

# Griffin's History

## Chapter 1-History of the Church up to the Reformation

### INTRODUCTION

#### CHAPTER I.

##### A BRIEF NOTICE OF THE CHURCH, UP TO THE REFORMATION.

We are fully assured, by Divine authority, that the Mosaic dispensation of worship was put down by Christ and his Apostles, and the Gospel mode of worship set up. But the precise time when the first local Gospel church was organized, is a matter of inference only. In the second chapter of the Acts, we find the following brief history of the saints, and their practice: "Then they that gladly received His word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls; and they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common—and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." In verse 47, we are told that "the Lord added to the church" but in verse 41, "church" is omitted. Therefore, from this fact, as well as the general narrative, we are fully persuaded that there was no regularly organized local church, when "there were added unto them about three thousand souls." But it is more than probable, that this great addition "unto them," led to an immediate organization, for in verse 47, we learn that "the Lord added to the church."

In Acts 5—11, we are informed that 'great fear came upon all the church' in consequence of a signal judgment inflicted upon a couple of hypocrites who "lied unto God," by pretending to give that which they did not give—by pretending to do that which they did not do—by trying to obtain a good name in the church for liberality and benevolence, regardless of truth and christian sincerity.

In the 8th chapter of Acts, we learn that "There was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles. Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." Some of "these travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Syrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch"—perhaps to see if these things be of God or of men—for "when he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad," which seems to express a previous doubt, or at least a fear.

Barnabas now left for Tarsus to seek Saul; and when he had found him he brought him to Antioch, it is more than probable, for the purpose of constituting a church. Be that as it may, "A whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people." And from this same church these same two Apostles were sent by the Holy Ghost to set things in order, and ordain Elders in all the churches as overseers thereof. Having accomplished this object they returned to Antioch.

In process of time a difficulty arose in Antioch church relative to circumcisions; and "Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them" were sent "up to Jerusalem; unto the Apostles and Elders about this question. And the Apostles and Elders came together for to consider of this matter." After the discussion was over, which seems to have been conducted by lay members, Elders and Apostles—"Then pleased it the Apostles and Elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, namely: Judas, surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. And they wrote a letter by them after this manner: The Apostles and Elders, and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles, in Antioch, and Syria, and Cillicia," &c. This latter concludes thus: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which, if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well."

So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered

the multitude together, they delivered the epistle; which, when they had read, the rejoiced for the consolation." And so ended the first regularly conducted church difficulty under the Gospel dispensation.

The foregoing we have gleaned from the Acts, which is about all the history of the visible church that we can gather from an inspired writer. There are many letters, written by inspiration to the local churches, which incidentally, throw additional light on their history; but our limits constrain us to pass on. We must now leave Jerusalem and follow the church westward, and that, too, without an inspired guide.

The number of the local churches in the Apostolic day is unknown to us—neither can we learn their constitutions, rules of decorum, or the terms on which sister churches, of that day, were associated together. These external arrangements must necessarily be left to the local churches, to be managed according to circumstances. Hence, where persecution raged against them, they were constrained to adopt rules, to govern their meetings, which were unnecessary when they were permitted to meet openly. Christ and His Apostles had revolutionized the mode of worship, and set up the Gospel Kingdom. The Comforter had sent Paul and Barnabas to ordain Elders in all the churches, as overseers thereof. Christ commanded His Apostles to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature—and they acted accordingly. The Comforter commanded the Elders to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with His own blood—and they acted accordingly. The former acted in the capacity of revolutionary officers, the latter as household or civil officers.

Although we cannot learn the precise time that the Apostolic churches existed, yet we know, that it was comparatively a short period, and that the part of the world in which they were located, has, for many long centuries, been buried in Egyptian darkness, so far as true Christianity is concerned. The mystery of iniquity began to work in the days of the Apostles, and in process of time, became so overwhelming in the local churches that the true followers of Christ were constrained to withdraw from the popular church and form a separate connection, on Apostolic principles.

It is not my object to write a history of the Church, but simply to show the general drift of her travels up to the present century. Therefore, it is sufficient for my purpose to say, that a separation took place at an early day. And Baptist historians generally agree, that the true church passed up through the Novations, the Paulicians, the Paterines, and the Waldenses, to the days of the reformation. These, however, are generic terms similar to "Protestant" of the present day. The want of

proper attention to this fact, has led many well meaning persons astray, relative to the doctrine and practice approved by these people. Suppose a history of the Protestants of the 19th century was written—yea, suppose a full history of all the people called Baptists only, was written, how much inconsistency in doctrine and practice could be handed down to future generations? A flood of errors, and hearsies, and superstitions, from the mouth of the Serpent, has followed after the Church, from Jerusalem, through Western Asia, Southern Europe, and North America—and had it been possible, the very elect would have been deceived and carried away by those signs and lying wonders which the followers of anti— Christ hath power to do in the sight of men. Satan's greatest efforts have been directed against the true Church, not only to annoy the saints, but to cast a blur upon the religion of their Lord and Master. In all the travels of the Church, he has hovered around her, with transformed angels of light, who will at times approximate so near the truth, as to render it difficult for the "very elect," and impossible for the natural man, to discover their hypocrisy. Yea, these incarnate fiends of darkness, like those of old, will at times admit the truth of God, and at the same time burlesque it, as being unprofitable, and therefore should be hid from men, being in its tendency a licentious doctrine.

Search the Scriptures, and you will find that those incarnate enemies of God, who have made hypocritical pretensions to His worship, while warring against His saints, and blurring the character of true Christianity, are the characters against whom all the gospel woes are pronounced.

Church history, except what little can be gleaned from the inspired writers, is, at best, nothing more than the traditions of men. Therefore, though it might be reliable, as a record of facts and events as they transpired, yet, it only portrays the history of uninspired fallible men. But when we consider that the true followers of Christ have generally been hid from the world, and when seen always hated, and every where spoken against—and, in addition to this, when we consider the great anxiety of the followers of antiChrist, to establish their false doctrine and practice, and for this purpose shaping history, by misrepresenting some facts and omitting others, by false and illegitimate inferences—then, we shall feel with additional force, the preat propriety of cleaving to that Book, which we recognize as the only rule of faith and practice. And, when we still go forward and search the Scriptures, and find that even the true visible church is not infallible, but liable to error, and that truth and falsehood are eternal opposites, and that the practice of an error by saints or sinners, for any length of time, can never make it right, then will the propriety of searching the Scriptures as our only rule, be still more forcibly riveted upon our minds. Hence, it seems much more consistent with Christian propriety to

measure ourselves by the Divine standard, in order to prove our legitimacy, than to go to history for the purpose of proving a regular succession. Though God has no doubt reserved to Himself, in all ages of the Gospel day, a people who never bowed the knee to Baal, yet, to say that the legitimacy of His visible church depends on proving a regular succession from the days of the Apostles, would be laying an unnecessary burden upon the household of faith. The visible church, as organized under the reign of the Comforter, was never designed, in whole or in part, to procure the eternal salvation of God's people; but seems to be designed for their salvation from error and delusion—false doctrine and false practice—to gather them together into one fold, through the instrumentality of under—shepherds, where they are to be fed, and edified, and comforted. Here "all things must be done decently and in order." Hence, it would seem sufficient without any concern about a regular succession, that we fellowship no disorder, which comes within the range of our knowledge.

## **THE WALDENSES**

We shall here proceed to give a few quotations relative to these people, promiscuously taken from Jones' Church History: "In articles of faith the authority of the Holy Scriptures is the highest, and for that reason it is the standard of judging, so that whatsoever doth not agree with the word of God, is deservedly to be rejected and avoided.

"The decrees of preachers and counsels are only so far to be approved as they agree with the word of God.

"We believe that there is one God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"The Scriptures teach us, that there is one God, almighty, unbounded in wisdom, and infinite in goodness, and who, in His goodness, has made all things. For He created Adam after His own image and likeness, but through the enmity of the devil, and his own disobedience, Adam fell, sin entered into the world, and we became transgressors in and by Adam.

"Christ had been promised to the fathers who received the law, to the end that, knowing their sin by the law, they might desire the coming of Christ to make satisfaction for their sins, and to accomplish the law by Himself.

"At the time appointed of the Father, Christ was born—a time when iniquity every where abounded—to make it manifest that it was not for the sake of any good in ourselves, for all were sinners, but that He, who is true, might display His grace and mercy towards us.

"Christ is our life, and truth, and peace, and righteousness, our shepherd and advocate, our sacrifice and priest, who died for the salvation of all who should believe, and rose again for their justification.

"That is the church of Christ, which hears the pure doctrine of Christ, and observes the ordinances instituted by him, in whatsoever place it exists.

"He is our mediator and advocate, nor is there any other name given under Heaven by which we can be saved. In His name alone, we call upon the Father—using no other prayers than those contained in the Holy Scriptures, or such as are in substance agreeable thereto.

"Ministers of the church ought to be unblamable, both in life and doctrine; and if found otherwise, that they ought to be deposed from their office, and others substituted in their stead; and that no person ought to presume to take that honor unto himself but he who is called of God, as was Aaron; that the duties of such are, to feed the flock of God, not for filthy lucre's sake, or as having dominion over God's heritage, but as being examples to the flock, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, and in chastity.

"All those in whom the fear of God dwells, will thereby be led to please him, and to abound with good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them, which are: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, sobriety, and the other good works enforced in the Holy Scriptures.

"We consider it to be our duty to beware of false teachers, whose object is to divert the minds of men from the true worship of God, and to lead them to place their confidence in the creature, as well as to depart from the good works of the Gospel, and to regard the inventions of men.

"We have ever regarded the inventions of men, in the affairs of religion, as an unspeakable abomination before God.

"We hold in abhorrence all human inventions, as proceeding from anti— Christ, which produce distress, and are prejudicial to the liberty of the mind.

"We consider the sacraments as signs of holy things, or as the visible emblems of invisible blessings. We regard it as proper, and even necessary, that believers use these symbols, or visible forms, when it can be done. Notwithstanding which, we maintain that believers may be saved without these signs, when they have neither place nor opportunity of observing them.

"We acknowledge no sacraments, as of Divine appointment, but baptism and the Lord's supper.

"We honor the secular powers, with subjection, obedience, promptitude and payment.

"Although anti—Christ was conceived in the days of the Apostles, he was then in his infancy, imperfect and unformed, rude, unshapen, and wanting utterance. He then wanted those hypocritical ministers and human ordinances, and the outward show of religious orders, which he afterwards obtained. As he was destitute of riches and other endowments necessary to allure to himself ministers for his service, and to enable him to multiply, defend, and protect his adherents, so he also wanted the secular power to force others to forsake the truth and embrace falsehood. But growing up in his members, that is, in his blind and dissembling ministers, and worldly subjects, he at length arrived at full maturity, when men, whose hearts were set upon this world, blind in the faith, multiplied in the church, and by the union of church and State, got the power of both into their hands.

"Christ never had an enemy like this; so able to pervert the way of truth into falsehood, insomuch that the true church, with her children, is trodden under foot. He robs the Savior of His merits, and the sufficiency of His grace in justification, regeneration, remission of sins, in sanctification, establishment in the faith, and spiritual nourishment. He seduces the people from Christ, drawing off their minds from seeking those blessings in Him, by a lively faith in God, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, and teaching his followers to expect them by the will, and pleasure, and works of anti— Christ.

"He makes use of an outward confession of faith; and therein is verified the saying of the Apostle: 'They profess in words that they know God, but in works they deny him.' He boasts of numerous miracles, even as the Apostle foretold, 'Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all miracles and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.' He has an outward show of holiness, consisting in prayers, fastings, watchings, and alms deeds, of which the Apostle testified, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

"Thus it is that anti—Christ covers his lying wickedness as with a cloak or garment, that he may not be rejected as a pagan or infidel, and under which disguise he can go on practising his villainies boldly, and like a harlot. But it is plain from both the Old and New Testaments, that a christian stands bound by express command to separate himself from anti—Christ.

"It is manifest from the New Testament, that the Lord is come, and hath suffered death, and he might gather together in one the children of God; and it is on account of this unity in the truth, and their separation from others, that it is said, Mat. x., "I am come to separate a man from his father, and to set the daughter against her mother, and the daughter—in—law against her mother—in—law, and those of a man's household shall be his enemies. Christ hath enjoined this separation when he said: 'Whosoever doth not forsake father and mother, &c, cannot be my disciple", And again, "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing." Again, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees—and take heed lest any man seduce you, for many shall come in My name and seduce many.' And in the book of the revelation he warns by His own voice, saying 'Come out of her My people, and be not partakers of her sins, that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins are come up unto heaven, and the Lord remembereth her iniquity.' The Apostle says the same, 'Have no fellowship with unbelievers, for what communion hath righteousness with iniquity, or what agreement hath light with darkness, or what part hath a believer with an infidel, or the temple of God with idols? Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

"Thus, as the Lord is pleased to enable us, and so far as our understandings are instructed into the path of duty, we attach ourselves to the truth of Christ, and to His church, how mean soever she may appear in the eyes of men. We therefore, have thought it good to make this declaration of our reasons for departing from anti— Christ, as well as to make known what kind of fellowship we have, to the end, that if the Lord be pleased to impart the knowledge of the same truth to others, those that receive it may love it together with us. It is our desire also, that if, peradventure, others are not sufficiently enlightened, they may receive assistance from this service, the Lord succeeding it by his blessing. On the other hand, if any have received more abundantly from Him, and in a higher measure, we desire with all humility to be taught, and instructed better, that so we may rectify whatever is amiss."

Thus wrote the Waldenses more than seven hundred years ago, while struggling against the first beast. The second beast, which John saw coming up as the other went down, has the external appendages of a lamb, but inwardly he is a dragon every whit. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast, which was before him. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast.