in his "Priscillianus Ein Reformator des Vierten Jahrhunderts Eine Kirchengeschichtliche Studie zugleich ein Kommentar zu den Erhaltenen Schriften Priscillians", and much has been drawn from this valuable commentary.

Important information as to those called Paulicians is given in "Die Paulikianer im Byzantischen Kaiserreiche etc." by Karapet Ter-Mkrtschian, Archdeacon of Edschmiatzin, the centre of the Armenian Church. An invaluable book for the period is "The Key of Truth A Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia" translated and edited by F. C. Conybeare. The document was discovered by the translator in 1891 in the library of the Holy Synod at Edjmiatzin; his notes and comments are of the utmost interest and value.

The discovery of the "Key of Truth" raises the hope that other documents illustrating the faith and teaching of the brethren may yet be found. The history of the Bogomils in the Balkan Peninsula is largely drawn from "An Official Tour Through Bosnia and Herzegovina" by J. de Asboth, Member of the Hungarian Parliament, and from "Through Bosnia and the Herzegovina on Foot etc." by A. J. Evans, the distinguished traveller and antiquarian, later Sir Arthur Evans. "Essays on the Latin Orient" by William Miller, has also been made use of.

The chapter on the Eastern Churches, especially the Nestorian, owes very much to "Le Christianisme dans l'Empire Perse sous la Dynastie Sassanide" by J. Labourt; to "The Syrian Churches" by J. W. Etheridge; and to "Early Christianity Outside the Roman Empire" by F. C. Burkitt M. A. The account of the Synod of Seleucia is taken chiefly from "Das Buch des Synhados" by Oscar Braun, while "Nestorius and his Teachings" by J. Bethune-Baker, has supplied most of what is given about Nestorius, and "The Bazaar of Heraclides of Damascus" by the same author, has especially been quoted; these give a vivid picture of

Nestorius and should be read in full if possible.

For the description of the spread of the Nestorians into China, "Cathay and the Way Thither" by Col. Sir Henry Yule, published by the Hakluyt Society, is of great interest and has been freely drawn upon.

Coming to the times of the Waldenses and Albigenses, "The Ancient Vallenses and Albigenses" by G. S. Faber, and "Facts and Documents illustrative of the History Doctrine and Rites of the Ancient Albigenses and Waldenses" by S. R. Maitland, have been referred to very fully. Perhaps the largest use has been made of the works of Dr. Ludwig Keller, especially for the history and teaching of the Waldenses. His position as Keeper of State Archives, giving access as it does to most important documents, has been used by him to investigate the histories of those known as "heretics", and his publications are an invaluable contribution to the understanding of these much misunderstood people.

Dr. Keller's book, "Die Reformation und die älteren Reformparteien" is a mine of information and all who can do so should read it. Use has also been made of his book "Ein Apostel der Wiedertäufer" and of a number of others written or issued by him. Of the time of the Reformation, the "Life and Letters of Erasmus" by J. A. Froude, gives a vivid picture, and "A Short History of the English People" by John Richard Green, is a constant help by giving in an interesting and reliable way the historical setting of the particular events related.

"England in the Age of Wycliffe" by George Macaulay Trevelyan has been used, and much has been taken from "John Wycliffe and his English Precursors" by Lechher (translated). "The Dawn of the Reformation the Age of Hus" by H. B. Workman, has been used; his references to authorities are valuable. Considerable quotations have been made from Cheltschizki's "Das Netz des Glaubens" translated from Old Czech into German by Karl Vogel. The description of the Moravian Church is based to a large extent on the "History of the Moravian Church" by J.

E. Hutton, issued by the Moravian Publication Office, while for Comenius "Das Testament der Sterbenden Mutter" and "Stimme der Trauer", both translations into German from Bohemian, the former by Dora Pe_ina, the latter by Franz Slam_nik, are quoted. One of the books most used is the very valuable one, "A History of the Reformation" by Thos. M. Lindsay. "Die Taufe. Gedanken über die urchristliche Taufe, ihre Geschichte und ihre Bedeutung für die Gegenwart" by J. Warns, is of great value, especially for the history of the Anabaptists, and its many references to authorities are useful.

The important and deeply interesting records of the Anabaptists in Austria are taken from "Fontes Rerum Austriacarum" and other publications by Dr. J. Beck and Joh. Loserth, which are referred to in more detail in the footnotes to the pages where this part of the history is related. The history of the Mennonites in Russia is chiefly found in "Geschichte der Alt-Evangelischen Mennoniten Bruderschaft in Russland" by P. M. Friesen, who was appointed by the "Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde" as their historian, and supplied by them with the documentary evidence they possessed; use is also made of "Fundamente der Christlichen Lehre u.s.w." by Joh.

Deknatel. Of the book by Pilgram Marbeck, "Vermanung etc.", summarized, only two copies are known to exist, one of which is in the British Museum. Very considerable use has been made of the valuable book by Karl Ecke, "Schwenckfeld, Luther und der Gedanke einer Apostolischen Reformation". The chapter on events in France is indebted to the "History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century" by J. H. Merle D' Aubigné, translated by H. White and for Farel, to the "Life of William Farel" by Frances Bevan, one of several interesting works of similar character by the same authoress.

Another work by Merle D' Aubigné here made much use of is "The Reformation in Europe in the Time of Calvin", "The Huguenots, their Settlements Churches and Industries in England and Ireland" by Samuel Smiles, gives much of value about the Huguenots. "Un Martyr du Désert Jacques Roger" by Daniel Benoit, tells of the "Churches of the Desert" after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

Returning to England, the "Memoir of William Tyndale" by George Offor, is quoted and otherwise referred to. The book most used in the account of the Nonconformists in England is "A History of the Free Churches of England" by Herbert S. Skeats, which would well repay reading; and "A Popular History of the Free Churches" by C. Silvester Horne, gives an interesting account of these churches. The "Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity" of Richard Hooker, is referred to. The "Journal of George Fox" supplies the best information as to his life. Three books which give excellent histories of the spiritual movements in Germany and surrounding countries after the Reformation have been largely made use of: "Geschichte des Christlichen Lebens in der rheinisch-westphälischen Kirche" by Max Goebel; "Geschichte des Pietismus und der Mystik in der Reformirten Kirche u.s.w." by Heinr. Heppe; and "Geschichte des Pietismus in der reformirten Kirche" by Albrecht Ritschl. "John Wesley's Journal" is the best source for an account of his life. "The Life of William Carey Shoemaker and Missionary" by George Smith, supplies most of what is told here of him. The account of the brother Haldane is taken chiefly from the "Lives of Robert and James Haldane" by Alexander Haldane. For Russia and the Stundists, in addition to the "Geschichte etc.," of P. M. Friesen, a useful book is "Russland und das Evangelium" by J. Warns. In the history of the rise of the German Baptists use is made of "Johann Gerhard Oncken, His Life and Work" by John Hunt Cook. For later movements in England etc., some MSS. have been available, and "A History of the Plymouth Brethren" by W. Blair Neatby, has been consulted. Extensive extracts have been made from the "Memoir of the late Anthony Norris Groves, containing Extracts from his Letters and Journals" compiled by his widow, illustrating the important part the teaching and example of Groves played in the history of churches of the New Testament type. "A Narrative of some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller" has been used as the best account of Müller's influential testimony; and details of the life of R. C. Chapman have been taken from "Robert Cleaver Chapman of Barnstaple" by W. H. Bennet, his personal friend. "Collected Writings of J. N. Darby" edited by William Kelly, is used to show Darby's teaching. "Nazarenes in Jugoslavia" published in the United States by the "Nazarenes", and various pamphlets, give information as to the movement connected with the people bearing this name.

The tragedy and glory of "The Pilgrim Church" can only be faintly indicated as yet, nor can they be fully known until the time comes when the Word of the Lord is fulfilled: "there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt. 10. 26). At present, albeit through mists of our ignorance and misunderstanding, we see her warring against the powers of darkness, witnessing for her Lord in the world, suffering as she follows in His footsteps. Her people are ever pilgrims, establishing no earthly institution, because having in view the heavenly city. In their likeness to their Master they might be called Stones which the Builders Rejected (Luke 20. 17), and they are sustained in the confident hope that, when His kingdom is revealed, they will be sharers in it with Him.____

PILGRIM CHURCH

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The New Testament is the worthy completion of the Old. It is the only proper end to which the Law and the Prophets could have led. It does not do away with them but enriches, in fulfilling and replacing them. It has in itself the character of completeness, presenting, not the rudimentary beginning of a new era which requires constant modification and addition to meet the needs of changing times, but a revelation suited to all men in all times. Jesus Christ cannot be made known to us better than He is in the four Gospels, nor can the consequences or doctrines, which flow from the facts of His death and resurrection be more truly taught than they are in the Epistles.

The Old Testament records the formation and history of Israel, the people through whom God revealed Himself in the world until Christ should come. The New Testament reveals the Church of Christ, consisting of all who are born again through faith in the Son of God and so made partakers of the Divine and Eternal Life (John 3. 16).

As this body, the whole Church of Christ, cannot be seen and cannot act in any one place, since many of its members are already with Christ and others scattered throughout the world, it is appointed to be actually known and to bear its testimony in the form of churches of God in various places and at different times. Each of these consists of those disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ who, in the place where they live, gather together in His Name. To such the presence of the Lord in their midst is promised and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is given in different ways through all the members (Matt. 18. 20; 1 Cor. 12.7).

Each of these churches stands in direct relationship to the Lord, draws its authority from Him and is responsible to Him (Rev. 2 and 3). There is no suggestion that one church should control another or that any organised union of churches should exist, but an intimate personal fellowship unites them (Acts 15.36).

The chief business of the churches is to make known throughout the world the Gospel or Glad Tidings of Salvation. This the Lord commanded before His ascension, promising to give the Holy Spirit as the power in which it should be accomplished (Acts 1:8).

Events in the history of the churches in the time of the Apostles have been selected and recorded in the Book of the Acts in such a way as to provide a permanent pattern for the churches. Departure from this pattern has had disastrous consequences, and all revival and restoration have been due to some return to the pattern and principles contained in the Scriptures.

The following account of some later events, compiled from various writers, shows that there has been a continuous succession of churches composed of believers who have made it their aim to act upon the teaching of the New Testament. This succession is not necessarily to be found in any one place, often such churches have been dispersed or have degenerated, but similar ones have appeared in other places. The pattern is so clearly delineated in the Scriptures as to have made it possible for churches of this character to spring up in fresh places and among believers who did not know that disciples before them had taken the same path, or that there were some in their own time in other parts of the world. Points of contact with more general history are noted where the connection helps to an understanding of the churches described.

Some spiritual movements are referred to which, though they did not lead to the formation of churches on the New Testament pattern, nevertheless throw light on those which did result in the founding of such churches.

From Pentecost there was a rapid spread of the Gospel. The many Jews who heard it at the feast at Jerusalem when it was first preached, carried the news to the various countries of their dispersion. Although it is only of the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul that the New Testament gives any detailed record, the other Apostles also travelled extensively, preaching and founding churches over wide areas. All who believed were witnesses for Christ, "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8. 4). The practice of founding churches where any, however few, believed, gave permanence to the work, and as each church was taught from the first its direct dependence on the Holy Spirit and responsibility to Christ, it became a centre for propagating the Word of Life. To the newly-founded church of the Thessalonians it was said, "from you sounded out the word of the Lord" (1 Thess. 1. 8). Although each church was independent of any organization or association of churches, yet intimate connection with other churches was maintained, a connection continually refreshed by frequent visits of brethren ministering the Word (Acts 15. 36). The meetings being held in private houses, or in any rooms that could be obtained, or in the open air, no special buildings were required.[1] This drawing of all the members into the service, this mobility and unorganised unity, permitting variety which only emphasised the bond of a common life in Christ and indwelling of the same Holy Spirit, fitted the churches to survive persecution and to carry out their commission of bringing to the whole world the message of salvation.

The first preaching of the Gospel was by Jews and to Jews, and in it frequent use was made of the synagogues. The synagogue system is the simple and effectual means by which the national sense and religious unity of the Jewish people have been preserved throughout the centuries of their dispersion among the nations. The centre of the synagogue is the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and the power of Scripture and synagogue is shown in the fact that the Jewish Diaspora has neither been crushed by the nations nor absorbed into them. The chief objects of the synagogue were the reading of Scripture, the teaching of its precepts, and prayer; and its beginnings go back to ancient times. In the seventy-fourth Psalm is the complaint: "Thine enemies roar in the midst of Thy congregations ...they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land" (Psa. 74. 4, 8). On the return from the captivity it is said that Ezra further organised the synagogues, and the later dispersion of the Jews added to their importance. When

the Temple, the Jewish centre, was destroyed by the Romans, the synagogues, widely distributed as they were, proved to be an indestructible bond, surviving all the persecutions that followed. In the centre of each synagogue is the ark in which the Scriptures are kept, and beside it is the desk from which they are read. An attempt under Barcochebas (A.D. 135), which was one of many efforts made to deliver Judaea from the Roman yoke and seemed for a short time to promise some success, failed as did all others, and only brought terrible retribution on the Jews. But though force failed to free them, the gathering of the people round the Scriptures as their centre preserved them from extinction.

The likeness and connection between the synagogues and the churches is apparent. Jesus made Himself the centre of each of the churches dispersed throughout the world, saying, "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20), and He gave the Scriptures for their unchanging guidance. For this reason it has proved impossible to extinguish the churches; when in one place they have been destroyed they have appeared again in others.

The Jews of the Diaspora[2] developed great zeal in making the true God known among the heathen, and large numbers were converted to God through their testimony. In the third century B.C. the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek was accomplished in the Septuagint Version, and as Greek was, both at that time and long afterwards, the chief medium of intercommunication among the peoples of various languages, an invaluable means was supplied by which the Gentile nations could be made acquainted with the Old Testament Scripture. Equipped with this, the Jews used both synagogue and business opportunities in the good work. James, the Lord's brother, said: "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day" (Acts 15:21). Thither Greeks and others were brought in, burdened with the sins and oppressions of heathendom, confused and unsatisfied by its philosophies, and, listening to the Law and the Prophets, came to know the one true God. Business brought the Jews among all classes of people and they used this diligently to spread the knowledge of God. One Gentile seeker after truth writes that he had decided not to join any one of the leading philosophical systems since through a happy fortune a Jewish linen merchant who came to Rome had, in the simplest way, made known to him the one God.

There was liberty of ministry in the synagogues. Jesus habitually taught in them--"as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16). When Barnabas and Paul, travelling, came to Antioch in Pisidia, they went to the synagogue and sat down. "After the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on" (Acts 13:15).

When Christ the Messiah came, the fulfilment of all Israel's hope and testimony, large numbers of Jews and religious proselytes believed in Him, and the first churches were founded among them; but the rulers of the people, envious of Him who is the promised seed of Abraham, the greatest of David's sons, and jealous of a gathering in and blessing of the Gentiles such as the Gospel proclaimed, rejected their King and Redeemer persecuted His disciples, and went on their way of sorrow without the Saviour who was, to them first, the very expression of the love and saving power of God toward man.

As the Church was first formed in Jewish circles the Jews were its first opponents, but it soon spread into wider surroundings and when Gentiles were converted to Christ it came into conflict with Greek ideas and with Roman power. Over the cross of Christ His accusation was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (John 19:20), and it was in the sphere of the spiritual and political power represented by these languages that the Church was to begin to suffer, and there also to gain her earliest trophies.

Jewish religion affected the Church, not only in the form of physical attack, but also, and more permanently, by bringing Christians under the Law, and we hear Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians crying out against such retrogression: "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2. 16). From the book of the Acts and the Epistle to the Galatians it is seen that the first serious danger that threatened the Christian Church was that of being confined within the limits of a Jewish sect and so losing its power and liberty to bring the knowledge of God's salvation in Christ to the whole world.

Greek philosophy, seeking some theory of God, some explanation of nature and guide to conduct, laid hold of all religions and speculations, whether of Greece or Rome, of Africa or Asia, and one gnosis or "knowledge", one system of philosophy after another arose, and became a subject of ardent discussion. Most of the Gnostic systems borrowed from a variety of sources, combining Pagan and Jewish, and later Christian teachings and practices. They explored the "mysteries" which lay for the initiated behind the outward forms of heathen religions. Frequently they taught the existence of two gods or principles, the one Light, the other Darkness, the one Good, the other Evil. Matter and material things seemed to them to be products of the Power of Darkness and under his control; what was spiritual they attributed to the higher god. These speculations and philosophies formed the basis of many heresies which from the earliest times invaded the Church, and are already combated in the later New Testament writings, especially in those of Paul and John. The means adopted to counter these attacks and to preserve unity of doctrine affected the Church even more than the heresies themselves, for it was largely due to them that the episcopal power and control grew up along with the clerical system which began so soon and so seriously to modify the character of the churches.

The Roman Empire was gradually drawn into an attack on the churches; an attack in which eventually its whole power and resources were put forth to crush and destroy them.

About the year 65 the Apostle Peter was put to death, and, some years later, the Apostle Paul.[3] The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (A.D. 70) emphasised the fact that to the churches no visible head or centre on earth is given. Later, the Apostle John brought the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to their close, a close worthy of all that had gone before, by writing his Gospel, his Epistles, and the Revelation.

There is a noticeable difference between the New Testament and the writings of the same period and later which are not included in the list or canon of the inspired Scriptures. The inferiority of the latter is unmistakable even when the good in them is readily appreciated. While expounding the Scriptures, defending the truth, refuting errors, exhorting the disciples, they also manifest the increasing departure from the divine principles of the New Testament which had already begun in apostolic days and was rapidly accentuated afterwards.

[Clement to the Corinthians]

Written in the lifetime of the Apostle John, the first Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians gives a view of the churches at the close of the Apostolic period.[4] Clement was an elder in the church at Rome. He had seen the Apostles Peter and Paul, to whose martyrdom he refers in this letter. It begins: "The church of God which sojourns at Rome to the church of God sojourning at Corinth". The persecutions they passed through are spoken of with a calm sense of victory: "women ... " he writes, "being persecuted, after they had suffered unspeakable torments finished the course of their faith with steadfastness, and though weak

in body received a noble reward." The tone is one of humility; the writer says: "we write unto you not merely to admonish you of your duty, but also to remind ourselves." Frequent allusions are made to the Old Testament and its typical value and many quotations are given from the New Testament. The hope of the Lord's return is kept before his readers; he reminds them too of the way of salvation, that it is not of wisdom or works of ours, but by faith; adding that justification by faith should never make us slothful in good works. Yet even here the beginning of a distinction between clergy and laity is already evident, drawn from Old Testament ordinances.

In his last words to the elders of the church at Ephesus the Apostle Paul is described as sending for them and addressing them as those whom the Holy Spirit had made overseers (Acts 20). The word "elders" is the same as presbyters and the word "overseers" the same as bishops, and the whole passage shows that the two titles referred to the same men, and that there were several such in the one church.

[Ignatius 35-107]

Ignatius,[5] however, writing some years after Clement, though he also had known several of the Apostles, gives to the bishop a prominence and authority, not only unknown in the New Testament, but also beyond what was claimed by Clement. Commenting on Acts 20,[6] he says that Paul sent from Miletus to Ephesus and called the bishops and presbyters, thus making two titles out of one description, and says that they were from Ephesus and neighbouring cities, thus obscuring the fact that one church, Ephesus, had several overseers or bishops.

[Polycarp 69-156]

One of the last of those who had personally known any of the Apostles was Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who was put to death in that city in the year 156. He had long been instructed by the Apostle John, and had been intimate with others who had seen the Lord. Irenaeus is another link in the chain of personal connection with the times of Christ. He was taught by Polycarp and was made bishop of Lyons in 177.

The practice of baptising believers[7] on their confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as taught and exemplified in the New Testament, was continued in later times. The first clear reference to the baptism of infants is in a writing of Tertullian in 197, in which he condemns the practice beginning to be introduced of baptising the dead and of baptising infants. The way for this change, however, had been prepared by teaching concerning baptism, which was divergent from that in the New Testament; for early in the second century baptismal regeneration was already being taught. This, together with the equally striking change by which the remembrance of the Lord and His death (in the breaking of bread and drinking of wine among His disciples) was changed into an act miraculously performed, it was claimed, by a priest, intensified the growing distinction between clergy and laity. The growth of a clerical system under the domination of the bishops, who in turn were ruled by "Metropolitans" controlling extensive territories, substituted a human organisation and religious forms for the power and working of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Scriptures in the separate churches.

This development was gradual,[8] and many were not carried away by it. At first there was no pretension that one church should control another, though a very small church might ask a larger one to send "chosen men" to help it in matters of importance. Local conferences of overseers were held at times, but until the end of the second century they appear to have been called only when some special occasion made it convenient that those interested should confer together. Tertullian wrote: "It is no part of religion to compel religion, which should be adopted freely, not by force."

[Origen 185-254]

Origen, one of the greatest teachers,[9] as well as one of the most spiritually-minded of the fathers, bore a clear testimony to the spiritual character of the Church. Born (185) in Alexandria, of Christian parents, he was one of those who, in early childhood, experience the workings of the Holy Spirit. His happy relations with his wise and godly father, Leonidas, his first teacher in the Scriptures, were strikingly shown when, on the imprisonment of his father because of the faith, Origen, then seventeen years old, tried to join him in prison, and was only hindered from doing so by a stratagem of his mother, who hid his clothes. He wrote to his father in prison, encouraging him to constancy. When Leonidas was put to death and his property confiscated, the young Origen was left the chief support of his mother and six younger brothers.

His unusual ability as a teacher quickly brought him into prominence, and while he treated himself with extreme severity, he showed such kindness to the persecuted brethren as involved him in their sufferings. He took refuge for a time in Palestine, where his learning and his writings led bishops to listen as scholars to his expositions of the Scripture.

The bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius, indignant that Origen, a layman, should presume to instruct bishops, censured him and recalled him to Alexandria, and though Origen submitted, eventually excommunicated him (231). The peculiar charm of his character and the depth and insight of his teaching devotedly attached to him men who continued his teaching after his death. This took place in 254, as a result of the torture to which he had been subjected five years before in Tyre during the Decian persecution.

Origen saw the Church as consisting of all those who have experienced in their lives the power of the eternal Gospel. These form the true spiritual Church, which does not always coincide with that which is called the Church by men. His eager, speculative mind carried him beyond what most apprehended, so that many hooked upon him as heretical in his teaching, but he distinguished between those things that must be stated clearly and dogmatically and those that must be put forward with caution, for consideration. Of the latter he says: "how things will be, however, is known with certainty to God alone, and to those who are His friends through Christ and the Holy Spirit." His laborious life was devoted to the elucidation of the Scriptures. A great work of his, the Hexapla, made possible a ready comparison of different versions.

[Cyprian 200-258]

Very different from Origen was Cyprian,[10] bishop of Carthage, born about 200. He freely uses the term "the Catholic Church" and sees no salvation outside of it, so that in his time the "Old Catholic Church" was already formed, that is, the Church which, before the time of Constantine, claimed the name "Catholic" and excluded all who did not conform to it. Writing of Novatian and those who sympathised with him in their efforts to bring about greater purity in the churches, Cyprian denounces "the wickedness of an unlawful ordination made in opposition to the Catholic Church"; says that those who approved Novatian could not have communion with that Church because they endeavoured "to cut and tear the one body of the Catholic Church", having committed the impiety of forsaking their Mother, and must return to the Church, seeing that they have acted "contrary to Catholic unity". There are, he said, "tares in the wheat, yet we should not withdraw from the Church, but labour to be wheat in it, vessels of gold or silver in the great house." He commended the reading of his pamphlets as likely to help any in doubt, and referring to Novatian asserts, "He who is not in the Church of Christ is not a Christian ... there is one Church ... and also one episcopate."

As the churches increased, the first zeal flagged and conformity to the world and its ways increased also. This did not progress without protest. As the organisation of the Catholic group of churches developed there were formed within it circles which aimed at reform. Also, some churches separated from it; and others, holding to the original New Testament doctrines and practices in a greater or less degree, gradually found themselves separated from the churches which had largely abandoned them. The fact that the Catholic Church system later became the dominant one puts us in possession of a great body of its literature, while the literature of those who differed from it has been suppressed, and they are chiefly known to us by what may be gleaned from the writings directed against them. It is thus easy to gain the erroneous impression that in the first three centuries there was one united Catholic Church and a variety of comparatively unimportant heretical bodies. On the contrary, however, there were then, as now, a number of divergent lines of testimony each marked by some special characteristic, and different groups of mutually-excluding churches.

The numerous circles that worked for reform in the Catholic churches while remaining in their communion, are often called Montanists. The use of the name of some prominent man to describe an extensive spiritual movement is misleading, and although it must sometimes be accepted for the sake of convenience, it should always be with the reservation that, however important a man may be as a leader and exponent, a spiritual movement affecting multitudes of people is something larger and more significant.

[Montanists]

In view of the increasing worldliness in the Church, and the way in which among the leaders learning was taking the place of spiritual power, many believers were deeply impressed with the desire for a fuller experience of the indwelling and power of the Holy Spirit, and were looking for spiritual revival and return to apostolic teaching and practice. In Phrygia, Montanus^[11] began to teach (156), he and those with him protesting against the prevailing laxity in the relations of the Church to the world. Some among them claimed to have special manifestations of the Spirit, in particular two women, Prisca and Maxmillia.

The persecution ordered by the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (177) quickened the expectation of the Lord's coming and the spiritual aspirations of the believers. The Montanists hoped to raise up congregations that should return to primitive piety, live as those waiting for the Lord's return and, especially, give to the Holy Spirit His rightful place in the Church. Though there were exaggerations among them in the pretensions of some to spiritual revelations, yet they taught and practised needed reform. They accepted in a general way the organisation that had developed in the Catholic churches and tried to remain in their communion; but while the Catholic bishops wished to include in the Church as many adherents as possible, the Montanists constantly pressed for definite evidences of Christianity in the lives of applicants for fellowship.

The Catholic system obliged the bishops to take increasing control of the churches, while the Montanists resisted this, maintaining that the guidance of the churches was the prerogative of the Holy Spirit, and that room should be left for His workings. These differences soon led to the formation of separate churches in the East, but in the West the Montanists long remained as societies within the Catholic churches, and it was only after many years that they were excluded from, or left, them. In Carthage, Perpetua and Felicitas, the touching record of whose martyrdom has preserved their memory, were still, though Montanists, members of the Catholic church at the time of their martyrdom (207), but early in the third century the great leader in the African churches, the eminent writer Tertullian, attaching himself to the Montanists, separated from the Catholic body. He wrote: "where but three are, and they of the laity also,

yet there is a church."

[Marcion]

A very different movement, which spread so widely as seriously to rival the Catholic system, was that of the Marcionites,[12] of which Tertullian, an opponent of it, wrote: "Marcion's heretical tradition has filled the whole world." Born (85) at Sinope on the Black Sea, and brought up among the churches in the Province of Pontus, where the Apostle Peter had laboured (1 Peter 1. 1), and of which Aquila (Acts 18. 2) was a native, Marcion gradually developed his teaching, but it was not until he was nearly sixty years of age that it was published and fully discussed in Rome.

His soul was exercised as he faced the great problems of evil in the world, of the difference between the revelation of God in the Old Testament and that contained in the New, of the opposition of wrath and judgement on the one hand to love and mercy on the other, and of Law to Gospel. Unable to reconcile these divergences on the basis of Scripture as generally understood in the churches, he adopted a form of dualistic theory such as was prevalent at the time.

He asserted that the world was not created by the Highest God, but by a lower being, the god of the Jews, that the Redeemer God is revealed in Christ, who, having no previous connection with the world, yet out of love, and in order to save a world that had failed and to deliver man from his misery, came into the world. He came as a stranger and unknown, and consequently was assailed by the (supposed) creator and ruler of the world as well as by the Jews and all servants of the god of this world.

Marcion taught that the duty of the true Christian was to oppose Judaism and the usual form of Christianity, which he considered as only an offshoot of Judaism. He was not in agreement with the Gnostic sects for he did not preach salvation through the "mysteries", or attainment of knowledge, but through faith in Christ, and he aimed at first at the reformation of the Christian churches, though later they and his followers excluded each other.

As his views could not be maintained from Scripture, Marcion became a Bible critic of the most drastic kind. He applied his theory to the Scriptures and rejected all in them that was in manifest opposition to it, retaining only what seemed to him to support it, and interpreting that in accordance with his own views rather than with the general tenor of Scripture, even adding to it where that appeared to him desirable.

Thus, although he had formerly accepted, he later rejected the whole of the Old Testament, as being a revelation of the god of the Jews and not of the Highest and Redeemer-God, as prophesying of a Jewish Messiah and not of Christ. He thought the disciples mistook Christ for the Jewish Messiah. Holding that the true Gospel had been revealed to Paul only, he refused also the New Testament, with the exception of certain of Paul's Epistles and the Gospel of Luke, which latter, however, he freely edited to get rid of what ran contrary to his theory. He taught that the remainder of the New Testament was the work of Judaizers bent on destroying the true Gospel and that they also had interpolated, for the same purpose, the passages to which he objected in the books which he received. To this abridged New Testament Marcion added his own book, "Antitheses", which took the place of the Book of the Acts.

He was an enthusiast for his Gospel, which he declared was a wonder above all wonders; a rapture, power and astonishment such as nothing that could be said or thought could equal. When his doctrines were pronounced heretical he began to form separate churches, which rapidly spread. Baptism and the Lord's Supper were practised, there was a greater simplicity of worship than in the Catholic churches, and

the development of clericalism and worldliness was checked. In accordance with their view of the material world they were severely ascetic, forbade marriage and only baptised those who took a vow of chastity. They considered the body of Jesus to have been not material, but a phantom, yet capable of feeling, as our bodies are.

Any error may be founded on parts of Scripture; the truth alone is based on the whole. Marcion's errors were the inevitable result of his accepting only what pleased him and rejecting the rest.

Departure from the original pattern given in the New Testament for the churches met very early with strenuous resistance, leading in some cases to the formation within the decadent churches of circles which kept themselves free from the evil and hoped to be a means of restoration to the whole. Some of them were cast out and met as separate congregations. Some, finding conformity to the prevailing conditions impossible, left and formed fresh companies. These would often reinforce those others which, from the beginning, had maintained primitive practice. There is frequent reference in later centuries to those churches that had adhered to Apostolic doctrine, and which claimed unbroken succession of testimony from the time of the Apostles. They often received, both before and after the time of Constantine, the name of Cathars, or Puritans, though it does not appear that they took this name themselves.

[Novatian--Third Century]

The name Novatians was also given to them, though Novatian was not their founder, but one who, in his day, was a leader among them. On the question which so much agitated the churches during times of persecution, as to whether or not persons should be received who had "lapsed", that is, had offered to idols since their baptism, Novatian took the stricter view. A martyred bishop in Rome named Fabian, who in his lifetime had ordained Novatian, was followed by one Cornelius, who was willing to receive the lapsed. A minority, objecting to this, chose Novatian as bishop and he accepted their choice, but he and his friends were excommunicated (251) by a synod at Rome. Novatian himself was martyred later, but his sympathisers, whether called Cathars, Novatians, or by other names, continued to spread widely. They ceased to recognise the Catholic churches or to acknowledge any value in their ordinances.

The Donatists^[13] in North Africa were influenced by the teaching of Novatian. They separated from the Catholic Church on points of discipline, laying stress on the character of those who administered the sacraments, while Catholics considered the sacraments themselves as more important. In their earlier years the Donatists, who were given this name after two leading men among them, both of the name of Donatus, were distinguished from the Catholics generally by their superior character and conduct. In parts of North Africa they became the most numerous of the different branches of the Church.

[Mani--c. 216--?]

While Christian churches were developing in various forms there was also a new Gnostic religion, Manichaeism which arose and spread widely and became a formidable opponent of Christianity. Its founder, Mani, was born in Babylonia (c. 216). His dualistic system drew from Persian, Christian, and Buddhist sources, and he announced his call to be the continuer and completer of the work begun and carried on by Noah, Abraham, Zoroaster, Buddha and Jesus. He travelled and taught extensively, reaching even to China and India, and exercised a great influence on some of the Persian rulers, but at last was crucified. His writings continued to be revered and his followers numerous in Babylon and in Samarcand, spread in the West also, and that in spite of violent persecution.

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