

[Novatian] considered the genuine Church of Christ to be a society where virtue and innocence reigned universally, and refused any longer to acknowledge those as its members who had even once degenerated into unrighteousness. His followers were called *Cathari*, or Puritans, and they comprehended many austere and independent Christians, in the east no less than in the west. But this endeavour to revive the spotless moral purity of the primitive faith was found inconsistent with the corruptions even of that early age; it was regarded with suspicion by the leading prelates, as a vain and visionary scheme; and those rigid principles, which had characterized and sanctified the Church in the first century, were abandoned to the profession of schismatic sectaries in the third." (Waddington's "History of the Church," i. 166). This is candid and liberal.

In the fourth century the *Donatists* raised the reform standard. They constituted about one-half of the Christian population of Northern Africa. Purity was their main object; they also, as well as the Novatians, called themselves *Cathari*—the *pure*—*Puritans*. Other men called them *Donatists*, after Donatus, whose leadership they followed. Robert Robinson, a learned writer of ecclesiastical history, in the last century, says they were "Trinitarian Baptists." The Rev. Thomas Long, Prebendary of Exeter, whose "History of the Donatists" was published in 1677, asserts that they "were generally anabaptistical; for they did not only rebaptize the adults that came over to them, but refused to baptize children, contrary to the practice of the Church, as appears by several discourses of St. Augustine," (Page 103).

That phrase, "the practice of the Church," is a very misleading one. The use of it arose in this way:—whatever ceremonies or usages existed, at any place or time, it was presumed, or represented, that it must have been always so from the beginning. The argument was—"This Church was founded in the times of the Apostles; such and such observances are now practised here; no doubt, therefore, that they were established by the Apostles." This was Augustine's argument for infant baptism. "If any one," he says, "seek for divine authority in this matter, though what is held by the whole Church, and that not as instituted by councils, but as a matter of *invariable custom*, is rightly