

# HISTORICAL VIEW OF THE BAPTISMAL FORMULA OF THE EARLY CHURCH

**THE DIDACHE:** Probably written in Syria between 100 and 150 AD (PATROLOGY, J. Quasten, Vol. I, P. 97), stated: "Baptize as follows: after first explaining all these points, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... (Ibid, p.31).

**JUSTIN MARTYR:** Justin, in about 150 AD (Apol . 1, 61), stated that candidates for baptism "receive the washing with water in the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit." (Ibid, p. 25).

**THE EPISTOLA APOSTOLORUM:** This document from about 150 AD, "expands this profession of faith (the trinitarian formula, CM) from three sections to five. Its Creed contains not only the faith 'in the Father, the ruler of the entire world, and in Jesus Christ, our Saviour, and in the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete' but adds 'in the Holy Church and in the forgiveness of sins'." (Ibid).

**IRENAEUS:** Born about 140 BC, Irenaeus is active as a Christian apologist late in the 2nd century and early in the 3rd century AD. "Irenaeus is firmly convinced that the teaching of the Apostles continues to live on unaltered. This tradition is the source and the norm of the faith. It is the canon of truth. For Irenaeus this canon of truth seems to be the baptismal creed, for he says that we receive it in baptism (Adv. Haer. I, 9,4): "The Church, although scattered over the whole world even to its extremities, received from the Apostles and their disciples the faith in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth, the seas and all that is in them, and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation, and in the Holy Spirit, who by the prophets proclaimed the dispensation, the advent, the virgin birth, the passion and resurrection from the dead..." (Ibid p. 300)

**HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME:** His well known work the APOSTOLIC TRADITION, written about 215 AD presents, among a number of other subjects, a triune baptismal form (three immersions), certainly a departure from apostolic doctrine, but none the less, this work is consistent with earlier teaching in that it tells us that baptism involves the trinitarian formula. Before each immersion, the candidate is asked if he believes in one member of the Godhead: Before the first immersion, he is asked: Doest thou believe in God the Father Almighty? And he who is being baptized shall say: I believe. Let him forthwith baptize him once, having his hand laid upon his head. And after this let him say, Dost thou believe

in Christ Jesus, the Son of God? And when he says: I believe, let him baptize the second time. And again let him say: Doest thou believe in the Holy Spirit? And he who is being baptized shall say: I believe. And so let him baptize him the third time." (Ibid, Vol. II, p. 191).

Compiled by Carl Mitchell