

"THE TRAIL OF BLOOD"

or

Following the Christians Down Through the Centuries From The Days of Christ to the Present Time

Or to express it differently, but still expressively--"A history of the Doctrines as taught by Christ, and His Apostles and those who have been loyal to them."

FIRST LECTURE

"Remember the days of old. Consider the years of many generations; Ask thy father and he will show thee. Thy elders and they will tell thee." (Deut. 32:7)

1. What we know today as "Christianity" or the Christian Religion, began with Christ, A.D. 25-30 in the days and within the bounds of the Roman Empire. One of the greatest empires the world has ever known in all its history.
2. This Empire at that period embraced nearly all of the then known inhabited world. Tiberius Caesar was its Emperor.
3. In its religion, the Roman Empire, at that time, was pagan. A religion of many gods. Some material and some imaginary. There were many devout believers and worshipers. It was a religion not simply of the people, but of the empire. It was an **established** religion. Established by law and supported by the government. (Mosheim, Vol. 1, Chap. 1.)
4. The Jewish people, at that period, no longer a separate nation, were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. They yet had their temple in Jerusalem, and the Jews yet went there to worship, and they were yet jealous of their religion. But it, like the pagan, had long since drifted into formalism and had lost its power. (Mosheim, Vol. 1, Chap. 2.)
5. The religion of Christ being a religion not of this world, its founder gave it no earthly head and no temporal power. It sought no establishment, no state or governmental support. It sought no dethronement of Caesar. Said its author, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." (Matt, 22:19-22; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:20). Being a spiritual religion it was a rival of no earthly government. Its adherents, however, were taught to respect all civil law and government. (Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-16)

6. I want now to call your attention to some of the landmarks, or ear-marks of this religion--the Christian Religion. If you and I are to trace it down through 20 long centuries, and especially down through 1,200 years of midnight darkness, darkened by rivers and seas of martyr blood, then we will need to know well these marks. They will be many times terribly disfigured. But there will always be some indelible mark. But let us carefully and prayerfully beware. We will encounter many shams and make-believes. If possible, the very elect will be betrayed and deceived. We want, if possible, to trace it down through credible history, but more especially through the unerring, infallible, words and marks of Divine truth.

Some Unerring, Infallible Marks

If in going down through the centuries we run upon a group or groups of people bearing not these distinguishing marks and teaching other things for fundamental doctrines, let us beware.

1. Christ, the author of this religion, organized His followers or disciples into a **Church**. And the disciples were to organize other churches as this religion spread and other disciples were "made." (Ray, *Bapt, Succession*, Revised Edition, 1st Chap.)
2. This organization or church, according to the Scriptures and according to the practice of the Apostles and early churches, was given two kinds of officers and only two--pastors and deacons. The pastor was called "Bishop." Both pastor and deacons to be selected by the church and to be servants of the church.
3. The churches in their government and discipline to be entirely separate and independent of each other, Jerusalem to have no authority over Antioch--nor Antioch over Ephesus; nor Ephesus over Corinth, and so forth. And their government to be congregational, democratic. A government of the people, by the people, and for the people.
4. To the church were given two ordinances and only two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These to be perpetual and memorial.
5. Only the "**saved**" were to be received as members of the church (Acts 2:47). These saved ones to be saved by grace alone without any works of the law (Eph, 2:5, 8, 9). These saved ones and they only, to be immersed in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). And only those thus received and baptized, to partake of the Lord's Supper, and the supper to be celebrated only by the church, in church capacity.

6. The inspired scriptures, and they only, in fact, the New Testament and that only, to be the rule and guide of faith and life, not only for the church as an organization, but for each individual member of that organization.

7. **Christ Jesus**, the founder of this organization and the savior of its members, to be their only priest and king, their only Lord and Lawgiver, and the only head of the churches. The churches to be executive only in carrying out their Lord's will and completed laws, never legislative, to amend or abrogate old laws or to make new ones.

8. This religion of Christ to be individual, personal, and purely voluntary or through persuasion. No physical or governmental compulsion. A matter of distinct individual and personal choice. "Choose you" is the scriptural injunction. It could be neither accepted nor rejected nor lived by proxy nor under compulsion.

9. Mark well! That neither Christ nor His apostles, ever gave to His followers, what is know today as a denominational name, such as "Catholic," "Lutheran," "Presbyterian," "Episcopal," and so forth--unless the name given by Christ to John was intended for such, "The Baptist," "John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11 and 10 or 12 other times.) Christ called the individual follower "disciple." Two or more were called "disciples." The organization of disciples, whether at Jerusalem or Antioch or elsewhere, was called Church. If more than one of these separate organizations were referred to, they were called Churches. The word church in the singular was never used when referring to more than one of these organizations. Nor even when referring to them all.

10. I venture to give one more distinguishing mark. We will call it--Complete separation of Church and State. No combination, no mixture of this spiritual religion with a temporal power. "Religious Liberty," for everybody.

And now, before proceeding with the history itself, let me call your attention to--

THE CHART

I believe, if you will study carefully this chart, you will better understand the history, and it will greatly aid your memory in retaining what you hear and see.

Remember this chart is supposed to cover a period of two thousand years of religious history.

Notice at both top and bottom of the chart some figures, the same figures at both top and bottom - 100, 200, 300, and so on to 2,000.

They represent the twenty centuries of time--the vertical lines separating the different centuries.

Now notice on the chart, near the bottom; other straight lines, this line running left to right, the long way of the chart.

The lines are about the same distance apart as the vertical lines. But you can't see them all the way. They are covered by a very dark spot, representing in history what is known as the "dark ages." It will be explained later. Between the two lowest lines are the names of countries . . . Italy, Wales, England, Spain, France, and so forth, ending with America. These are names of countries in which much history is made during the period covered by the names themselves. Of course not all the history, some history is made in some of the countries in every period. But some special history is made in these special countries, at these special periods.

Now notice again, near the bottom of the chart, other lines a little higher. They, too, covered in part by the "dark ages," they also are full of names, but not names of countries. They are all "nick-names." Names given to those people by their enemies. "Christians"--that is the first: "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" (Acts 11:26). This occurred about A.D. 43. Either the pagans or Jews gave them that name in derision. All the other names in that column were given in the same manner--Montanists, Novationists, Donatists, Paulicians, Albigenses, Waldenses, etc., and Ana-Baptists. All of these will again and again be referred to as the lectures progress.

But look again at the chart. See the red circles. They are scattered nearly all over the chart. They represent churches. Single individual churches in Asia, in Africa, in Europe, in mountains and valleys, and so forth. Their being blood red indicates martyr blood. Christ their founder died on the Cross. All the Apostles save two, John and Judas, suffered martyr deaths. Judas betrayed his Lord and died in a suicide. The Apostle John, according to history, was boiled in a great cauldron of oil.

You will note some circles that are solidly black. They represent churches also. But erring churches. Churches that had gone wrong in life or doctrine. There were numbers of these even before the death of Peter, Paul and John.

Having now about concluded with a general introduction and some very necessary and even vital preliminaries, I come to the regular history--

FIRST PERIOD A.D. 30-500

1. Under the strange but wonderful impulse and leadership of John the Baptist, the eloquent man from the wilderness, and under the loving touch and miracle-working power of the Christ Himself, and the marvelous preaching of the 12 Apostles and their immediate successors, the Christian religion spread mightily during the first 500-year period. However, it left a terribly bloody trail behind it. Judaism and Paganism bitterly contested every forward movement. John the Baptist was the first of the great leaders to give up his life. His head was taken off. Soon after him went the Savior Himself, the founder of this Christian religion. He died on the Cross, the cruel death of the Cross.

2. Following their Savior in rapid succession fell many other martyred heroes: Stephen was stoned, Matthew was slain in Ethiopia, Mark dragged through the streets until dead, Luke hanged, Peter and Simeon were crucified, Andrew tied to a cross, James beheaded, Philip crucified and stoned, Bartholomew flayed alive, Thomas pierced with lances, James, the less, thrown from the temple and beaten to death, Jude shot to death with arrows, Matthias stoned to death and Paul beheaded.

3. More than one hundred years had gone by before all this had happened. This hard persecution by Judaism and Paganism continued for two more centuries. And yet mightily spread the Christian religion. It went into all the Roman Empire, Europe, Asia, Africa, England, Wales, and about everywhere else, where there was any civilization. The churches greatly multiplied and the disciples increased continuously. But some of the churches continued to go into error.

4. The first of these changes from New Testament teachings embraced both policy and doctrine. In the first two centuries the individual churches rapidly multiplied and some of the earlier ones, such as Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, etc., grew to be very large; Jerusalem, for instance, had many thousand members (Acts 2:41; 4:4, 5:14), possibly 25,000 or even 50,000 or more. A close student of the book of Acts and Epistles will see that Paul had a mighty task even in his day in keeping some of the churches straight. See Peter's and Paul's prophecies concerning the future (II Pet. 2:12; Acts 20:29-31. See also Rev., second and third chapters).

These great churches necessarily had many preachers or elders (Acts 20:17). Some of the bishops or pastors began to assume authority not given them in the New Testament. They began to claim authority over other and smaller churches. They, with their many elders, began to lord it over God's heritage (III John 9). Here was the beginning of an error which has grown and multiplied into many other seriously hurtful errors. Here was the beginning of different orders in the ministry running up finally to what is practiced now by others as well as Catholics. Here began what resulted in an entire change from the original democratic policy and government of the early churches. This irregularity began in a small way, even before the close of the second century. This was possibly the first serious departure from the New Testament church order.

5. Another vital change which seems from history to have had its beginning before the close of the second century was on the great doctrine of **Salvation** itself. The Jews as well as the Pagans, had for many generations, been trained to lay great stress on **Ceremonials**. They had come to look upon types as anti-types, shadows as real substances, and ceremonials as real saving agencies. How easy to come thus to look upon baptism. They reasoned thus: The Bible has much to say concerning baptism. Much stress is laid upon the ordinance and one's duty concerning it. Surely it must have something to do with one's salvation. So that it was in this period that the idea of "**Baptismal Regeneration**" began to get a fixed hold in some of the churches. (Shackelford, page 57; Camp p. 47; Benedict, p. 286; Mosheim, vol. 1, p. 134; Christian, p. 28.)

6. The next serious error to begin creeping in, and which seems from some historians (not all) to have begun in this same century and which may be said to have been an inevitable consequence of the "baptismal regeneration" idea, was a change in the **subjects of baptism**. Since baptism has been declared to be an agency or means to salvation by some erring churches, then the sooner baptism takes place the better. Hence arose "infant baptism." Prior to this "believers" and "believers" only, were regarded as proper subjects for baptism. "Sprinkling" and "pouring" are not now referred to. These came in much later. For several centuries, infants, like others, were **immersed**. The Greek Catholics (a very large branch of the Catholic church) up to this day, have never changed the original form of baptism. They practice infant baptism but have never done otherwise than immerse the children. (Note--Some of the church historians put the beginning of infant baptism within this century, but I shall quote a short paragraph from Robinson's *Ecclesiastical Researches*.)

"During the first three centuries, congregations all over the East subsisted in separate independent bodies, unsupported by government and consequently without any secular power over one another. All this time they were baptized churches, and though all the fathers of the first four ages, down to Jerome (A.D. 370), were of Greece, Syria and Africa, and though they give great numbers of histories of the baptism of adults, yet there is not one of the baptism of a child till the year 370." (*Compendium of Baptist History*, Shackelford, p. 43; Vedder, p. 50; Christian, p. 31; Orchard, p. 50, etc.)

7. Let it be remembered that changes like these here mentioned were not made in a day, nor even within a year. They came about slowly and never within all the churches. Some of the churches vigorously repudiated them. So much so that in A.D. 251, the loyal churches declared non-fellowship for those churches which accepted and practiced these errors. And thus came about the first real official separation among the churches.

8. Thus it will be noted that during the first three centuries three important and vital changes from the teachings of Christ and His Apostles had their beginnings. And one significant event took place, Note this summary and recapitulation:

(1) The change from the New Testament idea of bishop and church government. This change grew rapidly, more pronounced, and complete and hurtful.

(2) The change from the New Testament teachings as to Regeneration to "baptismal regeneration."

(3) The change from "believers' baptism" to "infant baptism." (This last, however, did not become general nor even very frequent for more than another century.)

9. "Baptismal regeneration" and "infant baptism." These two errors have, according to the testimony of well-established history, caused the shedding of more Christian blood, as the centuries have gone by, than all other errors combined, or than possibly have all wars, not connected with persecution, if you will leave out the recent "World War." Over 50,000,000 Christians died martyr deaths, mainly because of their rejection of these two errors during the period of the "dark ages" alone--about twelve or thirteen centuries.

10. Three significant facts, for a large majority of the many churches, are clearly shown by history during these first three centuries.

- (1) The separateness and independence of the Churches.
- (2) The subordinate character of bishops or pastors.
- (3) The baptism of believers only.

I quote now from Mosheim--the greatest of all Lutheran church historians. Vol., 1, pages 71 and 72: "But whoever supposes that the bishops of this golden age of the church correspond with the bishops of the following centuries must blend and confound characters that are very different, for in this century and the next, a bishop had charge of a single church, which might ordinarily be contained in a private house; nor was he its Lord, but was in reality its **minister** or servant. . . All the churches in those primitive times were independent bodies, or none of them subject to the jurisdiction of any other. For though the churches which were founded by the Apostles themselves frequently had the honor shown them to be consulted in doubtful cases, yet they had no judicial authority, no control, no power of giving laws. On the contrary, it is as clear as the noonday that all Christian churches had **equal rights**, and were in all respects on a footing of equality."

11. Up to this period, notwithstanding much and serious persecutions, Christianity has had a marvelous growth. It has covered and even gone beyond the great Roman Empire. Almost, if not all the inhabited world has heard the gospel. And, according to some of the church historians, many of the original churches organized by the Apostles are yet intact, and yet loyal to Apostolic teachings. However, as already shown, a number of very marked and hurtful errors have crept in and gotten a permanent hold among many of the churches. Some have become **very** irregular.

12. Persecutions have become increasingly bitter. Near the beginning of the fourth century comes possibly the first definite government edict of persecution. The wonderful growth of Christianity has alarmed the pagan leaders of the Roman Empire. Hence Galerius, the emperor, sent out a direct edict of more savage persecution. This occurred Feb. 24, 303 A.D. Up to this time Paganism seems to have persecuted without any definite laws to that effect.

13. But this edict failed so utterly in its purpose of stopping the growth of Christianity, that this same emperor, Galerius, just eight years thereafter (A.D. 311) passed another edict recalling the first and actually granting **toleration**--permission to live the religion of Jesus Christ. This was probably its first favorable law.

14. By the beginning of the year A.D. 313, Christianity has won a mighty victory over paganism. A new emperor has come to the throne of the Roman Empire. He evidently recognized something of the mysterious power of this religion that continued to grow in spite of persecution. History says that this new emperor who was none other than **Constantine** had a wonderful realistic vision. He saw in the skies a fiery red cross and on that cross written in fiery letters these words--"By this thou shalt conquer." He interpreted it to mean that he should become a Christian. And that by giving up paganism and that by attaching the spiritual power of the Christian religion onto the temporal power of the Roman Empire the world could be easily conquered. Thus the Christian religion would in fact become a whole world religion, and the Roman Empire a whole world empire.

15. So under the leadership of Emperor Constantine there comes a truce, a courtship and a proposal of marriage. The Roman Empire through its emperor seeks a marriage with Christianity. Give us your spiritual power and we will give you of our temporal power.

16. To effectually bring about and consummate this unholy union, a council was called. In A. D. 313, a call was made for a coming together of the Christian churches or their representatives . Many but not all came. The alliance was consummated. **A Hierarchy** was formed. In the organization of the **Hierarchy**, Christ was dethroned as head of the **churches** and Emperor Constantine enthroned (only temporarily, however) as head of the **church**.

17. The Hierarchy was the **definite beginning** of a **development** which finally resulted into what is now known as the Catholic, or "universal" church. It might be said that its **indefinite beginnings** were near the close of the second and beginning of the third century, when the new ideas concerning bishops and preacher-church government began to take shape.

18. Let it be definitely remembered that when Constantine made his call for the council, there were very many of the Christians (Baptists) and of the churches, which declined to respond. They wanted no marriage with the state, and no centralized religious government, and no higher ecclesiastical government of any kind, than the individual church. **These Christians (Baptists) nor the churches ever at that time or later, entered the hierarchy of the Catholic denomination.**

19. When this hierarchy was created, Constantine, who was made its head, was not himself at that time a Christian. He had agreed to become one. But as the erring or irregular churches which had gone with him into this organization had

come to adopt the error of Baptismal regeneration, a serious question arose in the mind of Constantine, "**If I am saved from my sins by baptism, what is to become of my sins which I may commit after I am baptized?**" He raised a question which has puzzled the world in all succeeding generations. Can baptism wash away yet uncommitted sins? Or, are the sins committed **prior to baptism** washed away by one method (that is, baptism), and the sins committed **subsequent to baptism** washed away by another method?

20. Not being able to settle satisfactorily the many questions thus arising, Constantine finally decided to unite with the Christians, but to postpone his baptism until just preceding his death, so that all his sins might thus be washed away at one time. This course he followed, and hence was not baptized until just preceding his death.

21. Constantine's action in repudiating for the whole Roman Empire, the pagan religion, and accepting Christianity incurred the hot displeasures of the Roman Senate. They repudiated, or, at least opposed his course. And their opposition finally resulted in the removal of the seat of empire from Rome to Byzantium, an old city rebuilt and then renamed Constantinople for Constantine. As a result there came to be two capital cities of the Roman Empire--Rome and Constantinople. The two rival cities several centuries later became the ruling centers of the divided Catholic church--Roman and Greek.

22. Up to the organization of the Hierarchy and the uniting of church and state, all the persecution of Christianity has been done either by Judaism or Paganism. Now comes a serious change. Christians (in name) begin to persecute Christians. Constantine, desiring to have all Christians join with him in his new idea of a state religion, and many conscientiously opposing this serious departure from New Testament teachings, he begins using the power of government to compel. Thus begin the days and years and even centuries of a hard and bitter persecution against all those Christians who were loyal to the original Christ and Apostolic teachings.

23 Remember that we are now noting the events occurring between the years A.D. 300 and 500. The Hierarchy organized under the leadership of Constantine, rapidly developed into what is now known as the Catholic church. This newly developing church joined to a temporal government, no longer simply an **executive** to carry out the completed laws of the New Testament, began to be **legislative**, amending or annulling old laws or enacting new ones utterly unknown to the New Testament.

24. One of the first of its legislative enactments, and one of the most subversive in its results, was the **establishing by law of "infant baptism."** By this new law, "Infant Baptism" becomes compulsory. This was done A.D. 416. Infants had been infrequently baptized for probably a century preceding this. Insofar as this newly enacted law became effective, two vital New Testament laws were abrogated-- "Believers Baptism" and "Voluntary personal obedience in Baptism."

25. As an inevitable consequence of this new doctrine and law, these erring churches were soon filled with unconverted members. In fact, it was not very many years until probably a majority of the membership was composed of unconverted material. So the great spiritual affairs of God's great spiritual kingdom were in the hands of an unregenerate temporal power. What may now be expected?

26. Loyal Christians and churches, of course, rejected this new law. "Believers baptism," of course, "New Testament baptism," was the only law for them. They not only refused to baptize their own children, but believing in the baptism of believers only, they refused to accept the baptizing done by and within the churches of this unscriptural organization. If any of the members from the churches of this new organization attempted to join any of the churches which had refused to join in with the new organization, a Christian experience and a rebaptism was demanded.

27. The course followed by the loyal churches soon, of course, incurred the hot displeasure of the state religionists, many, if not most of whom, were not genuine Christians. The name "Christian," however, was from now on denied those loyal churches who refused to accept these new errors. They were robbed of that, and called by many other names, sometimes by one and sometimes by another, "Montanist," "Tertullianists," "Novationists," "Paterines," etc., and some at least because of their practice of rebaptizing those who were baptized in infancy, were referred to as "Ana-Baptists."

28. A.D. 426, just ten years after the legal establishment of infant baptism, the awful period known as the "Dark Ages" had its beginning. What a period! How awfully black and bloody! From now on for more than a decade of centuries, the trail of loyal Christianity is largely washed away in its own blood. Note on the chart some of the many different names borne by the persecuted. Sometimes these names are given because of some specially heroic leader and sometimes from other causes, and frequently names for the same people vary in different countries and even in different centuries.

29. It was early in the period of the "dark ages" when real Popery had its definite beginnings. This was by Leo II, A.D. 440 to 461. This, however, was not the first time the title was ever used. This title, similar to the Catholic church itself, was largely a development. The name appears, as first applied to the Bishop of Rome 296-304. It was formally adopted by Siricius, Bishop of Rome 384-398. Then officially adopted by Leo II, 440-461. Then claimed to be universal, 707. Then some centuries later declared by Gregory VII to be the exclusive right of the papacy.

30. Now to sum up the most significant events of this first five-century period:

- (1) The gradual change from a democracy to a preacher-church government.
- (2) The change from salvation by grace to Baptismal Salvation.
- (3) The change from "believers' baptism" to "infant baptism."
- (4) The Hierarchy organized. Marriage of church and state.
- (5) Seat of empire changed to Constantinople.
- (6) Infant baptism established by law and made compulsory.
- (7) Christians begin to persecute Christians.
- (8) The "Dark Ages" begin 426.
- (9) The sword and torch rather than the gospel become the power of God (?) unto salvation.
- (10) All semblance of "Religious liberty" dies and is buried and remains buried for many centuries.
- (11) Loyal New Testament churches, by whatever name called, are hunted and hounded to the utmost limit of the new Catholic temporal power. Remnants scattered over the world are finding uncertain hiding places in forests and mountains, valleys, dens and caves of the earth.