

**"A HISTORY OF THE TRUE CHURCH":
A BOOK REVIEW**

By Corliss F. Randolph

A copy of a book bearing the title, *A History of the True Church*, with the names of A. N. Dugger and C. O. Dodd as authors as well as publishers of the book for "The Bible Advocate," Salem, W. Va., U. S. A., copyright, 1936, has recently come into the hands of this writer. The book, of upwards of three hundred pages, is a palpable attempt to prove that the religious sect known as the "Church of God" is a sort of apostolic succession from the time of Christ, "traced from 33 A.D. to date."

To that end, hundreds of quotations from numerous authors, chosen irrespective of content, have been juggled into a sort of chronological chain, with connecting notes or comments by the authors of this book, in their attempt to establish their thesis, apparently wholly oblivious of the fact that all Christian churches, and Jewish churches for that matter, are churches of God, though by no means in the narrow sectarian sense meant by the authors of this book. All and sundry authors from whose writings a few lines, or even pages, can be gleaned to supply links in their chain of assumed evidence, are cited irrespective. Even though, to them, the Roman Catholic Church is "The harlot," its writers furnish grist for the mill of our authors.

Some of our best known and older Seventh Day Baptist churches are cited as "Churches of God"; for example, the Mill Yard Church, of London, England—the mother of English-speaking Seventh Day Baptist churches—is game for their bag. So, also, are Newport, Piscataway, Shrewsbury, and even the German Seventh Day Baptist Church of Ephrata

Benjamin Franklin becomes "the famous Pennsylvania Quaker" and "an observer of the seventh-day Sabbath." (p. 262.) The worship of "the stern Puritans at Plymouth . . . was on the Sabbath (Saturday) rather than Sunday." (p. 265.) The Pilgrim Fathers "were Sabbath-keepers, observing the seventh day of the week, and baptized by immersion." (p. 248.) Such preposterously erroneous statements are calmly inserted into the body of this remarkable book as historic facts.

Names of persons and places are treated equally cavalierly; for example: Francis Bampfield appears as "Frances Banefield," Job Bennett as "Jobe Bennett," Pinner's Hall as "Pinneis Hall," Bull Stake Alley as "Bell Alley."

The authors do not appear to know that, in the last analysis, the Puritans and Separatists were two distinct classes of church reformers in England; but they use the terms Puritan, Separatist, and Non-conformist as synonymous and interchangeable, apparently.

The sect now known as the "Church of God" is of comparatively recent origin, an off-shoot, as we learn, of the Seventh Day Adventists, who came out of the Millerite movement of a century ago.* More recently, as we are informed, there was a split in the "Church of God"; and A. N. Dugger was a leading spirit among the seceders. As set forth in the book under consideration, the seceders established headquarters at Salem, W. Va. Here on September 4, 1933, occurred "the restoration of the Scriptural organization of the Twelve to look after the spiritual affairs of the church, and Seven to take charge of the financial business, and also the Seventy to go forth two by two in giving the warning message for the hour." (p. 299; cf. pp. 300 et seq.) Among these groups,

Twelve Apostles of Jesus, and of his Seventy. Here, it may be assumed that Judas does not carry the bag. It appears to be entrusted to seven, rather than one. In these groups, the authors of this book are given prominent places.

Inaccuracies, historical and otherwise, such as we have noted, are sufficient to condemn this book outright as wholly untrustworthy as a source of history, even narrowly sectarian history. It is a pitiful, all but ludicrous, example of history written by ignorant hands, unskilled in historical research and interpretation, but bent upon establishing a predetermined thesis, regardless.

* The authors of this book set up the claim that the Seventh Day Adventists came into being as a separate sect, in 1860, as an off-shoot of the "Church of God." (p. 294.)

Since the publication of this book, as we are credibly informed, there has been another split in this "Church of God"; and C. O. Dodd, who had gathered the original congregation at Salem, W. Va., has been set adrift, leaving A. N. Dugger in possession of that field.

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