

# **A History of the Baptists**

**By John T. Christian**

## **CHAPTER V**

### **THE ALBIGENSIAN, THE PETROBRUSIAN, THE HENRICIAN, THE ARNOLDIST AND THE PERENGARIAN CHURCHES**

IT has already been indicated that the Paulicians came from Armenia, by the way of Thrace, settled in France and Italy, and traveled through, and made disciples in, nearly all of the countries of Europe. The descent of the Albigenses has been traced by some writers from the Paulicians (Encyclopedia Britannica, I. 454. 9th edition). Recent writers hold that the Albigenses had been in the valleys of France from the earliest ages of Christianity. Prof. Bury says that "it lingered on in Southern France," and was not a "mere Bogomilism, but an ancient local survival." Mr. Conybeare thinks that it lived on from the early times in the Balkan Peninsula, "where it was probably the basis of Bogomilism" (Bury, Ed. Gibbon, History of Rome, VI. 563).

They spread rapidly through Southern France and the little city of Albi, in the district of Albigeois, became the center of the party. From this city they were called Albigenses. In Italy the Albigenses were known by various names, like the Paulicians, such as "Good Men," and others. It is difficult to determine the origin of all of the names; but some of them came from the fact that they were regarded as vulgar, illiterate and low bred; while other names were given from the purity and wholesomeness of their lives. It is remarkable that the inquisitorial examinations of the Albigenses did not tax them with immoralities, but they were condemned for speculations, or rather for virtuous rules of action, which the Roman Catholics accounted heresy. They said a Christian church should consist of good people; a church had no power to frame any constitutions; it was not right to take oaths; it was not lawful to kill mankind; a man ought not to be delivered up to the officers of justice to be converted; the benefits of society belong alike to all members of it; faith without works could not save a man; the church ought not to persecute any, even the wicked; the law of Moses was no rule for Christians; there was no need of priests, especially of wicked ones; the sacraments, and orders, and ceremonies of the church of Rome were futile, expensive, oppressive, and wicked. They baptized by immersion and rejected infant baptism (Jones, The History of the Christian Church, I. 287). They were decidedly anti-clerical.

"Here then," says Dr. Allix, "we have found a body of men in Italy, before the year one thousand and twenty-six, five hundred years before the Reformation, who believed contrary to the opinions of the Church of Rome, and who highly condemned their errors." Atto, Bishop of Vercelli, had complained of such a people eighty years before, and so had others before him, and there is the highest reason to believe they had always existed in Italy (Ibid, I. 288). The Cathari themselves boasted of their remote antiquity (Bonacursus, Vitae haereticorum... Cathorum, ap. D'Archery, Scriptorum Spicilegium, I. 208).

In, tracing the history and doctrines of the Albigenses it must never be forgotten that on account of persecution they scarcely left a trace of their writings, confessional, apologetical, or polemical; and the representations which Roman Catholic writers, their avowed enemies, have given of them, are highly exaggerated. The words of a historian who is not in accord with, their principles may here be used. He says:

It is evident, however, that they formed a branch of that broad stream of sectarianism and heresy which rose far away in. Asia from the contact between Christianity and the Oriental religions, and which, by crossing the Balkan Peninsula, reached Western Europe. The first overflow from this source were the Manichaeans, the next the Paulicians, the next the Cathari, who in the tenth and eleventh centuries were very strong in Bulgaria, Bosnia, and Dalmatia. Of the Cathari, the Bogomils, Patoreni, Albigenses, etc. . . were only individual developments (C. Schmidt, Schaff-Hersog, I. 47).

That is to say, these parties were all of the same family, and this connection is rendered all the more forceful on account of the terms of reproach in which this writer clothes his language.

It has already been indicated that the Paulicians were not Manichaeans, and the same thing may probably be said of the Albigenses. The Albigenses were oppressed on account of this sentiment, which accusation was also made against the Waldenses. Care must be taken at this point, and too prompt credence should not be given to the accuser. The Roman Catholic Church sought diligently for excuses to persecute. Even Luther was declared by the Synod of Sens to be a Manichaean. The celebrated Archbishop Ussher says that the charge "of Manichaeism on the Albigensian sect is evidently false" (Acland, The Glorious Recovery of the Vaudois, lxvii. London, 1857). It would be difficult to understand the Albigenses from this philosophical standpoint. They were not a metaphysical people. Theirs was not a

philosophy, but a daily faith and practice, which commended itself to the prosperous territory of Southern France.

They held to the division of believers into two classes -- the perfect and the imperfect. This was the common classification of the Paulicians, Waldenses and Anabaptists. The most elaborate accounts are given of the initiation of the *perfecti* by a single immersion into the body of believers (Beausobre, *Historic du Manichaeism*, II. 762-877).

The Waldenses were also found in the city of Albi and they were also called Albigenses because they resided in that city (Martin Schagen, *The History of the Waldenses*, 110). It was from Italy that the movement extended to Southern France; and the soil was wonderfully well prepared for the seed. The country was the most civilized portion of France, rich, flourishing, and independent; the people gay, intellectual, progressive; the Roman Catholic Church dull, stupid and tyrannical; the clergy distinguished for nothing but superstition, ignorance, arbitrariness, violence and vice. Under such circumstances the idea of a return to the purity and simplicity of the apostolic age could not fail to attract attention. The severe moral demands of the Albigenses made a profound impression, since their example corresponded with their words. They mingled with their tenets a severe zeal for purity of life and were heard with favor by all classes. No wonder that the people deserted the Roman Catholic priests and gathered around the *Boni Honiness*. In a short time the Albigenses had congregations and schools and charitable institutions of their own. The Roman Catholic Church became an object of derision (Scliaff-Herzog. I. 47).

This state of affairs greatly alarmed and aggravated the pope. In the year 1139 they were condemned by the Lateran Council; by that of Tours in 1163, and mission after mission was sent among them to persuade them to return to the Roman Catholic Church. Cardinal Henry, in 1180, employed force. Pope Innocent III. published a crusade against them. Says the Historian Hume:

The people from all parts of Europe moved by their superstition and their passion for wars and adventures, flocked to his standard. Simon de Monfort, the general of the crusade, acquired to himself a sovereignty of these provinces. The Count of Toulouse, who protected, or perhaps only tolerated the Albigenses, was stript of his dominions. And these sectaries themselves, though the most inoffensive and innocent of mankind, were exterminated with the circumstances of extreme violence and barbarity (Hume, *History of England*, II. ch. xi).

In the second crusade the first city captured was that of Braziers, which had some forty thousand inhabitants. When Simon de Monfort, Earl of Leicester, asked the Abbot of Ceteaux, the papal legate, what he was to do with the inhabitants, the legate answered: "Kill them all. God knows His own." In this manner the war was carried on for twenty years. Town after town was taken, pillaged, burnt. Nothing was left but a smoking waste. Religions fanaticism began the war; rapacity and ambition ended it. Peace was concluded in 1229, and the Inquisition finished the deadly work.

The proof is overwhelming that the Albigenses rejected infant baptism. They were condemned on this account by a Council held at Toulouse, A. D. 1119 (Maitland, Facts and Documents Illustrative of the Albigenses, 90. London, 1832), and that of Albi in 1165 (Allix, The Ecclesiastical History of Piedmont, 150). The historians affirm that they rejected infant baptism. Chassanion says: "I cannot deny that the Albigenses, for the greater part, were opposed to infant baptism; the truth is, they did not reject the sacrament as useless, but only as unnecessary to infants" (Chassanion, *Historie des Albigeois*. Geneva, 1595). Dr. Emil Comba, of the Waldensian Theological College, Florence, Italy, the latest of the Waldensian historians, says that the Albigenses rejected "all the sacraments except baptism, which they reserved for believers" (Comba, *History of the Waldenses*, 17. London, 1889).

The story is a pathetic one. "We live," says Everwin, of Steinfeld, "a hard and wandering life. We flee from city to city like sheep in the midst of wolves. We suffer persecution like the apostles and martyrs because our life is holy and austere. It is passed amidst prayer, abstinences, and labors, but every-thing is easy for us because we are not of this world" (Schmidt. *Hist. et. Doct. de la secte des Cathares*, II. 94). Dr. Lea, the eminent authority on the Inquisition, has said that no religion can show a more unbroken roll of victims who unshrinkingly sought death in its most abhorrent form in preference to apostasy than the Cathari.

Peter of Bruys, a well-known Baptist preacher of those times, sought, about the year 1100, a restoration of true religion in Languedoc and Provence, France. He considered that the gospel ought to be literally understood and he demanded Scripture and not tradition from those who attempted to refute him. He was a pupil of the celebrated Abelard. Dollinger thinks he learned his doctrines from the Cathari and presents many reasons for his opinion. Others think that he presupposes the existence of the old evangelical life for several hundred years in Italy and Southern France. "There is much evidence," says Prof. Newman, "of the persistence in Northern Italy and in Southern France, from the early time, of evangelical types of Christianity" (Newman, *Recent Researches Concerning Mediaeval Sects*, 187).

His principal opponent was Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Clugni, and it is from Peter's book (*Contra Petrobrusianos*, *Patrologia Let*, CLXXXIX. 729) that we must judge of the doctrines of Peter of Bruys.

He held that the church was a spiritual body composed of regenerated persons. "The church of God," says Peter of Bruys, "does not consist of a multitude of stones joined together, but in the unity of believers assembled." He held that persons ought not to be baptized till they come to the use of their reason. Thus he rejected infant baptism referring to Math. 28: 19 and 'Mark 16:16. He denied that "children, before they reach the years of understanding, can be saved by the baptism of Christ [the Roman Catholic statement of his belief], or that another faith could avail those who could not exercise faith since, according to them (the Petrobrusians) not another's but their own faith saves, according to the Lord's word. He who shall believe and be baptized shall be saved, but he who shall not believe shall be condemned." "Infant," he continues, "though baptized by you [Roman Catholics], because by reason of age they cannot believe, are not saved [that is by baptism] and hence it is idle and vain at that time to plunge them in water, by which they wash away the filth of the body, and yet cannot cleanse the soul from sin. But we wait for the proper time, and when one can know and believe in him, we do not (as ye accuse us), rebaptize him who can never be said to have been baptized -- to have been washed with the baptism by which sins are washed away" [symbolically]. In respect to the Lord's Supper he not only rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, but he also denied the sacramental character of the rite.

On account of his great popularity he was with difficulty banished from Languedoc. He then appeared in the diocese of Narbonne and Toulouse, where he preached for twenty years with great success. In the year 1126 he was seized by the authorities and burnt at St. Gilles.

He had a great company of followers, who after his death were called Petrobrusians. They held the same views on baptism that he did. Deodwinus, Bishop of Liege, writing to Henry I., of France, says of the followers of Peter of Bruys: "They as far as in them lies overthrow infant baptism" (Wall; *The History of Infant Baptism*, I. 478).

It will be seen from the extracts given above that Peter of Bruys and his disciples rebaptized, and were, therefore, in the eyes of their opponents, Anabaptists. Jacques Benigne Bossuet the distinguished Bishop of Meaux

and the great Roman Catholic controversialist, 1704, complained of the followers of Calvin that they sought apostolic succession through the Waldenses. He says: "You adopt Henry and Peter of Bruys among your predecessors, and both of them, everybody knows, were Anabaptists." Faber says: "The Petrobrusians were only a sort of Antipedobaptists, who rejected not baptism itself, but who denied simply the utility of infant baptism" (Faber, *The Vallenses and Albigenses*, 174. London, 1838). J. A. Fabricius says: "They were the Anabaptists of that age" (Fabricius, *Bibliographia*, c. xi. 388).

Henry of Lausanne, A. D., 1116-1148, was a disciple of Peter of Brays, and was so successful in his work of reformation that he left a large number of followers who were called Henricians. He is described as "a man of great dignity of person, a fiery eye, a thundering voice, impetuous speech, mighty in the Scriptures." "Never was there a man known of such strictness of life, so great humanity and bravery," and that "by his speech he could easily provoke even a heart of stone to compunction." He came out of Switzerland to Mans and other cities of France. So great was his success that whole congregations left the churches and joined with him. When he had come, in 1148, to Toulouse, Pope Eugene III. sent Bernard of Clairvaux, the great heresy hunter, to that city to preach against him. Bernard describes the effect of Henry's preaching, saying that the churches were deserted, "the way of the children is closed, the grace of baptism is refused them, and they are hindered from coming to heaven; although the Saviour with fatherly love calls them, saying, "Suffer little children to come unto Me." Henry was compelled to flee for his life. Within a short time he was arrested in his retreat, brought before the Council of Rheims, committed to a close prison in 1148, and soon afterwards finished his days in it.

Like Peter of Bruys, he rejected infant baptism. Georgius Cassander, who, at the instance of the Duke of Cleves, wrote against the Anabaptists, says of Peter of Bruys and Henry of Lausanne: "They first openly condemned infant baptism, and stiffly asserted that baptism was fit only for the adult; which they both verbally taught, and really practiced in their administration of baptism" (Cassander, *De Baptismo infantium*. Coloniae, 1545).

Arnold of Brescia was born in the beginning of the twelfth century and died about A. D. 1148. He was a student of Abelard, in Paris, and returned with lofty notions of reformation in Italy. From one country to another he was driven by persecution. He finally returned to Rome and led a patriotic attempt for the freedom of the country against the pope. He was taken prisoner, hanged, his body burned, and the ashes thrown into the Tiber.

Otto Freising, the contemporary Roman Catholic bishop, remarks: "That he was unsound in his judgment about the sacraments of the altar and infant baptism" (Freising, *De Gentis Frid.*, II. c. 20). So he was condemned by the Lateran Council under Innocent II., A. D., 1139. Dr. Comba, in making a record of his opinions, says: "With the Albigenses, he condemned the above mentioned superstitions, as that also of the salvation of children by the sprinkling of water" (Comba, *History of the Waldenses*, 16).

Arnold had his followers, for he was very popular in Lombardy. "He founded," so his enemies said during his stay in Rome, "a sect of men which is still called the heresy of the Lombards" (Johannes Saresberensis, *Historia Pontificalis*. See Breyer, *Arnold von Brescia*). They had great congregations of laboring men which formed such an important feature of the work of the Waldenses and Anabaptists.

The Arnoldists, like their leader, rejected infant baptism. Of these men, Guillaume Durand, A. D., 1274, says: "The Arnoldists assert that never through baptism in water do men receive the Holy Spirit, nor did the Samaritans receive it, until they received the imposition of hands" (Bull of Pope Lucius III. *Hist. Pon. Prestz*, 515).

By the year 1184 the Arnoldists were termed Albigenses, a little later they were classed as Waldenses. Deickhoff, one of the German writers on the Waldenses, affirms: "There was a connection between the Waldenses and the followers of Peter of Bruys, Henry of Lausanne and Arnold of Brescia, and they finally united in one body about 1130 as they held common views." (Dieckhoff, *Die Waldenser im Mittelalter*, 167, 168. Gottingen, 1851). This is the general opinion of the authorities. M. Tocco does not hesitate to affirm that "the Poor of Lombardy (the Waldenses) descended in a direct line from the Arnoldists" (Tocco, *L'Eresia nel medio Evo*. Paris, 1884).

Berengarius, who was born at Tours, and died in the adjacent island of St. Cosme, was accused of holding Baptist views. He was a representative of that craving for spiritual independence, and opposition to Roman Catholicism, which came to the surface all through the Middle Ages. In 1140 he became director of the Cathedral schools of Tours, but his departure from Romanism caused his condemnation by many councils until he closed his troubled career in deep solitude. HIS great learning both in the Fathers and in classical literature, together with his profound study of the Scriptures, led him to the conclusion that the doctrine of transubstantiation was false, and that it was necessary for him to distinguish between the symbol and the thing symbolized in the Lord's Supper. Deodwinus, Bishop of Liege, a contemporary, states that there was a report out of France that the

Berengarians "overthrew the baptism of infants." This view is accepted by quite all of the historians.