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# Introduction to Christian History: Doctrines of the Remnant

“If a continuity of belief can’t be traced back to the end of the first century, it can hardly claim that it’s the *historic faith*.” *David Bercot, Christian historian*

It can also be said that we must return to the first documented writings of the Apostolic fathers, *in language of their day*, to ascertain ***what was the faith that was once delivered unto the saints.***

**And so we shall.**

## What was the language of the day?

- Alexander the Great (BC 356-323) became conqueror of Persian Empire: Greek language (Koine) became official language of countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.
- Most Jewish communities were located around the Mediterranean Sea, in the Hellenistic world where Greek was spoken.
- The Hebrew Bible was translated in stages between the third and second centuries BC into Greek and given the name “**Sep tu’agint.**” Was greatly esteemed by Josephus and writers of the day, ascribing it as divinely inspired.

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## The Septuagint (LXX) and the Apostolic fathers.

- Of significance for all Christians and Bible scholars, the LXX is quoted by the New Testament and by the Apostolic Fathers.
- The LXX was the major text source of the Apostles. New Testament writers used the Greek translation, implying that Jesus, the Apostles and their followers considered it reliable. The Septuagint clearly writes of a *virgin that shall conceive*, unlike other texts of the day. The Apostles preached the gospel from the Septuagint.

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## Chronology of New Testament Writers

Christ's death, resurrection and ascension: October, AD 32

- John Mark: Gospel of Mark: AD 70
- Gospel according to Matthew: AD 85
- Gospel according to Luke: AD 85 – 90
- Gospel according to John: AD 90 – 100

Saul of Tarsus met Christ on the road to Damascus in the year AD 37 (spent three years in Arabia) began ministry in AD 40 -- wrote his first epistle (1 Thes.) in AD 52 and his last letter (2 Tim.) in AD 66-67 from prison in Rome, prior to his martyrdom by beheading along the Appian Way.

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# *Christian History:* *Doctrines of the Remnant*

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, ***whatsoever I have said unto you.***” John 14:26

“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray for these alone. ***But for them that shall believe on me through their word.***” John 17: 18 – 20

***“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall teach others also.”***

2 Timothy 2:2

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## The Apostolic fathers – on Doctrine

- Their understanding is critical evidence for examining our doctrine today. Comparisons must be made with teachers closest to Christ and the Apostles.
- Quotations of faithful men who bridged years between AD 100 and the Edict of Milan, (AD 313) will be offered as *“the faith once delivered onto the saints.”* Jude 3 Many were well educated, former philosophers, lawyers, teachers of rhetoric and notable authors of their time.
- Historians declared that until early in the fourth century, teachers and writers spoke and wrote **“as though the church had one heart and one voice.”**
- The truth about the Reformation will reveal that most historians are wrong about the major players were in those dramatic years, while rarely identifying those of Anabaptist leaders who identified with the faith of the Apostolic Fathers.

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## Acknowledgements:

Informational resources are taken from many sources in the library of the Braun brothers. Their collections are now assembled the library of the Apostolic Christian Church in Syracuse, New York. These include *The Horizon History of Christianity*, *The Primitive Church*, *The Martyr's Mirror*, *The Early Christians* and others. Brothers of our fellowship are directly quoted in the presentation.

Much historical dated is taken from perhaps the most honest and objective historian of our time. His own personal search for the **true faith** changed his life. He has written several books published by **Scroll Publishing Co.** that are worth your time to read. Among them are, ***Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up***, ***The Kingdom That Turned the World Upside Down*** and ***Will The Theologians Please Sit Down***.

**David Bercot** is quoted in this presentation as applying the following criteria to be assured of the authenticity of his sources: **“I have not represented any beliefs or practices as being those of the early church in general, unless they met the following criteria:**

- 1. All early writers who mentioned the subject expressed the same view;**
- 2. At least five early Christian writers, separated by time or geographical distance, discussed the subject. (most are supported by testimony of more than five writers)**

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## Acknowledgements - continued

**The Early Christians**, was written by **Eberhard Arnold** and was published in 1926 in the German language, with the title “*Die ersten Christen nach dem Tode der Apostel*” He was educated in theology, philosophy and education in three universities in Germany, receiving his doctorate in Erlangen in 1929. In his search for the Truth, he discovered the and embraced the simple faith and practices of the early Christians. Together, with his bride he separated from the state church and began the **Bruderhof** community which embraced the Anabaptist doctrines and practices. The Nazis closed their community and allowed them to emigrate to England, where they took the name, **Society of Brothers**.

Arnold himself wrote the following; “**With this book we want to render simple and objective help to those who have earnest questions and concerns, so that they might begin to grasp the Christ-witness in past centuries just as it was given to men in those times. Among other factors that bear out the authenticity of these early Christian testimonies, is their simultaneous quotation from many different ancient sources.** The purpose of this source book --- is to point to faith in God, the witness of the Living Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit among the gathered believers everywhere throughout the centuries.”

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## Acknowledgments - continued

The well educated **Dr. Arnold** wrote in his book the following observation: *“Together with Oriental mystery cults, it was Greek philosophy, especially Plato’s, which exercised an increasingly dominant influence in this direction. (away from orthodox Christianity) Again, in the years between AD 180 and 250, ecclesiastical Christianity became a great power in the field of learning and literature, by extensively absorbing contemporary culture and philosophy. **To the same degree that it found favor with the educated, it departed from the central message of the Kingdom of God.**”*

*As late as the third century, men like Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Tertullian tried in vain to hammer out the purest possible form of primary Christian truth; in vain, those believers were disdainfully called “ignorant,” “uneducated”, and “simple minded”, but continued to protest vigorously against the invasion of learning.”*  
(“The Early Christians” page 50)

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## FOUR BASIC TESTS TO EXAMINE EVERY DOCTRINE

*Definition of doctrine:* “A belief system held as absolute by adherent or followers of a particular cause or leader.”

- Does this doctrine flow from the Bible ***naturally***? Is it in ***complete*** harmony with the teaching of the ***entire*** Bible?
- Does the support of this doctrine require ***strained*** and ***awkward*** interpretations of the scriptures?
- Is this doctrine in ***complete harmony*** with God’s evaluation and abhorrence of sin and his plan of redemption?
- Does this doctrine encourage a ***closer walk with God*** rather than to encourage yielding to temptation and a life of sin?

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## Quotation from the **We Believe** document

*The validity of this new draft statement of faith depends on its biblical character; its usefulness depends on its ability to communicate our understanding of the biblical message. In this expression of our faith we sincerely accept the lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the written Word of God, the Bible. Our purpose in formulating this draft statement of faith is twofold: (1) to seek to promote unity of the brotherhood by establishing an Apostolic Christian “doctrinal identity” and (2) to safeguard sound doctrine and life by providing a powerful and biblically grounded symbol of our faith.”*

We do well to heed the exhortation of the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 10: 12;  
**“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise.”**

2 Cor. 13:5 declares; **“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.—”** (by the Word of God)

*slide 06*

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## A Biographical Sketch of Ten Post-Apostolic Church Leaders

- **Polycarp** – (POL ih karp) AD 68– AD 155; Disciple of the Apostle John the revelator
- **IRENAEUS** – (I reh NEE us) AD 120 – AD 205; personal disciple of Polycarp
- **Justin** (JUS tin) – AD 110 – AD 165; lived during Polycarp’s lifetime
- **Clement of Alexandria** – (KLEM ent) AD 150 – AD 200: overseer of the first Christian School
- **Origen** – (OR ih jen) Ad 185 – Ad 255: was a student of Clement
- **Tertullian** – (tur TULL yen) AD 140 – Ad 230: one of few church leaders to write in Latin
- **Ciprian** -- (SIP ree an) AD 200 –AD 258; a pupil of Tertullian
- **Lactantius** – (lack TAN SHE US) – AD 260 – AD 330; a teacher of the Emperor’s son (cont.)

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In addition to the eight major leaders quoted on the doctrines of the Apostolic fathers, two others are quoted in this presentation. They are:

- **Felix, Minucius** – (FEE licks, meh NEW shus) AD 170 – AD 215; a converted Roman lawyer
- **Hermas** – (HUR mus) lived and wrote prior to AD 150; was a Christian writer of allegorical works

On slides which follow, each of these ten church leaders biographical sketches will be expanded to provide a better perspective of their contributions to the propagation of the **faith once delivered unto the saints**.

The next several slides will be biographical sketch on each leader.

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## POLYCARP

- A personal companion and disciple of the Apostle John
- A model of faith and devotion to the churches in Asia
- Appointed by John as overseer of the church of Smyrna, the “angel” spoken of in Rev. 2:9, who received the message from the Lord; “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) ---- Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer ---- be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.”
- Polycarp lived to be eighty-seven years of age. He was finally martyred by being burned alive and pierced by the sword after he served his executioners a meal.

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## IRENEAUS

- Ireneaus was a disciple and pupil of Polycarp.
- He was sent to Gaul (France) as a missionary.
- Became the overseer of the Lyons, France congregation after the previous overseer was killed during persecution.
- Was well spoken of by the entire early church of his time.
- Lived past the year AD 200 and was the critical link to the Apostles, having been mentored by Polycarp, who was a companion of the Apostle John.

Ireneaus was martyred in AD 200, by being fed to hungry wild beasts. Before his death he declared that when they tear his heart to pieces, he declared that “ the name of Jesus will be found on each piece.”

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## JUSTIN

- Justin was a Roman philosopher who converted to Christianity.
- He became an effective evangelist to pagan philosophers.
- He was one of the foremost apologists for the Christian faith,
- wrote a defense of Christianity and personally sent it to the Emperor.
- Justin devoted his life to helping educated Romans understand the meaning of the Christian life. As a gifted preacher he convinced many to embrace Christianity.

He was arrested after a group of philosophers plotted against him. Choosing rather to die than renounce Christ, he was executed in Rome in about AD 165. Thereafter he was known as Justin the Martyr or simply, Justin Martyr.

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## CLEMENT of Alexandria

- Another converted philosopher who found Christ while searching for the truth.
- He traveled throughout the Roman Empire, learning the precepts of the oldest, most respected elders of his time. His writings, dated about AD 190, reflect the composite wisdom of his teachers. He observed that ***“the church spoke as if it had one heart and one voice.”***
- Eventually settled in Alexandria, Egypt, becoming the elder of that congregation.
- Was in charge of the Christian School of Instruction at Alexandria until persecution forced him to leave.
- He was the personal mentor of Origen, a brilliant student who assumed oversight of the school after him.

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## ORIGEN

- A very gifted student of Clement, was raised in a Christian home and converted at age seventeen.
- Became head of the Christian School at age eighteen, under great persecution. He was proficient in grammar and Greek, taught him by his father. Later gave private lessons to support his family after his father was tried and executed for his faith. Origen defended his father during the trial to no avail.
- Because of his unusual brilliance, many pagans sent their children to him for instruction, many of whom became faithful Christians. He refused to accept any payment for his services as a Christian teacher.
- Became one of the most respected teachers of his time, giving Bible lectures. Scribes recorded his words, compiling them as the first set of Bible commentaries written by a Christian.
- Died at the age of seventy from inhumane torture.

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## TERTULLIAN

- A converted pagan; became a staunch defender of Christianity
- Most familiar of all early Christian writers
- One of the most gifted apologists to the Romans
- Elder of the Carthage church in North Africa
- Wrote most of his works in Latin rather than Greek
- Remembered for several memorable sayings such as, “The blood of martyrs is the seed grain of the church.”
- Writings span about twenty years (AD 190 – AD 210) They included essays and letters of reassurance for Christians in prison.
- Exhorted Christians to maintain their separation from the world
- Joined the Montanist sect in later life. The sect claimed a superior authority based on divine inspiration. (a type of Pentecostalism)

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## CIPRIAN

- One of Tertullian's pupils, a wealthy Roman who converted at the age of forty. He liquidated his entire estate and gave the money to the poor.
- His writings contain some of the most moving passages on spiritual rebirth.
- Was elected elder of the Carthage church after only a few years in the faith.
- His writings are of particular value, consisting of correspondence with elders of other churches, revealing concerns and problems of the congregations.
- Intense persecution forced this tireless shepherd to do most of his pastoral work secretly. He poured out his energy and very life for the flock entrusted to him.
- Finally arrested and beheaded by the Romans in AD 258

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## LACTANTIUS

- A celebrated teacher of rhetoric, received special notice from Emperor Diocletian.
- After conversion he dedicated his literary abilities to the cause of Christ.
- Lived through the last great Roman persecution of Christians in the early AD 300s, eventually settled in France.
- His writings are especially important because they were written at the very end of the pre-Constantine period of the church. They demonstrated that most Christian beliefs changed very little from the end of the Apostle John's life to the beginning of Constantine's reign.
- Lactantius was an old man when Constantine became emperor in AD 312. He was asked by Constantine to be the personal teacher of his son.

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The following several slides address several doctrinal points that are critical to understanding what was “the faith once delivered unto the saints.” The ten apostolic leaders to address them also include Felix, Manucius and Hermas.

Restating the criteria for authenticating their writings is critically important. They are not selected out of historical data to defend doctrinal positions of the Apostolic Christian Church. The criteria for selecting them was:

1. All early Christian writers who mentioned the subject expressed the same view;
2. At least **five** early Christians, **separated by time or geographical distance, discussed the subject.** Most are supported by testimony from more than five writers.

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## Statement Of Faith # 11

# Swearing to an Oath

- **Clement--** “How can he who is faithful show himself to be unfaithful so as to require an oath? But he does not even swear, preferring to affirm by saying yes, or deny by saying no.”
- **Tertullian--** “I need say nothing about false swearing, since swearing is not lawful.”
- **Origen--** “Ciprian and Eusibius also verified this was the universal position of early Christians on swearing.”

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## On War – Statement of Faith #12

- **Justin Martyr**– “We who formerly murdered one another now refrain from making war upon our enemies.”
- **Tertullian** -- “Can it be lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? And shall the son of peace take part in battle when it does not become him to sue at the law? Shall he apply the chain, the prison, the torture and the punishment, when he is not the avenger of his own wrongs.?”
- **Origen** – “Nowhere does Christ teach that it is right for his own disciples to offer violence to anyone, however wicked. For he deemed the killing of any individual to be against his own laws which are divine In origin.”

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## On War - continued

- **Ciprian** – “The world is wet with blood. Murder, which is admitted to be a crime when it is committed by an Individual, is called virtue when it is committed wholesale. Impunity is claimed for the wicked deeds of war, not because they are guiltless, but because the cruelty is perpetrated on a grand scale.”

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# Christian Responsibility to his Country

## Statement of Faith #12

- **Ciprian**– “Our answer is that we do, when occasion requires, give help to kings, but in a divine way, putting on the whole armour of God. We do this in obedience to the injunction of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, “I urge, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all men, for kings and all those in authority.” *1 Timothy 2:1&2* The more anyone excels in holiness, the more effective is his help to kings – even more than is given by soldiers who go out to fight and slay as many of the enemy as they can. None fight better for the king than we do, -- forming an army of righteousness by offering our prayers to God.

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## On Divorce

By the time of Christ, extramarital affairs on the part of husbands and wives were so frequent, that they were no longer scandalous. However, Christians didn't rationalize matters from a human viewpoint. The early church allowed for divorce only for adultery. *Matt, 19:9* Persons who divorced and remarried for any reason were considered to be living in an adulterous relationship. Even if a couple was divorced on the grounds of adultery, the church didn't encourage remarriage.

- **Hermas** – (a contemporary of the Apostle John) “It is good for a husband not to remarry after divorcing his wife, in case the wife may repent. In this matter men and women are to be treated the same way.”

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## On Abortion

Since the days prostitution became a way of life for depraved societies, the murder of unborn children became a reality. The Romans were masters of concocting potions and medical procedures that would eliminate the unborn from the womb. The church considered it murder.

- **Felix** – (a Christian lawyer chiding the Romans) “There are some women among you who by drinking special potions extinguish the life of the future human in their bowels, thus committing murder before they even give birth.”
- **Tertullian** – “Since murder is forbidden in any form, we may not destroy even the fetus in the womb. It matters not whether you take away life that is born or destroy one that has not yet come to birth.”

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## On Entertainment – the Roman theater

- **Tertullian** – “They teach adultery by acting it out. How can we expect our young people to respond when they see that these things are practiced without shame and that one eagerly watches. The father who carefully protects and guards his virgin daughter’s ears from every polluting word, then takes her to the theater himself, exposing her to all its vile language and attitudes. *How can it be right to look at things that are wrong to do? How can those things that defile a man when they go out of his mouth not defile him when they go in through his eyes and ears?*”

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## On Church Shepherds and Teachers

The historian writes, “The entire body of elders were the full time pastors of the early churches. The congregation wasn’t as interested in the depth of their knowledge as in the depth of their spirituality. There were no seminaries. A man learned the necessary skills through the school of experience. Trained by the existing body of elders, he learned how to walk closely with God and to shepherd others by imitating their examples. He had to teach by example and by word before he could be considered for service as an elder or overseer.”

- **Lactantius** – “How will the teacher take away the excuse of the self willed, unless he teaches them by his deeds, so they can see with their own eyes that the things he teaches are possible.”

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## On Capital Punishment

The early Christians utterly abhorred the taking of human life, whether by war, abortion or execution.

- **Lactantius** – “When God forbids us to kill, He not only prohibits the violence that is condemned by public laws, but also forbids that violence that is deemed lawful by men. It is always unlawful to put a man to death, whom God willed to be a sacred creature.”

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## On Church Discipline-Statement of Faith #13

**AD 285--** During the first two centuries the church universally considered three sins as possibly forgivable by God (1 Cor.5:5) but never by the church. They *were **sexual immorality, heresy (denial of the faith) and murder.*** Those guilty of these sins were excluded from Holy Communion and separated from the fellowship. **Ignacius** called it “the medicine of immorality and the antidote of death.”

Exclusion from the fellowship and communion imperiled salvation and those excluded craved reinstatement.

The first to accept repentant sinners (former believers) as a matter of church policy was Calistus. a Bishop of Rome, readmitting them on grounds including “the church of Rome is the heir of Peter to whom Jesus had given the keys to bind and to loose.” **Tertullian** was aghast and exclaimed, “We do not forgive apostates and shall we forgive adulterers?” But the ruling of Calistus won general acceptance.

In the following decade, heretics and murderers were also readmitted. Other departures from apostolic doctrines soon followed.

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## On Eternal Security

### Statement of Faith #16

The early church universally believed that works and obedience play an essential role in our salvation.

- **Clement of Rome** – (companion of Paul) “Let us strive to be found in the number that wait for Him, in order that we may share in his promised reward. But how, beloved ones, shall we do this? By earnestly seeking the things that are pleasing and acceptable to Him. By doing those things that are in harmony with his blameless will. And by following the way of truth, casting away from us all unrighteousness and Sin.”

cont,

slide 28

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## On Eternal Security -- continued

- **Polycarp** – “He who raised Him up from the dead will also raise us up – *if we do His will, walk in His commandments and love what he loved, keeping yourselves from all unrighteousness.*”
- **Ciprian** – “To prophesy, to cast out demons, and to do great acts upon earth are certainly a sublime and honorable thing. However, a person does not attain the Kingdom of Heaven even though he is found in all these things unless he walks in observance of the right and just way. (Matthew 7:22&23)

cont.

slide 29

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## On Eternal Security -- continued

- **Lactantius** – “He has given us this present life that we may either lose the true and eternal life by our sins, or win it by our virtue.”
- **Tertullian** – “Some people act as thou God were under an obligation to bestow on the unworthy His intended gift. They turn His liberality into slavery. – For do not many afterward *fall out of grace? Is not this gift then taken away from many?*”

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# On Baptism

## Statement of Faith #13

Christ's words to Nicodemus "being born of water" was universally understood by early Christians to be a direct reference to baptism. They associated three very important matters with water baptism.

1. *Remission of sins.* They believed that water baptism canceled all past sins. **Justin Martyr** wrote, "There is no other way to obtain God's promises that this – to become acquainted with Christ, to be washed in the fountain spoken of by Isaiah for the remission of sins, and to live for the remainder sinless lives." cont.

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## On Baptism -- continued

2. The New Birth: **Irenaeus** – “As we are lepers in sin, we are made clean from our transgressions by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord. We are thus spiritually regenerated as newborn infants, even as the Lord declared in John 3:5.

3. Spiritually Illuminated: **Clement of Alexandria** declared, “This work is variously called grace, and illumination, and perfection and washing. Washing , by which we cleanse away our sins. Grace, by which the penalties of our sins are cancelled. And illumination, by which that holy light of salvation is beheld, that is, by which we see God clearly.”

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## On Baptism -- continued

- **Ciprian** – in letter to a friend; “I used to indulge my sins as if they were actually a part of me, inherent in me. But later, by the help of the water of new birth, the stain of former years was washed away, and a light from above – serene and pure was infused into my reconciled heart. Then through the Spirit breathed from Heaven, a second birth restored me to a new man.”

The early church believed that infants who died and those martyred without a chance to be baptized would be accepted before God. They didn't portray God as a cold, inflexible being that could work no other way.

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## Church and State – the demise of sound doctrine

Significant events effecting true Christian doctrine from the beginning of the fourth century until the sixteenth century and the “so called” Reformation

- AD 303 – beginning of the Papacy and infant baptism; 17,000 Christians slain in one month by Emperor Diocletian.
- AD 313 – Edict of Milan – Constantine and Lycinius grant tolerance and civil rights to all religions, including Christians. They also returned confiscated property.
- AD 325 – Constantine convenes and presides over the Counsel of Nicea.

cont.

slide 34

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## Continuing Demise of Sound Doctrine

- AD 354 -- Birth of Augustine, considered the father of Western theology and Catholic doctrines; prolific writer of Christian thought that strongly influenced Luther and Calvin in the Reformation almost twelve hundred years later and still influences many evangelicals today.
- AD 414 – conversion of John Chrysostom, wrote on the need for complete conversion before baptism (a voice in the wilderness)
- AD 606 – Papal church declares infant baptism cannon law. (read the results in The Martyr's Mirror)
- AD 1155 – Peter Waldo, founder of the Waldenses sect. Reveals the first evidence of the Anabaptist faith. They, along with Baptists and Apostolics were persecuted almost to extinction over the next four centuries.
- AD 1440 – Johan Gutenberg, Mainz, Germany, invents the movable type printing press. (anyone and everyone could have a bible!!)

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## The (so called) Reformation

- AD 1517 - Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on Catholic church door in Wittenberg, Germany.
- AD 1520 – Luther expelled from Catholic Church – Zwingly persuades Zurich Council to forbid any religion with practices not based on scriptures. Ulrich Zwingly and John Calvin propagated the reformation movement in Switzerland, John Knox in Scotland.
- AD 1524 – Conrad Grabel, Felix Manz and George Blaurock, former associates of Zwingly, separated when his movement failed to establish a true New Testament church, Grabel, Manz and Blaurock founded the Swiss Brethren congregations. This new development thrust Anabaptist teachings into the arena of Christian thought.
- An observer declared, *“I have found men who had surrendered themselves to the doctrines of Christ by repentance evidenced by fruits. They established a congregation in which repentance was evidenced by newness of life in Christ.”*

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## The (so called Reformation) cont.

- AD 1527 – The Schleitheim Confession

The Anabaptists were rapidly growing in large numbers. Conrad Grabel baptized approximately ten thousand converts before he died of the plague eighteen months after the founding of the Swiss Brethren. Other groups of the Anabaptist persuasion in Switzerland and Southern Germany, gathered in Schleitheim, Germany to agree on a statement of faith that would identify them as a fellowship.

- Seven Articles of Faith were agreed upon, which became known as the “Schleitheim Confession”. Michael Sattler and his wife were apprehended and were found to have minutes of the meeting in their possession. They were tried and convicted as heretics and burned at the stake by “reformer” followers.

Slide 36 A

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## The Schleithem Confession

The Confession contained seven articles of faith presented here in abridged format: (the companion ACCN statements are also listed)

### Statement of Faith #13

1. Baptism shall be administered only to those who have experienced true repentance and truly believe that their sins have been taken away through Christ, who desire to be buried with Him in baptism and to walk in the resurrection of Christ. *This excludes infant baptism, which was “the first and greatest abomination of the Pope.”*

### Statement of Faith #14

2. “The ban” shall be employed upon all those who have given themselves over to the Lord, who have been baptized and walked in His ways, and have been overtaken by sin. The same shall be warned twice privately and the third time be publicly admonished before the congregation according to the commandment of Christ in Matthew 18.

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## The Schleithem Confession - continued

### Statement of Faith #17

3. Concerning the breaking of bread (Holy Communion) so it must be that whosoever does not share in the calling of the one God to one faith, to one baptism, to one spirit, to one body with all the children of God, may not be made one loaf with those who have fellowship with the dead works of darkness.

### Statement of Faith #8&9

4. To us the commandment of the Lord is obvious, whereby He orders us to be and become separated from the evil one, and thus He will be our God and we shall be His sons and daughters. Further, He admonishes us therefore to go out from Babylon and earthly Egypt.
5. We have been united as follows concerning shepherds in the church of God. The shepherd shall have a good report of them outside the faith. The office of such person shall be to read, exhort, teach and admonish the congregation, cont.

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## The Schleithem Confession- continued

5. cont. – He shall be supported wherein he has need by the congregation which has chosen him. *But if the shepherd should be driven away or led of the Lord by the cross, at the same hour another shall be ordained to take his place.*

### Statement of Faith #12

6. The sword is the ordering of God outside the perfection of Christ. It punishes and kills the wicked, guards and protects the good. In the law it establishes punishment and death for the wicked. Secular rulers are established to wield the same. Not many, who do not understand Christ's will for us, will ask whether a Christian may use the sword against the wicked or for the protection and defense of good. The answer is unanimously revealed from Him. We shall therefore not become magistrates or in any way pass sentence in disputes and strife about worldly matters since Christ did not wish to pass judgment on such matters. Cont.

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# The Schleithem Confession - continued

## Statement of Faith #11

7. We have united as follows concerning the oath. In the law it is commanded that it should be done only in the name of God, truthfully and not falsely. Christ, who teaches perfection of the law, forbids his followers all swearing. He says, “Your speech shall be yea, Yea; and nay, nay; for what is more than that that comes from evil.”

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## Defenders of the Faith

It behooves us to remember some *defenders of the faith from the sixteenth century and thereafter*. Many paid with their lives to preserve it. Countless numbers of them are known only to God and on that great day *they shall come from the east and the west and from the north and south and sit down in the kingdom of God*. Luke 13:29

- AD 1536 – **Menno Simons** left the errors of Rome and founded the Mennonites.
- AD 1642 – Quakers separated from the State Church
- AD 1648 – On ST. Bartholomew's night, during the French Inquisition, 40,000 Huguenots were slain as condemned heretics. Ancestors of Samuel H. Froelich escaped that night to Switzerland.
- AD 1803 – **Samuel Froelich** was born in Brugg, Switzerland
- AD 1825 – **Froelich**, convicted by his own preaching, cast himself on the mercy of God and was born again. Excommunication from the State Church set him free to carry the Anabaptist doctrines across Europe and ultimately to America through faithful men who believed his words and followed his example.

## Defenders of the Faith – cont.

- AD 1839 – Two Hungarian locksmiths, John Denkel and John Kropachek, met S.H. Froelich as they journeyed to Switzerland as tradesmen. They were converted by Froelich's ministry. Froelich preached over 400 sermons, taught many children's classes, kept a diary and wrote two – three hundred letters in duplicate annually! In twenty-five years of his ministry 110 churches were established.
- AD 1840 Denkel and Kropachek return to Hungary, but kept in close contact with Froelich until his death in 1857, learning doctrine and church practices. In their native Hungary, the locksmiths convinced others of the Truth, among them brothers Ludwig and Imre Hencsey. Ludwig was a powerful preacher, often entering into discussions on spiritual matters with a local Catholic monk who was amazed at his knowledge and Anabaptist teachings. Among the early converts was Josepf Bela, who would later share the gospel with America. Before World War 1, there were 86,000 Nazareans in Hungary!

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## Defenders of the Faith in America

- AD 1834 - Two Mennonite families, Virkler and Farney, emigrate to America to avoid military service in the Napoleonic wars. Settled in Lewis County, New York among the Amish. They soon realized the need for spiritual leadership, contacted Bro. Froelich, who sent Benedict Weyeneth, a powerful preacher who founded the first congregation in America, Croghan, New York in AD 1847.
- AD 1854 - Andrew Braun came to America with his family and small flock of believers. He was the grandfather of Philip and Gaius Braun.
- AD 1858 – First baptisms in America (Bluffton, Ind.) officiated by Elder Joseph Bela, from Hungary, who also founded the church in Sardis, Ohio in AD 1868.
- AD 1886 – Bro. Henry Geistlich of Zurich visits America, finds a small group of believers in Mansfield, Ohio. They multiplied into a large church through the efforts of Bro Joseph Bela, the Hungarian, who also spoke the German language.

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## Who were these early Christians? What was their testimony to their world?

“They dwell in their own countries simply as sojourners ----- They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of Heaven, They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time, they surpass the law by their lives. They love all men, but are persecuted by all. They are unknown, yet condemned. They are put to death, but [will be] restored to life. They are poor, yet they make many rich. They possess few things, yet they abound in all. They are dishonored, but in their dishonor are glorified ----- and those that hate them are unable to give any reason for their hatred.”

*The words of an unknown author, as he described Christians to the Romans in the year AD 130.*

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## Who are we? What is our testimony to our world?

“Not boasting, but we have the best thing in the world. The more we look at it, the more we have to marvel how much light was given to our brothers, and how much light is given to us in our time.”

Bro. Henry Michele – 1948 Brother’s Meeting

What an incomparable blessing, that after examining the doctrines of the earliest believers, we can say Amen to Bro. Michele’s statement. It is a foretaste of Heaven to personally relate to the conviction felt by the psalmist when he wrote in Psalm 100:3; *“Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; **we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.**”*

How deeply do we value this treasure? What are we willing to sacrifice to preserve it? What strategic plan is in place and working in our family circles? The first line of defense is in the home, not the church. The church only reflects what the home environments are.

***May those that come behind us find us faithful.***