

THE PAPAL DOMINION IS NOT CHRISTIANITY

Tract One

A series of Tracts presenting a Protestant view of Church history, tracing the roots of the true Church from New Testament times right up to the present day. Showing how the apostasy developed in the Papal Dominion, and then looking at what has happened in the last two hundred years WITHIN evangelicalism in North America. Men who still claim to be Protestant Evangelicals now want to combine with the Papal Dominion to form the ecumenical-read-Catholic-church, with the pope of Rome as the Universal Primate of this religious conglomerate. We will see, as history unfolds that in the last two hundred years non-catholics have sought to assist, and many are still working to assist in what Edward Elliott regarded as the theological suicide of Protestantism, in his battle with the Tractarians in England, in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

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INTRODUCTION

The word PROTESTANT was first used at the Diet of Spires. There were at least four important Diets convened at Spires. It was at the second Diet of Spires in 1529, that the term PROTESTANT was first used. Luther called his preachers, the EVANGELICI VIRI-EVANGELICAL MEN-his gospel preachers. So the EVANGELICALS, AS THEY WERE CALLED, PROTESTED AT THE Second Diet of Spires, because the Roman Catholic leaders were trying to curtail and revoke some of the concessions granted to the Lutherans at the first Diet of Spires. The word PROTEST here, did not then have the negative connotation it now has, that of being against some law or principle. Protest then meant a setting forth a strong AFFIRMATION in defense of a position. Those who sought to AFFIRM once again the concessions already gained at the first Diet were called PROTESTANTS. These men sought to keep the gains they had already won, such as the right to preach God's holy Word, the right to do nothing against their conscience, or to do anything against the salvation of souls, nor to do anything against the last decree of Spires. They simply wanted to keep the gains they had already won from Roman Catholicism, at the first Diet of Spires. They emerged from this second Diet of Spires, as Evangelical Protestants.

The significance of this breakthrough was that those who dissented from, and separated from, the Papal Dominion, had made the first step toward the liberty to preach the gospel. Others, down

through church history had dissented from, and separated from the Papal Dominion, but they were put down, imprisoned, and massacred. So that the gains they made only lasted a short time. They were not able to continue as free gospel preachers.

The second Diet of Spires was the first step to religious liberty, and the right to preach the gospel and form churches based on the Bible and not on the papacy. Ever since, the Papal Dominion has sought to recover the dictatorship it once had.

On top of that, many leaders within Evangelical Protestantism in recent years, have been working to help the Papal Dominion recover from the glorious Protestant Reformation. We call this effort the SUICIDE of Non-Catholicism. In the period AD 400 to AD 1300, true Christianity existed OUTSIDE the Papal Dominion. Yet many church historians allude to the popes of Rome, and the church they governed, as the Christian Church, and the overall system of Roman Catholicism as Christianity.

I was taught by professors, who all claimed to be Bible-believers, in the various academic institutions I attended. Yet, what I was taught in church history classes, by certain professors, I repudiated. In some cases, I repudiated it quickly; in other cases it took half a life time before I questioned what I had been taught. I saw that what I was taught concerning the Christian Church and Christianity, was questionable at best; and simply wrong at worst.

I do not blame those who taught me what they did, for the simple reason, they taught me what they had been taught. Unless a person does some serious research, he, many times, simply perpetuates the errors he himself has been taught, by men who think they are teaching the truth.

In this series of Tracts I am giving, a brief overview of church history, with particular emphasis upon the last 200 years. I believe a concerted effort has been made in the past 200 years to undo the truths of the Protestant Reformation, not just on the part of the Jesuits, and other Roman Catholic scholars; but on the part of those WITHIN the confines of Protestantism itself.

We have great difficulty in putting ourselves back into the position of the first Protestants, because religious liberty was then unknown. The Papacy still ruled most of Europe with an iron fist. So to get some measure of freedom to preach the gospel was a great triumph at that time.

We have even greater difficulty in putting ourselves back into the times before the Protestant Reformation got off the ground. For back then it was even more difficult to DISSENT from the Papal System. So various Protestant writers have looked at those early Dissenters as the first PROTESTANTS of church history, even though that term had not come into vogue in those early times.

I majored in history at Asbury University. I also took courses in church history at Trinity College, and in seminary, and in graduate school. I was taught the history of the popes of Rome from the earliest times of church history up until the time of the Reformation. All this history of the papacy was called "Christianity." • Whereas I now call it the history of the papacy: not the history of Christianity. I will allude to this distinction from time to time in this series of Tracts. For it is a distinction that is lost upon millions of church goers today in North America. It was lost on me too for about half of my lifetime.

If one looks at the TITLES of church history books he will see what I mean: *History of the Christian Church*, C. H. Dryer; *Story of the Christian Church*, J. L. Hurlburt; *Christianity through the*

Centuries, E. E. Cairns; *Short History of the Christian Church*, John Moncrief; *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, K. S. Latourette; *A History of the Christian Church*, P. Schaff, etc.

I cannot remember one professor that I sat under, presenting the history of the Tractarians. Yet, I believe, the Tractarians set in motion the theological suicide of evangelical Protestantism. They certainly set in motion the modern ecumenical movement, although not one professor I sat under, ever mentioned that truth.

Few thinking people will deny that great changes occurred WITHIN the once-Protestant denominations, across the board, in Europe and North America throughout the twentieth-century. So that the very term Protestant is all but gone, and the term non-catholic is now used to describe the part of "Christendom" that has not yet joined Roman Catholicism.

We will look at the history of Protestantism throughout the centuries before the Reformation, concentrating, as we said, upon the last 200 years of church history. In this Tract we will give an overview of the first 400 years of church history with the emphasis upon those who dissented from the Papal System.

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THE PAPAL DOMINION IS NOT CHRISTIANITY

I have heard many sermons on prophecy in my lifetime. In fact, I just heard a few more in the past few days, as of this writing. In all that time, I have only heard ONE sermon on church history. This sermon that dealt with quite a bit of church history, was preached by a man who had an earned doctorate, a man who had taught in a Christian college, and then later in a theological seminary, and had been pastor of several churches. He was a good speaker, and I believe a man of God, who had a good grasp of true theology, and also a heart for missions. In fact, he was involved in missionary activities, as well as all his other work. What he had to say, I would say, was what I had been taught in my church history classes. That is, although he said many good things, he apparently regarded much of the history of the Papal Dominion as the history of the Christian church, and of Christianity. This is exactly what I had been taught, too.

In other words, I have heard only ONE sermon that dealt with history, while I have heard many on prophecy. History is not considered important; prophecy is. Yet history affects prophecy profoundly. And we will prove that in subsequent Tracts. Even more importantly prophecy becomes history. Much of what was prophecy to Daniel the prophet; is history to us. Historical events affect prophecy.

The sermons in the book of Acts are laden with historical references and historical events. The preachers of the early church, in the book of Acts, did not shun history. Why has the modern church almost completely ignored history? And wherever a solitary effort is made, even there history is skewed, and influenced by Papal Historians.

I am sure that other men grasp truths more quickly than I do. For it took me years to come to see that much of what I had been taught in church history from the earliest times was greatly influenced by Papal Historians. What I now call the Papal Church, or the Papal Dominion, (as the Papal Church expanded its power and geographical area), was called the Christian church, or Christianity, by the church historians I read, and by the men who taught me. For example, Philip Schaff calls his mammoth work of eight large tomes, *The History of the Christian Church*. Volume III is called *Nicene and Post Nicene Christianity*. Volume IV is called *Mediaeval Christianity*.

To understand the Protestant Dissenters from the Papal Dominion, we must understand not only the rise of the papacy, but the claims of the papacy, and the evil men who occupied the papal chair for centuries. What these evil men came to rule over, WAS NOT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, nor was it in any way, CHRISTIANITY. But I was NEVER taught such a truth in my life time, in any of the academic institutions I attended.

Church historians write away about "Christianity" while dealing with the various popes of Rome. And indeed, write about "Arian" Christianity when dealing with some countries. This means that men who denied that Christ is God, about as elemental a truth that one can contemplate when thinking about Christianity, are all called Christians and what they taught and helped to spread is called "Christianity." It is this constant drumbeat, that drives such errors into the minds of those reading, and being taught, such antichristian drivel.

In this brief tract, we will look at what has been written about the early period of the papacy and how the papacy kept trying to expand its power during the first four hundred years of church history. Interspersed with the rise of the papacy, we will examine briefly some of the Dissenters from the Papal Dominion, who give some evidence of being much more biblically oriented than those they separated from, who persecuted them.

THE EARLY CLAIMS OF THE PAPACY

In spite of what many Roman Catholic scholars have written, in spite of what many non-catholic scholars have written, the early days of the "church" after the book of Acts, are shrouded in obscurity, as far as the city of Rome is concerned. In fact, most of what is written about those early days is mainly legendary. However, since Roman Catholic scholars believe and teach that Peter was the first pope, and that from him, in an unbroken chain, all subsequent popes have followed in apostolic succession, it is VERY important to them that such myths are established as truly historical and factual. Their whole religious system depends upon such claims.

When one reads the most up-to-date statements about the papacy in this present day, the claim that the first pope was Peter, and the claim that the present pope follows in unbroken apostolic succession from Peter is sounded forth again and again. When pope Francis was being installed recently, it was repeated quite often that he was the successor of St. Peter. The pope is also referred to as "the supreme pontiff of the Universal Church", and the "Bishop of Rome".

The entire edifice of the papacy rests upon the frail supposition that the present pope is the true successor of St. Peter, and St. Peter was the first pope of Rome. The researches done by Roman Catholic scholars, to prove that Peter was in Rome and was the first pope of Rome, are endless. Protestant scholars have also done researches on these subjects. It is obvious that the outcome is much more important to Roman Catholics than to Protestants, for the whole Papal Dominion rests upon Peter being the first pope.

There are four basic problems connected to Peter and the papacy in Rome:

1. To document the long term presence of Peter in Rome is impossible.
2. To substantiate that there was a bishop of Rome in Peter's lifetime is also impossible.
3. To show that the alleged office of Bishop, was filled by other bishops who succeeded Peter in that office, is also impossible.
4. The position of Antioch and other cities at that time precluded the prominence of Rome at such an early date.

1. There is no contemporary evidence that Peter was ever in Rome, much less that he was there for 25 years. Such evidence is drawn from writers more than two hundred years after the fact. For years Protestant scholars denied that Peter was ever in Rome. However, as Protestantism weakened, more and more concessions were made to the Roman Catholic position. However, as far as historical documentation is concerned, the statements of Jerome and Eusebius, respecting a twenty-five years' episcopate of Peter in Rome, are made more than two centuries after the fact.

These statements come after hundreds of years have passed, and at the time the Bishop of Rome was working hard, to increase his jurisdiction over the "church." • Roman Catholics tend to take these statements at face value, Historically Protestants did not.

2. The second problem is even more difficult to overcome: namely, that there was such a position as bishop of Rome in the first century of the church. According to many scholars, the origin of the episcopacy dates from some time in the second century, long after Peter's death.

The present pope now goes under the title of the Bishop of Rome, and claims unbroken apostolic succession from Peter, the first bishop of Rome. There is simply no contemporary evidence that there was such a position as bishop of Rome, in Peter's lifetime.

The inescapable truth is that the first two centuries of church history are completely SILENT on Peter's supposed episcopacy in the church of Rome. Even the modern Roman Catholic scholar, H. Burn-Murdock, an apologist for the papacy, plainly declares in his well-researched work, *The Development of the Papacy*, that there is NO EARLY EVIDENCE to show that Peter was ever at anytime the bishop of the church in Rome. He states,

None of the writings of the first two centuries describe St. Peter as a bishop of Rome.

1:

Burn-Murdock, H., *The Development of the Papacy*, Faber & Faber, London, 1954, p. 130.

Here is a modern Roman Catholic scholar, writing on the very subject of the development of the papal office, in the middle of the twentieth-century, and he candidly admits there is no evidence at all from the first two centuries that Peter was ever the bishop of the church at Rome. (Yet, at least one of my professors thought that there was evidence that Peter was in Rome, although I am not sure if he believed he was ever bishop of Rome.)

Furthermore, as to the actual exercise of anything like the modern papal jurisdiction on the part of Peter, even Roman Catholic writers have been unable to discover the slightest vestige. So even if it

can be proven that Peter may have been at one time in Rome, to prove that he was the first bishop of Rome is simply impossible.

3. A further difficulty is also impossible to overcome on the part of Roman Catholic scholars and that is the CONTINUED existence of the bishopric of Rome. For obviously, if one believes in Apostolic Succession, there can be NO break at all between the bishop of Rome then and the bishop of Rome now. So there must be an unbroken chain of bishops since Peter, up until the present man today, who claims to be the successor of Peter, and the present bishop of Rome.

When one tries to find out the bishops of Rome who followed Peter, he is faced with another impossible task. As to immediate successors following Peter, as bishops of Rome, there simply is no documented registry. Not only can it not be proved that Peter was ever the first bishop of Rome, there is no contemporary proof of any of his immediate successors to that office.

A number of men, of course, are put forward as possible candidates, but to any real historical validity to these claims, it is utterly non-existent. Several names were listed by Eusebius, who is writing several centuries later. Even that ancient writer is unable to reconcile the years, when these men were supposedly exercising their jurisdiction in Rome, with the names on the list. Some think that there is little reason to doubt the existence of these men, but to claim that they were the bishops of Rome, is another matter entirely.

Clement, is one of the known leaders in the early church. But notwithstanding his status in the church, the early tradition is much divided as to the time of his administration in Rome. Many claims are put forth, by Roman Catholic scholars, to try to make Clement out to be one of the early successors of Peter in Rome. But in all the ancient writings of this period, there is NO mention of the BISHOP of Rome. He may have been a leader in the church but as to being a successor-bishop of Peter, there is not a word.

Certainly, as time goes on, the church in Rome begins to assume leadership in the Empire, but this is far from proving that the Bishop of Rome existed, or was to be regarded as the highest person in the whole church. The fact that certain men began to present Rome as the leading church, means very little to a Protestant. For it shows that man, not Christ, is the one who is putting forth Rome as the leading church. It is also worthy of note, that almost every writer who is called to support some germ of the papacy, also mentions the severe opposition to the claims of the leader in Rome, within the other churches of the Empire.

4. The strongest evidence comes from the Bible itself; and it is against Rome.

Indeed, the Bible militates strongly against Rome as the leading church. The Bible speaks of the churches at Jerusalem and at Antioch doing certain things, while it is completely silent on Rome holding conferences or sending out missionaries. The Bible speaks of the Christians who were dispersed from Jerusalem after the death of Stephen, who preached the gospel at Antioch. Subsequently, Barnabas and Saul were sent out as missionaries from Antioch. Indeed, it was at Antioch that Paul rebuked Peter for his conduct contrary to the truth of the Gospel. It was at Antioch, Christ's™ believers were first called Christians.

There is good evidence that Antioch became a central city from which the gospel was sent out to various parts of the Roman Empire. There is evidence that Ignatius was the second bishop at Antioch until his martyrdom in AD 107.

-6:

*Much has been made of Ignatius's epistle to Rome in which he said Rome is "the head of the love-union of Christendom." However, this epistle in reality is a death blow to the fiction that Peter was the first bishop of Rome, for Ignatius does NOT make any reference at all to any bishop, which he surely would have done if such a person existed at that time.

Various councils were held at Antioch in those early days of the church. Antioch clearly eclipsed Rome at this time.

During the first few centuries of the church, there is no evidence that Antioch, Jerusalem, or Alexandria conceded, to the Roman bishop, a jurisdiction over them or over other churches in the empire. In fact, there is ample proof, even later in time, that the church in North Africa, and in places like Milan, repelled the claim that the Roman bishop had any ecclesiastical jurisdiction over them.

The Bible also teaches that Peter was a married man, definitely contrary to the demonic teaching of enforced celibacy.

-66:

**I used to meet on Sunday afternoons, with a young man who was studying to be a Jesuit, when I was in seminary. I remember raising this point with him. He had no answer to the Scripture that reveals, Simon Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever (Mark 1:30). He said he would have to ask his spiritual advisor.

The various churches outside Rome continued for many years to repel the claims of Rome to jurisdiction over them. McClintock and Strong stated that,

The Canons of the Nicene Council were, however, forged at Rome in the interest of the papacy at an early period, and the words ECCLESIA ROMANA SEMPER HABUIT PRIMATUM (THE ROMAN CHURCH ALWAYS HAS HAD THE PRIMACY) were inserted. At the Council of Chalcedon (451) the Roman legate, Paschasinus, read the Canon with the forged addition, but the council protested at once, and opposed the genuine version to the forged version of the Nicene Canon.

2:

McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, Reprint, 1981, Vol. VII, p. 628.

The forgeries of the papacy started early and kept going for centuries.

At this same council Pope Leo's legates protested against the famous twenty-eighth Canon,

which elevated the patriarch of New Rome, or Constantinople, to official equality with the Pope. But this protest, as well as that of Leo's successors, remained without effect.

3:

Ibid., p. 629.

To this day the Eastern Orthodox church does not recognize the Pope as its head. Showing that the pope of Rome has NOT been recognized as the head of "Christendom" • since long before the Reformation.

REFERENCES

EARLY PROTESTORS AGAINST ROME

The papacy has no unbroken chain going all the way back to Peter. Likewise Protestantism has no unbroken chain going back to the early church. However, just like the claims of Rome, Protestants also have some claims of dissenters from Rome at a very early period. One of the difficulties concerning claims and counter claims is the fact that Rome at one time was a biblical church. So Protestants do not have to produce a starting time for a true Church at Rome, for the Bible does that. When Paul wrote to Rome the church was biblical.

The question then that few seem to want to answer today among both Baptists and Roman Catholics is when did Rome go completely apostate. Spurgeon said, "we were never in Rome," •

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*We appreciate the ministry of C. H. Spurgeon, and his separated stand for the truth and against the Papal Dominion. We disagree with him on this point.

giving a back hand to the Reformers who came out of Rome, but to say that is too much. For Rome then is looked at as bad from the beginning, which is simply not true. There was a time when the Roman Church was a true biblical church.

So there is no need for dissenters to arise during the time that Rome remained faithful to the Bible. There were early groups that dissented from Rome but some of these were heretical, for they were dissenting from the truth at that time. So we must always distinguish between true dissenters from error and apostasy, and dissenters who themselves were heretics dissenting from the truth. Not all Dissenters are true believers.

The church of Rome continued for a number of years as a true church. Just when it became completely apostate is difficult now to pin down. Usually it is conceded that the church at Rome remained orthodox in its beliefs until the time of Constantine. At least, Roman Catholics use fables connected to Constantine, to try to establish the papacy and the supremacy of Rome, over other churches. Protestants usually look at Constantine as the one who brought about the demise of the true church. At least he started the downgrade.

However, this pertains to the Roman Church. There is the whole issue of the British Church in the British Isles. (We will look at this subject in a later Tract.) There are accounts that Christianity spread to the British Isles very early in the history of the Church. There, a NON-Roman church existed for several centuries. It continued more faithful to the Gospel, after most of Europe had fallen into the Roman Catholic apostasy. Patrick, Columba, and Columbanus, with others, sent missionaries back to Europe during the 5th and 6th centuries, to try to combat the Roman Catholic apostasy. They certainly form a part of the links, in the chain, of those who dissented from the Roman Catholic antichristian religion.

One of the earliest separations from Rome took place primarily in North Africa, where many churches refused to follow the dictates of Rome. This group was large, and it was called the Donatists.

THE DONATISTS

In all my studies in church history I never learned anything about the Donatists. Perhaps my teachers felt that they did not have time to cover them, or perhaps they felt that they were not important enough to merit any reference to them. I do not know, but I do know that I never learned anything about them. So whatever I NOW know about them, I had to dig up on my own. The more I have learned about them the more important they have become to me and to my understanding of the early history of the church.

This movement involved the authority of the church at Rome. It also involved the authority of the State. So it was no small issue or movement. Augustin was deeply involved in this controversy. First of all, it broke out in North Africa where he labored, and second, he believed in the authority of the church of Rome, and believed that ALL churches must remain in connection to it and indeed in subjection, to it. Third, he believed that the church should be united to the State, and not separate from the State.

The Donatists believed that the Church was to be separate from the State. So this movement was probably the first in church history to teach a form of separation, albeit, a separation from the State. Augustin not only adopted a State-Church construct, he advocated the necessity of the State to put down all separatists from the Roman church, by force if necessary.

-6:

* At first, he took a more irenic approach, and appealed for calm and for discussion and dialogue. However, as time went on, he came to believe differently. As violence and rioting broke out in various places, he came to believe that force would have to be used to decide the outcome. His reasoning, used by many others throughout church history, was that it had become necessary to use force, to kill some, rather than that the whole body should be destroyed.

It is truly amazing to me, to see how men down through church history, who are considered intellectual and theological giants, used the most far-fetched hermeneutical gymnastics to bolster their positions, especially where the use of murderous force was involved. When Augustin finally came to advocate deadly force to convince the Donatists of their "error," he tried to justify it by an appeal to the Scriptures.

He used the parable in Luke where it says, "compel them to come in." He exhorted the hesitating officer of the law, to proceed in enforcing the law, because the Scripture said, COMPEL THEM, to come into the Church. He also added, the fires of hell to his argument, as the Inquisitors of Rome would do later. Saying, it was better that some should perish in their own fires than that all should burn in Gehenna through "the desert of their impious dissension."

The movement began in North Africa, where Augustin also labored, so this no doubt contributed to his deep involvement with it. The controversy has been described simply as a conflict between Separatism and Catholicism, between ecclesiastical purism and ecclesiastical eclecticism. In other words; what constitutes the Church, or what is Christianity? The Bible reveals what is called the EKKLESIA, (from which the word ecclesiastical is derived) as a called out group, from EK out of,

and Kaleo to call. So simply put: a called out group. The epistles of the New Testament indicate that there is a difference between those called SAINTS and the rest of humanity. So the Donatist controversy revolved around the idea of the church as an exclusive regenerated community, and the idea of the church as the general Christendom of the State, and the people in it. This involved the issue of holiness and the issue of unity. Is the church to be noted for its holiness or its unity?

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*This issue has faced all churches at various times. No matter how well a church starts out, in time it tends to go down. This is the unbroken record of the "church" • throughout history. Few churches retain any semblance of purity for more than a hundred years.

Even in early America that grew out of a very strict form of Puritan separatism, we see the same problem arising about 150 years after the Pilgrims landed in 1620. Samuel Worcester was a faithful Congregationalist minister when he came to pastor the Congregationalist church in Fitchburg. Here is how one writer described the situation. "The following year he was ordained pastor of the church at Fitchburg... which was cursed by the evils... of its members (who were) Deists, Arians, Universalists, and openly immoral (that would describe many a "church" • today). With decision, inflexible integrity, and solemn faithfulness to truth and duty, Worcester opened the batteries of the Gospel upon the errors and sins that called for rebuke." • This resulted in much opposition and the attempt of the town council to take over the church, It was Augustin and his State church controversy all over again in 18th century America.

The Donatist controversy resulted in Augustin completing his theory of the church, that it was a universal body from which there could be no schism or separation. The VISIBLE UNITY was all important. There could be no deviation from it. This was to become the crystallized form adopted by the papacy, from then until now. There have been various dissenters within the Roman Catholic Church who have disagreed with this position, but it has held its own against all comers down through the history of Roman Catholicism to this present hour. And is now being defended and promoted by some who call themselves evangelicals, Reformed and the charismatics, and the Neo-orthodox.

The Donatists agreed with most of the teachings of the church. What precipitated the controversy was the widespread persecution of the church at this time, so the actual roots of Donatism were in the preceding years before its rise. The church was dealing with those who had lapsed during the times of persecution. How should a lapsed person be treated? As a true penitent who had failed, but who could now be restored once again to the bosom of the church? Or was he a renegade from the true faith, and the true church, who could never be restored to the church again?

The answer lay somewhere between these two extremes and the answer, or answers, given to this issue precipitated the Donatist Controversy. The Donatists wanted a much more rigorous discipline of the lapsed; while most of the church was satisfied with a milder form of discipline.

So does the church consist of truly saved people; or is it merely a collection of religious people who do not take their Christianity very seriously? The Donatists believed, that when a person gave up his beliefs so easily, in order to escape persecution, this was not a good sign. That if such people reapplied for membership, they should be made to understand the seriousness of their willingness to so quickly abandon their beliefs, in order to stay alive.

Secundus, the primate of Numidia, led on by one Donatus of Casa Nigra, called for a more severe discipline for all who had fled from danger, or who had delivered up the Sacred Books to the persecutors. He advocated prompt exclusion, once and for all, of all who had succumbed to persecution.

Others headed up the milder party and advocated moderation and discretion. The tension between the two parties threatened to divide the church in North Africa as early as AD 305. The actual outbreak occurred in AD 311. A bishop was elected, who apparently had been consecrated by another bishop Felix, who was called a TRADITOR-one who delivered up sacred books-to the persecutors. So there was a division in the church.

In AD 315, Donatus, a gifted man of fiery temperament, took over the leadership of the Stricter party. Each party then began to work to secure as many churches as they could on their side of the controversy. So the whole North African church became embroiled in the controversy. Trials and excommunications took place at various locations.

Felix, the TRADITOR, was investigated and found innocent. The Donatists appealed from this ecclesiastical decision to the Emperor himself. The Emperor agreed to hear their appeal, but ruled against them. The whole matter then took a much more severe turn. The emperor issued penal laws against the Donatist, deprived them of their churches, and ruled against their assembling. The State ruled against the churches.

The Donatists were not intimidated. So the whole debate was now transposed into violence. Bands of fanatics roamed the countryside and all kinds of violence erupted on both sides.

The whole matter then was put down by the military. Some of the Donatists were executed. Others were banished. Their churches were closed or confiscated. The Donatists looked upon all those who were killed as martyrs.

The emperor realized his mistake. In AD 321 he granted liberty to the Donatists to follow their convictions. He also exhorted the larger Catholic party to patience and moderation. This helped to pacify matters for a time. However, when Constantine died, Constans, who succeeded him did not favor treating the Donatists with kid gloves. So widespread persecutions began again. There were battles in which some Donatists fought against the military. They were usually defeated in these battles. So after thirteen years of bloodshed, Julian the Apostate became emperor. The Donatists were pleased. For the Apostate would not recognize Roman Catholicism as THE religion of the state. Thus in AD 361 they once again obtained full freedom to worship as they desired.

They took possession of their own churches again, repainted them and cleaned the walls with joy. Towards the end of the 4th century, North Africa was covered with their churches, and they had 400 bishops.

However, the problems were far from over. They had splits among themselves. Succeeding emperors were not sympathetic toward them. Augustin was working hard to UNIFY the church once again. From this time on the cause of the Donatists began to decline. In 411 at a great Arbitration Meeting in Carthage, attended by 279 Donatist bishops and 286 Catholic bishops, the Donatists were defeated in their position.

Stringent new laws were also passed again against them. In AD 415, they were forbidden under pain of death to hold religious assemblies.

Although the Donatists were not completely wiped out by the Roman Catholic persecution, the whole Church in North Africa was. The Vandals in AD 482 overran North Africa. So the Arian Vandals ended the controversy by a general destruction of the whole church. Yet the Donatists continued to survive as a distinct party down to the sixth century in other areas.

From this brief sketch we can see that the Donatists were not heretics, they believed the Bible and all the important doctrines of the Christian faith. They were not immoral. Some of the charges made against them, come from their enemies, so must be regarded as unfounded and exaggerated.

The schism began in differences about church discipline, concerning those who had lapsed from the faith, during persecution. The problem was widened because of the attitude of the Catholic church toward them, and the treatment meted out to them. Certainly there was fanaticism among the Donatists, but not all were fanatics by any means. And fanaticism was present among their enemies too.

While some scholars blame the Donatists, for causing schism in the church, others see the same issues today. Does any church have the right to claim it is the only true church, and the right to force all others to join it, under pain of death? Few modern Christians would agree with such a position.

The issue that arose then still arises today: what comprises the membership of the church? Can anyone join? Even those who do not believe the truth? Does any church have such a monopoly of the truth so as to be considered the one true church on earth?

Even more to the point today, is a religious body that teaches and practices all kinds of falsehoods, worthy of the name Christian? So the Donatists early on, showed the impossibility of any one institution being so perfect, that it has the right to enforce all other Christians to belong to it under pain of death.

The Donatists can be classed in that long line of Christians who refused to knuckle under to the threats and persecution of a religious body. As such, their stand is to be regarded as part of the long struggle of Christians, who desire to worship the Lord according to the Scriptures and not according to men, no matter how important those men may think themselves to be.

It also shows, that as the church moved further and further away from the time of the apostles, men began to see a difference in the church of their time and that of the apostles. So ever since, true Christians have sought to show that there are differences in what is called the ancient church and that of the apostles. All down through church history, ever since, protests have been made in order to show the difference between the ancient church and the church of the apostles.

As time went on these differences took on greater and greater significance; until, what claimed to be the one true church on earth, was completely and officially apostate, and not a Christian church at all.

JOVINIAN

Albert Henry Newman, the Southern Baptist Church historian, mentions a dissenting movement that began in the fifth century. This movement, he claims, was started by Jovinian, a contemporary of Jerome. Little is known about him, but apparently he did not like some of the things that were being brought into the church at that time and opposed them.

Jovinian, was one of the earliest Reformers before the Reformation, according to McClintock and Strong. He was an Italian, but whether of Milan, or Rome, is not now known. He taught in both cities and gained a number of followers. He opposed Asceticism, which was widely practiced and advocated by what are called the church "fathers." • It is hard now to find out exactly what he taught because he has been misrepresented by Roman Catholic writers.

We can gather that he taught that all believers share a common life in Christ through faith in Him, and that those who follow a monastic or celibate life style were no more acceptable to God for so doing. This was a profound challenge indeed, to the whole monastic and celibate life style, which was then being promoted as a more holy and pure life.

He also did not elevate the Virgin Mary as the Roman Church was beginning to do at that time. He taught that good works did not merit salvation. However, although he spoke out against such heresies, he himself, remained single, and more or less followed a monastic life style.

He first taught his doctrines in Milan, but was vehemently opposed by Ambrose in that city. He was denied the right to continue to advocate his views, by Ambrose, who was in control of Milan at that time. He then went to Rome, which was one of the last places to receive the ascetic fanaticism. (Again showing that Rome maintained a more biblical system of truth longer than some other parts of the Empire.)

Many parts of the empire were darkened by monasticism, particularly, the Eastern half of the Roman empire. Parts of the Western Empire were also being overrun with monasticism, before it finally came into the city of Rome. Here, in Rome, Jovinian had good success in promulgating his doctrines. He, and several of his main supporters, were condemned by a unanimous decision of the clergy in Rome. In Milan in AD 390 he and his followers, were excommunicated as authors of a "new heresy, and of blasphemy," • and were forever expelled from the church.

From what we can now gather about the teachings of Jovinian, there was nothing heretical about them. Nor were they in any way blasphemous, but rather, seemed to be much more in accord with Scripture, than the heresies that were then beginning to take root in the church of the Roman empire. The reigning bishop of Rome, Syricus, confirmed the condemnation and excommunication of Jovinian, and the Roman Emperor of that time, Honorius, enacted penal laws against the Jovinians. Jovinian, himself, was exiled to the desolate island of Boa, and died there in AD 406.

Jovinian had written, as well as taught, so his teachings continued to spread even after his excommunication and exile. Some nuns left their nunneries and got married. This caused a great stir in the city of Rome. So the "church" in order to crush this "monstrous teaching" called upon Augustin to help. As someone has said, they used "the good Augustin, a tool of bad men," • to write in defense of monasticism and asceticism and celibacy. In his Treatises on celibacy, Augustin, by wily sophistry, sought to reconcile the prevailing absurdities in the church to the teachings of holy Scripture. Augustin, however, on this occasion was not the man to be the church's champion. Such a man was the bad-tempered Jerome.

Jerome has been described as the man,

who by various learning, by voluble pen, as well as by (bad) temper, and boundless arrogance, and a blind devotion to what ever the "church" • sanctioned, was well qualified to do the necessary work of cajoling the simple, inflaming the fanatical, of frightening the timid, of calumniating the innocent, in a word of quashing, if it could be quashed, all enquiry concerning authorized errors and

abuses. The church right or WRONG, was to be justified, the objector, or (protester) innocent or guilty, was to be CRUSHED. And Jerome would scruple nothing could he accomplish so desirable an end.

1:

McClintock and Strong, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 1037.

So Jerome vehemently opposed the Jovinians. However, notwithstanding the attacks of the church's three prominent writers of that period, Augustin, Jerome, and Ambrose, the teachings of Jovinian, instead of dying out, continued to spread, and to be favorably accepted in different parts of the Roman Empire. This fact, made the work of Vigilantius much easier. Neander, the great German historian, does not hesitate to rank the services of Jovinian so high, as to consider him worthy of place by the side of Luther.

VIGILANTIUS

Vigilantius, is another early Protestant, who sought to oppose and correct the abuses in the church of his day. He was a presbyter, in the early part of the fifth century. He began to oppose the errors in worship and in morals that were beginning to overwhelm the church in the fifth century. He was a native of present day France, brought up to follow the business of Inn-Keeping; but in AD 395, he visited Paulinus of Nola, and immediately after, he was ordained a presbyter. He was recommended by Paulinus to Jerome. He visited Jerome in AD 396, and he disturbed Jerome.

Jerome had two weaknesses in his personality. An inordinate pride because of his learning; and an exalted opinion of his own orthodoxy, and Vigilantius managed to disturb him about both. Jerome was enamored with Origen. Origen held many strange and heretical positions on doctrine. Vigilantius issued an epistle condemning Jerome's Origenism. In response, Jerome compared him to Judas, and called him an ass.

2:

Op. cit., Vol. X, p. 779.

Eight years after Vigilantius left Jerusalem, a presbyter named Riparius notified Jerome that his adversary was teaching very questionable doctrines and disturbing the entire Gallic church through these teachings. Jerome then renewed his attacks on him, but without much success, for Vigilantius was supported by many of the clergy and laity, and was even protected by some bishops. No answer was given to Jerome's abusive attack, and Vigilantius drops out of view at this time. Some think that he may have died. Others believe that the barbarian invasions of Gaul at this time overshadowed the paper quarrels of churchmen, and they ceased to be recorded.

The views which Vigilantius set forth are not preserved in enough detail to furnish a complete system of theology. But we can gather several important truths that he set forth at that juncture in church history. He attacked,

the veneration of martyrs and relics. He doubted the genuineness of the relics, and condemned the bearing about of dead men's bones enswathed in costly wrappings. He considered the invocation of martyrs as a deifying of the creature and a step back into heathenism. He maintained that their intercession could not be relied upon, since their prayers on their own behalf were not always

answered, He held that the miraculous power with which relics were supposed to be endowed, had not extended to that time. He opposed and condemned the burning of candles at the shrines of the martyrs on the ground that the martyrs had the light of the Lamb and had no need of such illuminations.

3:

Loc. cit.

In the field of morals he condemned priestly celibacy and monasticism. He maintained that there is no distinction of morality into higher and lower classes, that true morality is binding upon all. He did not possess the learning or ability of Jovinian, but sought to rid the church of its heresies and unscriptural practices. Although his work fades out in Gaul at that time, it is interesting to note the revival of true teaching that later arose in France under the Henricans.

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