

A History of the Baptists – Part 2  
Psalm 44:1

I. The Early Baptist Churches

- a. In the year 150, a pastor named Montanus became very famous for refusing to submit to the hierarchy of churches or accept baptismal regeneration
  - i. He taught that every church should govern itself independently
  - ii. And that if someone who was baptized as an infant accepted Christ as his Savior, then he should be baptized again as a Christian
  - iii. Because of this, the Catholics began to call him an “Anabaptist”
    1. The prefix “ana” simply means “again”
    2. So the name “Anabaptist” means “one who baptizes again”
    3. This was a very derogatory term which implied great ignorance of Christian doctrine
  - iv. There were still churches who claimed Montanus as their founder as late as the year 722
  
- b. In the year 250, a pastor named Novatian also rose up in opposition to the Catholic church
  - i. This was a time of great persecution, and Novatian taught that anyone who denied God as a result of threats or torture must not have been a Christian in the first place according to I John 2:19
  - ii. Those who repented of their denial were required to make another confession of faith and then be baptized
  - iii. His followers called themselves the Cathari, but they were labeled by the Catholics as “anabaptists”
  - iv. The Cathari were still around at the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in 1517
  - v. Novatian was one of the great defenders of the Trinity and wrote a book entitled “On the Trinity.”
  
- c. In the year 311, a pastor named Donatus began preaching against the doctrines of the Catholics
  - i. He also taught that believers should be baptized after salvation and not for salvation, and thus was labeled as an “Anabaptist”
  - ii. He argued against Augustine on the subject of infant baptism
  - iii. And he was very famous for refusing to obey the Emperor who ordered him to comply with the Catholic church
  - iv. His response to that command was “What is the emperor to the church?”
  - v. He was a strong advocate for the freedom of religion
  - vi. One of their leaders, Petilian, said to the Catholics: “Think you to serve God by killing us with your hand? Ye err, if ye, poor mortals, think this; God has not hangmen for priests. Christ teaches us to bear wrong, not to revenge it.”

- vii. Augustine called for them to be put to death, and he suffered the fate of his own command when the Arians came to power in Rome
- viii. No records of them after AD 700, but John Wycliffe was once accused of being a Donatist, and in 1605, the Anabaptists of that time were said to be “the same as the Donatists of old”
- ix. Good book on Donatists – *A History of the Donatists* by David Benedict

## II. The Paulicians – According to older church histories

- a. Often accused of being Manicheans
  - i. Manicheans were pagan dualists who agreed with some Christian doctrines
  - ii. Augustine was a Manichean before he was saved
  - iii. This accusation was brought against the Paulicians by the Catholics
  - iv. The Catholic Encyclopedia still labels them as Manicheans
  - v. Even the Encyclopedia Britannica gives them this label
- b. Also accused of rejecting the Old Testament and some of the New
  - i. This accusation also came from the Catholics
  - ii. The Paulicians rejected the spurious books of the Apocrypha
  - iii. This accusation is also still repeated often today
- c. These accusations come from four Catholic documents on the history of the Manicheans
  - i. The modern acceptance of these accusations stems from their inclusion by a man named Gibbon in his very famous book *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* which was published in 1776
  - ii. These sources became obsolete in 1898, and modern publications of Gibbon’s book include an appendix admitting that Gibbon’s view was incorrect

## III. The Paulicians – According to modern church history

- a. In 1898 the historian, Conybeare, translated and published a book of doctrine which was written by a Paulician in the 9<sup>th</sup> century
  - i. This book was entitled the *Key of Truth*
  - ii. According to the *Key of Truth*, the Paulicians shared all of the core beliefs of modern day Baptists
  - iii. This contained only a single major point of false doctrine – by at least the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Paulicians had become adoptionists
  - iv. This belief was not held by the “daughter churches” started by Paulician missionary efforts prior to this time
- b. According to the *Key of Truth*, the Paulicians held to Baptist beliefs
  - i. They accepted the authority of both the Old and New Testament
  - ii. They recognized the independence of the local church

- iii. They taught that salvation was only through faith in the finished work of Christ
- iv. They emphasized believer's baptism
  - v. They advocated for and eventually implemented complete freedom of religion
  - vi. They encouraged their members to separate themselves from the evil lifestyle of the world
- c. They placed a strong emphasis on only allowing baptism for believers
  - i. "Let us then submit humbly to the holy church universal. and follow their works who acted with one mind and one faith and taught us. For still do we receive in the only proper season the holy and precious mystery of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Heavenly Father:—to-wit, in the season of repentance and of faith. As we learned from the Lord of the universal and apostolic church, so do we proceed: and we establish in perfect faith those who (till then) have not holy baptism nay, nor have tasted of the body or drunk of the holy blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore according to the Word of the Lord, we must first bring them into the faith, induce them to repent, and give it unto them."
  - ii. "In the beginning of Christianity there was no baptizing of children: and their forefathers practiced no such thing and we do from our hearts acknowledge that baptism is a washing which is performed in water, and doth hold out the washing of the soul from sin."
  - iii. The Arabs called them "Sabians" which translates literally as "Baptists"
  - iv. They are mentioned in the Quran as being "people of the book" along with Jews and Christians
- d. The first Paulician churches claimed to have been started by the Apostle Paul when he traveled through Armenia
  - i. Ancient Armenia was situated between Syria (Antioch) and Galatia
  - ii. It shared a border with Galatia that was marked by the Taurus Mountains.
  - iii. Paul could have traveled through Armenia on his way to Galatia for his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23)
  - iv. Or converts of Paul's ministry in Galatia could have traveled into Armenia to plant churches there
  - v. We know that Paul had a great burden for the people of that region because it was where he was attempting to go when he received the Macedonian vision during his second missionary journey
  - vi. This would explain the name of Paulician, but no one knows exactly why they chose this name
  - vii. From Armenia, the Paulicians spread throughout large portions of Asia and Europe eventually becoming as numerous as the Baptist churches of today
- e. The Paulicians did not consider the Catholics to be Christians

- i. "We do not belong to these. They have long ago broken connection with the church and have been excluded."
  - ii. When the Arabs began to challenge Roman rule in Armenia c. AD 650, the Paulicians sought refuge among the Arabs to escape from Catholic persecution
  - iii. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Paulicians took up arms to defend themselves against their Catholic persecutors and established the free state of Teprice which remained a Paulician state for 150 years before being conquered by Muslims
  
- f. They established absolute freedom of religion in Teprice
  - i. The Paulicians welcomed men of all faiths, so that they would have opportunity to witness to them
  - ii. They were vehemently opposed to any sort of persecution and taught that salvation must be accepted voluntarily
  - iii. Also established freedom of speech and freedom of the press
  - iv. The freedoms of this nation generated a very wealthy society, and they used that wealth to send missionaries all over the world
  - v. Around AD 970, the Byzantine emperor John Tzimisces transported a group of Paulicians to Thrace in southern Europe and granted them religious freedom there as well
  
- g. The Paulicians spread throughout Europe, and one of the largest concentrations of Paulician churches was in the country of the Albigenses of southern France
  - i. After the fall of Teprice, the missionary work of the Paulicians moved its base of operations to southern France and they began to be known as Albigenses instead of Paulicians
  - ii. The European Catholics identified them as a revival of the ancient doctrine of the Cathari
  - iii. The Cathari was a name given to the Novationists
  - iv. The Paulicians in this area eventually became known as the Albigenses, and their missionaries worked alongside other Paulicians throughout Italy and France
  
- h. The Paulicians were eventually driven underground, and did not re-emerge until the protestant reformation when they became one of the chief influencers of the Anabaptists of that time period
  - i. They had always been called "Anabaptists" by the Catholics, and by the time of the Protestant Reformation, they had adopted the name themselves