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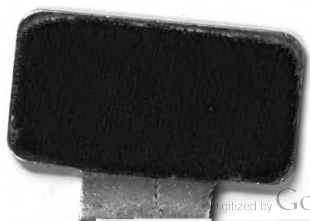
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# BAPTISM

AND

## CONFLICT WITH INDWELLING SIN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "FAITH AND WORKS," AND  
"THE CANON OF TRUTH."

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## BAPTISM.

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In considering this great subject, (though in few words,) it is intended to avoid *all* question of the time of the application of it, and the like; and to regard in it only the mind of God as the object of faith.

The first and fundamental character of all baptism, as an appointment in the outward sign, is, that is UNTO something. The children of Israel were baptized *unto* Moses in the cloud and in the sea: that is, unto the covenant they were to receive at Mount Sinai, in subjection to him who was over God's house; separated from Egypt and all that was in it, and from the rule of its ruler, by the cloud that stood between them and the land of Egypt at Migdol, as afterward by the sea.

Those who came to John were baptized *unto* repentance, John saying that they should believe on Him that should come after Him, even Christ. The Messiah was about to appear to Israel as the reformer of their state; and the new covenant was the law written in their hearts; and Christ was to rule as the Head of His own house. The word repentance at once betokens what they were to be separated from, namely, the departure from God in the existing state of Judaism, which, as it was, rejected Christ when He came.

The Baptism the Lord left was *unto* Himself.\* *Faith was come.* The covenant of righteousness, of life, and of power in Christ by GRACE. Those who received baptism, as confessing the name of Christ, (in baptism they put on Christ,) were evidently in a very various state of advance; some were zealous of the law, others capable of being shown its weakness, but the relationship to Christ in character was an established thing, and every advance only left more behind, in the separation first indicated. The baptized Jew, now zealous of the law, might advance to an apprehension of being dead to the law by the body of Christ, and to the knowledge of

\* So *eis onoma*, *unto* the name; *ενονοματι*, *IN* the name, occurs but once, in the case of Cornelius, on whom the Holy Ghost rested as at the beginning.



union with Christ by faith. Such would not be baptized again. If this baptism were *into* anything, (as may be considered shortly,) it is not into Christ; but the separation is from all that was evil, and all that was old, whether the soul realized it or not, and that Christ supplied the place of all. It was in truth, then, a separation from law, from the world, from the rudiments of the world, and from all that applied itself to man, in his various pretences as capable of good, and from ordinances UNTO Christ. The doctrine of Romans vi. stands out pre-eminently as marking the separation from the old man in the fruits thereof, in being buried with Christ.\* In Colossians ii. separation is from philosophy and vain deceit, from the traditions of men, from the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, from sabbaths, and the like, and from all else that is not now by the living God applied to our soul in Christ, *through faith*. We are complete in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power.

Further, it is most important for us to see that the things really left us by the Lord relate to us *as on earth*. HEIRS BY GRACE TO THE KINGDOM, *we are separated in the world, by baptism, unto Christ*. Nor is it needful to look for signification in these things, for us on earth they can be something. To this the expression of *burial* directs us. Baptism is given us as the *grave* of Christ, and all the things which life in Christ has stamped with death are *buried* with Him, and we and they with Him, in baptism. We are buried (thus can those that are dead in Him look at it) in His grave. We are buried with Him by baptism. The mind of God in it is the object that our hearts are directed to. It is practically important. There is power in measure, through faith, as appealed to by the apostle in Romans vi. It is important to say that the old man, in his sinful habits, on earth is buried. This is being buried with Christ by baptism into or unto death.\* The living subject of baptism sees the assigned place of these things. We who are alive and conscious are so to see them. Christ, charged with them, went

\* I believe the expression in Rom. vi. 4, of baptism into-or unto death, is a collective expression, describing what baptism characteristically is, as given of God.

down into the grave, and came out of the grave without them, and we, coming *out* of the water, leave them all, and all that can apply to them, being weak through the flesh, *in* the water, in the mind of God. We leave ourselves there. We look back on our baptism in such an aspect, and are called on by the apostle to do so.

The Church, *as divine*, is baptized with something else, namely, with the Spirit of God, uniting her to Christ in living existence. The baptism of the Church, as conferring its special character, is *heavenly*. She has a time to sojourn on earth, and to this baptism refers. The Church, as on earth, has a subjection and confession to fulfil to the Lord, who hath purchased her for Himself, and given her besides, a character as joint-heir with Him; and her holiness on earth is in being true to it to His glory. The difference between these two greatly affects the application of terms in scripture, which may in no wise be confounded. It is the mingling of that which is of earth and that which is of heaven that has been and is injurious to truth, and to the use of the things of God according to God.

It is not that we are not to see, as on earth, something more than that which is merely significant of other things. It is not intended to enter on them in this point of view now, and they are quite distinct from them.

But to resume: the moral necessity of the truth connected with the reality of baptism, as the burial of all that could usurp the place of life, is evident. The divine truth, that the power of Christ's death upon all evil is the necessary preliminary to the expansion of the divine life, is instructive; that carries us far into the divinely moral order of our restoration in the image of Christ. That this is expressed in baptism, over and above the actual burial of the old things, is manifest from scripture. The old man, and all that could attach to him, is to be never seen out of the water again; for it is in this burial we divinely rise, by the regenerating power of God, "through faith of the operation of God." It is not *out of it*, but *in it*. (Col. ii. 12.) So it is in Rom. vi. in its proper proportion. We are buried into the death—in fact, in this aspect, the old man is in the grave buried, that we might walk (being risen in the power of God) in newness of life. So in Peter iii. 21, We are *saved* by

baptism—clearly by what must die (in order that we should live) lying buried there; in the answer of a good conscience in the living and divine condition of the living man; in fact, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Whenever all that was to be buried rises, it causes to sink, so to say, all that which ought always to be above the place of death in the power of the glory of the Father. This is the divinely moral truth given us in these things.

As divine and heavenly, the Church can know nothing but the Spirit of God, as above with Christ, having spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him. Christ is our righteousness; ordinances, therefore, receive a secondary place only. This, their real place, should be seen, lest otherwise they make a gift of God for blessing, in the place assigned to them, an occasion of stumbling, and they become a door to the apostacy; and such have they become, and become fixed, as such, through the tradition of men. They were given to serve the purpose of separation. All ordinances were, and those left by Christ as well,—baptism administered by others; the Lord's supper—the act of the living adoration of the Church. We may be in a state of imperfect knowledge as to either, but except as an act of living adoration of the Church in worship in the supper of the Lord, the knowledge of and faith in the mind of God in them will make a great difference in our blessing. There are many things we have to know about them, which, as they are gradually received, are better sought in the word. Nor ought we to close these remarks without some direct reference to the necessary truth, that we must die in order to live, applying it *immediately* to our consciences. Found of God when we sought Him not—sought in the wonders of His grace—we are exhorted to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service. This is in the shape of motive, but the matter also lies deeper. The actual relationship of death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness, that being by nature born in sin, but now the children of grace, we may be moulded daily into the likeness of Christ, is the work of God by faith—changed into the same image, says the apostle, from glory to glory. "If," says St. Paul, Rom. vi. 5, "we are (or have become)

plants together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be plants of his resurrection, (or plants in the likeness of his resurrection.)” Justly the same fountain should not bring forth sweet water and bitter. How can there be growth in the Spirit, (putting all seeming aside,) but in the declension of the flesh and its lusts. If by the Spirit, ye mortify the deeds of the body, saith the apostle, ye shall live. If ye walk after the flesh ye shall die. Let that mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus; who on the cross condemned sin in the flesh in dying. It was truth told to us in Him, in whom was no sin. If ye are Christ’s, ye have crucified the affections and the lusts. There is no room allowed of God for the old creation and the new in the same man. According to this truth is the death *intimated* to the Christian in his baptism and in the mind of God in it, and in it is the resurrection he finds in its realization, by the exceeding greatness of God’s power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

The separation of us from the world is more on the surface, but is as express. The apostacy has so far grown, that its use of baptism is an entry into the world, instead of a separation out of it and from it; while the baptized should, as thus passed the Red Sea, look over the closed waters on the towers and pyramids and glories of Egypt, shut out from them for ever, while they rejoice on the way. Let every Babylonish garment, every pursuit of forgetfulness, of which Satan makes such use,—not to say the enticing pursuit of the world itself,—be seen as cut off from us in the water. The pursuit of the world’s possession (amidst which God may in His grace have given on earth duties of application to His glory,—and yet, blessed are the poor) shall pierce the soul through with many sorrows, sent in grace that the true and divine riches, those only called “our own,” may be duly estimated as enduring for ever; while He will not leave nor forsake those that are fed of His bounty in the wilderness, or as strangers in the land. Now the Lord increase us in acquaintance with the ways of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, unto all fruitfulness unto eternal life, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

## CONFLICT WITH SIN.

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“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”—1 John i. 9.

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WE hear of nothing in this place but confession for forgiveness of sin; because God is faithful and just. I would commend the faith of the power of confession for bringing the power of God to cleanse from the practice of sin;—sin as embracing everything adverse to the new nature in Christ.

However slow, or by whatever number of stages, we come to the truth that except or besides Christ there is, and can be, nothing accepted in the presence of God, yet is many a sin and a full variety of evil excused, undiscovered, and slumbered over; and this in many who have come to the full knowledge of the ways of God, and have their portion therein. It is, however, a position of peculiar danger to know, and yet to remain stationary: it morally hardens the soul; for it habituates to evil in the light of God. Evil is permitted by habit, and hypocrisy is not far off.

Again, how sad it is that many a soul dear to God is deeply troubled at sin as it rises to the surface. It struggles, resists, and prays, and is uninformed of the provision of God to meet the desires He has implanted there—a thirsting after the image of Christ—blessed be His name for ever! Let us suppose peace—unquestionable peace and acceptance in the risen Jesus—being in the light. Now if the Christian keep to the life of faith, and so in the consciousness of it, and of his calling, I doubt not hitherto undetected sin will often be revealed to him, and it is in God that it should be met, and before God; and confession is the way; and in God's presence will the light make it manifest, and, abiding in it, complete the circle of the image of Christ in the soul of the believer. To *abide* until we receive what we look for is

*faith.* It will come, and come effectually, even in the power of God. It is here the conflict is to be carried on—here the heart is broken—and blessing in new affections received. The previous question will only be—will he that has the conscience of sin consent to pass by his affections that are in the world, and enter there where he is to lose them? Has the Christian been contending with sin without the precincts of the presence of God? Then he has been contending where the enemy has the vantage ground; where habits may be altered, but where affections are never really relinquished; for the heart bargains for the *sight*, or *thought*, at least, of what is forbidden; but all *must* be swept away in the presence and power of God in the new creature. It is contest enough to pass by the affections that detain him, into the presence of God, which he now knows, and knows they are there to be relinquished.

A sense of sin, if we have been awakened, would send us *naturally* to struggle in ourselves against it, and with calling on the help of God, while we do not discover that it is, in this case, under the law that we do it. How sincerely is this often done! Prayer—vexation with self—shame (but as if from *our sense of sin* we had a right to be free) possess the souls of such; and the love that God has to them for their mind towards Him, in their thoughts of sin, and the partial success even they may gain, keep them in the path of weakness, and frustrate them of their desires. They must come lower yet. If they really examined their souls, or rather let God examine their souls, they would find that *they* have not really such a sense of sin as they suppose. They have a sense of the dishonour of it, but not of the character of it in the light of God; and that is the reason why the taste of judgments alone really alienates them from it. But these they accept, because they are content, at all cost, to be brought nearer to God; increasing with the increase of God. They learn the judgment against sin in the presence of God; and what they learn in communion is what will be revealed.

But the most important of all is the ground on which judgment is given, and to what the evil is in contrast, while he that confesses his fault is shielded from the

burning rays of God's glory by God's love in Christ. That ground is that the believer, by grace attracted by that love, has received Christ; Christ has become his life, whether in capacity of object, which God now is, or in actual condition, developed or undeveloped.

So little is commonly known of the calling of a child of God, or of the Church, Christ's body, in heavenly places, and of the grace the member of Christ receives in confession of Christ, and as witness in the *kingdom* into which he has been called, yet walking here below where Christ, as *Lord*, is nowhere acknowledged, that conscience is continually at fault for any resolution of its difficulties. It is often engaged in regulating that from which it should be wholly separate and free. Conscience in such a case vacillates, and its guidance is not to be relied on, because it can alone receive firmness by waiting on God; and, (I may say, without being misunderstood,) waiting for God, that having His mind, on however isolated a point, I should be in the way of a more enlarged understanding of His ways. If I had not my place with God in grace, I should be still incapable of coming to any resolution; but having that place, and knowing I have it, but not what it is, I enjoy His safeguard, as well as all that is needful to life and godliness, as part of His gift. I say this independent of any use of the word, for there may be great incapacity to use it, and yet the conscience is not to be neglected. Doubts therefore as to the world and relationships in it, and as to those arising out of it, can be well held, though God's presence be sought. As soon as I know that I am not of the world, but of Christ's kingdom, and chosen in Him, it settles a host of questions; but I have a conscience in Christ which brings many things in doubt, it may be, long before I know that; for his life is the light of men. I have received in Christ the capacity of receiving God, as an object; but Christ, known in glory, becomes necessarily the veiled Christ of the world; so known to him that is a stranger here. Whenever I receive this intelligence, (the gospel of the glory of Christ,) I find my way with much less fear and trembling.

A definite direction to obedience in the confession of

Christ's disacknowledged rights, and the fulfilment of all headships,\* will be found in the word, and as regulated by the Head of the body. Without this, and the faith of what we have in Christ, indwelling in our hearts by faith, (and one may say here, too, without faith it is impossible to please Him,) all the Christian will present is a moderated world and a moral man. But when I do know Christ in me as the hope of glory, the presence of God is sought for the putting off the old man, and the putting on the new. This brings in quite another order; and the greater obstacle to a conscience, being thus clear in its judgment, is put away. Sin lives in the mind by neglect. The flesh, in every incipient voluntary action, is contrary to the new nature in Christ; and if these have found no home in us, be the occasion what it may, blessed be God. But if they have, the sense of their evil is perfected in the presence of God, and by confession there, yield to His grace. The power also that would regulate what is still to be acted in the flesh is found there, for the presence of God is the place where moral failings, which affect our duties and their sources, are discovered and remedied. God in Christ is there. The new man in Christ is the eighth day of the cleansing of the leper, and we know the exceeding greatness of the power of God to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand, &c.

There is a peculiar conjunction, and yet a difference, between the death of Christ and the blood of Christ, blessed and holy is His name. The spilling of the blood is the death, for the blood is the life. I am not cleansed by the death, though pardoned by His bearing sin and its penalty for me. It is by the blood that has been drawn forth to the death that I am cleansed. My heart is *sprinkled* from an evil conscience by the application by the Spirit of the blood-shedding unto death—I am *washed* by the blood. Nor is the dead lamb left without its use. It is the moral power of the cross on the old

“ Works foreordained that we should walk in them,” (Eph. ii. 10,) does not, I apprehend, imply that we are ordained to them, though that also is true; but that the works are foreordained what they should be.



man. And I observe that the intent is, that the dead lamb roast with fire should be *wholly* eaten, and what remains uneaten be burnt with fire; and in the same way in the sacrifice of the peace offering, the intent is, that none should remain till the morning; and if it be a vow or voluntary offering, all that is left on the third day shall be burnt with fire.

It is surprising how the slightest matter defiles—unguarded intercourse—the eye—the ear; and what wretchedness to a tender conscience (in the new creature) which has not escaped from under the law, and has not its laver in heaven! But where habit has been contracted, before the soul is regenerate, how humbling, how painful, but how cleansing the work of the Lord in confession! How much worse if engendered after!—what labour in watchfulness to be free, and how sad its condition if not labouring under grace and in the presence of God. In whatever remains of the old man, one fault hides a deeper, and the mass would terrify, if seen at once. But oh! the blessing of unpalliating confession! God would not have provided Christ had He not been a pure God, or had not the body of sin been to be destroyed. The character of *the law* carries trespass. The character of *grace* a new creature in power possessing the soul, becoming its life and movement. Man by it knowing his Father in heaven, and his Master at the right hand of glory; with a conscience formed by the Spirit. Where else than to the presence of God will the Spirit lead us about our soul? It is here therefore the soul is to be laid open to God, for Him to tell it of itself, of the judgment of sin, and of the fulness of His grace; here to become acquainted with God; and here to receive the white robe at His hands.

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