

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE  
CHURCH OF CHRIST:  
FROM THE GERMAN**

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A Brief History of the Church of Christ: From the German by C. G. Barth

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**C. G. BARTH**

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BRIEF HISTORY  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF CHRIST.

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BRIEF HISTORY  
OF  
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

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FIRST PERIOD.

FROM THE EFFUSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT PENTECOST, TO THE TIME OF CONSTANTINE.

[A.D. 33 to A.D. 324.]

I.—*The Apostolic Age.*

It is presumed that our youthful readers are acquainted with the Acts of the Apostles, and that they take delight in this interesting and precious book of Scripture. They will, therefore, be glad to see the narration continued where St. Luke, who wrote it, leaves off, which is on St. Paul's arrival at Rome. But before we commence relating the events which followed immediately after this, we must refer to parts of St. Luke's narrative. Our history will require the best attention of all young persons, especially as it will bring before them many things which probably they have never heard of before, although the accounts we have of them are not new, but very ancient.

Our Lord had promised to his disciples that he would make them fishers of men; and, in Matt. xiii. 47, he shows them, by a parable, what sort of a capture they were to make: not one for the hurt or destruction of those who should be brought into the gospel net, but for the salvation of many from the great Leviathan; and this salvation an everlasting one. Neither was it to be a capture made, as it were, with the hook, by which those who should be caught would only be deceived and wounded; but it was to be made as with

a net, into which the fish should be collected together, both "bad and good," small and great.

This promise of Christ very soon began to be fulfilled. The first time that St. Peter cast the gospel net, which was only ten days after our Lord's ascension, he drew away by it three thousand at once. If our young readers have ever seen an assembly of three thousand persons, which they may possibly have done, they will recollect how very great a multitude this was; and we shall have to look long into the history of the church of Christ before we find another such a capture made at once. But what is even this great multitude, compared with the millions which have since been brought into the Christian church! It is only as a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field, and it became a great tree, so that the fowls of the air lodged in the branches thereof, Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

In a few days afterwards, Acts iv. 4, the first Christian church at Jerusalem received an additional increase of two thousand souls, making five thousand in all; whereas, before the effusion of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, their number amounted only to about a hundred and twenty, Acts i. 15.

Such then was the commencement of the Christian church; for the assembly at Jerusalem, who were brought to true faith in Christ at the feast of Pentecost, was the first Christian community or church. These first Christians, whose number continually increased, (compare Acts ii. 47, with xi. 5—7, and xvi. 5,) constituted a true and pure church of Christ, and showed, by their lives and conversation, that they had really received the good tidings of the Saviour, and had undergone a change of disposition and character. Even their unbelieving Jewish brethren stood in a kind of awe of them, and for a time did not venture to injure them. The whole company were of one heart and one mind; all were bound to one another in love, and each was ready to supply his brethren's wants out of his own means. The wealthier members of the church sold their houses and lands, and the money was

deposited in a common stock, for the maintenance of their poorer brethren. This common stock was under the direction and management of the apostles, till persons were appointed to the business, who were called deacons. The Christians at Jerusalem met together every day for edification; and they frequently held social feasts of love, and celebrated the Lord's supper. If any one refused to comply with the order of the church, or conducted himself with offence, he was affectionately and seriously admonished for his fault; and, when this was of no avail, he was excluded. When any one wished to join the community of these disciples of Jesus, and for that purpose to be baptized, he was only asked, whether he believed that Jesus is the Christ, (the Messiah, the promised Saviour of the world,) and if he answered in the affirmative, he was not refused baptism. This served to show the Jews that the apostles had no intention of introducing a new religion, but that they only preached the accomplishment of what the Israelites had so long expected, and consequently that they stood upon the foundation of Moses and the prophets.

There was no reason, in general, to fear that many would resolve upon this profession of Christ, unless they believed with the heart: as the mere profession required great self-denial. They had to acknowledge publicly as their Lord and King that very Jesus of Nazareth, who had been ignominiously crucified; and this was, to most of the Jews, such a "stumbling block," that nothing but special Divine influence could make the gospel to them "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Moreover, the peaceful days of the church soon terminated. When the young tree had gained sufficient strength, the Lord permitted storms and tempests to assault and shake it. This however only served to make it strike its roots still deeper, and to diffuse the sweetness of its blossoms to a greater extent.

After the death of Stephen, who was the first Christian martyr, arose the first persecution against the Christians at Jerusalem. Some of them were thrown