

5. The sign of the cross
 - a. Cyprian explained this ritual in the 3rd century as symbolic of the redemptive death of Christ on the cross
 - b. Used at the beginning and end of prayer, at times of need or danger and other occasions
 - c. The great sign – made with the five fingers outstretched on the forehead, chest and shoulders (left to right)
 - d. The lesser sign – made with the thumb on the forehead, lips and chest
 - e. Used to bless the person making the sign, others or even objects
6. Rosary beads
 - a. A devotional exercise in which repeated prayers are counted on a string of beads or a knotted cord
 - b. Began as a pagan practice and adopted by Eastern monks in the 3rd century
 - c. Rosary of the Virgin Mary reached its present form in the 15th century. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the rosary “consists of 5 decades, or sets of 10 beads, divided by a larger bead between each decade; this is known as a chaplet. The two ends of the chaplet are joined by a small string containing a crucifix, two large beads, and three small beads. The Lord’s Prayer is repeated on each large bead and the Hail Mary on each small bead; the Gloria Parti (Glory be to the Father) is recited after each decade. An event, known as a mystery, from the life, death, and glorification of Jesus or Mary is meditated upon during the recitation of each decade. There are three sets of five mysteries—he joyful, the sorrowful, and the glorious.”

C. Sacerdotalism

1. Comes from the Latin word for priest and refers to a religious system that uses priests
2. The priest is one who acts as a mediator between God and man. The New Testament rejects our need for human mediation (1 Timothy 2:5-6). However, sacerdotalism is the foundation of the Roman Catholic System.
3. Gives to the ceremonies a magical power to make holy and give grace. Ordinances become sacraments (a word related to sacerdotalism—both are related to the word sacred or holy; the priests and the sacraments both have the power to make others holy).

D. Ritualism

1. Extreme use of the “Lord’s Prayer” and other memorized prayers and praises
2. A ritualistic order of services
3. Services carried out with much pomp and ceremony giving them an elevated air of importance

E. The Growing Power of Bishops

1. During this period, the office of bishop and pastor (which are Biblically the same) began to be separated in practice
2. Bishops started to exercise authority over entire cities and their surrounding areas
3. Bishops began to exercise authority over presbyters who were relegated to being sub-bishops or pastors of smaller churches
4. Bishops took to themselves the power to forgive sins and to receive excluded church members

F. Immorality

1. Growing worldliness of the clergy
 - a. Frequenting taverns
 - b. Playing at dice
 - c. Usury
2. Licentiousness
 - a. Including bishops, presbyters, deacons and nuns
 - b. A large number of the decrees of the councils of this period are directed against some form of sexual sin

G. Feasts

1. Easter
 - a. Term is of pagan origin
 - b. Was first observed as a celebration of the resurrection of Christ at the time of the Jewish Passover
 - c. Later observance was changed to match the pagan celebration of Easter
 - d. Pagan traditions were brought over into the celebration (eggs, rabbits, etc.)
 - e. Celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon that occurs either on or after the vernal equinox of March 21st. This formula was first developed in Egypt. It means that Easter can occur anywhere from March 22 to April 25.
2. Christmas
 - a. The development of the feast celebrating the birth of Jesus is directly connected to fading expectations of the imminent return of Christ
 - b. The Christian celebration of Christmas replaced the Roman festival of Dies Invicti Solis (the Day of the Invincible Sun) which was introduced by the Emperor Aurelian in the 3rd century and was celebrated on December 25th
 - c. December 25th was also the birthday of Mithra, the Persian god of light; the day was devoted to the invincible sun
 - d. Festivities of the pagan holiday included:
 - (1) All work and business suspended
 - (2) The giving of gifts
 - (3) Many celebrations and parties

- (4) Easing of certain moral restrictions
- e. Many Christian writers (including Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Epiphanius) opposed the celebration of Christmas in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. In like manner, the Puritans of the 16th and 17th centuries opposed the celebration of Christmas.
- f. The celebration of holidays is a personal decision according to the scriptures. No one should be forced to keep a holiday or refused a chance to celebrate—as long as the acts of celebration themselves are scriptural. See Romans 14:4-10 and Colossians 2:16-17.

H. Deified Mother

1. During this period of time, Mary began to be exalted above what is stated in scripture. However, many of the teachings concerning Mary did not develop for many centuries and will be considered later.
2. Pagan cultures had a long tradition of goddesses of fertility
 - a. Ashtaroth (Canaanite)
 - b. Astarte (Phoenician)
 - c. Ishtar (Babylonian and Assyrian)
 - d. Isis, the mother of Horus (Egyptian). Isis is often shown as a mother with her infant son.
 - e. Aphrodite (Greek)
 - f. Venus (Roman)
3. The Mary of the Bible was slowly being transformed into “the queen of heaven” (Jeremiah 44:17-19, 25)

I. Denial of the Kingdom Reign

1. Premillennial doctrine was taught by Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Lactantius, Commodian, Victorinus, Methodius and many others throughout the first three centuries after Christ.
2. Origen called the belief in the literal return and reign of Christ “a Jewish dream”
3. Eusebius rejected the thousand year reign of Christ and claimed not to understand the Book of Revelation
4. Augustine said that the thousand year reign of Christ began at Pentecost

VII. CORRUPTION OF BAPTISTIC DOCTRINE

A. Early Quotations

1. Clement of Rome (c.96AD) said that “they are right subjects of baptism, who have passed through an examination and instruction.”
2. Clement of Alexandria (c.190AD) said, “The baptized ought to be children in malice, but not in understanding; even such children who, as the children of God, have put off the old man with the garments of wickedness, and have put on the new man.”

3. Tertullian (c.216AD) said that “adults were the only proper subjects of baptism, because fasting, confession of sins, prayer, profession, renouncing the devil and his works, are required from the baptized.” And, “The soul is sanctified, not by washing, but by the answer of a good conscience—baptism is the seal of faith; which faith is begun and adorned by the faith of repentance.”
4. The Lutheran church historian, Mosheim, in speaking of the first century after Christ, states, “Whoever acknowledged Christ as the Saviour of mankind, and made a solemn profession of his confidence in him, was immediately baptized and received into the church.” And, “The sacrament of baptism...was performed by the immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font.”
5. Conclusions
 - a. Early baptism was for adults (or those old enough to consciously believe in Christ) only
 - b. Early baptism **followed** salvation
 - c. Early baptism was by immersion

B. Baptismal Regeneration

1. One of the earliest corruptions of Bible doctrine
2. A carry-over from Judaism and the gospel of the kingdom
3. Influenced by the Babylonian Mystery Religions
4. Men as early as Justin Martyr (c.150AD) were teaching baptismal regeneration
5. Even today, every major Protestant group, as well as the Roman Catholics, teach some form of baptismal regeneration
6. Baptismal regeneration became the basis for a number of other false doctrines
 - a. Pouring and sprinkling
 - b. Infant baptism
 - c. Penance
 - d. Extreme unction
 - e. Purgatory
 - f. Indulgences and prayers for the dead

C. Pouring and sprinkling

1. Immersion was always performed in the earliest churches according to church historians such as Schaff, Mosheim, etc.
2. Immersion was performed in rivers and lakes, in private baths, in subterranean waters and later in man-made baptisteries
3. The sprinkling of water is spoken of by several of the early church writers (including Justin Martyr and Tertullian) as being purely heathen.
4. Pouring and later sprinkling appear to have been invented in Africa
5. Argument for pouring and sprinkling
 - a. Baptism is necessary for salvation
 - b. Some people, because of sickness, etc., cannot be immersed
 - c. Another way must be provided or these people will be lost
6. Infant baptism further reinforced the practice of sprinkling

D. Infant Baptism

1. Only adult believers were baptized until at least 200AD
2. According to Philip Schaff, Origen was responsible for the acceptance of infant baptism
3. Argument for infant baptism
 - a. Infants are born polluted by sin and therefore need remission of sins for salvation
 - b. Remission of sins comes only by means of baptism
 - c. Therefore, infants must be baptized so that they will go to heaven if they die before they are old enough to believe

E. Provisions for Post-baptismal Sins

1. Further corruptions came about from a concern for post-baptismal sins which (it was believed) were not washed away in baptism
2. The fear of post-baptismal sins caused Constantine to wait until he was on his deathbed before he was baptized
3. The doctrine of penance was eventually formed to atone for the sins that were committed after baptism
4. Later, extreme unction was added as a safeguard
5. Purgatory finally became necessary for those who failed to do enough penance
6. Indulgences and prayers for the dead were the results of the doctrine of purgatory
7. In this doctrinal environment, assurance of salvation became absolutely impossible.
8. NOTE: Since all this corruption is the logical result of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration and since the Protestant churches never succeeded in ridding themselves of this belief, therefore the return of the Protestant churches to the doctrinal position of Roman Catholicism is only a matter of time.

VIII. HERESIES

A. Marcion

1. Worked in and around the church at Rome from about 138 to 160AD (the time of his death)
2. Accepted only Paul's writings and Luke's gospel
3. Tried to remove every semblance of Judaism from Christianity
4. Taught that Jehovah of the Old Testament was not the same as the God of the New Testament
5. His teachings were widely accepted for a time
6. Later called Marcion the Heretic

B. Manichaeans

1. Mixture of Gnosticism with Zoroastrianism (a Persian religion) using Christian terminology
2. Founded by Mani, a Mesopotamian, about 238
3. He was crucified by a Persian king about 277
4. Taught that man's body was like the kingdom of darkness from which man needed to be liberated
5. Encouraged the asceticism, ceremony and sacerdotalism of later Christianity

C. Monarchians

1. Views taught by Theodotus of Byzantium and Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch
2. Insisted on the absolute unity of God
3. Taught that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God and one person
4. Regarded Jesus as a divinely begotten man who was energized by the Holy Ghost to be the Saviour of men
5. Christ was distinguished from the Word (who was the Son)
6. Basically an over-reaction to the allegorical interpretation of scripture

IX. SEPARATISTS

- A. Introductory Quote: "We do not expect perfection in any body of Christians, but taking dissenters in every age, they have been found preferable in their knowledge of doctrines, and their practice of morals, to any community in national forms." -p.116, *A Concise History of Baptists* by G. H. Orchard

B. Montanists

1. Their beginnings
 - a. Montanism developed in the second half of the second century as a reaction against the worldliness, moral laxity and controlling hierarchy of the church. As mainline Christianity ceased to look for the soon return of the Lord, the Montanists developed a strong and vivid eschatology.
 - b. Montanism is named for Montanus who preached and "prophesied" in Phrygia from about 135 to about 160AD.
2. Their doctrine
 - a. The Montanists were orthodox in all the major doctrines and were premillennial in eschatology. They felt that the expectation of Christ's soon return should determine the Christian's entire life.
 - b. They were Pentecostal in nature
 - c. Emphasized the gifts of the Spirit
 - d. Claimed new revelations
 - e. They considered their prophecy a preparation for the coming end of all things
 - f. They denied that special knowledge was given to men because they were bishops or teachers. They also taught the universal priesthood of believers.

- g. They were legalistic in practice
- 3. Their teaching concerning sin
 - a. They classified sins as mortal and venial (this became a later Roman Catholic teaching)
 - b. However, they further taught that mortal sins could not be forgiven after baptism and those who committed could not be received back into the church.
 - c. Mortal sins included:
 - (1) Adultery
 - (2) Second marriages, which were called adultery
 - (3) Flight from persecution
 - (4) Denial of the faith, as under torture or under threat of torture
 - (5) Homicide
 - (6) Idolatry
 - (7) Blasphemy
- 4. Their later history
 - a. Their most famous convert was Tertullian
 - b. They rejected the baptism of the “catholic” churches as corrupt and rebaptized those who came to them from these churches. In 253, Stephen, the bishop of Rome, excommunicated the Montanistic bishops of Asia Minor over this issue and called them “Anabaptists”.
 - c. Montanism spread to North Africa and as far as Spain and lasted as a distinct group down into the sixth century

C. Novatianists

- 1. The Decian Persecution (249-251AD) brought a large number of Christians who denied the faith under threat of persecution. Novatianism began as a movement in opposition to those who were receiving these Christians back into the churches after they had confessed their sin.
- 2. The division of the Novatianists was not based on any difference in doctrine but wholly on church discipline
- 3. They totally rejected the authority of the “catholic” churches and insisted on rebaptizing those who had been baptized in them
- 4. Though excommunicated by the “catholic” churches, they spread from Spain to Syria from the third to the fifth centuries

D. Donatists

- 1. Arose in North Africa following the Diocletian Persecution (284-303AD). Resulted from the total willingness of the catholic churches to receive back into the churches those who had denied the faith
- 2. The split came in 311 with the election of Caecilian as bishop of Carthage.
- 3. The Donatists unwisely appealed the decision to Constantine who turned the decision over to the bishop of Rome who at the Council of Arles in 314 condemned the Donatists.

4. Constantine therefore declared the Donatists heretics and persecution of the 400 Donatist churches began. The Donatists were the first Christians to be persecuted and have their blood shed by other Christians.
5. The movement was, to a great extent, an opposition to the worldliness of the catholic churches. They maintained that the churches should be made up only of visibly true believers.
6. They seem to have rejected infant baptism but many of them did believe in baptismal regeneration (which was the common doctrine of the catholic church of this time).
7. However, they rejected the authority of the catholic church to baptize and thus rebaptized those who came to them from those churches. As such, they were called Re-baptizers or Anabaptists.
8. After their initial run-in with Constantine, they came to believe in the separation of the church and state
9. They opposed many of the superstitions which were becoming common in the catholic churches, such as the worship of relics
10. They continued in North Africa until somewhere in the seventh century