

AA-2.-193

The Free Church and the Early Church

BRIDGING THE HISTORICAL
AND THEOLOGICAL DIVIDE

Edited by

D. H. Williams

WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN / CAMBRIDGE, U.K.

© 2002 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
All rights reserved

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
255 Jefferson Ave. S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503 /
P.O. Box 163, Cambridge CB3 9PU U.K.

Printed in the United States of America

07 06 05 04 03 02 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 0-8028-4986-5

UB0369255

www.eerdmans.com

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Preface</i> | vii |
| HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION | |
| The Canon of Scripture in the Church FREDERICK W. NORRIS | 3 |
| Evangelicals, Irenaeus, and the Bible D. JEFFREY BINGHAM | 27 |
| The Correction of the Augustinians: A Case Study in the Critical Appropriation of a Suspect Tradition GERALD W. SCHLABACH | 47 |
| RE-READING THE LEGACY OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION | |
| <i>Sola Scriptura</i> in Zürich? PHYLLIS RODGERSON PLEASANTS | 77 |

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Scripture, Tradition, and the Church: Reformation and Post-Reformation | 101 |
|---|-----|

D. H. WILLIAMS

TRADITION AND THE CHURCH

| | |
|---|-----|
| The "Congregationalism" of the Early Church | 129 |
|---|-----|

EVERETT FERGUSON

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Authority of Tradition: A Baptist View | 141 |
|--|-----|

E. GLENN HINSON

| | |
|--|-----|
| Alexander Campbell and the Apostolic Tradition | 163 |
|--|-----|

WILLIAM TABBERNEE

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| <i>Contributors</i> | 181 |
|---------------------|-----|

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| <i>Index</i> | 182 |
|--------------|-----|

Preface

To embark on a study that addresses the faith of the patristic or early church from the perspective of the free (or believer's) church is to discover how high is the historical and theological wall that separates the two. Even to say that free church and/or evangelical Christianity¹ has a heritage that encompasses ancient Christian influences will surprise many who identify themselves with this kind of Protestantism.² For such believers the ages of the church which follow the apostles, but predate the Reformation, constitute a kind of ecclesiastical "lost world," shrouded in the mists of empty ritualism, works righteousness, strange saints, and offering little relevance for grasping a vital Christian faith. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The problem is not merely that many Christians tend to view their

1. Free church Christianity is not synonymous with modern evangelicalism, although a large number of the religious affiliations within the free church legacy also identify themselves as "evangelical."

2. Most historians speak of the "free church" as that nonmagisterial part of the Protestant Reformation which began as various (so-called) "Anabaptist" groups in the sixteenth century, eventually becoming variegated into scores of self-sustaining movements such as the Hutterites, Mennonites, Quakers, as well as those which stem from Pietist and Puritan roots, such as Baptists, Quakers, Congregationalists, Evangelical Free, Methodists, and later, the Holiness and Restorationist movements: Nazarene, Disciples of Christ (or the Christian Church), Brethren, Pentecostal, Church of God, Adventist, and of course, Independent or Bible Churches.