

# **A History of the Baptists**

**By John T. Christian**

## **CHAPTER II THE ANCIENT CHURCHES**

The period of the ancient churches (A. D. 100-325) is much obscured. Much of the material has been lost; much of it that remains has been interpolated by Mediaeval Popish writers and translators; and all of it has been involved in much controversy. Caution must, therefore, be observed in arriving at permanent conclusions. Hasty generalizations that all Christians and churches were involved in doctrinal error must be accepted with extreme caution. Strange and horrible charges began to be current against the Christians. The secrecy of their meetings for worship was ascribed, not to its true cause, the fear of persecution, but to a consciousness of abominations which could not bear the light. The Jews were especially industrious in inventing and propagating such stories. In this way discredit was brought on the Christian name.

It is certain, however, in the early days following the death of the apostle John, that the Christians lived simple and zealous lives. Isaac Taylor, who especially wrote against a superstitious overvaluation of the patristic age, gives a fine picture of early Christian life. He says:

Our brethren of the early church challenge our respect, as well as affection; for theirs was the fervor of a steady faith in things unseen and eternal; theirs, often, a meek patience under the most grievous wrongs; theirs the courage to maintain a good profession before the frowning face of philosophy, of secular tyranny, and of splendid superstition; theirs was abstractness from the world and a painful self-denial; theirs the most arduous and costly labors of love; theirs a munificence in charity, altogether without example; theirs was a reverent and scrupulous care of the sacred writings; and this one merit, if they had no other, is of a superlative degree, and should entitle them to the veneration and grateful regards of the modern church. How little do many readers of the Bible, nowadays, think of what it cost the Christians of the second and third centuries, merely to rescue and hide the sacred treasures from the rage of the heathen (Taylor, *Ancient Christianity*, I 37).

A most beautiful and pathetic picture is given by the author of the *Epistola ad Diognetum* in the early part of the second century. He says:

The Christians are not distinguished from other men by country, by language, nor by civil institutions. For they neither dwell in cities by themselves, nor use a peculiar tongue, nor lead a singular mode of life. They dwell in the Grecian or barbarian cities, as the case may be; they follow the usages of the country in dress, food, and the other affairs of life. Yet they present a wonderful and confessedly paradoxical conduct. They dwell in their own native lands, but as strangers. They take part in all things, as citizens; and they suffer all things, as foreigners. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every native land is a foreign. They marry, like all others; they have children; but they do not cast away their offsprings. They have the table in common, but not wives. They are in the flesh, but do not live after the flesh. They live upon the earth, but are citizens of heaven. They obey the existing laws, and excel the laws by their lives. They love all, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown, and yet they are condemned. They are killed and made alive. They are poor and make many rich. They lack all things, and in all things abound. They are reproached, and glory in their reproaches. They are calumniated, and are justified. They are cursed, and they bless. They receive scorn, and they give honor. They do good, and are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice, as being made alive. By the Jews they are attacked as aliens, and by the Greeks persecuted; and the cause of the enmity their enemies cannot tell. In short, what the soul is to the body, the Christians are in the world. The soul is diffused through all the members of the body, and the Christians are spread through the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, but it is not of the body; so the Christians dwell in the world, but are not of the world. The soul, invisible, keeps watch in the visible body; so also the Christians are seen to live in the world, for their piety is invisible. The flesh hates and wars against the soul; suffering no wrong from it, but because it resists fleshly pleasures; and the world hates the Christians with no reason, but they resist its pleasures. The soul loves the flesh and members, by which it is hated; so the Christians love their haters. The soul is enclosed in the body, but holds the body together; so the Christians are detained in the world as in a prison; but they contain the world. Immortal, the soul dwells in the mortal body; so the Christians dwell in the corruptible, but look for incorruption in heaven. The soul is the better for

restriction in food and drink; and the Christians increase, though daily punished. This lot God has assigned to the Christians in the world; and it cannot be taken from them (Epist. ad Diognetum, C. 5 and 6 p.69 sq. Otto. Lips., 1852).

Through all of this period there were doubtless many churches that remained true to the New Testament ideals. The more earnestly they adhered to Scriptural principles the less likely was mention made of them. It was the unusual and the heretical that attracted attention and was recorded in the histories of the times.

For the first three centuries the Lord placed Christianity in the most unfavorable circumstances that it might display its moral power, and gain its victory over the world by spiritual weapons alone. Until the reign of Constantine it had not even a legal existence in the Roman empire, but was first ignored as a Jewish sect, then slandered, proscribed, persecuted, as a treasonable innovation, and the adoption of it made punishable with confiscation and death. Besides, it offered not the slightest favor, as Mohammedanism afterwards did, to the corrupt inclinations of the heart, but against the current ideas of the Jews and heathens it so presented its inexorable demand of repentance and conversion, renunciation of self and of the world, that more, according to Tertullian, were kept out of the new sect by love of pleasure, than by love of life. The Jewish origin of Christianity also, and the poverty and obscurity of a majority of its professors offended the pride of the Greeks and Romans. (Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 1.148).

In spite of these extraordinary difficulties Christianity made progress. The hindrances became helps in the providence of God. Persecution led to martyrdom, and martyrdom had attractions. Tertullian exclaimed to the heathen: "All of your ingenious cruelties can accomplish nothing; they are only a lure to this sect. Our number increases the more you destroy us. The blood of the Christians is their seed." The moral earnestness of the Christians contrasted powerfully with the prevailing corruption of the age, and while it repelled the frivolous and voluptuous, it could not fail to impress most strongly the deepest and noblest minds. This progress extended to every part of the empire. "We are a people of yesterday," says Tertullian, "and yet we have filled every place belonging to you—cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum. We leave you your temples only. You can count your armies our number in a single province will be greater."

Nevertheless, even before the death of the last of the apostles many dangerous and grievous heresies had sprung up in the Christian churches. A constant tendency to separate from the truth, as proclaimed in the Scriptures, was manifested in some places. The trend from the Word of God has been noted by the apostle Paul, and in some of his Epistles he combated error. Shortly after the death of the last of the apostles some dangerous heresies crept into the churches, and were advocated by many learned and distinguished men.

It is not to be understood that all, or even most of the doctrinal errors, which are found in later Roman Catholic history are to be found in this period. This is not the case. For example, the worship of Mary and of images, transubstantiation, the infallibility of the pope, and the immaculate conception are all of later date. The tendency was rather to lessen the demand for repentance and faith, the experimental in religion, and rather to emphasize external signs and symbols. It was imagined that the outward symbol could take the place of the inward grace. The point of departure probably had its largest expression in baptismal salvation, and the tendency of some churches toward episcopacy, and away from democratic simplicity.

One of the very earliest voices lifted against the abuses was that of the Shepherd of Hermas. The Shepherd says:

Customs have become worldly; discipline is relaxed; the Church is a sickly old woman, incapable of standing on her feet; rulers and ruled are all languishing, and many among them are corrupt, covetous, greedy, hypocritical, contentious, slanderers, blasphemers, libertines, spies, renegades, schismatics. Worthy teachers are not wanting, but there are also many false prophets, vain, eager after the first sees, for whom the greatest thing in life is not the practice of piety and justice, but the strife for the post of command. Now the day of wrath is at hand; the punishment will be dreadful; the Lord will give unto every one according to his works.

One of the earliest and most hurtful errors was the dogma of baptismal regeneration. This error in one form or another has marred the life and colored the history of all of the Christian ages. It began early and the virus may be traced to this day not only among ritualists, but likewise in the standards of evangelical Christians. Tertullian was influenced by it to oppose infant baptism, and under other conditions it became the frightful origin of that heresy.

Nevertheless, the churches continued to be free and independent. There were as yet no metropolitan bishops, and the office and authority of a pope was not yet known. Rome in those days had no great authority in the Christian world. "The see of Rome," remarks Cardinal Newman, "possessed no great mind in the whole period of persecution. Afterwards for a long time it had not a single doctor to show. The great luminary of the Western World is St. Augustine; he, no infallible teacher, has formed the intellect of Europe" (John Henry Newman, *Apologia pro Vita sua*, 4()7. London, 1864). Dean Stanley rightly adds: "There have been occupants of the sees of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Canterbury who have produced more effect on the mind of Christendom by their utterances than any of the popes" (Stanley, *Christian Institutions*, 241. New York, 1881).

There was, however, a constant tendency towards centralization. As the pastor assumed rights which were not granted to him by the Scriptures, some of the metropolitan pastors exercised an undue authority over some of the smaller churches. Then the churches in some of the cities sought the patronage and protection of the pastors of the larger cities. Finally Rome, the political center of the world, became the religious center as well. In time the pastor in Rome became the, universal pope. All of this was of slow growth and required centuries for its consummation.

Gregory the Great (A. D. 590-694) was "the first of the proper popes" and with him begins "the development of the absolute papacy" (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, I. 15). The growth of the papacy was a process of history. Long before this the bishops of Rome had made arrogant claims over other churches. Notably was this true of Leo I., A. D. 440-461. All of this is conceded by Hefele. He says:

It is, however, not to be mistaken, that the bishops of Rome did not, everywhere, in all the West, exercise full patriarchal rights; that, to-wit, in several provinces, simple bishops were ordained without his cooperation (Hefele, I. 385).

The line of the absolute Mediaeval popes began with Gregory.

"Christianity in Rome," says Gregorovius, "became in a very short time corrupt; and this is not to be wondered at, because the ground in which the seed of its doctrine had been sown was rotten and the least apt of all other grounds to bring forth good fruit. . . The Roman character had not been changed from what it was of old, because baptism cannot change the spirit of the times" (Gregorovius, *Storia della citta di Roma nel Medio Eve*, I.155).

Gregory objected to the title "universal bishop." "I do not esteem that an honor," he declares, "by which my brethren lose their honor. My honor is the solid strength of my brethren. . . . But no more of this: away with words which inflate pride and wound charity" (Gregory, Ep. 30.III. 933). Nevertheless, the conception of a local, independent church, by these and other means was partly overthrown; and much of the Christian world was called upon to suffer at the hands of a wicked and often ungodly hierarchy.

Believers' baptism continued to prevail in the churches. Notwithstanding the efficacy which was supposed to exist in baptism, infant baptism was of slow growth. Even after its first appearance it was opposed by many, and for a long time was not generally practiced.

The writers known as the Apostolic Fathers, Clement, Barnabas, Ignatius and the Pastor of Hermas, all required faith on the part of the candidate baptized. Clement does not mention baptism in his Epistle to the Corinthians; but he does exhort parents to "let your children be partakers of the Christian training" (Migne, *Patrologiae gr.*, I. 255).

Barnabas says: "Mark how he has described at once both the water and the cross. For these words imply, blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, have gone down into the water; for, says he, they shall receive their reward in due time" (Migne, *Patrologiae gr.*, II. 755).

Ignatius writes to Polycarp as follows: "let your baptism be to you an armor, and faith as a spear, and love as a helmet, and patience as a panoply" (Ibid, V. 847). The order of baptism as well as the exhortation exclude infant baptism.

And the Shepherd of Hermas speaks of those who "have heard the word, and wished to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Ibid, *Patrologiae gr.*, 11.906).

The Apostolic Fathers require that faith shall precede baptism and hence they know nothing of infant baptism.. Dr. Charles W. Bennett, Professor of Historical Theology in Garrett Biblical Institute, Methodist, says: "The Apostolic Fathers contain no positive information relative to the practice of the church of their time respecting infant baptism" (Bennett, *Christian Archaeology*, 391. New York, 1889).

Passing to the second generation of the Fathers, Justin Martyr, A. D. 114-168, has sometimes been quoted as favoring the practice of infant baptism. After relating the evils of human nature and the bad habits of men, Justin declares that,

in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and ignorance, but may become the children of choice and of knowledge, and may obtain in water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, Its name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; he who leads to the laver the person that is to be washed calling him by name alone (Migne, VI.419).

It is now quite generally admitted that Justin knows only the baptism of adults, though he believed in baptismal regeneration.

The celebrated passage from Irenaeus is as follows:

For he came to save all through means of himself, all I say, who through him are born again to God—infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child, for children; thus sanctifying those who are of this age, being at the same time made to them an example of youths, and thus sanctifying them to the Lord (Migne, VII. 783).

This passage is probably spurious. There is no proof, however, that it refers to baptism at all. Dr. Karl R. Hagenbach, for fifty years professor in the University of Basel, says that this passage does not "afford any decisive proof. It only expresses the beautiful idea that Jesus was Redeemer in every stage of life; but it does not say that he redeemed children by the water of baptism" (Hagenbach, History of Doctrines, 200. New York, 1869).

Origen, A. D. 185-254, is quoted in favor of infant baptism. His words are:

To these considerations it can be added, that it may be enquired why, since the baptism of the church is given for the remission of sins, baptism is given according to the observance of the church. Even to children (*parvulis*) for the grace of baptism would seem superfluous if there was nothing in children requiring remission and indulgence (Migne, XII. 492)

The same sentiment is found in his commentary on Romans.

The original Greek of Origen no longer exists, and there remain of the words of Origen only translations by Rufinus and Jerome in Latin. These translations are notoriously unreliable, and it is admitted that the ideas of a later age are freely incorporated in the writings of Origen. The children mentioned are not "infants," for in the same work this word is used to describe Jesus at the age of twelve (Migne, XIII. 1849). All that can be

claimed is that Origen refers to the baptism of children, not infants, as an apostolic tradition. This is not of much weight, when it is recalled that Origen refers to a number of things as of apostolic tradition which are not even mentioned in the Scriptures.

The earliest clear evidence of infant baptism is found in Tertullian who opposed it (A. D. 185). The first direct evidence in favor of it is found in the writings of Cyprian, in the Council of Carthage, in Africa, A. D. 253. In writing to one Fidus, Cyprian takes the ground that infants should be baptized as soon as they are born (Epistle of Cyprian, LVIII. 2). This opinion, however, was not based upon the Scriptures, and did not meet with the approval of the Christian world.

The early councils of the church were all against infant baptism. The Council of Elvira or Grenada, A. D. 305, required the delay of baptism for two years (Hefele, History of the Councils, 1.155. Edinburgh, 1871). The Council of Laodicaea held A. D. 360, demanded that those who are "to be baptized must learn the creed by heart and recite it" (Hefele, II.319). The Council of Constantinople decreed that persons should "remain a long time under Scriptural instruction before they receive baptism" (Ibid, II.368). And the Council of Carthage, A. D. 398, decreed that "catechumens shall give their names, and be prepared for baptism" (DuPin, Bibliotheque universelle, c. 4.282).

Many of the most prominent Christians, though born of Christian parents, were not baptized in infancy. The number of such persons is so great, and the details are so many, that mention can be made of only a few of them. The list would include the celebrated historian Eusebius, the emperor Constantine the Great, Ephrem Syrus, and the great Augustine.

Basil the Great was born in the year 329, in a wealthy and pious family, whose ancestors had distinguished themselves as martyrs. His mother and grandmother were Christians and four brothers and five sisters were well-known Christians. He was baptized when he was twenty-six years of age. In a remarkable passage, A. D. 380, he plainly indicates the drift of the times. He says:

Do you demur and loiter and put off baptism? When you have been from a child catechized in the Word, and you are not yet acquainted with the truth? Having been always learning it, are you not yet come to the knowledge of it? A seeker all your life long. A considerer till you are old. When will you make a Christian? When shall we see you as one of us? Last year you were staying till this year; and now you have a mind to stay till

next. Take heed, that by promising yourself a longer life, you do not quite miss of your hope. Do you not know what changes tomorrow may bring? (Migne, XXXI. 1514).

All of this demonstrates that the early Christians continued to baptize upon a profession of faith; and that infant baptism had gained no permanent foothold till ages after the days of the apostles.

Infant baptism was not of rapid growth. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo-Regius, North Africa (A. D. 353-430) was not the first to practice it; but he was, though not himself baptized in infancy, its first and ablest defender. He developed the theological argument in its favor. The Council of Mela, in Numidia, A. D. 416, composed of fifteen persons, and presided over by Augustine, decreed:

Also, it is the pleasure of the bishops in order that whoever denies that infants newly born of their mothers, are to be baptized or says that baptism is administered for the remission of their own sins, but not on account of original sin, delivered from Adam, and to be expiated by the laver of regeneration, be accursed (Wall, The History of Infant Baptism, I. 265).

It is a suggestive fact prophetic of the future that the first council favoring the practice of infant baptism also accompanied this by a curse against those who dissented from the opinions of the council. It furthermore shows there were opponents of infant baptism in those days, and that the infant rite was not the universal custom of those times.

The first rule, to which reference is made as favoring infant baptism in Europe, was by the Spanish Council of Gerunda, A. D. 517. The Council was composed of seven men who subscribed to ten rules. The canon covering the point at issue here is Article V.:

But concerning little sons lately born, it pleaseth us to appoint, that if, as is usual, they be infirm, and do not suck their mother's milk, even on the same day in which they are born (if they be offered, if they be brought) they may be baptized.

The rule was that ordinarily catechetical instruction should precede baptism. In the case of infants who were sick, because of the fear that they would be lost in case of death without baptism, they were to be baptized in infancy. No provision was made for the baptism of infants who were in good health. It has also been seriously doubted whether this Council was ever held.

Charlemagne, A. D. 789, issued the first law in Europe for baptizing infants. He was engaged in a stubborn war with the Saxons, but their brave general Windekind, always found resources to defeat his designs. In the end his imperial majesty hit upon a method, which disheartened Windekind, by detaching his people from him, and which completely made an end of the war. This was by reducing the whole nation by a dreadful alternative; either of being assassinated by the troops, or of accepting life on the condition of professing themselves Christians by being baptized; and the severe laws still stand in the capitularies of this monarch, by which they were obliged, "on pain of death, to baptize themselves, and of heavy fines to baptize their children within the year of their birth."

That this is a correct interpretation of the attitude of the early churches there is not the shadow of a doubt. All historians confirm, this contention. A few high authorities are here quoted.

Dr. Adolph Harnack, of the University of Berlin, says of the post-apostolic period:

There is no sure trace of infant baptism in the epoch; personal faith is a necessary condition (Harnack, History of Dogma, I. 20 note 2).

He further says:

Complete obscurity prevails as to the Church's adoption of the practice of child-baptism, which, though it owes its origin to the idea of this ceremony being indispensable to salvation, is nevertheless a proof that the superstitious view of baptism had increased. In the time of Irenaeus (II. 22, 4), and Tertullian (*de bapt.* 18), child-baptism had already become very general and was founded on Matthew 19: 14. We have no testimony regarding it from earlier times (Ibid, II. 142).

And finally he says that it

was established in the fifth century as the general usage. Its complete adoption runs parallel with the death of heathenism (Ibid, IV. 284).

Professor H. G. Wood, of the University of Cambridge, says:

We are, as Harnack says. "in complete obscurity as to the Church's adoption of the practice." The clear third century

references to child-baptism interpret it in the light of original sin, and if the adoption of the practice is due to this interpretation, it is almost certainly a late second century development . . . References to original sin in Clement of Rome or other writers earlier than Cyprian cannot be held to imply a knowledge of the custom of infant baptism. Moreover, the idea that infants needed to be baptized for the remission of sin. is contrary to all that is known of early Christian feeling toward childhood. . . . Even in the third century infant baptism cannot be described as a Church custom. That the Church allowed parents to bring their infants to be baptized is obvious; that some teachers and bishops may have encouraged them to do so is probable, though there is no reason to suppose that Tertullian's position was peculiarly his own. But infant baptism was not at this time enjoined, or incorporated in the standing orders of the Church (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, II.).

Dr. F. C. Conybeare says that "the essential thing was that a man should come to baptism of his own free will." He further says:

On such grounds was justified the transition of a baptism which began as a spontaneous act of self-consecration into an *opus operandum*. How long after this it was before infant baptism became normal inside the Byzantine church we do not know exactly. . . . The change came more quickly in Latin than in Greek Christendom, and very slowly indeed in the Armenian and the Georgian churches (Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edition, Article on Baptism).

Andre Lagarde says:

Until the sixth century, infants were baptized only when they were in danger of death. About this time the practice was introduced of administering baptism even when they were not ill (Lagarde, Latin Church in the Middle Ages, 37).

These facts are altogether against the idea that infant baptism was the practice of the ancient churches. In its introduction it met with the greatest opposition, and it was only under the anathema and by the point of the sword that infant baptism was pressed upon the unwilling Christians; and the same intolerance has followed its history to the present time.

Of the form of baptism practiced in the ancient churches there is not a particle of doubt. It is certain that immersion was the universal rule, save in the case of a few sick persons.

There are six elaborate descriptions or rituals of baptism which have come down to us. They were all well known in the churches and all of them prescribe immersion.. They are the so-called Egyptian Acts (Gebhardt and Harnack, *Texts and Researches*, VI. c 4 (28)); the Canon Hipolyte, the third century (Hipolyte, Bk. VII. (29)); the Apostolic Constitutions or Canons, in the Greek, the Coptic, and the Latin versions, A. D. 350-400; Cyril of Jerusalem, A. D. 286 (Migne XXXIII. 48); Ambrose of Milan, A. D. 397 (Bunsen, *Analecta*, II. 465), and Dionysius Areopagita, A. D. 450. These rituals were largely used in the churches and represent the universal practice of immersion.

Of this practice of immersion there is proof in Africa, in Palestine, in Egypt, in Antioch and Constantinople and in Cappadocia. For the Roman use of immersion we have the testimony of eight hundred years. Tertullian bears witness for the second century (Tertullian, *De Bapt.*, c. 4); Leo the Great in the fifth century (Fourth letter to the Bishop of Sicily); Pope Pelagius in the sixth century (Epist. ad Gaudent); Theodulf of Orleans in the eighth century; and in the eleventh century the Romans dipped the subject "only once" (Canisius, *Lectiones Antiq.*, III 281). These examples settle the use of the Italians.

There is also the testimony of the early Christian monuments. At first the Christians baptized in rivers and fountains. This, says Walafrid Strabo, was done with great simplicity (Migne, CXIV, 958). Later, on account of persecutions, the Christians hid themselves; and the Catacombs furnished many examples of baptisteries. Dr. Cote, who lived many years in Rome, and closely studied the baptismal question, says: "During the dark days of imperial persecutions the primitive Christians of Rome found a ready refuge in the Catacombs, where they constructed baptisteries for the administration of the rite of immersion" (Cote, *Archaeology of Baptism*, 151. London, 1876). Even a brief description of these baptisteries cannot be given here, but one who has not studied the subject carefully will be surprised at their number and extent.

Afterwards when more liberty of worship was granted to the Christians many churches were erected. At first the baptistery was an independent structure, separate from the place of worship; but later it became the custom to place the baptistery in the church house itself. Such baptisteries were erected in almost every country where the Christian religion had spread. This was particularly true in Italy. Cote gives a list of not less than sixty-six

baptisteries in that country alone (Cote, *Baptisteries*, 110). As late as the eighth and ninth centuries baptisteries continued to be in full use in Italy. Baptisteries were erected in Italy as late as the fourteenth century, while immersion continued in the Cathedral of Milan till the close of the eighteenth century.

These baptisteries were decorated and naturally many of the emblems, mosaics and paintings were intended to illuminate the form of baptism. The so-called Christian Art was found in the Catacombe, on the interior of churches and on church furniture and utensils. The oldest pictures do not date before the time of the Emperor Constantine (Parker, *The Archeology of Rome*, XII. 11. Oxford, 1877); many of them have been constantly repaired, and some of the most famous ones have been so changed that they have lost their original character (Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *History of Painting in Italy*, I. 22).

No certain conclusions can be drawn from this source, but the teaching of all early art indicates immersion as the form of baptism. The pictures represent river scenes, the candidate stands in the water, and every circumstance points toward the primitive act of baptism. The unanimous opinion of the professors of archaeology in the great universities is that the ancient pictures, in the Catacombs and elsewhere, of baptism, represent the rite as administered by immersion (See *Christian's Baptism in Sculpture and Art*. Louisville, 1907).

Affusion for baptism was of slow growth. Possibly the earliest mention of affusion is found in the famous Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (*Bryennios, Didacha ton Dodeka Apostolon*. Constantinople, 1883), which is variously claimed to be a production of the first to the seventh century.

Novatian (A. D. 250) presents the first case of clinic baptism on record. He had water profusely poured upon him while sick in bed, but his baptism is distinctly called "an abridgment" or "compend" (Eusebius, *The Church History*, 289. New York, 1890). Affusion is a mere substitute for immersion. France was the first country where affusion was permitted to persons in the full enjoyment of health (Wall, *The History of Infant Baptism*, I. 576). The first law for sprinkling was obtained in the following manner: "Pope Stephen III., being driven from Rome by Astulphus, King of the Lombards, in 753, fled to Pepin, who, a short time before, had usurped the crown of France. Whilst he remained there, the monks of Cressy, in Brittany, consulted him, whether, in cases of necessity, baptism, performed by pouring water on the head of the infant, would be lawful. Stephen replied that it would" (*Edinburgh Encyclopedia*, III. 236). It was not, however, till A.D. 1311, that the Council of Ravenna decreed: "Baptism is to be administered by trine

aspersion or immersion" (Labbe and Cosasart, Sacrosancta Concilia, II. B. 2.1586. Paris, 1671). Soon after this sprinkling became customary in France.

For the first thirteen centuries immersion was the normal practice of the Christian world. "Baptism by immersion says Dollinger, "continued to be the prevailing practice of the Church as late as the fourteenth century" (Dollinger, The History of the Church, II. 294. London, 1840-42). Immersion was practiced in some parts of Germany in the sixteenth century. In England immersion was the practice for sixteen hundred years.

At the time of the birth of Jesus religious liberty was unknown in the world. Even the ancient republics never recognized it. Socrates, with all of his moral heroism, never arose above the assumption, that impiety should be punished with death. In his defense before his judges he says:

My duty is to persuade you, if I can; but you have sworn to follow your own convictions in judging according to the law—not to make the laws bend to your partiality. And it is your duty so to do. Do not, therefore, require of me proceedings dishonorable in reference to myself and impious in regard to you, especially at a time when I am myself rebutting an accusation of impiety advanced by Miletus (Grote, History of Greece, VIII. 656)

It was fully agreed by all Pagan nations that the state had a right to regulate all matters connected with religion; and the citizen was bound to obey.

Early did the Christians avow and amplify religious liberty. The blood of persecution brought to the front this doctrine. Tertullian boldly tells the heathen that everybody has a natural and inalienable right to worship God according to his own conscience. His words are:

However, it is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according to his own convictions; one man's religion neither harms nor helps another man. It is assuredly no part of religion to compel religion—to which freewill and not force should lead us—the sacrificial victims even being required of a willing mind. You will render no real service to your gods by compelling us to sacrifice. For they can have no desire of offerings from the unwilling, unless they are animated by a spirit of contention, which is a thing altogether undivine (Tertullian, ad Scapulam, c. 2).

Justin Martyr affirmed similar opinions (Apol. I. C. 2. 4, 12), and later Lactantius says:

Religion cannot be imposed by force; the matter must be carried on by words rather than by blows, that the will may be affected. Torture and piety are widely different; nor is it possible for truth to be united with violence, or justice with cruelty. Nothing is so much a matter of free will as religion (Lactantius, Instit. div. V. 20).

Dr. Baur, commenting on these statements, says:

It is remarkable how already the oldest Christian Apologists, in vindicating the Christian faith, were led to assert the Protestant principle of freedom of faith and conscience as an inherent attribute of the conception of religion against their heathen opponents (Baur, Gesch der Christl. Kirche, I. 428).

Hase says:

Thus did the church prove, in a time of unlimited arbitrary power, the refuge of popular freedom, and saints assumed the part of tribunes of the people (Hase, Church History, sec. 117, p. 161, 7th edition).

This is hardly a Protestant doctrinal tenet, but it does belong to the Baptists. Protestants have been all too ready to persecute.

When Constantine, after the victory of Milvian Bridge, on the Tiber, October 27, 312, became emperor he issued a decree of toleration. The famous edict of Milan was issued by Constantine and Licinius. It is of so much importance that the law is here transcribed in full. It is as follows:

Perceiving long ago that religious liberty ought not to be denied, but that it ought to be granted to the judgment and desire of each individual to perform his religious duties according to his own choice, we had given orders that every man, Christians as well as others, should preserve the faith of his own sect and religion. But since in this rescript, in which much liberty was granted them, many and various conditions seemed clearly added, some of them, it may be, after a little retired from such observance. When I, Constantine Augustus, and I, Licinna Augustua, came under favorable auspices to Milan and took under consideration everything which pertained to the common

weal and prosperity, we resolved among other things, or rather first of all, to make such decrees as seemed in many respects for the benefit of every one; namely, such as should preserve reverence and piety toward the deity. We resolved, that is, to grant both to the Christians and to all men freedom to follow the religion which they choose, that whatever heavenly divinity exists may be propitious to us and to all that live under our government. We have, therefore, determined, with sound and upright purpose, that liberty is to be denied to no one, to choose and to follow the religious observance of the Christians, but that to each one freedom is to be given to devote his mind to that religion which he may think adapted to himself, in order that the Deity may exhibit to us in all things his accustomed care and favor. It was fitting that we should write that this is our pleasure, that those conditions being entirely left out which were contained in our former letter concerning the Christians which was sent to your devotedness, everything that seemed very severe and foreign to our mildness may be annulled, and that now every one who has the same desire to observe the religion of the Christians may do so without molestation. We have resolved to communicate this most fully to thy care, in order that thou mayest know that we have granted to these same Christians freedom and full liberty to observe their own religion. Since this has been granted freely to them, thy devotedness perceives that liberty is granted to others also who may wish to follow their own religious observances; it being clearly in accordance with the tranquillity of our times, that each one should have the liberty of choosing and worshipping whatever deity he pleases. This has been done by us in order that we might not seem in any way to discriminate against any rank of religion. And we decree still further in regard to the Christians, that their places, in which they were formerly accustomed to assemble, and concerning which in the former letter sent to thy devotedness a different command was given, if it appear that any have bought them either from our treasury or from any other person, shall be restored to the said Christians, without demanding money or any other equivalent, with no delay or hesitation. If any happen to have received the said places as a gift, they shall restore them as quickly as possible to these same Christians; with the understanding that if those who have bought these places, or those who have received them, demand anything from our bounty, they may go to the judge of the district, that provision may be made for them by our clemency. All these things are to be granted to the society of Christians by

your care immediately and without any delay. And since the said Christians are known to have possessed not only these places in which they were accustomed to assemble, but also other places, belonging not to individuals among them, but to the society as a whole, that is, to the society of Christians, you will command that all of these, in virtue of the law which we have above stated, be restored, without any hesitation, to these same Christians; that is, to their society and congregation; the above mentioned provision being of course observed, that those who restore them without price, as we have before said, may expect indemnification from our bounty. In all these things, for the behoof of the aforesaid society of Christians, you are to use the utmost diligence, to the end that our command may be speedily fulfilled, and that in this also, by our clemency, provision may be made for the common and public tranquillity. For by this means, as we have said before, the divine favor toward us which we have already experienced in many matters will continue sure through all time. And that the terms of this gracious ordinance may be known to all, it is expected that this which we have written will be published everywhere by you and brought to the knowledge of all, in order that this gracious ordinance of ours may remain unknown to no one (Eusebius. The Church History, X. 5).

Of this decree Mason says:

It is the very first announcement of that doctrine which is now regarded as the mark and principle of civilization, the foundation of solid liberty, the characteristic of modern politics. In vigorous and trenchant sentences it sets forth perfect freedom of conscience, the unfettered choice of religion (Mason, Persecution of Dioclesian, 327).

A forced religion is no religion at all. Unfortunately, the successors of Constantine from the time of Theodosius the Great (385-395) enforced the Christian religion to the exclusion of every other; and not only so, but they enforced so-called orthodoxy to the exclusion of every form of dissent, which was punished as a crime against the State. Absolute freedom of religion and of worship is a fact logically impossible on the church-state system. The government of the Roman empire was too absolute to abandon supervision of religion, so that the edict of Constantine was only temporary. Further, the rising power of episcopacy fitted into the monarchical system. Many of the bishops and monks were "men in black clothes, as voracious as elephants,

and insatiably thirsty, but concealing their sensuality tunder an artificial paleness."

The first blood of heretics shed by a Christian prince was by Maximus, A. D. 385, in the Spanish city of Treves. This act was approved by the bishops, with a single exception, but the Christian churches recoiled from it with horror.