



CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

*We have been buried therefore
with him by baptism unto death*

ROMANS 6:4 JND

ALFRED P. GIBBS

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

By

ALFRED P. GIBBS

Author of "Through the Scriptures," "The Preacher and His Preaching," "A Dreamer and His Dream," "The Marvelous City of Mansoul," "Worship," "Gospel Hymns and Choruses for Young and Old," Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7; "God's Good News," "Scriptural Principles of Gathering," "The Christian's Guide," "The New Birth," "The Lord's Supper," "The Uplifted Christ," etc. etc.

With a FOREWORD by
DONALD R. PARKER

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FOREWORD

BY DONALD R. PARKER

Someone has aptly said: "Do not think that a book is dry because it is dusty on the outside." We often buy a book whose title appeals to us, and then lay it aside until we can find time to read it, but frequently fail to give it our undivided attention and thus dust gathers on its covers.

Inasmuch as you now have this volume before you, take a look at its contents ere you put it on the shelf! Look at the section entitled: "The meaning of Baptism," and see how clear, concise and complete is the definition given of this ordinance.

Perhaps someone may say: "I am so busy that I have become a 'Digest reader.' Everything must be pre-digested for me!" If this is the case, read the section that deals with "The spiritual significance of baptism." Then examine carefully that part which emphasizes "The message of baptism."

The reader will then be encouraged to go into all the other aspects of this important subject in detail. He will find therein many Scripture passages by which to help any of his friends who have been taught that baptism is essential to salvation.

It has been the writer's privilege, pleasure and profit to sit under the oral, written and musical ministry of my beloved brother in Christ, Alfred P. Gibbs, for a good number of years. His treatise on the subject of "Christian Baptism" has been handled in the same painstaking and exhaustive manner as his other books on "Worship," "The Lord's Supper," etc. There are plenty of illustrative win-

dows to make clear the truth he wishes to convey.

The reader would be well advised to look up the many Scripture references it contains, and thus get a clear grasp of the subject himself, so that he will be able to pass on to others the scriptural teaching on this divinely appointed ordinance of baptism.

Greenwood Hills, Fayetteville, Pennsylvania, 1966.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

BY ALFRED P. GIBBS

INTRODUCTION

The Lord Jesus Christ left but two ordinances to be observed by His disciples: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. As one reads and rereads the New Testament, and particularly The Acts of the Apostles, which records the history of the early Church, a certain definite pattern of procedure will emerge which characterized the early days of Christianity.

The reader will observe that the rite of baptism, commanded by the Lord Jesus, was performed *once* upon a person, after he had professed faith in the Son of God; and that this ordinance involved the *entrance* of the candidate *into* the water, his *immersion under* the water and his *emergence from* the water. (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 8:38-39)

He will also discover that the Lord's Supper, which was ordained by the Lord Jesus on the night of His betrayal, was observed regularly and *often* by companies of Christians, who thus fulfilled the request of their Lord and Savior to remember Him and show forth His death until He returned again. (Matt. 26:17-30; Luke 22:7-22; I Cor.11:23-34, Acts 20:7)

Thus baptism is seen to be an *individual* act of obedience, on the part of a believer, to the command of his Lord and Savior, while the observance of the Lord's Supper is the *collective* act of obedience on the part of a group of believers who have met together, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the purpose of remembering Him in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup.

The distinction between these two ordinances can be stated thus. In baptism, each believer shows forth, in

pictorial form, *his death with Christ*. In the Lord's supper, each Christian shows forth, in pictorial form, *Christ's death for him*. In baptism the believer testifies: "Christ died as me." At the Lord's supper he testifies: "Christ died *for* me." Baptism is the *illustration* of the believer's *identification* with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. The Lord's supper is the believer's *proclamation* of his *appreciation* of the fact that Christ died for him and rose again. Thus both ordinances combine to present the greatest event in the history of the universe: the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ for our sins, His victorious resurrection and glorification in heaven.

Christendom has added five more ordinances to the list, as follows: confirmation, penance, extreme unction, matrimony and holy orders. These, however, have no authority whatever for their existence, as such, in the New Testament. By the word, "Christendom," is meant the sum total of all those systems of religion that name the name of Christ, whether they be good, bad or indifferent. It will therefore be obvious to all that there is a vast difference between Christendom and Christianity.

Christianity is confined, for its sole authority for faith and practice, to the *general teaching* of the New Testament. It rightly demands a "thus saith the Lord" for all it seeks to teach and do. In other words, it is not "What saith the Church," or "What saith the Creed?" but what "the *Spirit* saith unto the Churches," that constitutes the true and final authority for the believer. See Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

Christendom, on the contrary, has added, as we shall clearly see, many of the commandments and traditions of men as its authority for faith and practice. In many cases, these traditions have been allowed to obscure and even nullify the clear teaching of Scripture. This explains the great confusion that obtains in Christendom, as seen in

the multitude of denominations and the conflicting views concerning both baptism and the Lord's supper.

In the case of baptism, this ordinance has been so buried beneath the accumulated debris of man-made theories, human traditions and ecclesiastical decrees, that it is now accepted, in certain quarters, as a *substitute* for the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the person baptized! Thus what was originally intended by our Lord to be the confession of a believer's faith in the Son of God, and a symbolical *setting forth* of his spiritual identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, is now declared to be the *means* by which this identification has been effected! Thus it is asserted that a baby, at its christening, has, by this act, become "A member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom!" Could anything be further from the truth in regard to the scriptural significance of this ordinance?

In the case of the Lord's Supper, its beautiful simplicity and spiritual significance has been allowed to degenerate into a rite called "the sacrifice of the Mass." In the celebration of this rite, it is affirmed that on the pronouncement of certain words on the part of the "officiating priest," the bread and wine is magically turned into the actual and literal body and blood of Christ. Thus Christ is declared to be freshly sacrificed each time the Mass is celebrated!

In the post apostolic years of Christianity, these two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper came to be called "sacraments." This word was derived from the Latin, "sacramentum," which was used to describe the oath of allegiance which a Roman soldier took on enlisting in the army of the Roman empire. At this ceremony the recruit solemnly vowed that he now renounced his civilian status, with all its privileges and liberty of action and, from henceforth, acknowledged that he now belonged

to Caesar, whose every command he promised to obey, cost what it might and lead where it would.

Gradually this word came to be used to describe both the ordinance of baptism and the Lord's supper for, by his obedience to these ordinances, a Christian proclaimed to the world that he belonged, spirit, soul and body, to Christ who had now become his personal Savior, the supreme Lord of his life and the sole Master of his service. This explains why, in many pagan countries, and particularly in Moslem lands, the percecution of a professing Christian does not really begin until he has submitted to the ordinance of baptism. This becomes, as it were, his "sacramentum," by which he proclaims his identification with the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. Needless to say, the baptism of an unbeliever is not contemplated in the New Testament.

In this discussion on the question of baptism we must be careful to distinguish between *principles* and *personalities*; between the *teachings* of an ecclesiastical system, and the persons who are associated with that system. We may dislike the "ism" to which a person belongs, but this does not mean that we dislike the *person* who belongs to the "ism!" Loyalty to what one believes to be the true teaching of Scripture may necessitate his withdrawal from the ecclesiastical system that teaches some wrong doctrine; but this does not mean that he rejects the *persons* who are still in association with that system, for many are unaware of the error that is taught. In other words, it is the *principle of error* that is condemned and not the *persons*. While we may disagree with the *teaching* that a person holds, we should not doubt his sincerity in so believing; but seek, from the word of God, to lead him to an acknowledgement of the truth. This is what is meant by distinguishing *principles* from *personalities*.

Quite a number of books have been consulted in the

preparation of this book. The writer makes no claim for originality, but gladly and gratefully has entered into the labors of gifted brethren who have written on this subject, but whose books, in many cases, are now out of print. A Bibliography of these books will be found at the back of this book.

An analysis of the contents has also been included, which will not only aid the reader to view the subject as a whole, but also enable him to turn to any part of the subject in which he is particularly interested.

My grateful appreciation is extended to the following friends who kindly read the manuscript and contributed valued criticism as to its contents: Mr. Paul Sapp, of Paterson, New Jersey; Mrs. Anna Buirkle, of Jersey City, New Jersey; Mr. Edwin Fesche, of Baltimore, Maryland; and Mr. Donald R. Parker, of Dobbs Ferry, New York, who also graciously consented to write the foreword to the book.

It is now sent forth with the sincere desire and earnest prayer that it may prove to be a blessing to all the people of God, and that many, through its reading, may be brought to a greater realization of the importance of this subject, and to a deeper appreciation of the tremendous spiritual significance involved in this divinely appointed ordinance.

May it be particularly used to bring spiritual enlightenment to many fellow believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have not yet seen the scriptural truth of Christian baptism, as revealed in the New Testament scriptures. May they soon have the joy of gladly obeying the Lord Jesus by submitting to this ordinance, which so clearly sets forth, in symbol, the identification of the believer with his Lord and Savior, in His death, burial and resurrection!

Waynesboro, Georgia, June, 1966 Alfred P. Gibbs

CHAPTER ONE

I. DIFFERENT BAPTISMS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

It will be advisable, before we enter into the subject of the baptism of believers, to distinguish between several baptisms which are mentioned in the New Testament. A failure to distinguish between these various baptisms will only lead to confusion of thought, for each baptism has its own particular spiritual significance. Each Christian must learn to do what Paul exhorted the Philippian believers to do, and that is, to "distinguish between things that differ." (margin, Phil. 1:10) He must be careful to "rightly divide the word of truth," if he would be "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." (2 Tim 2:15)

A great deal of the confusion in Christendom is the result of failure to appreciate what is called "dispensational truth." By "dispensation" is meant the basis of God's dealing with mankind, or a portion of mankind, through various periods of history. Andrew Jukes has defined it as follows: "God has dealt with mankind at various periods since the fall of man, in different degrees of intimacy and, in a certain sense, also on different principles. Through it all, He has had one purpose in view: to reveal what He is, and to show what man is; but this one end has been brought out in different ways, and under varied and repeated trials." Scofield defines it as: "A period of time, during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God."

For instance, the believer should be able to distinguish between the dispensation of law, that "came by Moses," and the dispensation of grace, which "came by

the Lord Jesus." (John 1:17) He should be able to differentiate between "the Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God." (I Cor. 10:32) He should understand the difference between the Sabbath and the Lord's day; between the gift of salvation for the sinner, and the rewards of faithful service for the Christian; between the Judgment seat of Christ for the believer, and the Judgment of the great white throne for the unbeliever, etc. With this fact in mind, let us distinguish between five of these baptisms which are described in the New Testament.

1. John's baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, with a view to subsequent faith in Christ, whose forerunner he was.

Notice the description of this baptism: "John did baptise in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (Mark 1:4) "I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Matt. 3:11)

It is interesting to note that baptism did not originate with Christianity. Before the dawn of the Christian era there was a form of baptism practiced by the Jews which was known as "Proselyte baptism." It was performed on Gentiles who became converts to Judaism. After suitable instruction as to what was involved in making this great change, the convert was prepared for the actual ceremony that marked his transition from Gentile to Jew.

The ceremony took place in three stages. First, there was "Milah," or circumcision. Second, was "Tebilah," or baptism by immersion in water. As the convert stepped out of the water he was called by the rabbis a little child just born anew. He was told that his past life was as

completely gone as though he had died and had been buried. The third stage was called "Corban," or sacrifice. An animal was sacrificed and some of its blood was sprinkled upon him.

Needless to say, this ceremony was well known to the Jews of Christ's day. When John the Baptist "came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," the people were left in no doubt that their submission to this rite of baptism marked a transition in their lives, for, in so doing, they "justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John." (Luke 3:3; 7:29)

All who submitted to this baptism confessed, in so doing, that they repented of their sinfulness of the past, and acknowledged they were worthy only of death, of which this baptism was, to them, a picture. We are told that our Lord Himself submitted Himself to this baptism, not because of any necessity on His part, for He was absolutely sinless in thought, word, deed and attitude. Scripture bears testimony to the fact that He was without sin, that He knew no sin, and that He did no sin. (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22). By submitting to John's baptism, and this over John's strenuous objections, our Lord thus "fulfilled all righteousness." By this act Christ not only placed His seal of approval on John's ministry, but He also identified Himself with the godly remnant of Israel. (Matt. 3:13-17)

In submitting Himself to this baptism, our Lord prefigured the purpose for which He had come into the world, namely to go under the waves and billows of the judgment of a holy God on account of our sins, to bear them in "His own body on the tree," to "die for our sins according to the Scriptures," and to be buried and rise again in order to secure the salvation of every lost and guilty sinner who

will trust in Him, and rest in His accomplished redemption. (I Cor. 15:1-3)

H. A. Ironside has put the matter very succinctly: "The repentant part of the nation owned, by their baptism, that they deserved to die as violators of the divine law. The Lord Jesus took His place with them in baptism as the pledge that He was ready to go down into death for them. As another has beautifully illustrated it, they were like men who had given a note for a debt they could never pay. Christ, in His baptism, endorsed their note and offered Himself to pay the uttermost farthing. Sinless, He needed not to repent, but He was to 'fulfil all righteousness' by bearing the curse of the law for those who did. Thus it was His joy to take His place with those who sought not to hide, but confessed their guilt and its desert. . . . The 'excellent of the earth' were, in His eyes, not the self righteous Pharisees, but the humble followers of the Immerser—common people and publicans, perhaps the majority of them were; but they justified God and condemned themselves, and waited expectantly for the coming kingdom."

"His baptism in the Jordan is but the shadow of a far more solemn immersion which He must yet undergo, for He is to confess, as His own, the sins, not only of this remnant company, but of all who will be saved through His mighty sacrifice. (Luke 12:50). His baptism is the pledge of this, as also the intimation that the way to His glory is by the cross. It is plain, then, that it is not merely as an example for us that Jesus was baptized. His baptism was altogether of a different nature from that which He instituted after His resurrection, and for quite a different purpose. As one has well said: 'He was baptized to identify Himself with a rejected remnant. We, by baptism, are identified with a rejected Christ.' "

The Scripture bears record that after He was baptized "the heavens were opened unto Him, and John saw the Spirit of God descending upon Him like a dove, and lighting upon Him." Then, from heaven, came a voice saying: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Here is one of the many demonstrations of the Divine Triunity of the eternal Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. By this baptism our Lord entered upon His public ministry, after the thirty silent years spent in Nazareth, and did so with the full approval of heaven.

2. Christ's own baptism of suffering unto death because of our sins. (Luke 12:49-50)

Let us note His words carefully: "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" In these words our Lord referred symbolically to the substitutionary sufferings and death which He was to accomplish on the cross. Thus He anticipated the moment when, in infinite grace, He was to assume the awful liability of our sins and endure, at the hands of a thrice holy God, all the judgment that was their due. The dreadful storm of the righteous wrath of God was to break, in all its concentrated fury, upon His holy, spotless soul until all grounds of condemnation against the believer's sins was for ever past, and all the work needed for the salvation of every believing sinner had been accomplished to God's complete satisfaction. He knew all that this involved in the way of suffering, yet He allowed nothing and no one to turn Him aside from the path that led to that "hill, lone and grey," where He was to be forsaken of His God and die, in ignominy and shame, that we might be saved by His grace.

Well may believers, as they contemplate the work which the Lord of glory accomplished on the cross reverently sing:

"Gazing on the Lord in glory,
While our hearts in worship bow,
There we read the wondrous story
Of the cross, its shame and woe.

Every mark of dark dishonor
Heaped upon the thorn crowned brow,
All the depths of Thy heart's sorrow,
Told in answering glory now!

On that cross, alone, forsaken,
Where no pitying eye was found;
Now to God's right hand exalted,
With Thy praise the heavens resound!

Did Thy God e'en then forsake Thee,
Hide His face from Thy deep need?
In Thy face, once marred and smitten,
All His glory now we read.

Gazing on it, we adore Thee,
Blessed, precious, holy Lord!
Thou, the Lamb, alone art worthy—
This be earth's and heaven's accord!

Rise our hearts and bless the Father,
Ceaseless song e'en here begun;
Endless praise and adoration
To the Father and the Son!"

(Miss C. Thompson)

Needless to say, this was a baptism which only the Son of God could experience. There was no other one who could share the cup of suffering with Him, He must go through it all alone. We may well lift heart and voice in grateful praise that He willingly endured the cross and despised the shame, until all the work needed for the eternal salvation of those who trust in Him was accom-

plished to God's complete satisfaction. Only then did the Lord utter the loud triumphant cry: "It is finished!" and then dismiss His spirit. Three days later, He rose victorious from the tomb and now lives, in the power of an endless life, to save to the uttermost every sinner that will trust in Him. (Heb. 7:25)

Thus by His baptism unto death, our blessed Lord has both satisfied all the claims of a righteous law, and met all the holy demands of divine justice on the behalf of all who will trust in His accomplished redemption, receive Him as their own personal Savior and confess Him as the Lord of their life. The hymn writer has expressed it thus:

"The holy One who knew no sin,
God made Him sin for us;
The Savior died our souls to win,
Upon the shameful cross.
His precious blood alone availed
To wash our sins away;
Through weakness He o'er hell prevailed,
Through death, He won the day!"
(Hannah K. Burlingham)

3. Baptism with the Holy Spirit into the mystical body of Christ, the Church. (Acts 1:5; I Cor. 12:13)

John the Baptist referred to this when he said: "I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after me shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." After His resurrection, and just before His ascension, our Lord confirmed this prophecy and said to His disciples: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." (Acts 1:5) This baptism took place when "the day of Pentecost was fully come." With the sound "as of a rushing mighty wind,"

the Holy Spirit came and baptized the assembled believers and united them together into one organism, the mystical body of Christ. (Acts 2:1-4)

By the term "the mystical body of Christ," is meant the Church, which is formed of the sum total of all believers from Pentecost to the Rapture. One of the most striking of the many metaphors of the Church in the New Testament is that of a human body with its many members which, as we all know, is an organism, or that which is pervaded by a common life. Thus by the term, "the mystical body of Christ," we do not mean the actual and literal body of Christ, in which He became incarnate, lived, wrought, taught, suffered, died, rose again and ascended. We mean the *figurative* body, of Christ, the Church, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole Head, and of which every believer is a member. See I Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 1:22-23. When a person believes on the Son of God, and receives Him as Savior and Lord, that moment he is viewed in Scripture as having been joined to this mystical body of Christ, the Church, "which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 2:23)

Paul, by divine inspiration, wrote of this epoch-making event to the assembly at Corinth and said: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are (were) ye all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." (I Cor. 12:12-13)

This baptism of the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ took place at Pentecost, and is therefore true of all believers. It is never spoken of as being the *individual*

experience of a believer, but is always referred to in a *collective* sense, as being true of all believers.

The *individual* aspect of the Spirit's work in the believer is described as follows: conviction of sin, regeneration, indwelling, sealing, infilling, leading and empowering. Each believer was individually convinced, by the Spirit, of his need as a sinner and, on receiving Christ as his personal Savior, was regenerated and sealed by the Holy Spirit "unto the day of redemption." (Eph. 4:30) Each believer is indwelt by the Spirit, and may be led, filled and empowered by Him for service on behalf of Christ. The reader would do well to "read, mark and inwardly digest" the following passages, which refer to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. John 16:7-15; 14:17; 3:3-8; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 5:18-19; Gal. 5:22-26; Rom. 8:14; I Cor. 6:19-20.

4. **The baptism of believers, by immersion in water, after profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, as a confession, in symbol, of their identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.**

Inasmuch as this is to be the subject of this book, we shall deal, somewhat fully, with this particular baptism in the pages that follow. It is a subject that should be of great interest to every true child of God, for it was ordained by none other than the One who is acknowledged, by all Christians, as their Redeemer, Savior and Lord. May it be ours to bow to His authority in this, as in all other matters pertaining to the Christian life!

5. **Baptism with fire, which is to be the Christ-rejecter's doom. (Matt. 3:11-12; Rev. 20:15)**

Let us pay good heed to the words of John in regard to this baptism: "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He

will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into His garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." It will surely be clear, from this statement, that the "baptism of fire" is connected with judgment on the ungodly, or "the chaff." It therefore cannot apply to the believer, who has been guaranteed, by his Lord, that "he shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24; compare John 10:27-30)

Some Christians, sincerely but mistakenly, believe that this baptism of fire refers to an individual baptism of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to regeneration, by means of which the carnal nature, or the flesh, is completely eradicated in the believer, so that he consequently becomes sinlessly perfect, and is therefore incapable of sinning. That this is not true is clearly indicated, not only by the general teaching of the word of God, but also by the spiritual experience of godly Christians everywhere. The well known teacher of the Bible, H. A. Ironside, once claimed to have had this experience, but discovered it was a delusion and wrote a book showing its fallacy. It is entitled: "Holiness, the True and the False." It is the best thing on this subject, and each reader is advised to get a copy, and read it carefully, for it is written out of a bitter experience of this delusion.

Those sincere Christians, who have agonized in prayer for this "baptism of fire," should be very grateful to God that He did not answer their prayer. If He had, they would now be suffering "the vengeance of eternal fire," from which baptism there is no emergence and no deliverance! This baptism is reserved for those who neglect, reject or despise the Savior, who provided this great salvation at such an infinite cost. Should they die in that condition, they will be consigned to that dreadful lake of fire for all eternity, there to "weep and wail and gnash their teeth

for ever!" It was the Lord Himself that solemnly described the fate of those who die in their sins. See Mark 9:43-48; Matt. 25:41; John 8:21-24; II Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20: 11-15.

We have spent some little time in our review of these five baptisms, but we believe it is essential for each Christian to know, by the plain teaching of the Word, just where he stands in relation to this subject. Thus he will not only be enabled to "rightly divide the word of truth," but also equipped to "give an answer to every man that asketh him, a reason for the hope that is within him, with meekness and fear." (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15)

CHAPTER TWO

II. THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

1. The meaning of the Greek word.

The word, "baptise," comes from the noun form of the Greek word, "Baptisma." The verb form is, "baptizo." Both these words are derived from the word, "bapto," which means "to dip." Thus our English word, "baptise," is simply an Anglicized form of the Greek word, brought about by changing the last letter from an "O" into an "E." The word "baptismos" is used invariably for "washings." Heb. 6:2; 9:10. The word was used by the Greeks to describe the dyeing of a garment by dipping it in the dye, or the drawing of water by dipping a cup into a container of water. Thus the idea conveyed by the word is *immersion*. We shall deal more fully with this when we come to the mode of baptism.

2. The definition of it.

We may define the New Testament use of the word, as it relates to Christian baptism, as follows. Baptism is the divinely appointed ordinance by which a Christian, in figure or picture, confesses to others, by submitting to his immersion in water, not only his faith in the Son of God, but his spiritual identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection on his behalf. As Christ went through the awful reality of dying for our sins, being buried and rising again; so the believer, by going down under the waters of baptism and emerging therefrom, announces to all who witness it that he confesses he has died to sin in the Person of his Substitute, has been buried with Him and has been raised together with Him,

henceforth to walk with Him in newness of life and live to His glory.

It is important to notice that baptism is only the *figure*, or *illustration* of what *has already taken place* in the experience of the believer. The ordinance itself has no saving virtue. It does not *make* a person a Christian, but simply *marks* him as a Christian. Just as the bread and wine, at the Lord's supper, only *pictorially* represents the body and blood of the Lord, so baptism only *pictorially* presents the great fact of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and the believer's identification with Him.

Inasmuch as we shall be using the word, "identification," quite a little, perhaps a word as to its meaning may be in order. The dictionary defines it as, "viewed as being the same," or, "to make to be the same," or, "oneness with," or, "to associate oneself with."

It can be illustrated by a person's identification with a certain political party, with whose views on government policy he is in hearty agreement. Accordingly, he now identifies himself with this party and seeks, by all the means in his power, to further its interests by his gifts and efforts and by actively supporting its candidates for office.

In the case of Christian baptism, it is identification with a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of sinners. The world despised, rejected and crucified Him, but God has glorified Him at His own right hand and given Him a name that is above every name.

Christian baptism is the act by which a person, who has trusted Christ as his own personal Savior and Lord,

openly and publicly identifies himself with the Lord Jesus Christ. By this he shows symbolically that Christ's death was *his* death, that Christ's burial was *his* burial, and that Christ's resurrection was *his* resurrection; and that henceforth he is forever identified with the Lord Jesus, to own His supreme Lordship and to live for His glory for the remainder of His life.

Perhaps the best illustration of the meaning of the word, "identification," is found in Levit. 1:2-4. Here God gave instructions as to the mode of procedure an Israelite was to follow when offering a substitutionary sacrifice on his behalf.

He was told to bring an animal, which was acceptable to God, and take it to the door of the tabernacle and place his hand upon the head of his offering. By this act the offerer identified himself with his offering and, in picture, transferred his sins from himself to the offering. From that moment God viewed the sacrificial *offering* as taking the place of the sacrificing *offerer*. Notice what God declared: "It (the offering) shall be accepted for him, (the offerer) to make an atonement for him." In other words, the death of the *offering* was accepted by God in the place of the *offerer*, and God viewed the *offerer* as having died in the person of his substitute.

Likewise, when a person owns himself to be what God declares him to be, a guilty, lost, helpless and hell-deserving sinner, and believes that Christ bore his sins and died in his stead, and receives the Lord Jesus to be his own personal Savior, that moment he is viewed by God as having died and risen in the person of his Divine Substitute. He can then truthfully sing:

"All my sins were laid on Jesus,
Jesus bore them on the tree;
God, who knew them, laid them on Him,
And, believing, I am free!"

3. The illustration of the Old Testament ordinances.

There were certain events in the history of the nation of Israel which God commanded should be commemorated, either by an ordinance to be kept, or a monument to be erected. In this way God made provisions for the natural curiosity of children. They would witness the ordinance, or see the monument, and inquire: "What mean ye by this ordinance?" The parents, in turn, were instructed to explain to the children the spiritual meaning of the ordinance or the monument. Five of these are described in the Old Testament, and are full of rich spiritual meaning for us, "upon whom the end of the age has come." (1 Cor. 10:11)

There was the feast of the Passover that commemorated the redemption of Israel from the bondage of the Egyptians (Exodus 12:26). The feast of unleavened bread (Exod. 13:8). The redemption of the firstling of an ass by the substitutionary sacrifice of a lamb (Exod. 13:14). The giving of the law, together with its "testimonies, statutes and judgments" (Deut. 6:20). The monument of stones from the river Jordan (Joshua 4:6,21).

In like manner, each Christian should be prepared to give a scriptural explanation of the spiritual significance of both baptism and the Lord's supper to any person who inquires as to its authority and meaning. This is the purpose for which this book has been written, and it behooves all Christians to emulate the Bereans of old, of whom it was said: "They searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so; therefore many of them be-

lieved." (Acts 17:11-12)

The moment a person is regenerated by the Spirit of God, through faith in the Son of God, he is viewed by God as being eternally identified with Christ. In other words, the history of Christ is then viewed as the history of the Christian, for to be *in* Christ is to be as Christ. We are told in 1 John 4:19, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as *He is*, so are we in this world." This assertion would be incredible but for the fact it is so clearly stated in the Word. Was Christ born of the Holy Spirit? So is each believer. (John 3:1-5; Luke 1:35) Did Christ die? So has each believer in the Person of his Substitute. (Rom. 6:3-5) Did Christ rise again? Believers are described as having risen with Him to walk in newness of life. (Eph. 2:6) Is Christ now glorified? The believer is also described as being glorified with Him. (Rom. 8:28-30) Is the Lord also to reign? Christians shall also reign with Him. (Rev. 11:15; 2 Tim. 2:12)

The ordinance of baptism exists for the purpose of showing, in symbol, the reality of each believer's identification with his Lord and Savior. In other words, it simply, and in a most striking manner, illustrates what has already taken place in the experience of the person who is baptized. This, of course, at once eliminates any thought of infant baptism, for no irresponsible infant can be described as having passed through this experience of a personal appropriation of Christ as Savior and Lord.

4. The confession of one baptized.

As a believer stands in the water, ready to be immersed, he declares in effect to those who have gathered to witness the baptism: "I hereby confess, in my willing submission to this divinely appointed ordinance, my glad

obedience to the command of my Lord and Savior. In this symbolical manner, I show forth my identification with the One who bore my sins, took my place, died in my stead, was buried and rose again for my justification. As Christ went through the dreadful reality of suffering and death to secure my salvation so, by my immersion in water and emergence therefrom, I thus publicly declare my identification with my Lord in His death, burial and resurrection on my behalf, with the intention, henceforth, to walk with Him in newness of life." Surely no picture could be more simple, more beautiful and more spiritually significant than this!

CHAPTER THREE

III. THE AUTHORITY FOR BAPTISM

1. The Christian's sole authority.

For the Christian, there is but one Divine, authoritative and final authority, and that is the *general* teaching of the Divinely inspired and inerrant word of God. We are told that: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, (or mature) thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

Note the phrase: "the *general* teaching of the word of God." Most heresies, or false cults, can point to a verse in Scripture which *apparently* supports their contention; but when this wrong doctrine is examined in the light of *all* the scriptures that bear on that particular subject, its falsity is at once detected. This is the meaning of that statement from the word of God: "No scripture is of any private interpretation." (2 Pet. 1:20) In other words, the Scriptures did not originate with any private individual, but came directly from God through the instrumentality of holy men of God as they were controlled by the Holy Spirit. Each passage of Scripture must therefore be interpreted in the light of all the other passages of Scripture that bear on the same subject. This is a most important rule to observe when studying the Bible. It has been tersely put thus: "Text, without context, is pretext."

The religious traditions, decrees and creeds of men, however hoary with antiquity, learnedly composed by able theologians and sincerely presented by gifted men, should

have no voice of authority for the Christian. The sole and final court of appeal is the holy Scriptures. The Bible declares: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them." (Isa. 8:20)

A tremendous amount of controversy, through the years, has surrounded this subject of baptism. Though most writers are agreed as to the scriptural validity of the ordinance, and that it should be observed by all Christians, yet there is considerable difference of opinion as to the *subjects* of baptism, or *who* should be baptized; as to the *method* of baptism, or *how* should it be performed and as to the real *spiritual significance* of the rite, or *what* does it mean?

It is indeed tragic that an ordinance, so simple and so clearly revealed in Scripture as to its mode, subjects and teaching, should become a cause for so much controversy and consequent division among Christians. It all serves to demonstrate the fact that when man, in his fancied wisdom, attempts, by his additions, subtractions, ideas, traditions and explanations to "improve" on the pattern which God has laid down in His word, he only succeeds in "darkening counsel by words without knowledge." (Job 38:2) By means of these many alterations on the part of men, the beautiful simplicity of baptism has been largely lost. The rite that God intended should be a picture of a work of regeneration, *already accomplished* in a believer, is now declared to be the *means* by which this work of regeneration is accomplished!

It is actually affirmed, and in words that admit of no other meaning, that when an infant is baptized, or sprinkled, it is thereby: "made a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom!" This, of

course, is the exact opposite of what the word of God teaches, and this doctrine of baptismal regeneration has wrought incalculable harm. It has resulted in countless thousands of men and women believing themselves to be Christians when, all the while, by the manner of their lives, they are obviously strangers to the grace of God and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

2. The threefold test of the validity of a New Testament ordinance.

An ordinance, to be scripturally valid, must meet a threefold requirement. First, it must be commanded by the Lord Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels. Second, it must be practiced by the Church, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Third, its spiritual significance must be clearly expounded in the Epistles. There are only two ordinances that meet this threefold test: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Let us now see how baptism meets each of these three requirements.

(1) *It was commanded by the Lord Jesus in the Gospels.*

It was after His death and resurrection that the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples as follows: "Go ye therefore and teach (make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Age) (Matt. 28:19-20)

Three things are to be noted in "the great commission," as this has been called. First, the disciples were to go and teach all nations or, as the margin puts it: "make disciples of all nations." We learn elsewhere, in the New Testament, that disciples are made through the preaching

of the gospel, and the acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord, on the part of the hearer. Second, these disciples, when made, were to be baptized upon their profession of faith in Christ. Thus, by this ordinance, they openly confessed their faith in and their identification with Christ. Third, these disciples were now to be instructed to walk in obedience to the commands of their Lord and Savior.

It will be observed that in this commission the onus, or the responsibility to baptise the convert, is on the preacher. It is part of his commission, not only to preach the gospel, but to baptise and teach those who have responded to the message.

The commission given in the gospel of Mark reads thus: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15-16) Here the responsibility to submit to baptism appears to rest on the believer, who thus intelligently obeys the command of the Lord by having himself baptized. Thus, in each case of these commissions, baptism is said to *follow* the profession of faith in Christ, and is never said to *precede* it.

There are some who object to the word "command" in regard to baptism, but a glance at Acts 1:2 will confirm the fact that Christ gave many other commands to His disciples in addition to baptism. Notice what is said in this passage: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after that He, through the Holy Ghost, had given *commandments* unto the apostles whom He had chosen." Thus baptism is seen to be a distinct command of the Lord Jesus, and each believer should view it as such; for a command to a disciple

is as much as a command, when it is passed on to the convert. Baptism therefore becomes an act of obedience on the part the Christian to the will of his Lord who said: "If ye love Me, Keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

It is not necessary that a Christian should comprehend all that is involved in the spiritual significance of baptism before he submits to the ordinance. This requires the entire lifetime of the believer. Though the actual manual act of baptism takes but a few moments, to live out all that is involved in its spiritual significance will occupy the believer for the rest of his time on earth! It should be sufficient for each Christian to know it is the direct command of the One whom he claims to be the sovereign Lord of his life, and who it is now his joy and responsibility unhesitatingly to obey. The words of the prophet, Samuel, are in order at this point: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. 15:22)

It is one thing for a believer to know what is expected of him by his Lord and Savior, and another to translate that knowledge into loving, loyal and prompt obedience to His command. The words of the Lord Himself should come home with force to the heart of each believer: "If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them." (John 13:17)

Each person, after he has trusted Christ as his own personal Savior, should be able to say: "Lord Jesus, I thank Thee that, in Thy infinite grace, Thou didst bear my sins, endure all the judgment of God against them, and die and rise again to secure my eternal salvation. Having trusted Thee as my Savior and confessed Thee as my Lord, Thou hast assured me that I am now saved by Thy grace and belong to Thee, body, soul and spirit. I

have seen, from Thy word, that I should now be baptized on my profession of faith in Thee. In obedience to Thy will, I therefore gladly submit to being baptized in water and, in symbol, publicly show forth to others my faith in Thee and my identification with Thee in Thy death, burial and resurrection on my behalf."

(2) *The example of the early Church, as seen in the Acts.*

The best book to read on baptism has been in circulation for 1900 years. It is the book of the Acts of the Apostles. As, with an unprejudiced mind, one reads and rereads this book, he will be impressed by the fact that those who responded to the message of the gospel on the part of the apostles and others, and professed faith in the Lord Jesus, were baptized shortly afterwards. Let us look at ten of these instances, as recorded in this book.

(a) *The Jews on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:37-47)*

Aroused and convicted by the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of Peter and the other apostles, about three thousand souls repented of their national sin of rejecting and crucifying their Messiah, gladly received the word of the gospel and were baptized thereafter, and then "continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine (or teaching) and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and prayers."

(b) *The Samaritans. (Acts 8:5-25)*

Through the preaching of Christ on the part of Philip, we are told: "When they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." It will be noted here that there is no mention of babies being included in this baptism.

(c) *The Eunuch.* (Acts 8:26-39)

In response to a divine revelation, Philip approached this man and was used of God to lead him to Christ. After his conversion the Eunuch, seeing a pool of water, said to Philip: "See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Accordingly, on his profession of faith in Christ, Philip went down with him into the water and baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Eunuch went on his way with the word of God in his hand, the Spirit of God in his heart and the joy of the Lord in his soul.

(d) *Simon Magus.* (Acts 8:13)

He was a former sorcerer who, for many years had deceived the people with his trickery. When he was brought face to face with the power of the gospel we are told he "believed the message," and was accordingly baptized. Whether it was a mere profession, without possession, we are not informed. There is quite a little disagreement regarding this. We only mention the case in order to show it was after his profession of faith that he was baptized.

(e) *Saul, of Tarsus.* (Acts 9:1-20)

This arch enemy of Christ and Christians was marvelously arrested by the Lord Himself while on his way to Damascus to arrest and imprison those who named the name of the Son of God as their Savior and Lord. Blinded by the surpassing glory of Christ, he was led into the city of Damascus where he remained for three days. At the end of this period a Christian named Ananias was sent to him who said: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared to thee as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." At these words, Saul had his sight restored and "arose and was baptized."

(f) *Cornelius, the Roman Centurion.* (Acts 10:1-48)

Peter, on receiving a special revelation from the Lord, went to this man's house, where a company of people were gathered to hear the message of the gospel. As Peter presented the Person and work of Christ and proclaimed the good news of the forgiveness of sins, the Spirit of God fell upon the whole congregation. Peter, on seeing this evidence of God's regenerating power, exclaimed: "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Then he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

(g) *Lydia, at Philippi.* (Acts 16:11-15)

Paul, in response to a vision, crossed the Hellespont and came to Europe, then proceeded to the principal city of Philippi. Here it was that a woman by the name of Lydia, a business woman, heard the word of the gospel and her heart was opened by the Lord to the message so that "she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." After her conversion she was baptized, together with the members of her household, who also believed. She then offered the hospitality of her home to Paul and Silas who accepted it.

(h) *The Jailer at Philippi.* (Acts 16:22-34)

This story of the conversion of the jailer has been the subject of countless sermons, and rightly so, for it illustrates, in a remarkable way, the mighty power of God displayed in the salvation of a soul. In this case, as in the other instances we have been considering, after he was saved he was baptized, together with all his house, who also had heard the word of the gospel and believed. This was the cause of much rejoicing on the part of the whole family.

(i) *The Corinthians. (Acts 18:8)*

As a result of Paul's preaching in this great and very sinful city of Corinth, we are told that "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized." Surely nothing could be plainer than this. Here is the scriptural order. First, the hearing of the word. Second, the believing of the word. Third, obedience to the Lord in the ordinance of baptism.

(j) *The disciples of John at Ephesus. (Acts 19:1-7)*

These were twelve men who, under the preaching of a man named Apollos, who knew only the baptism of John, came under the preaching of Paul, who inquired of them: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They replied: "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Then Paul inquired: "Unto what then were ye baptized?" They answered: "Unto John's baptism." This baptism, as we have already noted, was unto repentance and remission of sins, with a view to faith in the Messiah who was to come for, in John's day, Christ had not died for sin and risen again. Under the teaching of Paul, these men came to trust the Lord Jesus, and accordingly were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus on their profession of faith in Him.

We have referred to ten definite instances in the New Testament where believers on the Lord Jesus were baptized upon their profession of faith in Him. By this it is clearly proved that the ordinance of baptism, subsequent to conversion, was practiced by the early Church, as recorded in the Acts.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE AUTHORITY FOR BAPTISM

(Continued)

(3) *Its spiritual significance is expounded in the Epistles.*

From all the references to baptism in the epistles, it is clear that the various Churches, or assemblies of Christians, to whom these epistles were addressed, were composed of Christians who had been baptized on their profession of faith in Christ. In fact, Paul takes it for granted that those to whom he addressed himself had been baptized, for he wrote: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3) Thus baptism was an event that had taken place in their own experience, and of which they were well aware. This naturally eliminates any idea of baby baptism. As far as the New Testament is concerned, no unbaptized believer on Christ is contemplated in its pages. There was no confusion, in Paul's day, as to either the subjects of baptism, or its mode. It was left for Christendom, with its unscriptural priestcraft, to introduce the many innovations and alterations which have combined to bury the beautiful simplicity and spiritual significance of this ordinance beneath the debris of ecclesiastical controversy, and becloud the subject by the mists of confused speculation.

George Muller, famous for his faith and godly life, who had learned the truth of Christian baptism from his own study of the word, wrote as follows: "It is my firm

conviction that of all the truths revealed in the holy Scriptures, none is clearer than the truth in regard to baptism—justification by faith not excepted: and that the truth is obscured solely because inquirers are not willing to let the Bible alone answer the question.” These are weighty words, coming as they do from a great man of God. All are well advised to give them their most serious consideration. We shall have occasion to refer to him later, as to his own experience in getting baptized.

Let us now examine some of the references to baptism as found in the Epistles, and see what we can gather as to the spiritual meaning attached to this ordinance by these divinely inspired men.

(a) *To emphasize the unity into which every believer has been brought through faith in Christ.* (Eph. 4:3-6) “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” It will be noted that this is a seven fold unity, and that one of these unities refers to baptism. That this refers to water baptism seems clear, for Paul has already referred to the Spirit’s baptism in the previous verse which, as we have seen, is into the mystical body of Christ, the Church, hence the reference to the “one body.”

Let us note verse 5 particularly. First, it speaks of “one Lord.” Each believer, on receiving Christ as Savior and Lord, was united to Christ in a bond of union that shall never be broken. He is spoken of as being “in Christ,” as to his *sphere* of life, and under the absolute lordship of Christ as to the *manner* of his life. “For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto

the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." (Rom. 14:8-9) Each Christian is viewed as being under the Lordship of Christ and united to Him to live for His glory.

Second, "one faith." Christ is set forth in Scripture as the supreme Object of faith. He is the Center and Circumference of Christianity. In fact, Christianity is Christ. Apart from Him, there is no Christianity. He is described as being "the Author and Finisher of faith." (Heb. 12:2) He made it *possible* by His incarnation and life on earth as Man, "holy, harmless and undefiled." He made it *available* by His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, when He willingly bore our sins and accomplished all the work necessary for our salvation, died and rose again. He makes it *actual* in the experience of every sinner who trusts Him as his own personal Savior and owns Him as Lord. There is but one faith, which was "once delivered unto the saints," and for which faith each Christian is urged to "earnestly contend." (Jude 3)

Third, "one baptism." By his baptism each believer, outwardly and pictorially, expresses his oneness or unity with Christ, and with every other believer on earth. Sectarianism or denominationalism is a virtual denial of this unity that baptism affirms. Hence Paul sternly rebukes the sectarian spirit that had crept into the assembly at Corinth and declares: "Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" Only if this were true had they any right to call themselves after the name of Paul, or any other servant of the Lord. (1 Cor. 1:13) The sad confusion in Christendom, concerning the subjects, mode and significance of baptism, is in marked contrast to the "one baptism" of Scripture.

It is also important to notice that there is not one particular baptism for the Jew and another for the Gentile. Both Jew and Gentile are now saved on exactly the same terms, namely, faith in the Son of God and His accomplished substitutionary sacrifice. Thus this "one baptism" is the only one for all believers in this present age. Nor does Scripture countenance any other form of baptism, either by the sprinkling or the pouring of water. Least of all does it contemplate the baptism of infants. The "one baptism" is for professed believers only. May it be ours to "hold fast the sound of sound words" in regard to this blessed ordinance, and allow nothing and no one to rob us of "the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 1:13; 2 Cor. 11:3)

(b) *To illustrate the identification of each believer with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.* (Rom. 6:3-5)

While water baptism is not the subject, or theme of Romans 6, it is nevertheless introduced to illustrate the greater truth of the believer's identification with the Lord Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. It is very important to notice that baptism is only the *picture* of this identification. This fact is clearly indicated by the words of similitude that are used: "*Like* as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the *likeness* of His death, we shall be also in the *likeness* of His resurrection."

Thus baptism is here shown to pictorially present the great foundation truth of Christianity: that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again. It also illustrates the wondrous truth that, in God's sight, each believer is viewed as having been crucified with Christ, and thus has

judicially died to sin and self in the Person of his Divine Substitute. Thus each believer can truthfully and joyously testify: "Christ not only died *for* me, but *as* me. He not only died to put my *sins* away, but He died to put *me* away, in so far as my standing in Adam is concerned. All that I was, as a man in the flesh, came to an end in the death of Christ, and God now sees me as risen together with Christ, and henceforth views me as 'a new creation in Christ Jesus.'"

The believer's identification with Christ is the theme of Romans six. The reader would be well advised to lay this tremendous truth to heart, for it is fundamental to the Christian faith. He must constantly heed the injunction to "Reckon himself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ his Lord." (Rom. 6:11) In the measure in which he reckons this to be true and yields his body, with all its members, to Christ, he will be enabled to experience the reality of the promise: "sin shall not have dominion over you!" (vs. 14)

Thus the importance of the truth of baptism can easily be appreciated when it is seen to illustrate this great and basic fact of the Christian life. Therefore to belittle this ordinance, or relegate it to a place of minor importance, is to take issue with the revelation that God has given concerning this matter in His word. Baptism does not, in any way, fit a person for heaven, or produce the new birth, or make a disciple, or cleanse one from his sins, or impart a divine nature, or introduce one into a "circle of privilege and blessing," or join him to the Church, which is the body of Christ, or secure his "acceptance in the Beloved." Nor does it add one whit to all the spiritual blessings which are his in Christ. All this was made possible wholly by the substitutionary sacrifice of the Son of God. The finished work of Christ alone is

all sufficient to secure the believer's eternal deliverance from the consequences of his sins. All the unspeakable riches of the believer became his the moment he was born again by trusting the Lord Jesus as his Savior. (Eph. 1:3, 13)

The only thing that baptism is said to save the believer from is a bad conscience. Once an unbaptized believer sees, from the Word, that he should be baptized, yet refuses to obey the Lord in this ordinance, he thereby acquires a bad conscience in regard to baptism, because of his disobedience to what he knows the Lord would have him do. Once he submits to baptism, then it becomes to him, "the answer of a good conscience towards God." (1 Pet. 3:21)

(c) *To drive home the truth of the new sphere of completeness in Christ, into which the believer has been brought through his identification with Christ.* (Col. 2:8-17)

Notice the wording of the text: "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead."

In the epistle to the Colossians, Paul is combatting the Gnostic heresy, which falsely taught that Christ was merely a created Being, instead of the essential and eternal Son of God, equal and eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and thus possessed of full and complete Deity. Seven things are predicated of our Lord in this passage found in Col. 1:15-2:10. First, He is said to be the Creator of all things both in heaven and earth. (1:16-17) Second, He is "the Head of the body, the Church." (1:18) Third, He has the preeminence in all things. (1:18) Fourth, He is the Redeemer and Reconciler

of men. (1:20-23) Fifth, He is the Center of His people's gatherings. (1:27) Sixth, He is the One in whom are hid "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (2:3) Seventh, He is the One in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (2:9-10)

From this magnificent and Divinely inspired description of the Lord Jesus, the believer is assured, because of his identification with Him, as symbolized in his baptism, that he also is "complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power." (2:10) Thus the Christian, being viewed by God as having died in the Person of his Substitute, and being buried and raised with Him, as pictured in his baptism, is described by God as having been introduced into a sphere in which Christ has the "preeminence in all things." The believer, being delivered from legalism on one hand, (2:16-23) and license on the other, (3:1-11) is urged to: "Do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." (3:17)

(e) *To teach that baptism is a symbolic putting on of Christ.* (Gal. 3:27)

"As many of us as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." By this is meant that, by their submission to baptism, they *outwardly* and symbolically testified to a fact that was *inwardly* and spiritually true, namely, that they now belonged to Christ. Baptism became, as it were, the new uniform which the believer now donned, by which he proclaimed his new Ownership, and which would for ever mark him out as belonging solely to Christ.

Thus the believer is described as being baptized *into* Christ in order to put *on* Christ. In this way, his outward conduct as a Christian constitutes the proof to others of

the reality of his inward identification with Christ. Each Christian is therefore justified in saying with Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) Compare this with Gal. 5:24, which reads: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."

The same thought is expressed in Romans 13:14, where Paul, writing to Christians of more mature years, urges them to: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Thus the spiritual significance of baptism should have a very practical outcome in the life of the one baptized, for he is urged to live a life in keeping with the truth he expressed in his baptism, namely: he has "put on Christ."

(f) *As providing the believer with a good conscience towards God.* (1 Pet. 3:20-21)

"When once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure wherein even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filthiness of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him."

Here the striking incident of Noah being saved from the flood by the ark of God's providing, is used to illustrate what is pictured in the baptism of the believer. Noah rested, in perfect safety in the ark, during the awful flood that devastated the whole earth. From this ark he emerged

into a new world, and immediately offered sacrifices to the God who had provided the ark and preserved him safely to repopulate the earth. See Genesis 6-8.

Likewise the believer, through faith in the One who went through the greater storm of the wrath of God for his sins, finds himself in a new sphere of acceptance before God, and is declared to have "passed out of death into life." (John 5:24) As another has put it: "The answer which a good conscience demands is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead. When this truth is apprehended, baptism is full of meaning as the soul realizes Christ was 'delivered for his offences and raised again for his justification.'" (Rom. 4:25) It is this which "gives the guilty conscience peace, and purges away the stain of sin."

As the ark, in Noah's day, brought him from a condemned world into a new world; so the believer, through faith in Christ, is delivered from the condemnation of sin and brought into a state of acceptance with the very God against whom he had so grievously sinned! Baptism is the divinely purposed illustration of this fact.

It will be noted, in this passage, that baptism is not credited with any cleansing virtue whatever. It does not put away the "filthiness of the flesh." It is the precious blood of the Lamb of God that alone cleanses from all sin, for we are definitely told that: "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7) The value of baptism is declared, in this passage, to give the believer a good conscience as he rests in the finished work of Christ, and is obedient to Him by submitting to baptism, which so vividly pictures his identification with his Lord in His death, burial and resurrection.

We trust we have shown conclusively that the ordi-

nance of baptism has met the threefold test of its validity. It was commanded by the Lord Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels. It was practiced by the early Church, as recorded in the book of Acts. Its spiritual significance is clearly expounded in the Epistles.

CHAPTER FIVE

IV. THE SUBJECTS OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Or, who should be baptized?

The answer, in brief, is this: only those who have heard and responded to the gospel message; who have believed that Christ bore their sins, died in their stead and rose again for their justification, and have received Him as their own personal Savior and Lord. Only such have any right to be the subjects of baptism. This, as can readily be appreciated, eliminates the false theory of infant baptism, or infant sprinkling or pouring, a thing the New Testament knows nothing whatever about, for not a single instance is recorded of such an event in its pages.

A reading of the Acts of the Apostles should be sufficient to convince anyone that Christian baptism always *followed* and never *preceded* profession of faith in Christ. In each of the instances to which we have already referred, this was found to be the regular order of procedure. Any departure from this order must therefore be regarded as an innovation introduced by man, and therefore has no authority for the believer, and which has always resulted in confusion. The New Testament neither teaches *adult* baptism nor *child* baptism, but only the baptism of *believers*, whether old or young. Once this fact is firmly grasped, it will deliver a person from being carried away by the subtle arguments of those who teach otherwise.

Let us look at three instances in the New Testament

where this fact is plainly indicated.

1. The Corinthian believers.

The record of Paul's visit to Corinth is found in Acts 18. As a result of his preaching in that great and wicked city, we are told: "many Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized." (v. 8) Surely nothing could be clearer than this simple statement of facts. Three things are stated. First, they heard the gospel preached. What was this gospel that they heard? Paul himself tells us in a letter he wrote to these same people a short time afterwards. Let us note what he had to say: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:1-4)

Thus Paul proclaimed, with no uncertain sound, the good news he had been commissioned to declare. He preached Christ, His substitutionary sacrifice and triumphant resurrection. We are told that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17) This, of course, eliminates infants, who are incapable of intelligently hearing the word.

The second thing stated is that these people believed the message that Paul preached. They realized their need of salvation and owned themselves to be the guilty sinners for whom Christ died. They then personally received the Lord Jesus as Savior and owned Him as Lord. Consequent on this, they were saved by the grace of God, and re-

joiced in the assurance of the forgiveness of all their sins. They could truthfully sing: "Happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away!"

The third thing mentioned is that those who had believed on Christ were baptized, not in order *to be* saved, but because they *were* already saved. It does not require a course in systematic theology to learn, from this simple narrative, what God's order is in regard to Christian baptism: it follows the hearing of the gospel and the exercise of faith in Christ on the part of the hearer.

2. Cornelius and his household. (Acts 10)

Peter, as a result of a divinely given vision, is directed to the home of a Roman centurion, who lived in Caesarea, and who was a Gentile. On his arrival at the home he discovered that Cornelius had invited many of his friends and relatives to hear the message. Peter then proceeded to preach the gospel and present Christ as the Savior of men. Mark his words as he declared: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins!" As he uttered these words, the Holy Spirit came upon the hearers and they were regenerated. On seeing this, Peter exclaimed: "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Then he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. This is the first recorded instance of Gentiles, as such, being brought under the power of the gospel and added to the Church. Prior to this, the preaching had been confined to the Jews, but from this time on, the door of faith was now opened to the Gentiles.

From this incident we can surely gather that only those capable of hearing and believing the message of the gospel and receiving the Holy Spirit are fit and proper

candidates for baptism. This again eliminates any possibility of babies being baptised on these conditions.

3. The Ethiopian Eunuch. (Acts 8)

Philip is directed by the Lord to go to a place between Jerusalem and Gaza. When he had done so, he saw a chariot approaching in which was an Ethiopian eunuch who was returning from a visit to Jerusalem. Running to the chariot, Philip found the man reading from the fifty third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah. From this Scripture portion we are told Philip "preached unto him Jesus," and had the joy of seeing him trust the Savior. Undoubtedly Philip must also have presented the truth of Christian baptism, for there is no reference to baptism in Isaiah 53. As they travelled on, the Eunuch saw a pool of water and exclaimed: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Accordingly, we are told, "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of God caught away Philip that the Eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

Here again, the same order is followed. The Eunuch heard the word, believed its message, trusted the Savior and accordingly was baptized on his profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These incidents we have quoted are plain narratives, which any one can easily follow, and the same pattern is followed in each case: hearing, believing and being baptized.

Paul could write to the believers at Rome and remind them of their experience in baptism. He could say: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" Thus their baptism was an event that they could recall as having

taken place within their knowledge. This could not have been possible had they been baptized as babies, for they would have had no recollection that this had ever taken place! To baptise a baby is to rob that person, when afterwards he is saved, of the joy of intelligently and willingly obeying his Lord in this rite; particularly when he is assured that his baptism, as a baby, was the equivalent of Christian baptism.

Some years ago, a young Christian approached an older believer and confided to him of the great joy that had come into her life as she had yielded her life completely to the Lord. The old Christian replied: "You have doubtless discovered that obedience to the word of God is the secret of true Christian joy and usefulness." The young lady replied: "O yes, trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey"! He next inquired: "Have you been obedient to the Lord in baptism?" When she replied in the affirmative, he next inquired: "When were you baptized?" She replied: "When I was a baby." "How do you know?" was his next question, and she replied: "My mother told me so." Then said the old Christian: "When you get to heaven, and the Lord Jesus asks you whether you have been baptized, be sure to refer Him to your mother!" At this the young lady added: "I not only have my mother's word for it, but I also have my baptismal certificate hanging on the wall of my bedroom." Then the old believer said: "Well, be sure and take that certificate with you when you go to heaven!" These words were used of God to show this young believer the fallacy of her position, and she was baptized shortly afterwards.

May we courteously inquire of the reader, if he or she is a believer: Have you been baptized, by immersion, since you came to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus as your

personal Savior? If not, then give this matter your most earnest consideration, and rest not until you have obeyed the command of the One whom you profess to own as the supreme Lord of your life. Remember, "If He's not Lord of *all*, then He's not Lord at *all*!"

CHAPTER SIX

V. THE MODE OF BAPTISM

Or how should a person be baptized?

The answer, of course, is by immersion in water. We shall present the evidence for this from the word of God.

1. By the Greek word that is used.

We have noted previously that the word, "baptise," is an Anglicized form of the Greek word, "baptisma," which is the noun form, and "baptizo," is the verb form. Both forms are derived from the root, "bapto." This word occurs some eighty times in the New Testament. According to the well known authority, Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon, it means to "dip," or to "dye," This, of course, is done by immersion. It is used to describe the act of drawing water by dipping a vessel therein.

The question may well be asked: "Why did not the translators of the Authorized Version render these Greek words in their correct English equivalent, which is "immerse?" The answer has been suggested that: "As *scholars* they could not translate them *falsely*, while as biased *theologians* they could not translate them *truly*!"

Another has said: "Had the Greek word been *translated* in our English version instead of *transliterated*, we should have, as in Rotherham's version, the word 'immerse', wherever we now read 'baptise.' The prevalence of the unscriptural and Romish practice of infant baptism, at the time of the translation of the Authorized version into English, accounts for the presence of the Greek word,

‘baptise,’ for by that word, the meaning is hidden from English readers who are not acquainted with the Greek language.”

“If the Greek word, ‘baptizo’ had been treated by the translators in the same way as all other words of the Greek text had been treated by them: that is to say, if an English word of equivalent meaning had been put in the English version to represent it, there would be no uncertainty in the minds of ordinary English readers as to how baptism is to be administered.” (“Baptism,” by Philip Mauro)

2. The statements of learned theologians who do not practice baptism by immersion.

It will be of interest to observe the comments of some very well known and able teachers of the Word, whose denominational affiliation prevented them from practicing the scriptural form of baptism, that of immersion upon profession of faith.

We will select a few examples from many more that we could quote. Notice how they unite in their testimony as to the scriptural mode of baptism.

(1) Canon Liddon, an Anglican, or Episcopal clergyman, states in his commentary on Romans: “The baptism of adults by immersion is present in the Apostle’s mind. The descent into the water: (katadusis), and the rising from it (anadusis), were two striking features of the rite.”

(2) Dr. William Sanday, and A. C. Headlam, also Anglicans, wrote in “The International Critical Commentary:” “Baptism expresses symbolically a series of acts . . . immersion—death; submersion—burial (the ratification of death); emergence—resurrection.”

(3) Dr. A. Plummer, another Anglican, wrote: "The rite is nowhere described in detail, but the element was always water, and the mode of using it was commonly immersion."

(4) Bishop Handley Moule, also an Anglican, wrote: "Scripture indicates a usage of immersion in Apostolic missions very plainly. And it connects baptism with our Lord's death, burial and resurrection doctrinally."

(5) Mark Guy Pearse, a well know Methodist clergyman, wrote: "Baptism meant and meant always death, burial and resurrection."

(6) The Hon. Baptist Noel, an Anglican clergyman, wrote: "I believe I have weighed well every considerable argument that has ever been adduced in the maintenance of infant baptism, as an addition to, and evidently becomes a substitute for the baptism of believers in Christian Churches; and I have come distinctly to these two conclusions, which appear to me at least to be certain. It appears to me to be distinctly proved, first, that baptism, as ordained by Christ, is an immersion in the water, a being buried in the water; and secondly, that immersion is meant to be a profession of faith in Christ."

(7) A Dr. Cox wrote: "I now demand of Mr. Ewing to point me out the Lexicon which does not give dipping, plunging or immersing as the unquestioned, settled and universally admitted primitive signification of the contested terms."

(8) Dean Stanley, a famous Anglican clergyman, and a writer of repute wrote: "There can be no question that the original form of baptism—the very meaning of the word—was complete immersion in deep baptismal waters; and that, for at least four centuries, any other form was

either unknown or disregarded, unless in case of dangerous illness, as an exceptional, almost monstrous case."

(9) The famous Dr. Alexander Maclaran, who has been called "the prince of expositors," quotes Bishop Lightfoot, an Anglican, as saying: "Ye were buried with Christ to your old selves beneath the baptismal waters." Dr. Maclaran then adds: "If baptism is immersion, and immersion expresses a substantial part of its meaning, can sprinkling be baptism?" (British Weekly, 1905)

(10) Martin Luther wrote: "I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and the mystery signifies."

(11) John Calvin declared: "The word baptise means to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient Church."

(12) Dr. Thomas Chalmers, of the Free Church of Scotland wrote: "The original meaning of the word 'baptism' is immersion. The prevalent style in the Apostle's day was an actual submerging of the whole body under water."

(13) We are told that John Wesley, "the father of Methodism," "practiced immersion before he went to Georgia and, while there, he not only immersed, but he refused the Lord's Supper to all who had not been immersed" (Tyreman's "Oxford Methodists.")

(14) Conybeare and Howson, in their monumental work, "The Life and Epistles of Paul," wrote concerning Romans 6:3-7: "This passage cannot be understood unless it is borne in mind that the primitive baptism was by immersion."

3. The element required, which is water.

This can readily be seen by consulting the various accounts of baptisms recorded in the New Testament. John, the Baptist declared: "I baptise you *in water*." (Matt. 3:11) Later we read: "They were baptized by him *in the river Jordan*." (Mark 1:5) Still later we are told: "John was baptizing in Aenon, near to Salem, for there was *much water* there." (John 3:23) In Matt. 3:6 we are told that, in response to John's message of repentance, "There went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea . . . and were baptized of him *in Jordan*, (a river) confessing their sins." In the account of our Lord's baptism we read: "When He was baptized, He went up straightway *out of the water*." (Matt. 3:16) In the description of the baptism of the Eunuch, we are told that both Philip and the Eunuch went down *both into* the water and he baptized him . . . and when they were *come up out of the water*," etc. (Acts 8:36-39)

The well known case of the conversion of Cornelius and his household further demonstrates that water was the medium used in baptism. Peter's words are to the point: "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10) Thus it is clear that water, and plenty of it, was required for scriptural baptism.

4. The method employed.

In one word, it is immersion, for it is the God-appointed figure of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Just as the Lord went under the waves and billows of the storm of God's judgment against sin on our behalf; so the believer, in obedience to his Lord's command, is immersed in water and, in this way, confesses his identification with his Lord and Savior.

One has only to read the many accounts of baptisms in the New Testament to be convinced of this fact. Of our Lord's baptism it is recorded: "When He was baptized, He went up straightway out of the water." Surely this indicates He must have been *in* it to come *out* of it. Perhaps the clearest evidence is that of the baptism of the Eunuch. We are told that "they went down both *into* the water, and Philip baptized him. . . . When they were come up *out* of the water, the Spirit caught away Philip." (Acts 8) In view of such scriptures, it is no wonder that even those who practice sprinkling are compelled to admit that immersion is the scriptural mode!

5. The figure, or the illustration used.

Should there remain any lingering doubt that immersion is the mode employed in baptism, the illustration used by the Holy Spirit to describe it should be sufficient to convince the open minded reader. Again we shall turn to a scripture that has often been quoted: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are *buried with Him* by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been *planted* together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, (rendered inactive) that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. 6:3-6)

Note particularly the words: "*buried with Him* by baptism," and "*planted together.*" There is only one way to bury people, whether in a cave or under the ground, and that is, to put them out of sight. Abraham uses this very expression when he bought a cave in which to bury

his wife and said: "that I should bury my dead out of my sight." (Gen. 23:8) Baptism is a burial, and it is also a "planting." The planted seed is covered by the soil, and in due time springs up from its grave, to fulfill its God-given function. See John 12:24. The person who is baptized is therefore placed under the water and momentarily disappears from sight, to illustrate his burial with Christ. He is then brought up out from the water to illustrate his resurrection with Christ, henceforth to walk with and live for Him in newness of life.

The same picture of burial is also used in Col. 2:12 where we read: "*Buried* with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." The only form of baptism that can fit the picture of burial, which God uses to describe baptism, is immersion. A corpse is not buried by sprinkling a few grains of dust upon its head, or by pouring a jug of earth on its body, but only by a complete putting out of sight.

There is a striking illustration of the spiritual meaning of baptism in the Old Testament. When Israel crossed the Jordan into the promised land, God, through Joshua, gave instructions that twelve stones should be taken from the dry bed of the river and placed as a memorial pillar on the Canaan side. Then twelve stones should be taken from the Canaan side and placed in the bed of the river, on the spot where the priests feet had stood who bore the ark of the covenant, as the people had passed over dry shod. As the waters of Jordan returned to their normal flow, these stones were covered or buried.

The stones buried in the river could picture the believer's identification with Christ in His death. The twelve stones erected in the Promised Land could illustrate the

believer's resurrection with Christ. The purpose for the erection of these memorial stones was that their children, yet to be born, should be moved to inquire as to their meaning, and their parents were instructed to rehearse in their ears the miracle of the passing over of the Jordan from the wilderness into the land of promise. (Josh. 4:1-10)

We are told that John Knox brought infant sprinkling from Geneva to Scotland in 1559. In 1643 the Westminster divines met together to discuss the form of baptism. Twenty four of these men voted for immersion as the mode. An equal number voted for sprinkling. The casting vote, in favor of sprinkling, was cast by a Dr. Lightfoot, and thus infant sprinkling became the Presbyterian form of baptism.

Thus by the meaning of the Greek word; by the element required, "water"; by the method employed, immersion; by the figure used, "burial"; by the findings of eminent teachers of the Word, who do not practice immersion; we can surely conclude that the scriptural mode of baptism is by immersion in water.

CHAPTER SEVEN

VI. DIFFERING VIEWS ON THE QUESTION OF BAPTISM

It is astounding to record that, in spite of the crystal clear teaching of the word of God as to the meaning, subjects, mode and spiritual significance of baptism, this ordinance is still a matter of much controversy in Christendom. Moreover, it has divided Christians into various groups, each intent on vigorously advocating its own particular view of the subject. Thus, an ordinance which God intended to express the *unity* of all believers, has been allowed to become the cause of *dividing* them into opposing camps. It has actually caused Christians to cruelly persecute their fellow believers, and even put them to death!

It will be in keeping with our subject if we examine several of these differing views of Baptism and test, each one in turn, by the teaching of the infallible word of God. Though controversy is not a pleasant task, it is a necessary one, if we are to arrive at a correct understanding of the situation regarding this subject. This will take some time, and involve the use of some considerable space; but we believe that it is well worth the effort, for we are told in the good Book: "Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom and instruction and understanding." (Prov. 23:23) This must be paid for in the hard cash of experience, and this only comes as a result of one's own individual study; and this, in turn, is described as "a weariness to the flesh"! (Eccl. 12:12) The divine injunc-

tion is: "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good."
(1 Thess. 5:21)

1. Those who believe in infant baptism.

This is the belief of millions of people, of both Roman Catholic and Protestant persuasion. It is taught in a printed form of Church procedure, and in language that admits of no other meaning. It is affirmed by these people that when a baby is brought to a minister of religion, and sprinkled with water, accompanied by a recited form of procedure, the child thereby becomes: "A member of Christ, the child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of God." The reader may verify this by consulting their books of discipline and the prescribed order of procedure at such a function. It also declares, under the heading of "Ministration of Baptism of Infants: The baptizing officer shall say: 'Seeing now, dearly beloved, brethren, that this child is by baptism regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks to almighty God for these benefits.'"

In Article 27 of the Episcopal creed it is stated: "Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened; but it is also a sign of regeneration, a new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sins, and adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed."

It was in view of such a statement, so contrary to the teaching of Scripture, that C. H. Spurgeon, perhaps the greatest preacher of this age said, in his famous sermon on Baptismal Regeneration: "The Church of England (or the Episcopal Church) does not teach this doc-

trine merely through a section of its ministers, who might charitably be considered as evil branches of the vine, but it openly, boldly and plainly declares the doctrine in her own appointed standard: 'The Book of Common Prayer,' and that in words so express, that while language is the channel of conveying intelligible sense, no process short of violent wresting from their plain meaning can ever make them say anything else."

This belief in baptismal regeneration is not confined to the Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox churches, but, as we have seen, is accepted in some of the Protestant denominations. However, there are some denominations who, though they practice infant baptism, do not believe it regenerates the child. It is indeed difficult to understand how some otherwise good and sound teachers of the Word can give lip service to that which has no place given to it in the word of God. It is a question that only the judgment seat of Christ can answer.

(1) *The origin of infant baptism.*

The question may well be raised as to when and how this theory of infant baptism, and the far worse doctrine of baptismal regeneration, came to be introduced into Christendom and gained such universal acceptance in so short a time. Of one thing we can be positively certain, it has no foundation whatever in the New Testament. There is not a single case on record of a baby being baptized in any of its pages.

Martin Luther, who later incorporated infant baptism into his doctrine said, "It cannot be proved that infant baptism was instituted by Christ, or by the first Christians after Christ." Calvin, who also adopted infant baptism, declared: "It is nowhere expressed by the Evangelists that infants were baptized." Erasmus, contemporary with

Luther, affirmed: "It is nowhere expressed in the Apostle's writings that they baptized children."

In a criticism of Protestantism, and this, from the pen of a Roman Catholic bishop named Hughes, comes the following: "The first principles of Protestantism is that nothing be practiced which is not authorized by scriptural example: But it does not appear, from Scripture, that even one infant was ever baptized. Therefore Protestants should reject, on their own principle, infant baptism as an unscriptural usage." These are words that should cause every practicer of infant baptism to very seriously reconsider his position in this matter, for each time he baptises a baby, he is but following in the footsteps of Rome!

It is difficult to discover just when the theory of infant baptism originated and was introduced into Christendom. To trace its rise and progress one needs to consult a good book on Church History. One such, originally published in three volumes, but now available in one large volume of over 1000 pages, is by Andrew Miller, and is published by Pickering and Inglis of Glasgow. This will acquaint the reader with the background needed to appreciate the conditions of the Church, following the death of the Apostles. Perhaps the most informative book on the subject of Baptism was written by Johannes Werns, a devout and sound Christian scholar, a master of the Greek language and a reliable and able historian. It represents a life time of careful investigation on the part of a well taught and very able man in the Scriptures. It is presented in a most readable manner, and its 350 pages are packed with invaluable information regarding the use and abuse of this ordinance of baptism. It bears the simple title, "Baptism," and is published by the Paternoster Press of London, England. By all means get this excellent book

and "read, mark and inwardly digest" its contents.

We know for certain that there were no recorded instances of infant baptism during the first hundred years of Church history. Following the death of the original band of Apostles came those who are known as the early "Church Fathers," whose writings, called "the Patristic writings," though uninspired and not authoritative, are nevertheless quite informative as to the conditions that obtained in the early days of Christianity. From the earliest of these writers, such as Clement, Polycarp, Barnabas, Ignatius, Hermes and Papias, we find no trace of the practice of infant baptism.

In the second century, such writers as Quadratus, Aristidez, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Theophilus, Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus also make no mention of infant baptism. Some find in Irenaeus (A.D. 178) bishop of Lyons, the first mention of this idea of pedobaptism (child baptism). His writings reveal the fact that he believed that the waters of baptism possessed certain magical properties which, in some mysterious way, imparted some spiritual benefits to the person baptized. In A.D. 197 Tertullian composed a treatise on baptism, and argued against the rising custom of baptizing children. Apparently infant baptism was introduced to the North African Church about the end of the second century. Dean Stanley wrote: "In the Apostolic age, and the three centuries that followed, it is evident, as a general rule, that those who came to baptism came in full age and of their own and deliberate choice."

Principal John Cunningham, in his famous "Croal Lectures" said: "Infant baptism is never heard of during the first one hundred and fifty years of the Church's history. Notwithstanding the remonstrance of Tertullian, in-

fant baptism came slowly into use. For if there was a danger of a baptized person disgracing his baptismal profession, there was a still greater danger of an unbaptized infant dying and being damned for ever. So great a calamity must by all means be prevented by the easy method of dipping the infant in lukewarm water. Thus infant baptism came daily, more and more into use, and was soon universal. It was a startling departure from the original institution and the usage of three or four hundred years." Another historian named Salmasius wrote: "An opinion prevailed that no one could be saved without being baptized and, for that reason, the custom arose of baptizing infants."

Bishop Handley Moule, an Episcopal clergyman, in his "Outlines" (page 256) said: "In the New Testament we have not indeed any mention of infant baptism . . . It is true that few certain notices of infant baptism are to be found before the third century."

It will be recalled that Paul, in his farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, predicted that after his departure false teachers and false teaching would be introduced into the churches. Let us note his words carefully, for they have been tragically fulfilled: "For I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:29-33) Here is "Apostolic succession" with a vengeance!

Notice particularly to what Paul commends the believers in view of the rise of these false teachers: It was, "to God and the word of His grace." They were not commended to the catechism, the prayer book, the breviary or book of discipline, but to the word of God. This is the test by which to judge all teaching. We should ask: is it true to the *general* teaching of the word of God? An isolated text, divorced from its context, may apparently seem to support an erroneous idea; but when this idea is tested in the light of *all* the scriptures that deal with this subject, its falsity will become apparent.

(2) *The Patristic Writings.*

It may be profitable, at this point, to discuss this matter of the Church Fathers, for this will help us to form a better estimate of the worth, or otherwise, of their writings.

After the death of the Apostles, gifted men arose who, doubtless motivated by a sincere desire to improve on the New Testament pattern of Christianity, introduced various innovations which they fondly hoped would contribute to the development of the Church and further its influence in the world. These men, greatly gifted and most sincere, are called the "Church Fathers." They wrote considerably, and their writings have been preserved to us. They are called "The Patristic Writings," from the Latin word "Pater," which means "father." In these writings we can trace the beginnings of the departure from the pattern of the New Testament church.

These men would get an idea, which would gradually develop into a theory. They would then search the Bible to see if they could find any support for this theory. After a while, they would discover some isolated text which seemed to give some support to their theory. Then, by

a misinterpretation of this text, which was divorced from its context, they would formulate a doctrine and incorporate it into the official teaching of the Church. Thus, instead of getting *out* from the Bible the doctrines they taught, they put their theories *into* the Bible, and then made the Bible fit their particular theory! In this way they "wrested the Scriptures to their own destruction." (2 Pet. 3:16)

It must not be forgotten that many of these early Church fathers were men of good character, great learning and sincerely devoted to the Person of the Lord Jesus. Many of them were martyred for their convictions, and even welcomed violent death rather than deny what they believed to be the truth. They were intensely sincere in their convictions, but the sad fact remains that many of them were *sincerely mistaken*, and herein lies the tragedy of it. Thus, these many heresies were introduced by men of piety. Because of this fact, their erroneous teachings were accepted by the rank and file of Christians without question. Instead of searching the Scriptures for themselves "to see if these things were so," and thus getting back to the fountain head of truth; they accepted these false ideas on the say so of those whom they considered to be their authorities on all questions of doctrine (Acts 17:11). May this bitter lesson not be lost on us! However gifted and godly a person may be, his teaching must be brought to the test of all Scripture before it is accepted as correct or rejected as false.

The Church of Rome accepts these Patristic writings as being of equal authority with the Holy Scriptures. In fact, Rome has four sources of authority on which to base its dogmas. First, is the Bible. Second, the Apocrypha. Third, the Patristic writings. Fourth, the interpretation of the Church, by which, of course, they mean themselves.

It can easily be seen that, by this means any theory, however wild, fanciful and false could be foisted upon a credulous public, which must accept their teaching, or face the possibility of excommunication from their organization.

In the days of the Inquisition, thousands of godly, Bible-believing Christians were cruelly tortured and put to death simply because they refused to accept any teaching that did not have the support of Scripture. A good book to read in this connection is Foxe's "Book of Martyrs." It will enable believers to appreciate the price that was paid to secure for them the liberty they now enjoy to read and obey the word of God, none daring to make them afraid.

This noble army of martyrs, "who loved not their lives unto death," should be a challenge to us who have "obtained like precious faith" in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not without the deepest significance that the Greek word for "witness" is "martur," from which the word "martyr" is derived, which means "one who bears witness by his death." It is one thing to sing:

"Faith of our fathers, living still,
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword;
O how our hearts beat high with joy,
Whene'er we hear that glorious word!
Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to Thee 'till death."

It is another thing to translate this fact into the terms of our own experience!

It is in these Patristic writings that we can trace the gradual development of infant baptism which, at the beginning, was by immersion. This, in turn, blossomed out

into baptismal regeneration. There were in existence, at this time, many Mystery cults, which also had their secret customs and ordinances. With these Mysteries, which were purely pagan in character, it was taught that, through their ceremonies, the devotees entered into a mystical relationship with their god or gods "through a definite sacramental act and definite sacramental formulas." These Mystery cults united in their stand against Christianity, and did all in their power to crush it; but gradually, the ideas incorporated in these cults began to infiltrate and permeate Christianity. These Church fathers now began to teach that the waters of baptism contained a mystical and magical quality that cleansed a person from his sins and imparted to him the Holy Spirit. As early as A.D. 140 Hermes wrote: "We descend into the water and receive forgiveness of sins." Another, by the name of Barnabas (not the companion of Paul) wrote: "We go into the water full of sins and filth, and come forth fruitful, and have in our hearts the fear of God and hope on Jesus in the Spirit."

Another of these fathers expressed himself in extravagant and most eulogistic terms regarding the virtue of baptism. He wrote: "Baptism is the illumination of the soul, the transformation of life, the pledge of a good conscience towards God. Baptism is the support of our weakness, the putting off of the flesh, the putting on of the Spirit, participation in the Word, restoration of the creature, the washing away of sins, impartation of light, banishing of darkness. Baptism is a vehicle to God, a death with Christ, a fortification of faith, a perfecting of the spirit, a key to the kingdom of heaven, a changing of the life, a freeing from slavery, a severance from fetters, a conversion to a better condition. Baptism—what shall I further enumerate? It is the finest and most glorious gift

of God. . . . It is holier than every other kind of illumination." (Gregory A.D. 330-390)

Error does not take long to propogate, rather it spreads like wildfire. Not only so, but one error begets another, until the original truth is scarcely recognizable. Thus the "teachers with the itching ears" soon "turned away the ears of their hearers from the truth unto the fables of men." (2 Tim. 4:4) The myths of the Mysteries were allowed to eclipse the plain statements of the truth. They exchanged the "bread" of the Scriptures for the "stones" of the superstitions of men. (Luke 11:11) Truly, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (1 Cor. 5:6) Or, to change the figure: "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3:5)

The union of the Church and the State, under Constantine, early in the fourth century, hastened the process of deterioration in the professing Church, and soon infant baptism became the rule. The aim was to have a "Christian nation," and the quickest way to attain this status was to have all the babies baptized by immersion, and soon everybody would be considered to be a Christian, simply because he or she had passed through this ceremony as a child. However, this did not come into existence without considerable opposition; but gradually the opposition gave way to toleration and toleration to verification. By the sixth century, infant baptism had become universal.

Many of these well known Church fathers, however, had not been baptized as children, among whom were such men as Ambrose, (died 397) Jerome, (died 420) Augustine, (died 430) Gregory, (390) Basil, the great, (died 379) Ephraim, the Syrian, (373) Chrysostom, the "golden mouthed," (died 407).

The ceremony attending infant baptism gradually became more intricate, as several innovations were added, so that only the learned could fathom the involved meaning of the various formulas and acts in connection with it. Soon, only the "clergy" were permitted to perform the complex ceremony by which the baby was introduced into "the body of Christ." It must be noted that infant baptism, during this period, was by immersion only.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DIFFERING VIEWS ON BAPTISM

(Continued)

(3) *Some texts quoted in support of infant baptism.*

The advocates of infant baptism, although they can find no record of such a thing taking place in the New Testament to support their contention, are quite ready to turn to certain texts in the Bible, which they *imagine* give them the warrant for so doing. Let us look at a few of these "proof texts," and see whether they are justified in their conclusions. We will refer to three of these texts at this time, and deal with others later on.

(a) *John* 3:3-5. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." These were the words addressed by our Lord to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The proponents of infant baptism declare that the water here mentioned refers to the literal water used in baptism and that, through it, the person baptized is regenerated! That this is a mistaken assumption is evident as we consult the Scriptures as a whole, which ascribes no saving virtue whatever to the waters of baptism. Let us examine the claim.

(i) In the first place this passage has nothing whatever to do with Christian baptism, for this ordinance was not instituted until after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. (*Matt.* 28:19-20)

(ii) If the water of *John* 3 refers to the literal water

used in baptism, what shall be said of the "water" of John 4, where Christ said: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life"? Obviously this cannot refer to literal water, but is a symbol of the Holy Spirit who indwells the believer the moment he trusts in the Savior. See John 7:37-39.

(iii) The water to which Christ referred is undoubtedly the Old Testament symbol of the word of God, a figure with which Nicodemus, as a ruler of the Jews, should have been quite familiar. Read, in this connection, Ezekiel 36:24-27 and compare 37:1-14. Here, in the vision of the valley of dry bones, the prophet shows that both the *word* of God and the *Spirit* of God were necessary to bring about the rebirth of Israel nationally. The same figure is used in Psalm 119:9; "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word." It is the Word that cleanses the life, even as water does the body. This is made crystal clear by 1 Pet. 1:23, where we read: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever." Surely nothing could be plainer than this. It will be noted that baptism is not mentioned at all in this passage. Now compare Titus 3:5, which reads: "According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Finally, look at Eph. 5:26, which declares: "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it that He might cleanse it with the washing of water by the *word*."

The simple, scriptural and satisfactory explanation of John 3:5 is that the Spirit of God so applies the word of God to the hearer or reader of the Scriptures, that he is led to see his need as a lost and guilty sinner, and trust the Lord Jesus as his Savior and is thus born again. Thus

the word of God *enlightens* the soul. (Ps. 119:130). The Spirit of God *convicts* the soul. (John 16:7-14) Faith in the Son of God *saves* the soul. (John 3:14-16)

Water baptism, therefore, has nothing to do with producing the new birth; it is simply the believer's confession, in symbol, of what he has *already experienced* of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit upon his acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord. Still another explanation of John 3:5 is supplied by C. F. Hogg, an able teacher of the Word, who points out that the conjunction "kai," rendered "and," can also bear the translation, "even." Thus it could read: "Except a man be born of water, even the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The criminality of this doctrine of baptismal regeneration can be seen on every hand. There are many thousands of men and women who have been assured that, because they were christened as babies, they were thereby "born again and made members of the body of Christ, and heirs of the kingdom." Thus they have been blinded to the truth of the gospel and lulled into a sense of false security, for which there is no foundation in the word of God.

(b) *Matthew* 19:13-15. "Then were brought unto Him little children that He should put His hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And He laid His hands on them and departed thence." In all discussions on infant baptism, this scripture always crops up, but it has no more to do with baptism than the words: "Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle!" (Rev. 20:8)

It will be observed that there is no mention of bap-

tism in this passage. It simply records that our Lord, in His tender love, took little children in His arms and blessed them, but He did not baptise them. (See Mark 10:13-16) Nor did the Lord ever commission His disciples to baptise them. The logical conclusion to which we can come from Matt. 19 is: Christ blessed the little children, but did not baptise them; therefore infants should not be baptized! There is no connection whatever between the blessing of children and the baptizing of infants, except in the overworked imagination of certain people! Bishop Jeremy Taylor has well said concerning the text: "Suffer little children" etc: "It proves nothing so much as that there is a want of better argument!"

Those who deduce infant baptism from Matt. 19:13-15 and teach that only by baptism can a baby be brought to the Lord Jesus, actually, in this way, interpose baptism between the child and the Savior! Thus the unscriptural christening of babies is, in reality, an obstacle that must be surmounted ere the child can be brought to Him!

(c) *The theory that baptism, in the New Testament, has taken the place of the Old Testament rite of circumcision.*

It is argued that inasmuch as each Jewish male child was commanded to be circumcised on the eighth day; so, in Christianity, each child should be baptized to bring it into a place of covenant blessing. Let us again apply this claim to the test of all scripture, and note its falsity.

(i) In the first place, circumcision was an ordinance confined to the nation of Israel and its proselytes; but baptism is an ordinance peculiar to Christianity, which is unique, and entirely distinct from Judaism. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17) Christianity is not a new patch on

the old garment of Judaism, but something entirely different, and infinitely superior to it. as the epistle to the Hebrews clearly indicates. (Matt. 9:16)

(ii) Circumcision was a rite definitely commanded by God, and thus was a *compulsory* act for every male child eight days after he was *physically* born. Baptism is a *voluntary* act on the part of a person after he has been *spiritually* born through faith in the Son of God.

(iii) Circumcision was confined to the *male children* only of the Jewish race, at a definite time after birth. Baptism is for both male and female of any age, after they have been regenerated.

(iv) Circumcision was only for those who, by *natural generation*, had been brought under the covenant blessings promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and was also extended to freeborn and strangers. Baptism is only for those who, by a *supernatural regeneration* have been born into the family of God. See John 1:12-13. Circumcision is *Jewish*, but baptism is *Christian*. Circumcision did not make a person a Jew, he was that already by physical birth. It simply marked the male child as a Jew. It was the sign that God had commanded. (Gen. 17:11)

(v) There is no suggestion of faith on the part of the circumcised child, for he was unconscious of what was taking place. Baptism, however, demands an intelligent act of faith on the part of the person to be baptized, for we read: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:12)

(vi) At the first Church council, held in Jerusalem around A.D. 53, this matter of circumcision was discussed at length; but there was no suggestion offered, or mention made that baptism had now taken the place of cir-

cumcision. (Acts 15:7-29) This certainly would have been the time and the place to have settled this matter, if there had been any question about it in the minds of the Apostles, but not a word is said about baptism having taken the place of circumcision.

(vii) Timothy was undoubtedly baptized as a believer, but he was afterwards circumcised. In his case, baptism did not take the place of circumcision! (Acts 16:1-3)

In Col. 2:10-23, the rite of circumcision is used, in a symbolic sense, to illustrate what the believer, by his baptism has confessed, namely, his identification with Christ. Just as circumcision consisted of a cutting off of the flesh; so the believer, by his symbolic burial with Christ in baptism, demonstrates the cutting off, from before God, of his former life as a man in the flesh. Thus he is linked forever with a triumphant and glorified Christ, and is therefore free from all legalistic bonds, to live to the glory of his Lord and Savior.

Some years ago, we were challenged to a debate on infant baptism by a clergyman who believed in it. We agreed to debate on this subject, but stipulated that only the Bible should be consulted during the debate. Somewhat reluctantly, he agreed to this condition, and he was given three days in which to prepare his argument. When we met in his study, he was visibly embarrassed and finally admitted that, in searching the New Testament, he had found no mention of any case of infant baptism. "But," he added triumphantly: "There is not a verse in the New Testament that says a baby should *not* be baptised!" To this we replied: "Supposing I founded a new religious denomination and decreed that, as an ordinance of my new denomination, all the members should have

their baby's faces painted blue at the age of eight days. You would naturally inquire of me: 'By what authority do you have these babies faces painted blue at the age of eight days,' I would triumphantly reply, in your own words:" There is not a verse in the New Testament that says a baby's face should not be painted blue at the age of eight days!" The debate ended at this point!

To infer that because the Bible does not specifically name and prohibit a certain act, or to argue, from the silence of Scripture, that any act is permissible if it is not actually condemned, is to open the door for the admittance of a host of practices for which there is no precedent or authority in the word of God. The old saying: "Silence gives consent," has no authority for the student of the Scriptures!

Infant sprinkling, or immersion, is one of the things concerning which the Scripture is silent. One has only to witness the elaborate ceremony at such an event to realize how far astray men have gone from the simple yet beautiful pattern laid down in the word of God. The prescribed prayers, the various actions and the pronouncement that the child is now regenerated, all combine to create a most distasteful impression to those who have been enlightened by the word of God.

Of the many innovations which have been introduced since the New Testament was closed as a completed revelation, the following is a partial list: (1) Priestcraft, or the formation of a special class among believers known as "the clergy." (2) The rule of the bishop. (3) Infant baptismal regeneration. (4) The sacrifice of the Mass. (5) The confessional. (6) The invention of Purgatory. (7) Prayers to the saints. (8) Prayers for the dead. (9) The sign of the cross. (10) The use of incense. (11) The

immaculate conception. (12) The adoration of Mary. (13) The celibacy of the clergy. (14) The special vestments of the clergy. (15) The elaborate ritual. (16) Images. (17) The assumption of the virgin. None of these are mentioned in the New Testament as being part of Christianity.

Christendom, today, is very largely a mixture of Judaism and Paganism, with a little Christianity thrown in to make it more palatable. A bishop, seeking to explain the presence of the many innovations which had been introduced into the ritual of his particular denomination, remarked complacently: "This, of course, is all part of the *development* of the Church." A Christian interrupted him at this point and said: "Bishop, we have another word for it." "And what is that?" inquired the bishop. The man replied, in one word: "*Departure!*"

It all goes to prove that good men, doubtless acting from a good motive, when led astray by their own ideas, can introduce error which will lead many thousands of people astray. Isaiah, by divine inspiration, rebuked the false prophets of his day and said: "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream, and he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? . . . Therefore I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal My words, everyone from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets saith the Lord, that use their tongues to say: 'He saith.' Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause My people to err by their lives and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them. Therefore shall they not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." (Jer. 23:28-32)

CHAPTER NINE

DIFFERING VIEWS ON BAPTISM

(Continued)

(4) *The Reformation, and its limitations.*

It may be helpful, at this point, to say something regarding the great Reformation. Following the rise and assumption of episcopacy, with its special class of clergy, in varying ranks, came what has been appropriately called "the dark ages." During this period, the Bible was suppressed and forbidden to the laity. All who refused to bow to the dictates of Rome were ruthlessly suppressed and persecuted, even unto death. Ignorance of the most appalling description obtained, and gross superstition held full sway over the people, most of whom were illiterate.

Yet, even in these dark ages, there was a godly remnant who refused to accept the pretentious claims of Rome, and sought to continue in the scriptural simplicity of the New Testament pattern. These people were compelled to meet in secret places for Bible study, prayer and the observance of the Lord's supper. They were mercilessly hunted down, tortured and many thousands of them were martyred.

Then came the Reformation. This occurred early in the sixteenth century. It dealt a severe blow to Romanism and introduced the era of Protestantism, so called because it was a protest against the inventions, errors and evils of Roman Catholicism. The leaders of Protestantism were in a quandary as to how far they should go in cleaning

up the mess that faced them in Christendom. One has well put it thus:

“They fully realized the evil of priestcraft and episcopacy, but were not able to shake themselves free from the unscriptural idea that an earthly organization of some kind was necessary to bind together the assemblies of believers. They attempted to “reform” Churches, instead of exhorting each local gathering to hold fast the Head, from whom alone the love and unity can be obtained that is to be of any real value in binding saints together.” (George Goodman)

The advent of the Reformation resulted in the recovery of the twin truths of justification by faith alone, and the efficacy of the sacrificial work of Christ, as the alone ground of acceptance before God. The tragedy of the Reformation lies in the fact that the truth of the Church of God, as found in the word of God, was largely neglected.

Instead of going right back to the New Testament pattern of assemblies, and to those simple scriptural principles revealed therein, they began to form new organizations which they vainly imagined would secure the unity of Protestantism. Infant baptism was retained as an ordinance, and the evils of clerisy and episcopacy were incorporated into the new order. Thus the Reformation, which had promised so much, only resulted in an incomplete deliverance from the errors of Rome, and a *partial* recovery of scriptural truth.

As it was in the dark ages, so also, during this period, there was a faithful few who refused to accept the error of clerisy, episcopacy and infant baptismal regeneration, and sought to continue in primitive and scriptural Christianity. These were called “Independents,” and they were

made to suffer, this time at the hands of Protestantism, for their faithfulness to God and His word! Many were imprisoned, some martyred, while others were banished from the realm. Some found refuge in Holland and Switzerland, and some emigrated to America and became the founders of the Pilgrim colony in New England.

A good illustration of the real cause of the bogging down of the Reformation is found in the book of Ezra, chapters one to five. This describes the return of the Jewish remnant from the Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem. The first act of these Jews was to rebuild the altar of the Lord and sacrifice burnt offerings thereon. Thus the way to God, by means of a substitutionary sacrifice, was re-established in the land.

This illustrates what took place at the Reformation, when the soul-emancipating truth of justification by faith alone in the substitutionary sacrifice of the Son of God was recovered and fearlessly proclaimed. Thus the way to God, through the redemptive work of Christ, was unearthed from the debris of tradition and sacerdotalism, under which it had been buried for centuries. This answers to the erection of the altar, and for this fact we give God our grateful praise.

The Jewish remnant, however, neglected to rebuild the temple of God, and for several years it continued to lie in a state of ruin. At length, through the faithful preaching of Haggai and Zachariah, the people of God were aroused to a sense of their neglect, and began and completed the rebuilding of the house of God. The temple, of course, answers to the truth of the Church, which is the present "house of God." (1 Tim. 3:15)

The Reformers concerned themselves almost exclusively with the rebuilding of the altar, but neglected the

equally great matter of the recovery and re-establishment of those principles of Church truth found in the New Testament. While we should praise God for the Reformation, yet we must deeply regret that it stopped short of a return to those scriptural principles laid down in the Word. The Reformation simply substituted the organization of Protestantism for the organization of Romanism. It merely exchanged the Roman form of clerisy for a Protestant form of the same thing.

It is quite true that the Protestant organization was a vast improvement on the Roman brand, for its clerics and bishops were far better men; but the fact remains that the word of God gives no warrant for either variety! Few of the leaders of the Reformation seemed to realize this fact, and it was not long before internal dissention arose which divided them into various camps or denominations, with its resultant confusion, and thus history again repeated itself.

The moral of this is surely obvious. When men, even when acting from the best of motives, ignore the pattern which God has given in His word, declension and failure must be the inevitable result. No one can improve on God's plan. When God wished to build a sanctuary so that He might dwell among His people, He gave minute instructions to Moses as to its design, and continually admonished him saying: "Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shown thee in the mount." (Exod. 25:40; 26:30; 27:8)

Since the Reformation, Protestantism has been divided into many different denominations. Some of these are very large, numbering millions of members; while others are quite small. However, one feature seems to be true of nearly all: they have retained clerisy, and thus

limited the gifts of Christ to His Church to one man called "the minister." In most cases this man has been specially trained in theology, selected by them, and ordained as their "clergyman."

We shall now occupy ourselves with examining the varying views of infant baptism, as practiced by some of the great denominations of Christendom, and we would again emphasize the necessity to distinguish principles from personalities. We are speaking of *systems* of religious belief, and not so much of persons in those systems.

(5) *The Roman Catholic view of infant baptism.*

We have already referred to this great religious organization, and seen that it is a mixture of Judaism and Paganism with a little Christianity thrown in. Its rise to a place of supreme power began with the union of the Church and State in the reign of Constantine, the Roman emperor in the fourth century. From being a persecuted minority under the previous emperors of Rome, the Church now came under the friendly patronage of the State, with disastrous results.

Prior to this unholy union, many things had been introduced into the professing Church, for which the New Testament made no provision; but at least it had been opposed to Paganism. Once the Church and the State combined, the pagans, who had previously stood aloof from Christians, now came in great droves to join the now popular movement. Thousands, by baptism, were now added to the State religion. In fact, during this period, many were *compelled* to be baptized, and thus the so-called Church became a great tree under whose branches every evil bird of doctrine found shelter.

From that time on, until the dawn of the Reforma-

tion, the Roman Church was the undisputed master of Europe and, under the supreme authority of the Pope, enjoyed practically complete domination of both the religious and political scene. All who refused to bow to its authority were punished severely. During this period many more innovations were introduced into the ritual of the Roman church. Great cathedrals were erected, with an ornate and complicated ritual, performed by gorgeously attired priests and spectacular processions, all of which were well calculated to appeal to the senses, and the love of the spectacular.

Belief in infant baptismal regeneration was practically universal. It was taught that the waters of baptism contained a mysterious and magical quality that cleansed the infant from its original sin, and resulted in its regeneration. Augustine had affirmed: "It may therefore be correctly affirmed that such infants as die without being baptized will be involved in condemnation, but of the mildest character." Until the middle ages, infant baptism was performed by immersion, but since that time sprinkling has become the mode.

The baptismal ceremony also became a most complicated affair. According to Schaff's "Religious Encyclopedia," it consisted of the following procedure. (1) A little oil of "mystic unction" was placed in the water to be used, and the child was then presented to the priest by the sponsor of the child. (2) The exorcism was pronounced by which the evil spirits were rebuked. (3) A little salt was then placed in the child's mouth to indicate it was now protected against the corruption of sin. (4) The sign of the cross was then made on the forehead, eyes, breast, shoulders and ears to indicate all these avenues were now open to understand the things of God. (5) The child's nose and ears were next touched with spittal. (6) The

Devil and his works were now renounced by the infant, through the mediation of the sponsor. (7) The child was then anointed on the breast with the oil that he might receive true faith, and between the shoulders that he might engage actively in good works. (8) The Christian faith was then professed by the sponsors on behalf of the child. (9) The child was next asked if he wished to be baptized. When the sponsor answered in the affirmative, the baby was duly sprinkled with the water. (10) The child's head was then anointed by chrism to mark him as a member of the body of Christ. (11) The child then received a white cloth (sudariolum). (12) A lighted candle was placed in the hand of the child to indicate a Christian must be a light. (13) The child was then given the name of some saint.

It will surely be obvious that all this is a far cry from Christian baptism as practiced in the New Testament, which does not even contemplate an infant being baptized, let alone to have such an elaborate ceremony performed upon it! A good book to read in connection with this is, "The Two Babylons," by Hislop. This clearly shows that many of these innovations introduced into the ritual of Rome were borrowed from the heathen and idolatrous rites practiced hundreds of years before in Babylon. The same is true of the Lord's Supper. From a simple remembrance of the Lord Jesus, it has been transformed into the sacrifice of the Mass, in which it is affirmed the bread and wine, at a given signal, is transformed into the actual body and blood of the Lord!

The belief in infant baptismal regeneration is still tenaciously held in the Roman Catholic denomination, and it is considered a dire tragedy for a baby to die without being christened, for such go to a place called "The Limbo of the innocents" where the soul enjoys the fullest

natural bliss, but is deprived of the "Beatific Vision of God." All this, of course, is purely imaginative, and has no foundation in the word of God. To such extreme lengths can people go when they neglect the sole revelation which God has been pleased to give to man, the divinely inspired and authoritative Bible!

(6) *The Greek Orthodox view of infant baptism.*

The full official title of this denomination is, "The Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Oriental Church." It was originally Roman Catholic. In A.D. 726, there was a division between the eastern and western part, which was caused by a controversy as to the superiority of the bishop of Rome, as against the bishop of Constantinople, plus the matter of the use of images which stand out from the wall of the Church building.

For many years the Greek Orthodox was the state religion of Russia, until Communism swept it out of power. It is still the state religion of some countries in eastern Europe, with millions of adherents. In many respects this great organization is similar to Rome. It believes in and practices infant baptismal regeneration but with this difference: it *immerses* the baby instead of sprinkling it. It also gives the child holy communion. In this, at least, they are consistent, for they argue that a person who is eligible for baptism is also qualified to take the Lord's supper. The "Household Baptists," with whom we shall deal later, though they practice baby baptism, deny the child the elements of the Lord's supper.

Though the Greek Orthodox Church is not allowed to erect images that stand out from the walls of their Church buildings, yet they are allowed to place them in niches in the wall. They also venerate holy pictures and worship the saints and, in many other ways, have griev-

ously departed from the scriptural pattern. Needless to say, they do not acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope. They also allow, under certain conditions, their priests to marry and have families. A visit to one of their Church buildings will serve to confirm the fact that there is much superstition prevalent in the services, and little is known of the glorious gospel of the grace of God.

CHAPTER TEN

DIFFERING VIEWS ON BAPTISM

(Continued)

(7) *The Lutheran view of infant baptism.*

Martin Luther was undoubtedly a giant in the faith, and was clearly raised up of God to proclaim the great truth of justification by faith in Christ and His finished work alone. Associated with him were other stalwarts of the faith, such as Calvin, Melancthon, etc.

Unfortunately, in his revolt from Rome, Luther did not divest himself of all the grave clothes of Romish superstition, which had obtained for close to twelve hundred years. Instead of returning to the New Testament pattern of the Church, he retained many of the features of Rome, such as clerisy and infant baptism. Concerning the Lord's Supper, he introduced the theory of "consubstantiation,"* which resulted in a break with some of his friends. In 1527, Luther and Melancthon took the fatal step of forming a state Church, with the ruling prince of the Province in control, with the authority to carry out its policy by force of arms if necessary. Thus the bitter lesson of Constantine was forgotten.

Infant baptism presented many problems to Luther and, during the years that followed, he changed his views on this subject many times. In 1528 he wrote: "Baptism helps no one, nor is it to be given to any one except he believes for himself and, without personal faith, no one is to be baptized. . . . Were we not able to prove that the

*See author's book on: "The Lord's Supper."

young children themselves believe, and have personal faith, it is my sincere counsel and judgment that they straightway desist—and the sooner the better—and never more baptise any child.”

The reader may feel like asking, in the light of this statement: “How can he reconcile this statement with his advocacy of infant baptism?” The answer is that Luther actually believed that infants could believe! He quoted Matt. 19:14 and declared that inasmuch as Christ had declared concerning children: “of such is the kingdom of heaven,” and that this kingdom can only belong to believers, therefore one must take it for granted that little children must believe!” This was termed, “the passive receptivity of the child.”

In view of this peculiar reasoning, Luther advocated infant baptism. He further stated: “The word of God, which falls on the ear, is inwardly communicated, at the same time by the Spirit. The more susceptible a small child is, the more easily does the word pronounced by the priest over the little candidate work through the Spirit.” In fact, he further stated: “Just because they are without intelligence, they have a greater aptitude for faith than the old and intelligent, with whom intelligence always lies in the way, and will not thrust its great head through the narrow gate.”

Furthermore, Luther appealed to the antiquity of infant baptism, and its general acceptance as an ordinance for twelve hundred years, as still further “proof” that it should be retained as an ordinance by his denomination. In spite of his own statement that baptism without faith was worthless, yet on the speculative assumption that infants had faith, he decreed that they should be baptized! Thus on an hypothesis, for which there is not a tittle of

scriptural support, Luther taught that little infants could believe and so included infant baptism in his doctrine.

Luther, in a small book, published in 1526, which is entitled "The Small Baptismal Book," gave minute instructions as to the mode of procedure to be adopted when an infant was presented to be baptized. The one who is to do the baptizing must pray the following prayer: "O almighty, eternal God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I invoke Thee concerning this (name of child) Thy servant, who asks for the gift of Thy baptism, and desires Thy eternal grace through the spiritual new birth. Receive him, O Lord, as Thou hast said: 'Ask, and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' Thus extend now the good to him who knocks, that he may obtain the eternal blessing of this heavenly bath, and receive the promised kingdom of Thy gift, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

After more questions are put to the infant and answered by the sponsor (or godparents) of the baby, the infant is then asked; "Dost thou renounce the Devil and all his works and his nature?" The sponsor answers, "Yes." Then the priest asks the child: "Dost thou believe in God the Father, in Jesus Christ, His Son, and in the Holy Spirit, and the one Christian Church?" When the sponsor answers, "Yes," the child is then baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. After this, the following prayer is recited: "The almighty God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten thee anew through water and the Holy Spirit, and has forgiven thee all thy sins, Himself strengthen thee with His grace unto eternal life. Amen. Peace be with thee."

What a travesty this is on the simple pattern of the

word! It seems scarcely credible that a man of such learning could get so far astray from the truth so clearly revealed in the New Testament, which teaches that only those who can hear the word of God and exercise "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," have any part in baptism. Worse still, to solemnly ask God's blessing on such a thing!

The Lutherans were active in the persecution of those who differed from them in regard to infant baptism, and who rebaptised those who were saved under their ministry. They were called "Anabaptists" (or rebaptizers), and many were imprisoned and quite a number were put to death for their faithfulness to the word of God. It has been well said: "A monopoly becomes a tyranny!" May it be ours to "hold fast the faithful word," and allow no one to turn our ears from the truth unto "the fables of men!"

(8) *The Episcopal view of infant baptism.*

The Reformation also affected Great Britain which, for a thousand years, had been under the domination of Rome, with the Pope in supreme religious control. Again it becomes necessary to consult a good Church History to be able to appreciate the tremendous change that took place when the Reformation dawned and Protestantism was now in the place of power. The great cathedrals, previously occupied by the Roman Catholics, now became the property of the Protestants who conducted their services therein.

It would be pleasant to record that having broken with Rome, the Protestants of Great Britain now reverted to the New Testament pattern of the Church but, alas, this was not so. As in the case of the Lutheran Church in Germany, many of the ordinances and much of the ritual of the Roman Church was retained in the new order.

The Episcopal form of government was adopted, belief in infant baptismal regeneration was continued and, under the protection of the state, laws were passed compelling the people to attend the religious services on pain of arrest, imprisonment and even death. Thus those who had once been persecuted became the persecuters! The ruling member of the royal family was given the title of secular head of the Church, and was addressed as "The defender of the faith."

Perhaps an explanation is in order as to how this episcopal form of government, unknown in the New Testament, came into existence after the death of the Apostles, and has continued ever since. The term itself is derived from the word, "Episcopos," which is translated "bishop," and which means, "one who watches over, or an "overseer." Another term, which is used in the New Testament, is "presbuteros," which is translated "elder" or presbyter." The New Testament teaching in regard to bishops or elders is clear. The terms are used interchangeably. When the word "elder" is used, it refers to the age and experience of the person. When the word "bishop" is used, it refers to the *work* that he does, that of watching over the flock of God.

That these terms, "elder" and "bishop", are interchangeable and refer to the same person, is frankly admitted even by those whose ecclesiastical position and practice deny it.

Jerome (died 420) wrote: "Among the ancients, presbyters (elders) were the same as bishops, but by degrees, that the plants of dissention might be rooted up, all responsibility was transferred to one person." Bishop Lightfoot, an Anglican, wrote: "It is a fact, now generally recognized by theologians of all shades of opinion that, in the

language of the New Testament, the same officer in the Church is called indifferently, 'bishop, elder, or presbyter.'" Dean Alford, also an Anglican, wrote: "The identity of 'episcopos' and 'presbuteros,' in apostolic times is evident from Titus 1:5,7." He then adds significantly: "The 'episcopi' of the New Testament have officially nothing in common with our bishops."

We have already referred to the formation of a special caste among the people of God who were called "the clergy." These believers, gifted by the Lord with the ability to preach, or teach, or guide the people of God, gradually began to imagine that their particular gift gave them a superior status in the assemblies of the saints. They began to give themselves airs and adopt a condescending attitude towards those who had not been so gifted. Apparently they neglected the exhortation which is addressed to all believers: "As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Pet. 4:10) It is stated that these gifts were given for the purpose of "perfecting (maturing) the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:8-16)

Not content with adopting a superior air, these men began to form themselves into a clique, or a special caste among the believers, and to claim the *exclusive monopoly* of preaching, teaching, exhorting and governing the people of God. Thus they turned what God had intended as a *stewardship among* the believers into a *lordship over* the believers. In this way the *priesthood of all* believers was allowed to degenerate into the *priestcraft* of a *few* believers! During the years that followed, these men began to wear a distinctive dress and give themselves titles to distinguish them from the "ordinary" believers or, as they

were called, "the laity." Thus the unholy distinction began between the "clergy" and the "laity." This distinction persists to this present day, and has wrought incalculable harm by stifling the exercise of spiritual gifts among gatherings of the Lord's people.

The next phase in the process of degeneration was the appointing of one bishop, or elder, to be in control of an assembly, instead of the scriptural plan of a plurality of elders. See Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1. By A.D. 200, this had become an established thing. Still later there came what was called "the diocesan bishop," a man who ruled over a district in which were located many assemblies. These diocesan bishops, in turn, began to contend with each other as to who was the head bishop of them all, and finally the Pope emerged as the supreme pontiff, and who was called "the vicar, or representative of Christ on earth!"

In Great Britain, the Episcopal Church is a state church, with the archbishop of Canterbury as its head, and the archbishop of York as the second in command. The election of its bishops is in the hands of the parliament, and its prescribed prayers must have the approval of the parliament before they can be used in their services. There seems to be a strong tendency to adopt the ritual of Rome into their services, but this is being strongly resisted by an evangelical minority.

This then is the background of Episcopalianism. They have retained infant baptismal regeneration as a feature of their denomination. In the Thirty Nine Articles, number 27, we read, "Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are distinguished from others that be not christened; but it is also a sign of regeneration, or the new birth, whereby as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are

grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sins, and of our adoption to be sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God. The baptism of children is in any wise to be retained in the Church as most agreeable to the institution of Christ."

(9) *The Reformed view of infant baptism.*

John Calvin agreed with Luther that infants should be baptized, but differed with him as to its effect. He did not believe it effected the regeneration of the one baptized, but affirmed that both baptism and the Lord's Supper were a symbolic confirmation of an inwardly experienced grace. He did not believe that baptism secured the forgiveness of sins, or resulted in the impartation of the Holy Spirit.

He taught that inasmuch as believing parents belonged to the Lord, so also did their children. Therefore he held that these children should be baptized, not to effect their regeneration, but to receive them into the Church. He did not believe that the children of unbelievers should be baptized in infancy, but only upon their profession of faith when they were old enough to understand.

In the Heidelberg Catechism, the seventy fourth question reads: "Shall one baptise young children also? Answer, "Yes, for they, as well as old people, appertain to the covenant of God and His Church; and in the blood of Christ the redemption from sins and the Holy Spirit, who works faith, is promised not less to the older. Therefore shall they also, through baptism, as the sign of the covenant, be incorporated in the Christian Church, and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers, as in the Old Testament took place by circumcision, in the

place of which in the New Testament baptism is appointed."

The Reformed view is that when adults turn, in repentance to the Lord and profess faith in Him, then only may they be baptized, for "the sacraments are a sign and seal for believers, the new born, for all who have been received into God's covenant grace who are Christ's possession." As believing parents are now viewed as being in covenant relationship with God, and thus removed from membership in the sinful race of Adam; therefore the children of such are also considered to be included in this covenant of grace, and even though they have not yet reached the age of understanding, they may be baptized as "little members of the covenant." In due time, of course, they are to be confirmed as actual members of the Reformed Church, after they have satisfactorily answered the questions of the catechism.

Though far more free from error than the Lutheran view, yet the Reformed view does not conform to the New Testament revelation concerning baptism. To affirm that Christian baptism, as applied to children, has taken the place of the Jewish rite circumcision is, as we have shown elsewhere, a wrong assumption, for circumcision has no relation to Christian baptism.

It is sometimes maintained that a germ of spiritual life is bestowed to an infant at its baptism, but this germ of spiritual life only remains as the child, when older, renounces the world, the flesh and the Devil. This, of course, is pure supposition, and based only on wishful thinking. It has no scriptural support. If it were true; then salvation would be made to depend on human merit, a thing which scripture flatly denies.

We must beware of basing our *authority* for Church

truth on the Old Testament, for the truth of the Church is exclusively a New Testament revelation, and is therefore entirely distinct from Judaism. There is no mention of the Church in the Old Testament. In fact, we are distinctly told it was a "mystery," (that is, a hitherto unrevealed secret) "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." (Eph. 3:3-6)

However, the Old Testament may well be used to *illustrate* some truth which is clearly taught in the New Testament, for the Old Testament has been aptly termed "the picture book of the New Testament." It was the failure to recognize this fact that led the early Church fathers to incorporate into the Church order what belonged exclusively to Judaism, all of which was done away in Christ.

In the second Helvetic Confession, 1566, Cap. 20, we read: "To be baptized in the name of Christ is to be enrolled, initiated and received into the covenant, into the family and the inheritance of the sons of God; that, cleansed from our sins by the blood of Christ, we may lead a new and an innocent life. We are internally regenerated by the Holy Ghost: but we receive publicly the seal of these blessings by baptism, in which the grace of God inwardly and invisibly cleanses the soul, and we confess our faith, and pledge our obedience to God. Children of believers should be baptized; for to children belongs the kingdom of God: why then should not the sign of the covenant be given them?"

The Presbyterian denomination is largely patterned after this idea of Calvin. They also retain infant baptism by sprinkling, but do not believe it is efficacious in securing the regeneration, or the forgiveness of the child.

The reader will have noticed the constant reference to "the covenant," and its sign of circumcision, but as we have seen, this belonged only to Israel as God's earthly people, and circumcision was a sign of this covenant. The old covenant of the law was done away in Christ. When our Lord, after His loud triumphant cry, dismissed His spirit, God rent the veil of the temple in twain from top to bottom, in the center. In this way He indicated that Judaism, with its temple, priesthood, offerings and ritual, was now ended in His sight: and that now, through "the new and living way" which Christ had made possible through His completed redemptive work, the way into God's presence, forgiveness and favor was through Christ alone. One has only to read the epistle to the Hebrews to have this fact confirmed.

Baptism is an ordinance belonging to Christianity. It has nothing to do with Judaism. Circumcision, the rites and offerings and the elaborate ritual of the temple belongs to the old covenant of the Law. To introduce that which was true only of Israel and make it apply to Christianity is to do violence to the Scriptures. Baptism is only for those who are "the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus," not by a *physical* or natural birth, but by a *spiritual* or *supernatural* birth, as John 1:11-13 clearly indicates. The tragedy of the Reformation was that it retained many of the errors of Rome, including clerisy and infant baptism, and thus failed to fulfil its bright promise.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DIFFERING VIEWS ON BAPTISM

(Continued)

2. Those who ignore the necessity for baptism.

Having dealt, at some length, with those who teach infant baptism and infant baptismal regeneration, let us now turn our attention to some who declare that baptism is no longer necessary for believers. There are mainly two groups who take this attitude: Quakers, or The Society of Friends, and The Salvation Army.

(1) The Quakers.

This denomination was formed by a man named George Fox, around 1643. He was faced, in England, with a religious system, which, though nominally Protestant, was under the control of the State, and staffed with an army of clergymen, many of them unsaved, practicing an elaborate ritual the New Testament knew nothing about.

All this was naturally repugnant to George Fox who realized, emphasized and practiced the need for spiritual reality. He soon began to preach against the ritualism of the State Church, which had largely buried the truth of God beneath the debris of sacerdotalism and formalism. Fox revolted, and rightly so, from the practice of infant baptismal regeneration. He also, and rightly, rejected the unscriptural theory that the Lord's supper was a means of salvation to those who partook of the bread and wine.

From the one extreme of sacerdotalism, he now swung to the other extreme and taught that both ordinances were

no longer to be observed by Christians. He affirmed that the only baptism that was necessary for the believer was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Thus he failed to take into consideration that the baptism of the Spirit is into the *body* of Christ, the Church, but that baptism in water symbolizes identification into the *death* of Christ. He also taught that inward spiritual communion with Christ now took the place of the Lord's Supper, and based his belief on Rev. 3:20, where the Lord Jesus said: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me."

He was an impassioned preacher and many, sickened by the dead ceremonialism of the State Church, left it and gathered under his banner. This brought upon their heads the wrath of the clergy, who persecuted, imprisoned and put to death these people who thus dared to take issue with them. At one time, in England, over 4000 Quakers were in prison because of their refusal to bow to the religious authorities, and some were put to death for their faith.

George Fox was essentially a mystic, and emphasized the spiritual to the exclusion of the physical. Though right in many of his pronouncements, he was wrong in others. For instance, he taught from John 1:9 that every person is physically born with a certain measure of inner divine light. In the measure in which this divine light is followed and cultivated, it will increase and lead the person into the full enjoyment of the truth.

His attitude towards baptism and the Lord's Supper is to be condemned. To teach that because an ordinance, instituted by the Lord Jesus, is *abused* by *some*, it is to be *rejected* by *all* is false reasoning. Both ordinances

should be observed, but in a scriptural and spiritual manner. To reject the ordinance of baptism and the Lord's Supper is to reject ordinances that the Lord Himself has instituted and to take issue with the Lord Himself and question His wisdom and authority in so ordering them.

The Quakers today are largely modernistic in their thinking. Having lost most of the evangelistic zeal that they once possessed, they are now more interested in promoting social and political reform than in propagating the gospel of the grace of God.

(2) *The Salvation Army.*

This organization was founded by William Booth, in England. At the first, both baptism and the Lord's Supper were observed. A storm of opposition, from various denominations, was soon forthcoming. They accused the General of forming another denomination. To put an end to this accusation he decided, in 1882, to cease to observe both ordinances. Since that time neither ordinance has been observed by them.

It is indeed to be regretted that this organization, so greatly used of God in the preaching of the gospel, particularly to the depressed classes, should have taken this action. Surely nothing can be gained by ignoring and rejecting the ordinances which the Lord Himself so definitely instituted and commanded to be observed. The present attitude of the Salvation Army regarding these two ordinances is best appreciated by the following article, which appeared in the Toronto "War Cry" in August, 1959.

"The Handbook of Doctrine makes plain the Army's viewpoint and position with respect to the sacraments as observed by some of the Protestant denominations. As it is the Army's firm conviction that these ceremonies are

not necessary for salvation, nor essential to spiritual progress, we do not observe them. . . . We believe that the sacraments are not a must. The form, wording and observance are not necessary to spiritual life. The forms, sacraments and ceremonies, as practiced, are man-made and man-instituted. The Army has its forms, and perhaps we could use the word, ceremonies, but it is at pains to show that such are man-made customs, and to be changed in word and manner as the Spirit may dictate. . . . Our emphasis is, 'the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life'. The form or ceremony is of comparatively little importance."

"In discarding the use of sacraments the Army Founder was led to do so for the following reasons: 1. There was no uniformity of practice. 2. There was great argument and conflict between religious denominations. 3. The bitterness generated was harmful to the interests of the kingdom. 4. A large proportion of Church members gave no outward sign of an inward change, although they placed great importance upon the observance of the sacraments. 5. There was no scriptural warrant for the way the sacraments were observed. 6. They were not necessary to salvation or spiritual progress. 7. Some forms were positively harmful to the Army type of converts. 8. Salvation by the blood of the Lamb, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit were the essentials. The only baptism enjoined in the New Testament was the baptism of the Holy Spirit."

To this we reply that while we agree that the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are not essential to salvation, we do affirm that they have been given to the believer to observe. Surely if our Lord and Savior ordered them to be observed, who are we to pick and choose what shall, or what shall not be deemed necessary to observe? Surely they are necessary if the Lord's request

is to be obeyed. The fact that a divinely given ordinance is abused affords no reason why it should not be observed in a scriptural manner. It is not left for the believer to choose what ordinance he shall observe and what he shall not.

Therefore, while we can thank God for the Salvation Army, we cannot be thankful that they have ignored the plain teaching of the word of God in thus setting aside the ordinance which pictures the believer's identification with the Lord Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. Then think of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, by which believers, meeting in the name of the Lord Jesus, may take the bread and the cup in fond memory of the One who made their salvation possible at such infinite cost, even by the sacrifice of Himself. It was Christ who declared through Paul: "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye shew, (proclaim) the Lord's death till He come." These ordinances have been given to be *observed* and not to be *ignored*!

CHAPTER TWELVE

DIFFERING VIEWS ON BAPTISM

(Continued)

3. Those who oppose all forms of baptism

There is a small, but very active and vocal group who declare, and this most vehemently, that baptism is no longer valid for this present dispensation. This idea was introduced by a clergyman of considerable learning by the name of E. W. Bullinger. His peculiar beliefs have come to be known as "Bullingerism," or "Ultra Dispensationalism." The late Dr. H. A. Ironside, a most able teacher of the Word, was thoroughly acquainted with the teachings of this particular cult, and has written a booklet entitled, "Wrongly Dividing The Word Of Truth." (Loizeaux Bros. Neptune, New Jersey.) We will let him tell us what these people teach as to baptism. Each reader would do well to get a copy of this booklet. Here is his summary of their beliefs.

"First, inasmuch as our Lord Jesus was 'a minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made to the fathers,' it is insisted that the four Gospels are entirely Jewish, and have no real message for the Church, the Body of Christ. All might not put it quite so boldly as this, but certainly their disciples go to the limit in repudiating the authority of the Gospels."

"Secondly, it is maintained that the book of Acts covers a transition period between the dispensations of the law and the dispensation of the mystery; that is, that in the book of Acts we do not have the Church, the Body

of Christ, but that the word, 'ecclesia' (Church or assembly), as used in that book, refers to a different Church altogether to that of Paul's prison epistles. This early Church is simply an aspect of the kingdom, and is not the same as the Body of Christ!"

"Third, it is contended that Paul did not receive his special revelation of the mystery of the Body until his imprisonment in Rome, and that his prison epistles alone reveal this truth and are, strictly speaking, the only portion of the Holy Scriptures given to the members of the Body. All the other epistles of Paul, save those written during his imprisonment and the general epistles, are relegated to the earlier dispensation of the book of Acts, and have no permanent value for us, but were for the instruction of the so-called 'Jewish Church' of that time."

"Fourth, the entire book of Revelation has to do with the coming age, and has no reference to the Church today. Even the letters to the seven Churches in Asia, which are distinctly said to be 'the things that are', are, according to this system, to be considered as 'the things which are not', and will not be until the Church, the Body of Christ, is removed from this world. Then, it is contended, these seven churches will appear on earth as Jewish churches in the great tribulation."

"Fifth, the Body of Christ is altogether a different company, according to these teachers, from the Bride of the Lamb, the latter being supposed to be Jewish.

"Sixth, the Christian ordinances, having been given before Paul is supposed to have received his revelation of the mystery in prison, have no real connection with the present economy, and therefore are relegated to the past, and may again have a place in the future great tribulation."

William Hoste, in his excellent pamphlet combatting the Bullinger theory, makes this pertinent statement: "Many are misled by the position of the Epistles in the New Testament, and forget that most of them are included in the period covered by the Acts."

Dr. Ironside then goes on to say: "Having had most intimate acquaintance with Bullingerism, as taught by many for the past forty years, I have no hesitation in saying that its fruits are evil. It has produced a tremendous crop of heresies throughout the length and breadth of this and other lands; it has divided Christians and wrecked churches without number. It has lifted up its votaries in intellectual pride to an appalling extent, so that they look, with supreme contempt, on Christians who do not accept their peculiar views." These words, by one not given to exaggeration, should be sufficient warning to any who are inclined, like the Athenians of old, to "spend their time in nothing else, but either to hear or to tell some new thing." (Acts 17:21)

We are concerned, of course, particularly with their denial that baptism is not for this present age. That this is not true should be obvious from the words of our Lord when He gave the commission to His disciples, as declared in Matthew 28. Here, after commanding His disciples to baptise those who became disciples, He added: "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (or age). His commission, therefore, applies to the end of this present dispensation, even as His presence is also guaranteed to the end of the age. The command and the promise go together.

One is tempted to take up the objections of these people, one by one, but this has been done in a very able manner by Dr. Ironside. There is also another pamphlet

written by a very able teacher and writer, Mr. W. E. Hoste, whose booklet entitled, "Ultra Dispensationalism Examined" is a thorough examination and repudiation of their erroneous teaching. This is published by Walterick Pub. Co. Box 2216, Kansas City, Kansas.

To their assertion that the baptism of the Spirit has taken the place of water baptism, one has only to refer to Acts 10 where we read that Peter, seeing that the Gentiles had been baptized by the Spirit said: "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Thus the reception of the Holy Spirit did not do away with the necessity for Christian baptism.

In reply to their argument that all carnal ordinances were abolished at the cross, (Col. 2:14) and therefore baptism is included, one only needs to point out that baptism was an ordinance which Christ gave *after* the cross and His resurrection!

In reply to their statement that Paul declared he was "not sent to baptise, but to preach the gospel," one has only to turn to other statements of Paul where he tells us he baptized several people; and not only so, but he saw to it that those who believed under his ministry were also baptized. See 1 Cor. 1:17; 1:16; Acts 18:8; 19:5. etc.

Bullinger also taught the false theory of soul sleep, that is, that the spirit and soul of the believer lapses into a state of unconsciousness at death, and is therefore entirely unaware of its existence until the second advent of Christ. This, of course, is a flat contradiction of what the word of God teaches, and that is, to be "absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." Paul could speak of "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." See 2 Cor. 5:6-8; Phil. 1:23.

We have spent too much time on this mischievous and soul-withering error. However, should the reader desire to pursue the subject further, he will find, in the two booklets recommended, a good and sufficient answer to their many misconceptions of Scripture. Error is best recognized and combatted by a knowledge of the truth, and this can only come from a diligent study of the *general* teaching of the word of God concerning any doctrine.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DIFFERING VIEWS ON BAPTISM

4. Those who teach that baptism is essential to salvation.

Far from belittling baptism, these people go to the other extreme, and declare that, apart from baptism, there can be no salvation! They believe and teach that, however good and godly a believer may be, if he has not been baptized subsequent to his profession of faith in Christ, he is still a lost sinner and under the condemnation of God!

This is the view of the so-called "Churches of Christ." They are quite a militant group, very fond of argument, and active in the propagation of their erroneous theory of giving to baptism a place that Scripture nowhere assigns it.

The principal scriptures on which they base this theory are the words of Christ, as recorded in Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." They also make much of Matt. 28, the great commission. Their favorite quotation, however, is Acts 2:38, where Peter, addressing the people of Israel, said: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." They are also fond of alluding to Acts 20:16; Gal. 3:26-27; and 1 Pet. 3:20-21. Let us now examine some of these passages which, they affirm, teach that baptism is essential to a person's salvation.

(1) *Mark* 16:16. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Here baptism simply indicates the *normal outward* evidence that a person has believed on Christ. He is baptized, not in order to be saved, but because he is already saved. This is clear from the many other references in the New Testament where salvation is mentioned without a word being said about being baptized. Scripture teaches that we are saved by a Person, and on the basis of a work accomplished by that Person, and not by an ordinance. To put an ordinance between a soul and salvation is to substitute an ordinance for the Son of God!

If salvation was conditioned by baptism, then the words: "and is not baptized," would follow the statement; "But he that believeth not." When a person states that the believer who has not been baptized is lost, he is, in reality, actually *adding* to the word of God. This is a very serious error indeed, for nowhere is such a statement found in the Scriptures. There are literally tens of thousands of truly born again believers who are living godly lives, but who, due to incomplete teaching, have not been baptized on their profession of faith. Are these Christians still lost and doomed to an eternal hell, simply because they have not been immersed in water? Perish this Christ-dishonoring and most unscriptural thought!

The word of God assures all believers that they are saved. (Acts 16:31) That they are the possessors of eternal life and that shall *never* perish. (John 10:27:31) That they have been "sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption." (Eph. 4:30) That they have been blessed with "all the spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." (Eph. 1:3) To assert that such are lost, because they have not been immersed in water, is to deny the plain truth of God's word.

While we firmly maintain that all Christians should

be baptized on their profession of faith in Christ, we strenuously reject any suggestion that this ordinance is in any way essential to their eternal salvation. There is not a word in scripture to support such a monstrous doctrine.

(2) *Matthew 28:19-20*. "Go ye therefore and teach (make disciples) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (age).

This denomination teaches that this scripture should read: "Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all men *by* baptizing them," etc. That is, they teach that disciples are made by baptism. That this is not true can be seen by referring to John 4:1 where we read: "Jesus *made* and *baptized* more disciples than John." Thus the making of disciples and the baptizing of disciples are two distinct and separate things. Baptism does not *make* disciples, it only *marks* them as being disciples.

We could not do better than quote from Johannes Warns' book on "Baptism," to which we have previously referred. This man, author of a Greek grammar, writes thus concerning Matt. 28:19-20: "In Matt. 28:19, the principal verb is "make disciples," which is followed by a participle, "baptizing them." Some would make this to mean: "make disciples by baptizing them," thus treating the principal verb and the participle by describing only one action. By this they seek to find scriptural support for baptizing persons without prior personal faith in and acceptance of Christ as Lord. They allege that by baptism such receive the status of being disciples."

"The falsity of such reasoning can be easily demon-

strated by turning to similar construction of words in the New Testament. For example, Eph. 6:17-18: "Take (the principle verb) unto you the whole armor of God" etc. "praying and watching." It would confuse the whole passage to render it: "Take by praying and watching." Take Acts 18:23: "He departed (principal verb) . . . passing through the country" etc. It would make no sense to read: "They departed *by* passing through." Take Acts 14:21-22: "They returned (principal verb) to Lystra, confirming the souls of the disciples." This cannot be made to mean: "They returned *by* confirming, etc. Look at Acts 21:2-3: "They set sail, (principal verb) and coming in sight of Cyprus." No one would translate this: "They set sail *by* coming in sight of Cyprus."

In like manner, it is only nonsense to translate Matt. 28:19 "making disciples *by* baptizing them." The scripture previously quoted; "Jesus made and baptized more disciples," should settle this once and for all. Those who teach that disciples are made by baptizing are trying to make the scriptures affirm what they do not teach. The Bible speaks of this as: "wresting the Scriptures." (2 Pet. 3:16)

The New Testament tells us exactly how disciples are made, and it is, most decidedly, not by baptism, but through faith in the Lord Jesus. This can be verified by turning to Acts 10:19-26. How did these people at Antioch become disciples? The answer is found in verse 21. It was through the preaching of the word that "a great number believed and turned unto the Lord." Notice, there is not a word said about them being baptized, though doubtless they were. It was here that the disciples were first called "Christians." Thus discipling is done, not by baptism, but through the preaching of the gospel, and faith on the part of the hearer. The disciple, thus made by

faith in Christ, is now ready to be baptized as one who has already been saved.

Let us look at a few more scriptures in this connection. Acts 8:13 "Then Simon himself believed, and when he was baptized" Acts 8:36 "What doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said: If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." And he answered and said: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God . . . and he baptized him." Acts 10:47 "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Acts 13:38-39 "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 16:14-15. "Lydia . . . whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul, and when she was baptized, etc." Acts 16:30 What must I do to be saved? And they said: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." Acts 18:8 "And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized." It will be clear from these verses that these people were saved when they believed, and were then baptized because they were saved, and not in order to be saved, or to add to their salvation.

It has been well said that the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible! It is only as one scripture passage is compared with other scripture passages that deal with the same subject, that an overall picture of the whole truth can be appreciated. Most of the new fangled cults in Christendom are founded on isolated verses of Scripture, which are interpreted without any consideration for all the other verses which would have given them a sane, scriptural and balanced presentation of the subject.

(3) *Acts* 2:38. "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." This scripture is the happy hunting ground for those who teach that baptism is essential to salvation.

They confidently affirm that this is the divine and permanently settled order of God's way of salvation for this present time. Therefore, they argue, there can be no salvation without baptism. They point out, by a chart, the three steps necessary to salvation: (1) Repent. (2) Be baptized. (3) Receive the Holy Spirit.

This all sounds very convincing to the person who is not acquainted with all the many other scriptures that bear on this matter of salvation. Let us look at this verse, and see it in the light of its context, or setting, and learn its real meaning.

(a) In the first place, to whom was Peter's message directed? Notice: "Ye men of *Judea*," (v. 14) "Ye men of *Israel*," (v. 22, 29) "Let all the house of *Israel* know," (v. 36) Compare also *Acts* 3:12; 4:10; 5:30-31; 7:2,51. It was a message addressed specifically to the Jews only, and not a word is addressed to Gentiles, as such. The Gentiles are not brought in until *Acts* 10, and then the message of salvation is quite different, as we shall see later. The Jews are here charged with the dreadful and national crime of having rejected and crucified their Messiah. They are now urged to repent of this and, by their baptism, to publicly disassociate themselves from their complicity in this awful crime. It has been well put thus: "By their baptism, they outwardly severed the link that bound them to the unbelieving nation, and thus came over on to Christian ground." Note Peter's exhortation: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation!"

This was also true of Saul of Tarsus, who was similarly urged to "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16) Saul had been a saved man for three days, for he had owned Christ as his Lord, and this is salvation. (Acts 9:9) We read: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:9) By his baptism he showed, in the sight of men, that he, who had previously been a hater of Christ, and a persecutor of His people, now repudiated all he had once stood for, and confessed, in this symbolic way, his belief in and his allegiance to the Son of God, his Savior and Lord. Thus, in a *metaphorical* way, he "washed away his sins."

The same thought is expressed in 1 Cor. 6:11. Here Paul describes some of the sins of the heathen, and then reminds the believers that "Such were some of you, but ye are *washed*, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." One thing is certain from Scripture: water does not cleanse from sin. It is the precious blood of Christ alone that does this, for we are told: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin." (1 John 1:7) Nor is it the blood, plus baptism, or anything else! We do not reach the *blood* of cleansing through the *water* of baptism, but the *water* of baptism through the *blood* of cleansing! (See Heb. 9:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19) Since it is the blood of Christ alone that cleanses from *all* sin, how many sins are left for water to wash away?

Baptism, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, was a message confined to Jews only. It is not mentioned at all in connection with the Gentiles, for the Gentiles were not specifically charged with crucifying the Messiah. Thus baptism for the remission of sins is con-

fined to two preachers only: John the Baptist and Peter and, in each case, the message is addressed to Israel only. Let us get this fact firmly in our minds.

(b) In the second place, these people who assert that baptism is essential to salvation fail to take into consideration the transitional character of the first ten chapters of the Acts. This can easily be demonstrated by comparing the second chapter with the tenth. In Acts two, the order is (1) Repent. (2) Be baptized. (3) The remission of sins. (4) The gift of the Holy Spirit. In the tenth chapter this order is completely changed. As Peter presented the Person and work of Christ to the Gentiles gathered in the home of Cornelius, he declared: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." We are then told that, while he spake those words, the Holy Spirit fell on the congregation. Then Peter said: "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized which *have received the Holy Ghost* as well as we?"

In Acts 2, baptism was the *condition* on which the Spirit should be given. In Acts 10 the Spirit is given *before* baptism. In Acts 2, it is "Repent and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins. In Acts 10, not a word is said about repentance and baptism being conditional for the remission of sins. Peter's message to the Gentiles was: "Whosoever *believeth* in Him shall receive remission of sins." From chapter 10 on, this is the normal procedure for both Jews and Gentiles alike. They are now on exactly the same ground, for we read: "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, (Gentile) for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." (Rom. 10:12)

Unless this transitional character of the first ten chapters of the Acts is taken into consideration, confusion

must inevitably follow. Let us imagine two rooms separated from each other by a narrow corridor. Label the room on the left, "Judaism" and the one on the right, "Christianity." A gradual transition down this corridor is marked between Acts 2 and 10. For instance, in Acts 2 the Jews received the Holy Spirit *after* water baptism. In the eighth chapter, the Samaritans received the Spirit through the laying on of the hands of the apostles. In chapter ten, the Holy Spirit is received without water baptism, or the laying on of hands. The only possible way to account for this difference is to appreciate dispensational truth. We must be careful not to run to excess in this matter, as the ultra-dispensationalists have done; but simply observe the definite distinction which God has indicated in these first ten chapters of the Acts.

Therefore to apply Acts 2:28 as God's present way of salvation for all men, is to ignore dispensational truth and shut one's eyes to dozens of scriptures that clearly teach that salvation is by grace alone, through faith in the Person and work of the Son of God, *entirely apart from any ordinance whatever*, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Then again, those who mistakenly teach, from Acts 2:38, that baptism is essential to salvation, have misunderstood the meaning of the preposition, "for," in Peter's message: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for* the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." They have wrongly assumed that the word, "for," has the meaning of "in order to," but this preposition in the Greek does not have this meaning.

It has been pointed out, by Dr. J. R. Rice, that the Greek preposition translated "for," in this passage is "eis," a common word used 1800 times in the New Testament,

but never with the meaning of "in order to." It is variously translated: "into, in, among, against, at, for, on, to, toward, upon." Thus it carries the meaning of, "in reference to."

The Greek preposition which carries the meaning of, "in order to," is "hina." This word occurs over 500 times in the New Testament, and is variously translated: "so as, so that, that, to the intent, to the intent that." Had the divinely inspired writer meant to convey the idea that baptism was necessary in order to obtain the remission of sins, he would have used the word "hina," but, instead he used the preposition "eis," which, as we have noted, has a different meaning.

Perhaps an illustration will clarify the difference. Here is a successful athlete who receives a prize for winning a race. He is not given the prize *in order to* win the race, but because he has *already won it!* A person receives a bill from a garage where his car has been repaired. The bill is headed: "For services rendered." He does not send the bill in order to render the services, but because he has already rendered those services. In other words, it is in reference to services already rendered.

Thus a person is baptized, *not in order that* his sins may be forgiven, but because they have *already been forgiven*, by virtue of the precious shed blood of Christ, and acceptance of Him as one's own personal Savior. Water does not wash away sins. It is the blood of Christ alone that avails to accomplish this, as many Scripture passages clearly indicate. See 1 John 1:7, Hebrews 9:13-14,22, etc. etc.

Scripture does not contradict itself. To affirm, from Acts 2:38, that the New Testament teaches that salvation is obtained through water baptism, is to contradict a host of Scripture passages which state, in clear language, that

the forgiveness of sins is conditioned by faith in the accomplished redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ, and acceptance of Him as one's own Savior and Lord. See Acts 10:43; 13:38-39; 26:18; Rom. 3:24-25; 5:1; 10:4-17.

It is good to keep in mind the fact that it is not necessary to be able to follow all the ramifications of an involved process of reasoning in order to come to a conclusion as to whether what is affirmed is right or wrong. If the result is *obviously* wrong, then the *process of reasoning*, by which they reached that wrong conclusion, must be wrong. For instance, supposing you asked a person to add these figures by mental arithmetic: "25, plus 83, plus 94, plus 79, plus 104," and the person answers "1,794,689:" You would know immediately he is obviously wrong in his answer, for these figures could not possibly total that amount. Therefore the process of reasoning, by which he reached this wrong conclusion, must be wrong. Likewise the person who declares that thousands of born again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, because they have not been baptized by immersion subsequent to their conversion are lost, is obviously wrong. By whatever process of reasoning he reached that conclusion, his *reasoning* is wrong, because the *answer* is wrong!

Here are a few scripture passages in which the way of salvation is declared, and in none of them is a word said about baptism being necessary for salvation. Acts 13:38-39; 16:14-15; 16:30-34; 18:8; Rom. 1:15-17; 3:20-26; 4:5; 5:1,7-10; 8:1, 29-30; 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:14-18; 6:11; 15:1-8; Gal. 2:14-20; 3:26; Eph. 1:13; 2:8-10; 4:30; Col. 1:12-14; 1 Thess. 1:2-6; Titus 3:3-7; Heb. 9:13-14; 10:12-14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 5:9-13

(4) *Galations* 3:26-27. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as

have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." This is another favorite text by which these people teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. Let us take a look at this verse.

This scripture in no wise asserts that baptism puts us into Christ. It says we are the children of God "through faith in Christ Jesus." It does not assert that we are the children of God through baptism. Nor does it say that we are the children of God through faith in Christ, plus baptism; but through faith in Christ Jesus, *plus nothing*. By submitting to baptism the believer, as it were, puts on Christ as a badge, or uniform, that marks him out as one already belonging to Christ. Thus he outwardly identifies himself, in this symbolic way, with the One who died and rose to secure his eternal salvation.

If, as these people assert, baptism is essential to salvation, it is rather strange, to say the least, that Paul was thankful he had not personally baptized many of the Corinthian believers, for he wrote: "I thank God I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius." (1 Cor. 1:14) From this it is surely clear that Paul was not of the opinion that baptism was essential to salvation! Again he says: "Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel." (v. 17) This simply means that baptism was not the *chief thing* with Paul. His chief work was to present Christ to the soul through the preaching of the gospel, and thus lead men and women to a saving knowledge of the Son of God. Baptism then followed, either performed by him, or by any capable brother in the Lord.

Notice again, in the commission that the Lord gave him, there is no mention of baptism. In Acts 26, he describes this commission as follows: "To open their eyes,

and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." Notice, there is not a word that baptism, in any way, aided in producing any of these great blessings. These came as a result of the preaching of the gospel and faith in Christ on the part of the hearer.

Paul did not preach baptism for the remission of sins, nor did he ever state that baptism was essential to salvation. The gospel he preached is described in the Acts and his epistles, and are open for all to read. He presented Christ and His finished work as the only foundation for faith. Mark his solemn words, directed against the false teachers of his day, who sought to add various things to the gospel which Paul had not included as being essential to the salvation of God. In this particular case it was circumcision and legalism. In the case we are now considering, it is baptism which has been added. Let us read his words: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be *accursed*." These are grim words.

Those who teach that no one can be saved apart from water baptism are certainly not preaching the gospel that Paul was commissioned to proclaim, and are therefore included in this solemn anathema, to which they would do well to give the most earnest heed. Unfortunately, these people love to argue, and are seldom moved from the position they have taken. Error has the fatal effect of blinding the minds of people to the truth of God. One of their preachers actually said in my hearing: "A man is lost until he is baptized!"

We are told that "God hath not given to us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a *sound mind*." (2 Tim. 1:7) Common sense is that sense, apart from

which, all other sense is nonsense! God has given us brains to use. Spurgeon once remarked: "The most common thing about common sense is its common absence." The nonsensical argument of these people is obvious to any whose "senses have been exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. 5:14) It has been well said: "Faith, though always unreasoning, is never unreasonable."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DIFFERING VIEWS ON BAPTISM

5. Those who teach and practice baptism for, or on behalf of, dead people.

This is the belief of the Mormons, and they base their belief on 1 Cor. 15:29, which reads: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?"

No discussion on baptism would be complete without a reference to this scripture, which has been the source of much controversy from time immemorial. The false cult of Mormonism is particularly interested in it, for they base their doctrine of baptism by proxy on this scripture. They teach that a living person, who is a Mormon, can be baptized in the place of another who has died without embracing Mormonism as his religious belief. Some Mormons have been baptized over a hundred times on behalf of their deceased relatives, sincerely supposing, in so doing, that the spirits of those who have died outside the pale of Mormonism would be benefited thereby and enabled to accept Mormonism, in a future life, if they so desired.

In 1962, 2,566,476 of these proxy baptisms were performed in the various Mormon temples, in this and other countries. For those desiring some authentic information in regard to the beliefs and ceremonies of this cult, an interesting book has recently been written by William J. Whalen, entitled: "The Latter Day Saints In

A Modern World." It is published by John Day, Co., of New York.

However, the fact remains that the New Testament knows nothing about this baptism by proxy. There is no example or direction concerning it in Scripture. Just as no one can repent for another, or believe in Christ for another, or be born again in the place of another, so no one can be baptized in the stead of another. The very fact that such an interpretation has been put on it by Mormons should be sufficient to condemn it in the eyes of all who accept the Bible as the divinely inspired, inerrant and sole revelation from God to man.

There are many explanations as to what is meant by the words: "baptized for the dead." The great scholar, Bengel wrote: (1875) "Of 'the baptism for the dead' the variety of interpretations is so great that he who would collect, I shall not say those different opinions, but a catalog of the different opinions would have to write a dissertation." Many of these interpretations of this admittedly difficult passage are absurd on the face of them, for they cannot stand the test of all Scripture. There are, however, certain interpretations which appear to furnish a reasonable explanation, and the reader can decide for himself as to which appeals to him as the true meaning of the disputed passage. We will suggest three explanations.

(1) *The argument from the context.*

A good plan to adopt, when seeking the real meaning of a passage of Scripture, is to consult other versions, and this will be helpful in this instance. In the American Revised version, it is rendered: "Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?" The subject

of 1 Corinthians 15 is the physical resurrection of *physically* dead bodies. There were false teachers in Corinth who denied the resurrection of the dead, and Paul is here combatting this false teaching. He points out that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ was not raised (v. 13), a thing which he had declared earlier in the chapter was an historical fact, proved beyond all possibility of successful contradiction by the testimony of unimpeachable witnesses. (vs. 1-8)

Paul continues his argument by asserting that if Christ was not raised, his "preaching was in vain" (or empty) v. 15. If this was so, then their faith in the message he had preached was also vain. If what he had told them was not true, then he was a false witness, for he had testified that Christ had actually risen again (v. 15). If his witness concerning the resurrection was untrue, then they were still in their sins. (vs. 16-17) If Christ was not risen, then those who had died, believing this to be true, were perished, with no hope of resurrection. (v. 18) Furthermore, if Christ was not risen, then life is a pitiable affair with no prospect for the future. (v. 19)

Then notice the change in the language in v. 20: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept (or are asleep, or have died). He points out that Christ is not only the *pattern*, but the *pledge* that all who have died, believing on Him, shall be raised from the dead. Death is not the end of all things to the child of God, for death was not the end of the Lord Jesus. There is a glorious future awaiting all believers for, at the second coming of the Lord, the bodies of those who have died in Christ shall be raised with glorified bodies and reunited to their spirits which the Lord will bring with Him. Read the rest of the chapter, and compare it with 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

This then is the context of the verse we are considering. Verse 29 is simply an illustration which Paul uses to enforce his argument for the resurrection of the dead. He asks: "If there is no resurrection from the dead, then what is the use of being baptized?" We have seen that baptism is the symbol of the believers' identification with Christ, not only in His death, but in His resurrection. The emergence of the believer from the waters of baptism means something. What does it illustrate? It illustrates the resurrection of Christ. Therefore, if Christ is not raised, and there is no resurrection of the dead, then baptism becomes a meaningless rite, a dead and useless thing, and a hollow mockery; and those believers who, during their lifetime, were baptized, and who have since died, were baptized in vain, if there is no resurrection. If death ends all, then baptism is a cruel farce, for it has in view the resurrection.

(2) *The argument from an illustration of a military figure.*

This is a very satisfactory interpretation of this verse. It will be noted that verses 20-28 are parenthetical. The argument from the end of v. 19 is taken up again in v. 29. The word "dead" here is in the plural, and should be rendered "dead ones," that is, Christians who have physically died.

Now let us think of all Christians as forming the army of the Lord Jesus and doing battle against the common enemy. As time goes on, the ranks of this army become depleted by the hand of death, and thus there are gaps left in the front ranks. The question is: Who is to take the place of these dead ones, and thus fill up the gaps in the ranks? There is only one answer. Those believers, who are being saved and baptized, will fill those

gaps in the ranks. Thus, by their baptism, which is the outward expression of their inward identification with Christ, these young believers would step into the places of those who had been removed from the ranks by physical death.

Hence the question: "What shall they do who are baptized for (Greek "in the place of") the dead ones, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized to take the place of the dead ones?" If there was to be no resurrection of the dead ones, whose places they had taken by virtue of their baptism, then their faith and their baptism had been all in vain; for they too, would soon pass from this scene, with no hope for the future. This seems to be the most reasonable interpretation of this disputed passage.

(3) *The argument from the altered punctuation.*

There are no punctuation marks in the original, and a well known and able teacher of the Word, Mr. Harry Lacey, has suggested that a slight alteration of the punctuation of this verse would clarify it. He points out that 1 Cor. 15:12-32 forms part of a reduction to absurdity argument, by which Paul seeks to combat the false teaching which denied the resurrection from the dead.

After the parenthesis of vs. 20-28, Paul renews the argument in verse 29, and he suggests that this verse should be punctuated as follows: "Else what shall they do who are baptized? It is for the dead, if the dead rise not at all. Why, then, are they baptized for them?" Then follows the logical conclusion if there is to be no resurrection: "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die". (v. 32) He then goes on to show that the denial of the resurrection blasphemes Christ, impugns apostles, reduces baptism to a farce, since it is merely for

the dead, if there is no resurrection, and leaves us with one course open, that of fatalistic "Epicureanism", a philosophy current in that day which affirmed that pleasure was man's highest good.

Mr. Lacey goes on to point out that "failure to appreciate the nature of the argument in ancient days, led to a custom of baptism by proxy, which was unknown in Apostolic times. The same failure, in more recent times, has led to the interpretation of the passage in the light of this unwarranted custom, instead of the general argument of the chapter." By this, of course, he has reference to the false cult of Mormonism.

We have noted three interpretations of this passage. Personally we are inclined to favor the second, though the other two have value. At any rate, we can dismiss from our minds the erroneous idea that baptism can be performed by proxy, for it has no foundation in the Word.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

DIFFERING VIEWS ON BAPTISM

(Continued)

6. Those who teach and practice "Household Baptism."

It is not a pleasant task to take issue with some otherwise very well taught and able expositors of the word of God, whose writings are still a source of much spiritual profit to the people of God. However, faithfulness to what we believe to be the teaching of Scripture, demands that every theory, or doctrine taught, must be submitted to the test of all the word of God before it can be received. We are told, in the good Book, to: "prove all things, hold fast to that which is good." (1 Thess. 5:21)

This theory of Household Baptism was introduced about a hundred and twenty five years ago by certain Christians in a body of believers who separated themselves from organized religious denominations, and sought to return to the New Testament pattern of meeting simply as Christians, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, owning no Head but Christ, no authority but the Holy Scriptures, and no pattern of Christian fellowship save that found in the New Testament. For this movement we give God our grateful thanks. Many great teachers were raised up, whose writings have been, and still are, a source of much blessing to Christians everywhere.

The theory of Household Baptism, in brief, is that when a father or mother of a family is saved and baptized, each member of that household should also be baptized, including the infants and the servants. Furthermore,

that all children subsequently born into that family, should also be baptized, as infants, by immersion. They hold that, in some mysterious way, which the Scriptures know nothing about, these baptized persons are introduced into a place or "circle of privilege," or into "the kingdom of heaven," or "the house of God." Others refer to it by saying they are, by baptism, brought on to "Christian ground," whatever that may mean. However, they do not believe that those who are thus baptized are thereby regenerated, but simply introduced into a sphere of privilege that the children of unsaved parents do not enjoy.

However, it must also be stated, that many who are associated with these brethren in assembly fellowship have flatly rejected this theory of "Household Baptism" as lacking any scriptural support. These brethren rightly maintain, what we have sought to emphasize in this book, that only those who have been regenerated by the Spirit of God are fit subjects for baptism. William Hoste has succinctly summed up their peculiar theory as follows: "Household Baptism is an attempt to form a synthesis of incompatibles: infant baptism, the device of man, and Christian baptism, the ordinance of Christ." We shall have occasion to quote from some of these well known teachers as we proceed to examine the claims of those who affirm that Household baptism is the scriptural form of procedure.

It will be observed that this theory closely approximates the Calvinistic idea, or "The Reformed Theology," to which we have already referred. This affirms that children of believers are, by physical birth, brought under the covenant blessing of their believing parents. Thus they should therefore be baptized, not in order to regenerate them, but to bring them into the Church, or into a place of privilege.

The proponents of Household Baptism have published quite a number of pamphlets to advocate their peculiar theory. Should any be interested in examining their claims, the following booklets should be consulted. "Reasons for my faith as to Baptism"; by F. W. Grant; "Baptism" by F. C. Jennings; "What does the Bible teach about Baptism?" by R. Elliot.

One has only to read a few of these pamphlets to notice the fallacy of their arguments. For instance, a certain expression is introduced, or a statement is advanced, but with no Scriptural proof, in the way of chapter and verse, to support it. Having made the statement, they blandly proceed to draw certain conclusions from it, as though its truth had already been established by the mere fact of their having said it. Their line of reasoning, by which they seek to justify their theory, is usually expressed in vague language and involved phraseology, so that the whole thing is left hanging in the air with no visible means of Scriptural support.

One of the best known teachers of this group, and a very able expositor of the Scriptures, C. H. Mackintosh, author of the well known and much used "Notes on the Pentateuch," wrote concerning this theory of "Household Baptism" as follows: "I do not complain of any who conscientiously hold this or that view on the subject; but I do complain of those who, instead of preaching and teaching Jesus Christ, are disturbing the minds of God's people by pressing infant baptism upon them. For my own part, seeing the question has thus been forced upon me, I can only say I have, for thirty two years been asking, in vain, for a single line of Scripture for baptizing any, save believers, or those who profess to believe. Reasons I have had, conclusions and deductions; but of direct Scripture authority, *not a tittle.*" ("Things New and Old" Vol. 15,

page 8)

From the pen of another giant in the Word, and author of many books of exposition, and also associated with these brethren come these words: "Made a disciple, Lydia was baptized as became her. Such was the Lord's command to His servants. Only the males among the Jews were circumcised; disciples, both men and women were baptized. (Acts 8:12) Not only was Lydia baptized, but her household also. 'And when she was baptized and her house' etc. What is meant thereby? We do not hear of husband or children. She may have been a widow without a family, or never married. She had a household, and we hear of the brethren there, believers therefore, and probably not men only, but women. Of little ones we hear nothing; and the divine account, which is full and minutely exact to admiration in other respects, not even implies anything of the kind, so that the temerity of tradition, of intellect, of will, that would from this account extract a ground for supposing infants in this case at any rate, is as bold and manifest, as unjustifiable. . . . Neither here, nor later in the chapter, nor in 1 Corinthians, is there the least proof that any were baptized except confessors of Christ, and . . . the baptism of Infants *has no Scriptural warrant.*" (Wm. Kelly, "Exposition of the Acts" Vol. 2, pages, 54-55)

From the pen of Andrew Miller, author of the famous "Church History" comes the following: "In the New Testament there is perfect uniformity, both as to precept and example on the subject of baptism; but in our own day, and ever since the beginning of the third century, we find in the Church endless variations, both as to theory and practice on this important subject . . . Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, is the first of the fathers that alludes to infant baptism. He died about the year 200, so that his writings

are placed towards the close of the second century. The apostolic fathers never mention it."

From J. G. Bellett, author of "The Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus" comes this statement: "I believe Gal. 3:27 more fixed my judgment as to baptism than any scripture, for it told me that baptism was the intelligent act of a believer, the personal act of one's own faith, so to express it" ("Showers upon the Grass" page 44)

Thus, within the same circle of this particular group of believers, are these two entirely opposite views on the question of the baptism of infants. It is important to keep in mind that however great a person's knowledge of the Scriptures may be, and his ability to teach it to others, he is not immune from the possibility of error. The error, in this case, is aggravated by the character and attainment of those who introduce it. No mere human being is infallible, or has any right to expect that what he teaches will be received as authoritative, or regarded as correct simply because he says so. All that is taught from the word of God must be subjected to the clear and *general* teaching of the Scriptures, for this alone is the believer's sole and final authority on all matters of doctrine.

Now let us examine some of the reasons which these believers in household baptism advance to support their theory. Far better minds and much better writers than the present author have written against this theory, and much that follows has been gleaned from their excellent books and pamphlets, many of which are now out of print.

(1) *The five households.*

It is argued that since the New Testament describes the baptism of five different households that each, or at least some of these households, must have included little children, and that these children were baptized on the

strength of their parents faith. The reader is advised to refer to each of these households, and make himself thoroughly familiar with what the Bible actually says about them. They are as follows:

- (a) *The house of Cornelius.* (Acts 10:24-48)
- (b) *The house of Lydia.* (Acts 16:14-15, 40)
- (c) *The house of the Philippian jailer.* (Acts 16:32-34)
- (d) *The house of Crispus.* (Acts 18:8)
- (e) *The house of Stephanus.* (1 Cor. 1:16; 16:15)

Now let us look at each of these households, and see how many babies we can find in them, which would justify the theory of baptizing infants.

(a) *The house of Cornelius.*

Peter, as the result of a direct revelation from the Lord Himself, goes to the home of a Roman centurion who has gathered his friends and relatives together to hear the message that Peter is to bring (v. 24). Cornelius said to Peter: "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Thus, all present were capable of intelligently hearing the message that Peter was to bring. This naturally eliminates all idea of babies being present, for they are incapable of intelligently hearing and believing.

Peter proceeded to present Christ, His Person and His work, and then proclaimed: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." As he uttered these words, we are told that "the Spirit of God fell on all them which heard the word." The effect of this divine visitation

was that they *all* spake in tongues, they *all* magnified God, they *all* received the Holy Spirit, and they were *all* baptized as believers. To suppose that there were little babies in this company, and that these little ones were recipients of the Holy Spirit, spake in tongues, magnified God and were baptized is somewhat of a strain on one's imagination and credulity!

(b) *The house of Lydia.*

Here was a business woman, a seller of purple from Thyatira, a city 200 miles from Philippi. She was accompanied by her household servants who carried her goods. Through the ministry of Paul, the Lord opened her heart and she attended to the message of the gospel and was saved. Then, when both she and her household had been baptized, she invited Paul and Silas to stay in her home, and the invitation was accepted.

Later on, after the arrest, imprisonment and miraculous release of Paul and Silas, we are told: "They went out of the prison and entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed."

From these three verses the household baptists would have us believe (i) That Lydia was a married woman. (ii) That she had little children. (iii) That these children were with her at the time. (iv) That these little children, on the strength of her faith, were baptized. (v) That all her household servants, on the strength of her faith, were also baptized. This is the suppositious "evidence" for household baptism in the case of Lydia, on the strength of which they are prepared to baptise babies, the unsaved servants of a Christian master, and the unconverted children of a Christian father or mother. Now let us look at the facts as they are recorded in the Word.

In the first place no mention is made as to whether Lydia was married or not. Second, as to whether she had children. Third, that these children were with her on this business trip. Fourth, that these were little children, not old enough to object to being baptized. Fifth, that her household servants, without any profession of faith in Christ on their part, were compelled to be baptized.

The facts which are here recorded surely point entirely in the opposite direction. What married business woman, with little children, would undertake a 200 mile journey with these little children? There is no mention whatever of children in this story. What is mentioned, however, is that her household consisted of "brethren" who could be "comforted" by the word ministered by Paul and Silas. See v. 40. The force of C.H.M.'s terse remarks regarding this theory can now be better appreciated: "Reasoning I have had, inferences, conclusions and deductions, but of direct Scripture authority, not a tittle."

(c) *The house of the jailer of Philippi.* (Acts 16:22-40)

We are told that Paul and Silas "spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, rejoicing in God with all his house."

Again we are solemnly informed that there must have been little children in this home and, on this gratuitous assumption, we are assured that all these little children were baptized on the strength of the faith of the father, the head of the house, who had been saved!

However, as we look carefully at the wording of this account, we discover there is no mention whatever

of little children. On the contrary, we are told Paul and Silas spake unto him the word of the Lord and to all that were in his house. Note that word "all." It is mentioned three times. (Verses 32-34) They *all* believed, and they *all* rejoiced. Can you imagine a little baby listening intently and intelligently to the word of God, then believing and being baptized and rejoicing in the assurance of salvation? All surely includes *each*. Therefore the all who heard, believed, were baptized and rejoiced before the Lord, included each member of his household with no exceptions.

Here is a true case of a whole household being saved and a whole household being baptized. Would that there were more instances of such! We are firm believers in the scripturalness of a household being baptized, providing each member of that household has been saved by the grace of God through personal faith in the Lord Jesus. The writer saw one such case a few years back, and it was a lovely sight to witness.

Some have attempted to get around the fact that the whole household rejoiced by saying that the joy of the jailer, in some way, communicated itself to the members of his household! Experience however, has demonstrated that the unsaved members of a household do anything but rejoice when a fellow member is saved. See Matt. 10:34-36. It is then that the sword divides and opposition is aroused against the one who has professed to trust the Son of God. As the Lord Himself put it. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

(d) *The house of Crispus.* (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14)

"And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house." Here again, we are assured that not only Crispus believed, but that all

his house believed also. We are told that "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17) Subsequent to the conversion of Crispus, Paul personally baptized him. The question may be raised: "Why did Paul only baptise Crispus, seeing his whole household also believed?" The answer is quite simple. Paul did not personally baptise every one who was saved under his ministry, but often left the actual manual task of baptizing to others. He also informs us why he did this in the case of the Corinthians: "Lest any should say I had baptized in my own name." (1 Cor. 1:15) Paul was rebuking the party spirit which had arisen in the assembly. He deplored the formation of certain cliques, each calling itself after the name of its favorite teacher, and expressed himself, in no uncertain terms, that this was an evident token of their carnality.

Incidentally, we may learn from this that it is a small matter as to who the person is that performs the actual task of baptizing a believer. Christendom demands that only "ordained clergymen" shall be permitted to perform this important task, and also "administer" the Lord's Supper. Scripture knows nothing of this special class of Christians, known as "clergymen," and least of all that only such may perform the act of baptism. Any brother in the Lord, sound in life and physically able to do it, may baptise a fellow believer. One sometimes hears a Christian say: "You know, I was baptized by brother So and So," as though this gave his particular baptism a greater importance than if it had been performed by some comparatively unknown brother. We need ever to beware lest a spirit of professionalism be allowed to creep in and rob us of the "simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Cor. 11:3)

Whenever Christian baptism is mentioned in the New Testament, the stress is on the *act* of baptism and not

on the person who does the baptizing. We are told that "Jesus baptized not, but His disciples." (John 4:2) Paul was baptized by a disciple named Ananias, a devout man. (Acts 9:10; 22:12) Paul only baptized a few of those that were saved under his ministry. The Scripture thus indicates that any Christian who is spiritually, morally and physically fit, can perform the task.

It is in connection with this incident of Crispus that the well known words regarding baptism are found: "And many Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized." Here is the present and divine order for baptism today. Would that it were observed everywhere! What confusion, worse confounded, would have been avoided if this procedure had been followed. The present disorder in Christendom only goes to prove that when men depart from God's plan and purpose in regard to an ordinance, doubt, division and disorder will inevitably follow.

(d) *The household of Stephanus.* (1 Cor. 1:16; 16:15)

"I baptized also the household of Stephanus." The question now arises: Were there any babies in this household which would provide a scriptural precedent for the baptizing of other babies in a household? Let us examine the evidence. Paul first visited Corinth in the year A.D. 54. His letter to the Corinthian assembly was written five years later. What happened in the interim? The answer is found in chapter 16:15. Concerning this household Paul wrote: "I beseech you brethren (ye know the house of Stephanus, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.") If there had been a baby, or little children in the home of Stephanus, as it is gratuitously assumed by the advocates of infant baptism, it seems passing strange that,

five years later, these little ones were "ministering to the saints!"

As another has said: "The fact that Scripture records not a single case of the baptism of an infant, is evidence of the weightiest kind, and should be accepted as conclusive by one who believes that the silences and omissions of Scripture are as much matters of divine arrangement as its statements. The weight of this evidence is augmented by the statement in Acts 8:12; "But when they believed . . . they were baptized, both men and women." No children are mentioned. . . . In order to secure a foundation for the practice of baptizing the infant children of a believer, it is necessary to make two assumptions, both of which are wholly unwarranted; namely: (1) That there were infants in the households of Lydia, the Jailer and Stephanus. (2) That these infants were baptized along with the adult and believing members of those families. Only by doing great violence to the word "household" can we force it to yield that meaning. Especially is this to be reprobated, when done for the purpose of obtaining a foundation for infant baptism, since it is perfectly obvious that these scriptures were not given to teach or sanction that practice." ("Concerning Household Baptism" by Philip Mauro)

Thus the argument from these five households, mentioned in the New Testament, afford no evidence whatever for the baptism of any save those who have heard the word and believed on Christ. To assume that infants were in each of these households, and that they were baptized because of the faith of the head of that household, is pure speculation and entirely unsupported by any evidence of its actuality. In view of this, we unhesitatingly reject it.

The logical conclusion for those who believe in infant

baptism is that infants should also be given the elements of the Lord's Supper. If it is right to baptise them, then surely they also have the right to this also. It was to those who had heard the word of the gospel, believed on Christ and had been baptized that Paul wrote concerning the proper way to observe the Lord's Supper. In this respect, at least, the Greek Orthodox denomination is consistent, for when they baptize babies they also give them the bread and wine, for they argue that submission to the former fits them for the reception of the latter.

This is evidenced in Paul's letter to the Romans where he says: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" On the basis of this, the believers are urged to walk "in newness of life." If the "so many of us as were baptized" are the same ones who are exhorted to walk "in newness of life," how could this possibly be true of an infant who can neither hear, repent and believe, let alone walk in newness of life?

Now let us examine some more scriptures which these brethren are fond of quoting to support their claims for the scriptural support of their theory of Household Baptism. Before we proceed to do this, let us quote the findings of a well known Christian lawyer, who stood high in his profession, and was well trained in the science of weighing and evaluating evidence, and consequently was well versed in the use of logic. He carefully examined the arguments of those who advocated household baptism and during the course of his penetrating examination of the evidence they offered to support their contention, expressed himself as follows:

"We would enter a general word of warning against the method by which our friends attempt to justify the practice for which they contend, namely, by deducing

from one specific instance a so called 'principle', and then utilizing the latter to establish a specific instance, quite different from that which supplied the 'principle.'

By this method it is possible to make a given instance prove almost anything one pleases. All that is necessary is to make the 'principle' broad enough to cover both instances—the given one and the desired one—and the result will be attained. It is not putting the matter too strongly to say that the results attained by this method are utterly useless."

"It is a fallacy, familiar to students of logic, whereby it is sought to establish a desired conclusion from a given fact by the simple process of introducing a middle term, (in this case the so-called 'principle') which is broad enough to include both the premise and the desired conclusion."

"It is obvious that John's baptizing, in view of the coming of Christ, furnishes no reason why children should be baptized, in view of their possibility of growing up and being converted. It could just as readily be proved that anybody might be baptized in view of anything else that might possibly happen hereafter. For surely, if the method be sound, one might argue that since John's baptism looked to the future, therefore everybody should be baptized who looked to the future regardless of what he was looking for." ("Concerning Household Baptism" by Philip Mauro) With this piece of sound logic in mind, let us now look at some of their further "evidence" for infant baptism.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN.

DIFFERING VIEWS ON BAPTISM

(Continued)

(2) *John's baptism.*

It is asserted that John's baptism was prospective, that is, it was in view of the future advent of Christ, of whom John was the forerunner, and that those whom he baptized were baptized with a view to future faith in Christ, when He should come. From this fact, they argue that infants should also now be baptized, with a view to their future faith in Christ, when they will be old enough to understand and believe the gospel message. In one of their pamphlets on this subject, the question is asked: "Could anything be more clear as to the intent of baptism? On what possible ground then can there be any valid objection to children being baptized in view of their becoming Christians and walking in newness of life?"

Here is a sample of the fallacy of their system of reasoning, as described in the quotation from P.M. If baptism is in view of the possibility of the future faith of the child, then every child should be baptized, whether in a Christian family or not, for all may possibly hear the message of the gospel and be saved when they reach that age when they are able to understand! God is no respecter of persons. Does a baptized baby have a better opportunity for exercising a future faith in Christ than an unbaptized baby, seeing that neither is contemplated in the word of God?

We have before noted that John's baptism was not Christian baptism, for his baptism was conditioned upon *repentance*, and Christian baptism is upon *faith* in Christ. It is surely clear, from Matt. 3:1-12, that John only baptized responsible and repentant adults, who confessed their sinfulness and submitted willingly to baptism. No force was used to compel them. There is no mention of any infant being brought to him to be baptized. Therefore to argue that because John baptized adults, in view of Christ's advent, that therefore infants should be baptized in view of the possibility of their becoming Christians later on, is utterly illogical in the extreme, for the one instance has no bearing whatever on the other.

But John's baptism was not only prospective, but it also had reference to the past, for those who were baptized did so, confessing their sins which they had already committed, and for which they now repented. The logical conclusion therefore, from this incident, is that since babies have no sins to confess, they have no need of repentance and consequently no need of baptism!

(3) *The marriage relationship sanctifying the children.* (1 Cor. 7:10-17)

"The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." (1 Cor. 7:14) This is another favorite text from which they seek to deduce proof for their theory of infant baptism.

The subject of this portion of Scripture, as the reader may easily verify for himself, is not baptism, for it is *not even mentioned*, but what is to be the attitude of a saved man to his still unsaved wife; or the saved wife to her unsaved husband, and what effect does this have upon the children? Should the saved partner leave the unsaved

partner? The answer is an emphatic negative.

The reason given is that the unbelieving wife has been sanctified, or set apart to her husband, by the divine ordinance of marriage. Likewise the unbelieving husband has been sanctified by the believing wife. Then, the apostle adds: "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." The word "holy," as applied to the unbelieving parent, or to the unbelieving children, does not mean that they are holy in the *absolute* sense of the term, as Christians are designated "holy brethren." This applies only to believers. It is "holy" in a *restricted* sense. It has to do only with the family relationship, otherwise conjugal relations could not be maintained.

The following comment, by Mr. William Hoste, is helpful to an understanding of this passage. In reply to the question: "In what sense are the children 'holy?'" he answers: "They are 'holy' only in the same sense that the unbelieving husband is said to be 'sanctified by the wife.' The words, 'sanctified' and 'holy,' are from the same Greek root, which means 'to set apart.' It does not necessarily imply any *moral* change in the thing or person sanctified. For example, the Lord Jesus Christ was said to be 'sanctified by the Father,' and also by Himself. See John 10:36; 17:19. He certainly did not need any moral change; He was set apart for a certain object. In Matt. 23:17-19 we read of the temple and the altar sanctifying the gold and the gift on them respectively, but it is clear that such objects could not be morally changed.

"In our verse, the husband is not *morally* changed; he still remains an unbeliever, but he is set apart to the wife by the divine ordinance of marriage, so that they might continue to live together. Were it not so, the children, too, would have to be separated from, as unclean—'else

were your children unclean,' a contingency which does not seem to have occurred to the minds of anybody. But they, too, are sanctified, or set apart, for their believing parents or parent.

"The question as to their fitness for baptism has been argued from the passage, but to get baptism out of the passage, it must first be put in, for there is no mention of such a thing. The real question is, of fitness to live under the same roof."

Should the unsaved partner, or the unsaved children (after they have reached the age of responsibility) die in that state, they would be lost eternally even though they were related to one who was a child of God. Thus the word "sanctified" and "holy", in this verse, simply means to be set apart in proper married relationship.

It will be observed, however, that there is no mention of the unbelieving husband, or the unbelieving wife, or the unbelieving children being baptized. Those who advocate household baptism infer from this scripture, that because the unbelieving husband, or wife, or children are related to a saved person, that the children of such a marriage should be baptized. But since the word "sanctified" and "holy" applies to both the unsaved partner and the children, why confine baptism only to the little children? Why not the unsaved parent? This would present some considerable difficulty particularly if force had to be used! What would be the age limit of the children who would be baptized? To introduce baptism into this situation is therefore utterly unwarranted, for there is no mention of it in the passage.

Needless to say, we freely own that to be born into a Christian family is a very great privilege indeed, particularly if those Christian parents heed the admonition

to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4) Timothy is a case in point, and his mother and grandmother are warmly commended for the spiritual training they gave him. (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14) Tens of thousands will rise up, in a coming day, and bless their godly parents for bringing them up under the sound of the "old, old story of Jesus and His love," and for leading them, early in life, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and then pointing out to them the privilege and responsibility of being baptized as believers. This is the scriptural way. To substitute infant baptism for this is to put the cart before the horse. People are saved, not because they were baptized as babies, but because they heard the word of truth and believed on Christ for themselves, and then personally and willingly obeyed the Lord in baptism.

My good friend and brother in Christ, the late John Bloore held the household baptism theory for many years, but rejected it as he faced the paucity of the evidence for it. His booklet: "Baptism," is still in circulation, and can be obtained from Loizeaux Bros., Neptune, New Jersey.

Another good friend, the late C. F. Hogg, a most able teacher and writer, always referred to those who held the theory of household baptism as "Baby baptizers." He pointed out that if the Scriptures teach, as they affirm, that all the members of a believer's household should be baptized, irrespective of their individual faith in Christ, then why do they not *practice it consistently*, even to the application of force, and compel *all* the members of that family to be baptized? Why select only the little children and babies who cannot resist, or offer any objection to the proceedings?

(4) *The baptism unto Moses.* (1 Cor. 10:1-12)

"All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink, etc."

On the basis of this scripture it is taught that, since all the fathers were baptized (or identified) unto Moses in the passage of the Red Sea, and that their little children must have been included in this baptism, therefore the children of a Christian parent or parents, should also be baptized.

Here again, as in the case of the argument from John's baptism, the same faulty process of reasoning is adopted to fit the contention that infants should be baptized. But here again, they lean upon a broken reed. As another great teacher, Mr. W. Hoste has put it so forcibly: "Figuratively, Israel was a redeemed people, and their children correspond, not to *literal children in the flesh*, but to *new born babes in the family of God!*"

The fact is, there is no mention of children in this passage. The emphasis is on the "fathers", and these fathers are later described as being displeasing to God and were "overthrown in the wilderness." But not so their children, for they were brought into the promised land. See Numbers 14:26-33. To make an analogy between the crossing of the Red Sea on the part of the fathers and Christian baptism finds no support in the passage we have been considering, for Paul here makes no reference to Christian baptism. To infer that because all the fathers of Israel were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea that, therefore, all the children of Christian parents should be baptized, is false reasoning. It leads one to ask: What about the mixed multitude that traveled with them? What about the cattle, sheep and goats? Should not these also be baptized? Why limit baptism to little infants?

If going through the cloud and the sea is the equivalent of believer's baptism, surely mention would have been made of that fact in this scripture and an application made. The whole passage simply consists of a solemn warning, from the history of Israel, that privilege brings with it a corresponding responsibility. Just as the fathers of Israel, who were identified with Moses failed, so the Christian, identified with Christ as his Leader and Lord, must beware of failure also. See 1 Cor. 10:10-15

A well known teacher, a believer in infant baptism for many years, but who later gave it up, justified his belief in household baptism by saying: "All my children were baptized in infancy, and now they are all grown up, and all are saved." We replied by saying that we knew of dozens of large families, none of whom were baptized as infants, but who were all now saved and going on for the Lord. It wasn't baptism that predisposed them to the gospel, but the godly upbringing of their parents.

(5) *Baptism introduces the one baptized into a place of privilege.*

Household baptists are quite fond of using this expression. Sometimes it is referred to as "a circle of blessing", or "the house of God," or the "kingdom of God." With not a tittle of Scripture to support them, this statement is blandly made as though the very fact that they affirm it proves its truth. The following statement is made in one of their numerous pamphlets on this subject: "Household Baptists believe that baptism connects their children outwardly with that which will save them if, in time, they accept it by faith." (By R.E.) Still another, whose initials are W.S., after asserting that children should be brought into the "house of God" by baptism says: "We do not say that unbaptised children are not

in the house of God, nor do we affirm that they are." To this Mr. Hoste caustically remarks: "Then why write a pamphlet of 32 pages to prove what he is uncertain about?"

It seems scarcely credible that an otherwise able teacher should express himself in such a vague and confused manner. It almost seems that such persons have a blind side on certain subjects, which prevents them from seeing the absurdity of their viewpoint. Even the great J.N.D., a master theologian, declared: "As to christening, it is the word that most truly expresses what baptism is—being made, as to outward position, a Christian." Another quotation from their writings is as follows: "Baptism introduces into outward relationship with God and into a sphere of outward privilege. But if there is an outward place of privilege, and the entry into it is by the rite of baptism, then the passage (Rom. 11:15-24) becomes clear at once. From such privilege mere professors may be cut off."

Here again is a bald statement made, with no support from the word of God, indicating that mere professors are, "by baptism," brought into a "sphere of outward privilege." Think of the millions of unregenerated men and women, who are now living without God, Christ and the Holy Spirit who, according to this statement, have, by their baptism, been brought into "a place of privilege!"

The reply to this, of course, is that the Bible says nothing of the kind. Baptism, as we have seen, is for believers only, and is their public confession of their identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. All that baptism can do for an unsaved person is to change him from a *dry* sinner into a *wet* sinner! Household baptists are fond of stressing the fact that baptism has to do

with profession. This is so, but, we may well ask: what profession can a baby make of its faith in Christ? It lies, utterly unconscious of what is taking place, yet we are assured by these people that, by this act, it has been brought into "a place of privilege," or into "the house of God."

One of the worst features of this theory of infant baptism is that after the baby has grown to the age of responsibility, and trusts Christ as his Savior, he is now denied the privilege of willingly and intelligently obeying the Lord in this ordinance, for, he is assured by them, he "has already been baptized." What would you think of a father who, on the day his son was born, celebrated, at that time, the twenty first birthday of this child in the expectation that he would ultimately reach that age? What shall be said of another father who, when his son was born, had him baptized with the expectation that, at some future time, he would be saved? One is surely just as unreasonable as the other.

Let us quote the trenchant words of W. Hoste: "The theory of bringing unregenerate persons into the house of God by baptism is built, I believe, on a triple misconception. First, As to what the house of God is. Second, As to what baptism means. Third, As to the conditions on which households were baptized, as recorded in the Acts. The "house of God" is another name for the "church of the living God" as 1 Tim. 3:15 shows. It is composed of 'little ones' who have believed on Christ, and He, as Son, is Head over His own house. False professors may 'creep in unawares,' but they are never 'living stones,' or in the house of God at all, and will one day 'go out from us'.

"Those who 'hold fast the confidence' etc. prove

themselves to be the true house of God. (Heb. 3:6) It is only those who have 'tasted that the Lord is gracious', who form the 'spiritual house' of 1 Pet. 2:5. Over this house—the only house of God known in Scripture—our Lord is said to be High Priest. How could He be High Priest over such a mixed multitude as the 'house of God' of the household baptists? Much is made of a phrase in 2 Tim. 2:20, as though it read: 'in *the* great house,' i.e. 'the great house of Christendom'; but the scriptural phrase is 'a great house,' that is, any great house in Rome or Jerusalem, or anywhere else. The verse is only an illustration." (Household Baptism)

(6) *The case of Noah and his family* (1 Pet. 3:18-22)

From this incident the Household Baptists teach that, as Noah and his family were all saved by the ark, and that on the faith of Noah, so the children of a Christian parent should be baptized on the basis of the faith of the believing parent. Once again the fallacy of this piece of reasoning is apparent. Noah's children were all full grown men with wives, and they went into the ark on their own volition, and on their own responsibility, and on the basis of their own faith in the word of God. They believed in the reality of the coming judgment, and took advantage of the provision that God had made for their salvation. To draw an analogy between the grown up and married sons of Noah, acting upon their own faith and initiative, and little babies being acted upon without their knowledge and consent, is illogical in the extreme.

Another distressing feature of those who teach household baptism is the fact that any form of baptism previously performed, either by sprinkling, or pouring, or immersion, or whether done by a converted or an unconverted clergyman, is accepted as being the equivalent of Christian baptism, so that the person who is saved in

after life, is under no necessity to be baptized as a believer!

There are other scriptures which household baptists use to bolster their claim to be justified in baptizing infants, but we have already dealt with them under the heading: "Some texts quoted in support of infant baptism." The texts dealt with are John 3:3-5; Matt. 19:13-15; and the theory that Christian baptism has taken the place of circumcision. The reader may wish to refer to them to refresh his memory.

In some assemblies of the Lord's people a simple dedicatory service is conducted every so often for the benefit of those who so desire. Christian parents bring their little ones, and they are publicly dedicated to the Lord by name, and prayer is offered for them, and the Christian parents are exhorted, from the Word, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Needless to say, there is no baptismal ceremony, nor is it claimed that the child, by this means, is introduced into a charmed circle of "special privilege." It simply means that the little one is launched on the voyage of life in an atmosphere of thanksgiving and prayer for its future.

With this we will conclude our remarks on Household Baptism. We have spent some considerable time on this particular section in our study on baptism, but trust the effort has not been in vain. It is our hope that the reader has been convinced, from the word of God, of the scriptural form of baptism that is so plainly set forth in the New Testament, i.e. the baptism of believers only, by immersion, upon their profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

7. Different methods of baptism.

Since the institution of baptism by our Lord, many

changes have taken place in the method of baptizing people. Let us draw attention to some of the different methods practiced today.

(1) *Christian baptism*. This, as we have seen, consists of the baptism by immersion of a person who has professed faith in the Lord Jesus. This is the scriptural method.

(2) *Infant baptism by immersion*. This was the method introduced around the third century. The baby was plunged into a bath of lukewarm water, and the ceremony performed with certain prescribed prayers and gestures. This was the method in the Roman Church until the twelfth century, and is practiced by the Greek Orthodox Church to this day.

(3) *Infant baptism by aspersion*, or sprinkling. This consists of a few drops of water being sprinkled on the head of the baby, and accompanied also by certain recited prayers and symbolic signs. This is still the most common form today.

(4) *Infant baptism by affusion*, or pouring. Instead of sprinkling the baby, the water is poured on its head and certain prayers recited during the ceremony. This is the form used by the Mennonites, but is only used upon those old enough to understand, so that it cannot properly be called infant baptism. They base their belief in the use of this method by the reference to the Holy Spirit being poured out. But again, this method fails to fit the picture of baptism, which, as we have seen, is described as a burial.

(5) *Triple immersion*. Early in the post-apostolic history of the Church, there arose the idea that the one who presented himself for baptism should be immersed three times. Once in the name of the Father, then in the

name of the Son, and third, in the name of the Holy Spirit. Tertullian, Jerome and Athanasius all make mention of this method. The New Testament, however, gives no hint of this method. Baptism is in the *name*, not the *names* of the Trinity. Triple baptism also destroys the illustration of a burial. A corpse is not buried three times, but only once!

The truth of the tri-unity of the eternal Godhead is a mystery entirely beyond our natural *comprehension*, but not beyond our spiritual *apprehension*. It is clearly revealed in Scripture that the Godhead consists of three Persons, each equal and eternal with the Other, and Each possessed of all the prerogatives of Deity: omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence and immutability. Each is described as having all the essentials of personality: intellect, emotions and will. Yet there are not three Gods, but one glorious and eternal Godhead! Into the name of the Trinity each person is baptized—what an honor and privilege!

(6) *Baptism in running water.* Some do not consider that baptism is scriptural unless it is performed in running water or, as they put it, "living water". A certain section of the Mennonites practice this form. They probably got the idea from the fact that John baptized in the river Jordan. But this again does not fit in with the pattern of the New Testament. What about the Eunuch in the desert? What about the three thousand baptized in Jerusalem, where there was no river? The *kind* of water used in baptism is immaterial. It can be in the sea, a river, a lake, a pond or a tank. All that is necessary is that it be deep enough to completely immerse the one to be baptized.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

DIFFERING VIEWS ON BAPTISM

(Continued)

8. The question of re-baptism.

The question has often been raised as to whether a person, who was christened or immersed as a baby, should be re-baptized after he has been saved. Should he view his infant baptism as the equivalent of Christian baptism, or should he be baptized in a scriptural manner by immersion, after his profession of faith in Christ?

There can surely be only one answer to this question. All one needs to do is to ask himself the question: What is the New Testament teaching in regard to baptism? Seeing that it does not countenance the baptism of any save those who have trusted the Lord Jesus, therefore all other so-called baptisms are null and void. Once this has been seen, there is only one thing for this person to do, and that is to be baptized in a scriptural way.

Whatever religious ceremony a person may have passed through before his regeneration, we may be sure it had no spiritual meaning for him, for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. 8:8) We are told that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14) Such an ordinance as baptism and the Lord's supper is utterly without spiritual significance to an unsaved person, for he is "dead in his trespasses and sins." The tragic fact is that millions of unsaved people have

been baptized, and also take the Lord's supper, imagining in so doing, that they are meriting the favor of God, instead of which they are only partaking unworthily and meriting the judgment and condemnation of God! (1 Cor. 11:27)

There is actually a case recorded in the New Testament of re-baptism upon profession of faith in Christ. It is found in Acts 19:1-7. The apostle Paul, while in Ephesus, found twelve men who had been baptized with John's baptism which, it will be recalled, was unto repentance with a view to faith in Christ who was to come. He inquired of these men: "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" They replied: "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit." Then Paul inquired: "Unto what then were ye baptized?" They answered: "Unto John's baptism." At this, Paul said: "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, and had believed on Christ, they were re-baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Thus these twelve men realized that the baptism of John had been superseded by Christian baptism because of the advent, life, death, resurrection and glorification of the Son of God. They had been baptized by John's baptism *after* it had been superseded by Christian baptism, consequently their re-baptism was necessary. There is no record of those being re-baptized who had submitted to John's baptism *prior* to the cross.

Here, then, is a clear example, from the Word, of re-baptism. Therefore those who, while they were babies, were either sprinkled or immersed, and thus were incapable of hearing with the hearing of faith, should, on

their profession of faith in Christ, be baptized in a scriptural way.

A clergyman by the name of Dr. Mountain, who was sprinkled as a child and afterwards became a minister, practiced infant sprinkling for twenty years. Then, through his study of the word, he saw the truth of Christian baptism and accordingly requested baptism by immersion, and this was done. In telling the story of his baptism he says: "The time of my baptism was one of great spiritual blessing. Christ came very near to me by His divine Spirit; and I realized, as never before, my union with my Savior, in His death, burial and resurrection. I was conscious also of a definiteness, thoroughness and completeness in my confession of Him as my Lord and King, such as I had never experienced. Not that I felt there was any merit in my being baptized, or that the sacred rite had any saving effect. I saw that it was Christ's will and command that I should be baptized, and I felt it a duty, a privilege and a joy to obey Him. As I came out of the baptismal waters, the following verse came to my mind as a divine message and stimulus:

'He leadeth me, O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
Still, 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!'"

Then again, there are adults who were baptized by immersion before they were really saved, imagining that this would save them. What are these to do? They are in the same position as those baptized as babies. Therefore they should be re-baptized, for their previous baptism was utterly worthless, and should be considered as never having taken place.

During the Reformation period, many hundreds of

Christians in Europe were cruelly treated and many put to death, this time by Protestants. The crime for which they were persecuted was that they rebaptized those who professed faith in Christ as a result of their preaching of the gospel. They were called "Anabaptists," (or re-baptizers) and their cruel treatment is a very dark blot on the pages of the history of the Reformation. How a rite, so simple and redolent with real spiritual significance as Christian baptism, could produce such hatred on the part of those who professed to accept the Bible as the sole rule for faith and practice, is a sad commentary on the deceitfulness of the human heart. It reveals the fearful lengths to which even Christians can go, who shut their eyes to the plain teaching of the Bible and substitute for it the traditions of men.

It will be of interest to the reader to learn of the deep spiritual exercise of a well known servant of the Lord, George Muller, founder of the famous Orphan Homes of Bristol, England. He was born in Germany, and had been christened as a baby, but afterwards was wonderfully saved and became a preacher of the gospel, and came from Germany to England to be the pastor of a Church. As a minister, he had often spoken against those who taught and practiced believer's baptism, but he had never carefully examined the Scriptures on this subject. Through the advice of a Christian woman, who urged him to study what the Bible had to say on this subject, he decided to give it his earnest consideration. We will let him tell us the results of his prayerful investigation.

"As soon as I had time, I set about examining the subject. The mode I adopted was as follows. I asked God repeatedly to teach me concerning it, and I read the New Testament from the beginning with a particular reference to this point. But now, when I earnestly set about the

matter, a number of objections presented themselves to my mind."

"First, many holy and enlightened men have been divided in opinion concerning this point. Does not this prove that it is not to be expected that we should be able to come to a satisfactory conclusion about the question in the present imperfect state of the Church? This objection was thus removed. If this ordinance is revealed in the Bible, why may I not know it, for the Holy Spirit is the Teacher in the Church of Christ, now as formally."

Second, There have been but few of my friends baptized, and the greater part of them are opposed to believer's baptism, and they will turn their backs on me. Answer. Though all men should forsake me, if but the Lord Jesus takes me up, I shall be happy."

"Third, You will be sure to lose one half of your income, for such and such reasons, if you were to be baptized. Answer, As long as I desire to be faithful to the Lord, He will not suffer me to want."

"Fourth, People will call you a Baptist, and you will be reckoned among that body, and you cannot approve of all that is going on among them. Answer. It does not follow that I must go along in all points with all those who hold believer's baptism, even though I do get baptized."

"Fifth, You have been preaching for some years, and you will have thus to confess publicly that you have been in an error, should you be led to see that believer's baptism is right. Answer. It is much better to confess that I have been in error concerning that point, than continue in it."

"Sixth, Even if believer's baptism should be right,

yet it is now too late to attend to it, as you ought to have been baptized immediately on believing. Answer. It is better to fulfil a commandment of the Lord Jesus ever so late, than to continue living in the neglect of it."

With this straight forward approach to the matter, George Muller began to search the New Testament. He took as his guide the words of Christ, as found in John 7:17 which reads: "If any man will *do* His will, he shall *know* of the doctrine." He further wrote:

"As soon as I was brought into this state of heart, I saw from the Scriptures that believers only are the proper subjects for baptism, and that immersion is the only true mode. . . . The passage that convinced me of the former was Acts 8:36-38, and of the latter, Romans 6:3-5. Some time after, I was baptized. I had much peace in doing so, and never have I, for one moment, regretted it. . . ."

"In conclusion, my example has been the means of leading many to examine the question of baptism, and to submit, from conviction, to this ordinance. My seeing this truth has led me to speak on this, as well as other truths, and only since I have been in Bristol, now more than seventeen years (1850), nearly nine hundred have been baptized among us."

This is one of very many cases. One in particular comes to mind, that of the late Dr. A. T. Pierson, for many years a Presbyterian minister and a most prolific writer, whose splendid books are still widely circulated and have been of great blessing to thousands. It was not until he was sixty years of age that he saw, from the Word, the truth of Christian baptism. Accordingly he was baptized and continued his rich spiritual ministry of the word of God. This, at his age, and with his reputation, took

real courage; but, as we have remarked earlier: the high cost of obedience to God's word is only exceeded by the higher cost of being disobedience to it!

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN.

VII. THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

Having discussed the meaning, authority, subjects, mode, the differing views of baptism and the question of rebaptism, let us now concentrate on the spiritual significance of baptism.

While the initial act of being baptized takes but a few minutes, it requires a whole lifetime to live out all its spiritual implications. Though it is a most simple and beautiful ordinance, yet the truth it sets forth is most profound and of far reaching spiritual import. We mentioned before that it is not necessary for a believer to grasp all the spiritual significance that is involved in the act before he is baptized, though it is good for him to be concerned in this matter.

Doubtless the children of Israel did not understand all the spiritual meaning that was involved in keeping the various feasts of Jehovah, or in observing the ornate ritual of the Tabernacle, with its priesthood and the many offerings, with their complicated ceremonies. But this did not prevent them from observing all the feasts and presenting the various sacrifices. They simply obeyed the directions that God gave them in His word. So also is it in the matter of obeying the Lord in baptism.

It is only in the light of the New Testament revelation that the spiritual significance of these types of Christ can be appreciated. For instance, the Old Testament gives no explanation as to the spiritual meaning of the Pass-

over, when a lamb was selected, slain and its blood sprinkled on the lintel and doorposts of the homes of the children of Israel, and the promise was given: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." (Exodus 12) It is only as we open the pages of the New Testament that all this becomes crystal clear when we read: "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us." (1 Cor. 5:7)

In like manner, no spiritual meaning is assigned to the incident of the brazen serpent being lifted up in the wilderness, in order that the snake-bitten Israelites, looking to it, could be healed. (Numbers 21) It is only as we read the words of the Lord Jesus in John 3 that the story glows with divine light, and becomes redolent with the virtue and value of the substitutionary sacrifice of our blessed Redeemer. Mark His words: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The New Testament, however, does not leave us in the dark as to the spiritual meaning of baptism. We are clearly informed of its deep significance, and each believer should make himself well acquainted with its practical teaching. The truth of baptism will affect the everyday life of the Christian as he lives in a world that is opposed to God, Christ, the Spirit, the Christian and Christianity, and faces his threefold enemy: the world, the flesh and the Devil.

We could define baptism in this way. It is an ordinance, appointed by the Lord Jesus, by which a believer in Him, by his immersion in water, outwardly and symbolically expresses, to those who witness it, his faith in and his identification with Christ, in His death, burial and resurrection on his behalf.

The sacrifice of Christ is the greatest event in the universe. It has been well said: "An eternal past knew no other future, and an eternal future shall know no other past," save that great moment when, in infinite grace, the eternal Son of God, "through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God." By His substitutionary sacrifice, death, and resurrection, our Lord accomplished all the work needed for the salvation of every sinner who will trust Him as his own personal Savior, and own Him as Lord.

It is this unique event that baptism pictorially sets forth to those who witness it. Thus we can appreciate the prominent place and the great importance that this ordinance is given in the New Testament. May it be ours to give this ordinance a similar place in our thinking and in our lives! May we lay to heart the many exhortations of Scripture which are based on the spiritual meaning of baptism, and may we seek, by God's grace, to live them out in our lives! Only in this way shall we really appreciate its true and practical meaning.

1. It is a divine command to be obeyed.

There are some who object to the word "command," as applied to baptism, but surely this is what it really is. As we read the words of our Lord in His great commission, to what other conclusion can we come? What were His words? "All power (authority) is given unto Me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," etc.

These are the words of One who speaks with the voice of absolute authority. Thus His commission to His disciples was His command to them. To question His

authority is to deny His supreme Lordship over His disciples. The imperative, "Go!" admits of no other meaning than a command. The same is true of the commission recorded in Mark: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" etc. What is "Go!" but a command by One who is in the position to give it. Thus the Lord's commission is His command.

Compare this with Acts 1:1-4. "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up after that He, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen. . . . And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father which, saith He, ye have heard of Me." What were these commands which the Lord gave to His disciples? One of them surely is that which is recorded in Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16.

Then again, look at Acts 10:34-38. We are told that Peter "commanded them to be baptized." There was no question as to whether or not it should be done. It was a command to be obeyed.

The words of the Lord Jesus are pertinent to this end: "Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am." Then He reversed the order of the titles and said: "If I then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." (John 13:13-15) In this way the Lord propounded a great truth. Christ can be the Master of one's service without necessarily being the Lord of one's life; but when He is the Lord of the life, he is also the Master of all his service.

Obedience is essential to true discipleship. Christ's words need to be prayerfully pondered by all who profess to be His disciples: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." And again: "Ye are My friends, if ye *do* whatsoever I command you." Once more: "If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them." (John 14:15; 13:17; 15:14)

While it is not essential for a believer to know all the spiritual significance that baptism involves, it is essential that he obeys the command of his Lord to be baptized. The purpose of this book is to furnish the believer with enough information, from the Bible, which will enable him to appreciate both the necessity and the meaning of this ordinance. Only as he is obedient to the truth he knows, will he be led on into the knowledge and obedience of further truth, and thus "grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior."

There is much we shall never know until we have obeyed the truth we *do* know. As the Bible puts it: "Then shall we know, *if we follow on* to know the Lord." (Hosea 6:3) It has been well said: "Light accepted, bringeth light; light rejected, bringeth night." It would be far better not to know the will of God, than to know it and not do it.

The first and essential thing for a Christian to know about baptism is that it is the will of the Lord Jesus that each one, who has trusted Him as Savior and owned Him as Lord, should be baptized, simply because Christ said so. He should be able to say with the Eunuch: "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" and then, realizing that nothing hinders, have it done immediately, as an act of glad obedience to the command of his Lord.

2. Baptism is a divinely given picture of the believer's identification with Christ, in His death, burial and

resurrection, to be lived out in the believer's life.

This is the supreme lesson of baptism as found in Romans chapter six. Baptism is viewed in many ways, as connected with the life of the Christian. In Peter, it is viewed as salvation through Christ. In Romans, it is our newness of life in Christ. In Colossians, the emphasis is on the Headship and supremacy of Christ in the life. In Galatians, it is deliverance from legalism in the life through Christ. In Ephesians, it is associated with our unity in Christ. In 1 Corinthians, it points forward to our resurrection in Christ. In the Gospels, it is part of the commission of Christ. Thus baptism is seen to touch many aspects of the Christian's life. Each believer should therefore be exercised both to know and apply the spiritual truth of baptism to his own life. Let us now concern ourselves particularly with baptism, as it pictures our identification with Christ, first, in His death; second, in His burial; third, in His resurrection.

(1) Identification with Christ in His death.

God views, or reckons every believer to have judicially died in the Person of his divine Substitute. This is a tremendous truth that would be incredible but for the fact that God has plainly stated it in His word. Paul puts it thus: "I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) God views the believer as though he had actually died in the person of Christ, his Representative, who bore his sins, died in his stead, and rose again for his justification. Baptism is the symbol or picture of this wonderful fact.

In Col. 3:3 we read concerning the believer: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." This means

that all that we were, as men and women in the flesh, came to an end, in the reckoning of God, at the death of Christ. This is not a question of *feeling* on our part, (for we feel anything but dead!), but it is a matter of *fact*, simply because God has said it. By his baptism the believer testifies that he recognizes this fact, and now desires to publicly acknowledge it in symbolic form.

As he stands in the water, ready to be immersed, he says, as it were: "God reckons me to have died in the Person of the Lord Jesus, my Savior and Substitute, who bore my sins, suffered all the judgment of a holy God on my behalf and, by His death, satisfied all the righteous requirements of a perfect law and the just demands of a holy God. Believing this to be true, and having trusted the Lord Jesus as my own personal Savior, and owned Him as my Lord, I now submit to this symbolic rite as a testimony, to all who witness it, of my identification with my Lord in His death for me."

Death is the termination of a life. The life which the believer lived prior to his regeneration was a life without God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, life, hope, peace, excuse and righteousness. This God-dishonoring life came to an end when the believer, in simple faith, laid hold on the glorious truth of the accomplished work of salvation on the part of the Son of God, and trusted Him as Savior and Lord. He now is described as "a new creation in Christ Jesus," with the "old things" having passed away, and all things having now become new. He can therefore joyfully testify: "The spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. 8:2)

This identification of the believer with Christ in His death and resurrection has far reaching consequences, and affects every area of his life as a Christian. Let us think

of seven things from which the death of Christ has delivered the believer.

(a) *He is dead to the penal consequences of sin.*

We read: "He that is dead is freed from sin." (Rom. 6:7) The penalty of the believer's sins has been endured by the One who bore them in His own body on the tree and paid, in full, all that the righteous law and a holy God demanded for his deliverance from condemnation. The believer now rejoices in the fact that:

"God will not judgment twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine!"

(b) *He is dead to the authority of sin.*

The word of God puts it thus: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed (or rendered inactive as an instrument of sin), that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. 6:12) By "the old man" is meant the totality of all that we were, as men and women in the flesh, when sin was our master and we served it willingly. Sin has now lost its dominion, so that the Christian is no longer under obligation to serve it, or allow it to "reign in his mortal body." (Rom. 6:12) This does not mean that the sinful nature in the believer, called "the flesh," has been eradicated, and that he is no longer capable of sinning; but it indicates that sin is no longer the dominating factor in his life. It is no longer the controlling force.

(c) *He is dead to the world.*

Paul could say: "God forbid that I should glory, (or boast) save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

(Gal. 6:14) This does not mean "the world" of nature, which God made, the mountains, valleys, streams, flowers and birds etc. Nor does it mean "the world" of men, which God so loved and for whom He gave His beloved Son to be the Savior. By "the world," in this sense, is meant the sum total of all those persons, places, pleasures and pursuits from which God is left out. Concerning this meaning of the world, the word of God declares: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John 2:15-16)

The Christian is therefore not to love the world's popularity, pomp, power, pleasures, policies, pride and pelf. This once characterized and governed his life, but now all this has to go, for the believer is to consider himself dead to it, in the person of his Lord who was despised, rejected and crucified by it. All the world gave to Christ was a stable in which to be born and a cross on which to die. The cry of the world was: "Away with Him! We will not have this Man to reign over us!" The person who identifies himself with Christ will discover he must also share the rejection of His Lord. The world is still unchanged in its enmity to God and His Son. If they persecuted Him, they will also persecute all those who, by their baptism, publicly take their stand with and for Him. (John 15:18-27) This, however, does not depress the child of God, for he can sing:

"O worldly pomp and glory,
Your charms are spread in vain!
I've found a sweeter story,
I've found a truer gain!"

(d) *He is dead to the self-pleasing life.*

Scripture thus expresses it: "If one (Christ) died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." (2 Cor. 5:14-15) The self-pleasing life, that formerly marked him, in his unsaved days, has given place to a Christ-pleasing life. He no longer sings:

"I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul!"

but he joins with another, and joyfully testifies:

"Christ is the Master of my life,
Christ is the Captain of my soul!"

There can surely be no room for prideful boasting, self-exaltation and self pleasing as we think of the One "Who pleased not Himself," and who "humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Rom. 15:3; Phil. 2:5-10) The believer therefore makes his "boast in the Lord" and sings:

"When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Lord of glory died;
My richest gain I count but loss ,
And pour contempt on all my pride!
Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the cross of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood!"
(Isaac Watts)

Someone once said: "No Christian will amount to much in his Christian life until he has attended his own funeral! "This is what baptism really implies and pictures: death to the self life. This denying of self is anything but

pleasing to the flesh, but it is essential to true spirituality of life.

(e) *He is dead to fleshly pursuits.*

We read: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections (passions) and lusts." (Gal. 5:24) By the word "flesh" is meant the old self nature, communicated to us at our physical birth. This is inherently sinful in character, evil in conduct and at enmity against God. (Rom. 8:5-8) Christ, by His sacrifice, "condemned sin in the flesh." The believer, now identified with Christ in His death and resurrection, is under no obligation to allow the flesh to control in his life. He is exhorted to have "no confidence in it," and to "make no provision (or allowance) for it." (Phil. 3:3; Rom. 13:14)

The flesh and all its out workings were condemned at the cross. The believer must recognize this fact, and resolutely "Reckon himself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." Though the believer is "not in the flesh," as to his standing before God; yet the flesh is still in him, and it will seek to assert itself at every opportunity. As the flesh rises to express itself through the believer, or seeks to respond to some temptation from outside, the Christian must keep this fact of God's reckoning ever before him. He must say to any sin of thought, word or deed: "I reckon myself to have died to this sin, in the person of my Substitute." Or he must say to that evil desire: "This evil desire belongs to the flesh, which God has condemned, and brought to an end by the death of Christ. I therefore reckon myself to be dead to this evil desire." As this attitude is consistently and constantly maintained, the flesh will be kept in the place of subjection, so that it does not "have the dominion over him." (Rom. 6:14)

(f) *He is dead to the claims of the law.*

Notice what God declares: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." (Rom. 7:4) The law is the revelation of the righteous requirements of God, who is infinitely holy and sin-hating. The law's demands were summarized by the Lord Jesus in these words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. 22:37) Thus the law rightly demands absolute perfection of thought and conduct, for nothing less can merit the approval of a thrice holy God. One thing is certain. Neither you nor I have given to God this perfection which His law demands. The failure to meet the requirements of the law constitutes sin, and sin must be punished. That punishment is eternal separation from God, for we read: "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23)

The question may then be raised: How can a holy God righteously receive, pardon, welcome and relieve a guilty sinner, undeserving of the least of His mercies? The solution to this problem took place at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ when He, the holy, sinless, harmless and undefiled Son of God, assumed the full liability of our sin, bore our sins in His own body and, by His death, satisfied all the just demands of God against sin and the sinner. Having met all the righteous demands of the law by His death, on behalf of the guilty sinner, He then rose again to save all who put their trust in Him. This is the gospel of the grace of God, the best news that ever fell on mortal ears!

Thus "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. 10:4) The end of the law, in some countries, is a hangman's rope. Once a

criminal has been executed, the law has no further claim upon him, for the just demand of the law was satisfied by his death. Likewise, the death of Christ, as symbolized in baptism, has satisfied the law's demands against the sinner who trusts in His substitutionary sacrifice, and receives Him as his Savior. To all who have rested in Christ's finished work comes the glad assurance, from the word of God: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus!" (Rom. 8:1)

In spite of the fact that all the laws demands have been met by the death of Christ, there are many thousands of sinners who are trying, by their own efforts, to keep the law in order to merit the favor and forgiveness of God. Should the reader be one of these, hearken to the message of the gospel, as found in Galations 2:16: "Knowing that a man is not justified (declared righteous) by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Surely nothing could be plainer than this!

The following hymn beautifully expresses this fact. Mark the words carefully, for they are full of gospel truth:

"The perfect righteousness of God
Is witnessed in the Savior's blood;
'Tis in the cross of Christ we trace
God's righteousness, yet wondrous grace.

God could not pass the sinner by,
His sin demands that He must die;
But in the cross of Christ we see
How God can save us righteously.

The sin is on the Savior laid,
'Tis by His Blood sin's debt is paid;
Stern justice can demand no more,
And Mercy can dispense her store.

The sinner that believes is free,
Can say: 'The Savior died for me!
Can point to the atoning blood,
And say: 'This made my peace with God!"
(Albert Midlane)

Every believer can now say with Paul: "I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." (Gal. 2:9) The law is no longer the rule of the believer's life. This does not mean that the Christian is a lawless person—far from it. He is now enabled, by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, to "fulfill the righteousness of the law," and thus live a life to the glory of God and to the praise of the Savior. See Rom. 8:4. Thus he can sing:

"Free from the law, O happy condition!
Jesus has died and there is remission;
Cursed by the law, and bruised by the Fall,
Christ hath redeemed us, once for all!"

(g) *He is dead to the dominion of Satan.*

In Hebrews 2:14-15 we read these remarkable words: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He (Christ) also Himself took part of the same; that, through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." No sooner had sin been introduced into the world through the temptation of Satan, than God gave the promise of a coming Redeemer and said to

Satan: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15) This has been called the "prote evangelium," or the first mention of the gospel.

To this initial prophecy, details were added through the centuries that followed. Abraham was called to be the father of a new nation. Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David were selected to be the progenitors of the coming seed of the woman. At last, in the little town of Bethlehem, the great event took place, when Mary brought forth her first born son, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. This baby, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, was none other than the eternal Son of God who, in infinite grace, clothed Himself with humanity in order to become our Savior. His birth was accompanied by a host of angels who joyously chanted: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!" (Luke 2:14)

At the age of thirty, Christ began His public ministry by being baptized by John in the river Jordan. Shortly afterwards, He was tempted of the Devil forty days and nights. From this temptation He emerged triumphantly. For the next three to four years He went about doing good, "healing all that were oppressed of the Devil." By His absolutely sinless life, His mighty miracles and His wonderful words of life, He demonstrated His essential and eternal Deity. In spite of all the opposition that Satan sought to bring against Him, our Lord allowed nothing and no one to turn Him aside from the purpose for which He had come into the world, namely, to offer Himself to God as a substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of sinners.

On the cross He willingly assumed the liability of our sins and, by the shedding of His precious blood, paid

the full penalty thereof, which was death. It seemed that Satan had triumphed, but he had only succeeded in fulfilling the prophecy of "bruising His heel." On the third day, our Lord rose triumphant from the tomb, and now lives forever in the power of an endless life. He ascended back to heaven where He is now glorified. Thus, by His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus "bruised the serpent's head," and thereby annulled his power and determined his doom, which will one day be executed at the second coming of Christ.

Just as David used Goliath's own sword to slay the enemy of Israel, so our Lord, through His accomplished redemption, death and resurrection, has overcome the great enemy of our souls, the Devil. All who trust Christ as their Savior and rest in His finished work may, through Him, be "more than conquerors" over Satan and his host of wicked spirits. To the Christian, Satan is a defeated foe. Though he still has great power and wisdom, yet the promise to the believer is: "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you." (Js. 4:7) The child of God must therefore stand in the victory that Christ has wrought, put on the whole armor of God, and firmly "stand against the wiles of the Devil." (Eph. 6:10-18)

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

(Continued)

(2) Identification with Christ in His burial.

Not only is the believer viewed by God as being dead with Christ, but he is also described as being buried with Him, for we read: "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death." (Rom. 6:4) Burial is the proof of death, for we bury only the dead. This is why immersion can be the only true picture of burial, for in burial the body is put completely out of sight. Thus neither aspersion, or the sprinkling of water, nor affusion, or the pouring of water, can possibly convey the symbolism of baptism, which is a burial.

The imagery of baptism is very striking. The person to be baptized stands in the waters of baptism, thus taking his place as a person who has died with Christ. Unresistingly, he allows himself to be taken by the baptizer and plunged beneath the water, thus disappearing momentarily from view. Thus, in picture, he shows his identification with Christ in His burial. He realizes that as his Savior went through the awful reality of being buried beneath the waves and billows of the storm of God's wrath against his sins, so he now gratefully shows this forth by his immersion in water.

Amid the awful darkness of Calvary, rejected by man and forsaken of His God, our blessed Lord, the sin-

less One, was "made sin for us." We read of His inner sufferings in the Psalms where He cried: "Save Me O God, for the waters are come into My soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow Me . . . Reproach hath broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness. I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. They gave Me gall for My meat, and in my thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink." (Ps. 69:1-3, 20-21) In another Psalm He cries: "Thou hast laid Me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon Me, and Thou hast afflicted Me with all Thy waves." (Ps. 88:6-7)

This was the baptism our Lord had in mind when He said: I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened (confined) till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50) He knew full well all that was involved in His baptism of suffering, judgment and death. For this cause He had left the ivory palaces above to come into a world of sin, darkness, degradation and death. From the infinite heights of ineffable glory and unapproachable light, He came to the simplicity of a human body and to fathomless depths of shame and darkness.

The awful storm of the wrath of God against sin fell, in concentrated fury, upon His sinless undefended head, so that He cried: "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts; all Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over Me!" (Ps. 42:7) A waterspout represents the concentrated fury of heaven meeting the fury of earth in one pivotal spot. All man's bitter hatred of God, and all God's intense hatred of sin met at Calvary, upon the Man on the middle cross. Beneath the dreadful waves and billows, He sank and the storm exhausted itself upon Him, until all grounds of condemnation against us were for ever

past. The believer does well to sing:

“The tempest’s awful voice was heard,
O Christ, it broke on Thee!
Thy open bosom was my ward;
It bore the storm for me!
Thy form was scarred,
Thy visage marred,
Now cloudless peace for me!”
(Ann Ross Cousin)

We can now appreciate the striking imagery conveyed by baptism. As the believer allows himself to be immersed beneath the water he is enabled, in some little measure, to appreciate what the Lord passed through in order to save him from the dread consequences of his sins. He lays hold on the fact that the Lord of glory, the prominent and preeminent One, allowed Himself to be put out of the sight of men, in the tomb, to secure his eternal salvation and blessedness. Christians can now truthfully sing:

“Buried in the grave of Jesus,
We believe what God has said;
Faith, His judgment acquiescing,
Reckons now that we are dead.
Death and judgment are behind us,
Grace and glory are before;
All the billows rolled o’er Jesus,
There exhausted all their power.”
(J. A. Trench)

(3) *Identification with Christ in His resurrection.*

But baptism goes further than picturing Christ’s death and burial. It proclaims, with no uncertain voice, His triumphant resurrection, for we read: “That like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the

Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." (Rom. 6:4-5)

The redemptive work of Christ not only necessitated His death and burial, but also demanded His victorious resurrection. We are told He was "delivered for our transgressions and raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25) The resurrection of Christ was God's declaration of His complete acceptance of the substitutionary sacrifice of His beloved Son. It was, as it were, God's hearty, "Amen!" to the declaration of His Son when He cried: "It is finished!" How do we know that all the work necessary for the salvation of every sinner has been accomplished, to God's complete satisfaction? The answer is seen in the resurrection of Christ. Christ had said: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work" (John 4:34) This work He accomplished, fully and finally. He will never have to come from heaven to suffer, bleed and die again. "Christ, being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once (for all), but in that He liveth, he liveth unto God." (Rom. 6:9-10)

Because of this glorious fact, baptism not only consists of immersion in water, submergence under water, but emergence from the water to complete the picture of the believer's union with his Lord. As Christ rose from the dead, to live in the power of an endless life, so now the Christian, possessed of everlasting life, is to live a life worthy of the One to whom he now belongs, body, soul and spirit. The Christian life has been aptly termed: "the outliving of the inliving Christ."

As the believer faithfully reads and studies the

Scriptures, keeps in touch with God by prayer, confesses all known sin to God when it is realized, seeks to witness for the Lord as opportunity provides, he will experience what it means to "walk in newness of life." He will also realize his need of the fellowship of other believers, with whom to meet for prayer and Bible study, and for the remembrance of the Lord in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup. Best of all, he has the Holy Spirit to indwell him and to lead him into all truth, and also to empower him for whatever service he seeks to render to the Lord.

We trust that the reader has been impressed with the tremendous spiritual meaning that is found in the ordinance of baptism. To treat such an ordinance with indifference, and label it a non-essential, is to question the wisdom of the Lord in instituting it. To magnify the ordinance, and make it essential to the eternal salvation of the soul is equally reprehensible. To alter its mode from immersion to sprinkling and pouring, is to rob it of its true spiritual significance. To substitute the baptism of irresponsible infants for the baptism of professed believers is to introduce something for which there is no scriptural warrant, and which must inevitably lead to utter confusion, as the baptized mass in Christendom can demonstrate. May it be ours to increasingly value the beautiful simplicity of this ordinance, and realize more fully its deep spiritual significance!

We have seen that baptism is the command of the Lord to be obeyed, and that it is the divinely given picture of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Now let us consider a third thing about baptism:

3. It is a testimony of one's faith in Christ, to be public.

Some years ago a preacher was approached by a believer who said: "I have seen from the word of God that, as a believer in Christ, I should be baptized on my profession of faith. However, the denomination to which I belong does not believe in immersion, and particularly in re-baptism. If they heard I had been baptized by immersion, they would excommunicate me from their fellowship. My proposition is this: that you take me at night, all alone, and baptize me in such and such a lake, and no one will know a thing about it." The preacher rightly refused his request, and pointed out that the death of Christ, which baptism pictures, was not a secret thing, but was in full view of those who came to witness it, and that the Lord had openly endured the cross and despised the shame in order to secure the salvation of sinners. Then he quoted that verse: "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord." (Matt. 10:24; Heb. 12:2-3)

There are no "secret baptisms" recorded in the Word. They were performed in the presence of others, and thus it became a public confession of a believer's faith in Christ. This was soon known to others and, in many cases in those days, cost the believer scorn, persecution imprisonment and even death. This still holds good in Moslem countries, where the baptism of a one-time Moslem is often followed by his martyrdom. There is no substitute for obedience. Our Christian experience is worth to us exactly what it costs us in the way of sharing "the reproach of Christ." (Heb. 11:26)

The story is told of a girl named Annie who had lived a thoroughly worldly life, but had been brightly saved. She asked to be baptized, and the day and time and place was arranged. Accompanied by her new found Christian friends, she made her way to the river where the baptism was to take place. The banks of the stream

were lined with crowds of people and, among them, many of her former worldly friends. As Annie waded into the river, these old companions took out their handkerchiefs and shouted: "Good bye, Annie!" They realized that, by this act, Annie was publicly saying farewell to her worldly associations and pleasures, and from henceforth sought to live for Christ alone.

The world is still unchanged in its attitude to God, the Lord Jesus, and the one who seeks to live for Christ. A public baptism often provides the worldling with an opportunity to express his ridicule, and sometimes awakens his active opposition. The unsaved seem to sense that the act of baptism furnishes a line of demarcation between Christians and themselves, and they naturally resent it.

To those who believe in infant baptismal regeneration, the scriptural baptism of a believer is a rebuke. Many such have been convinced of its error as they have witnessed their friends, who had been christened as babies, confessing their faith in and identification with their Lord as responsible believers, and thus acquiring a "good conscience before God."

Dr. Rendle Short once wrote: "Delicate, timid folk, men and women, boys and girls have been baptized before now, and are still being baptized in the open air, in the face of a hostile crowd, and sometimes in icy water. But such brave resolutions and fearless witnessing is part of the cross which every follower of Christ, with any conviction in his soul, must take up sooner or later, if he is to be a disciple at all, and shames the apathy of those of us who think we prefer a pleasanter way to that described in the Scriptures."

CHAPTER TWENTY

VIII. SOME QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT REGARDING BAPTISM

It may be helpful, at this juncture, to look at some questions which are asked in the New Testament concerning the matter of baptism. They cover a wide range of truth and are most illuminating and helpful.

1. Christ's own question as to its deep spiritual meaning. (Matt. 20:20-22; Luke 12:50)

The mother of two of our Lord's disciples, James and John, approached the Lord with the request that her two sons might be granted the honor of sitting, one on His right hand and the other on His left, when He came into His kingdom. The Lord replied "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" To this the two disciples answered confidently: "We are able."

Little did these two young men realize what they were saying, and what was involved in the Lord's question and their answer. In Luke's gospel the Lord is recorded as saying: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened (confined) until it be accomplished!" It was to go through this awful baptism that He had left the brightness of the eternal glory of heaven, which had been His eternally. He knew full well all that was involved in this baptism of suffering and death, through which He was to pass, if the sinners whom He loved were to be delivered from the dread penalty of their sins. Only He

could envision the contents of that cup, from which His spotless soul instinctively shrank, and concerning which He prayed in the garden: "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done." (Luke 22:42) The bloodlike sweat, that revealed the agony of His holy soul, could not be shared with His disciples, so He prayed alone.

Only He could comprehend the infinite depths of suffering to which He must descend if sinners were to be raised to the heights of fellowship with Him, and be "seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." Only He could foresee the agony of Gethsemane, the shame of Gabbatha, and the horror of Golgotha. He alone, of all the universe of angels and men, could experience this baptism. The task could not be delegated to anyone else. We rightly sing:

"None other could our place have taken,
Highest of the high though he;
The Son of God, despised, forsaken,
Was one of the Godhead three!"

(J. M. Gray)

Steadfastly He made His lonely way to the cross, allowing nothing and no one to turn Him aside from His divine purpose. He had come to "give His life a ransom for all." He had declared: "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power (authority) to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." (John 10:17-18) How pregnant with meaning are the words of John 18:4: "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth." With the full knowledge of all that awaited Him in the immediate future, He hesitated not but, "for the joy that was set before Him, endured the

cross and despised the shame" to redeem us to Himself, blessed be His name! (Hebrews 12:2)

Beneath the waves and billows of the outpoured judgment of God against our sins, the sinless Savior sank, as He was "made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5:21) James and John, who had so confidently declared their ability to share His baptism, did so because they had no conception whatever of what was involved in His question. But our Lord did, and willingly went through that dread baptism, and emerged in triumph in order to make good *in* the believer all He had accomplished *for* the believer! The Christian, as he views the cross and the empty tomb, can now reverently and joyfully sing:

"O what a load was Thine to bear,
Alone in that dark hour!
Our sins, in all their terror there,
God's wrath, and Satan's power!
The storm that bowed Thy blessed head,
Is hushed forever now;
And rest divine is ours instead,
While glory crowns Thy brow!"
(H. Rossier)

Thus our Lord's question concerning His own baptism was, to Him, the symbol of death. So also, as we have seen in the previous pages, the believer by his immersion in water proclaims to others that he has laid hold on the blessed truth that, in the death of Christ, he also has died and that henceforth, with Paul, he can say: "For to me to live is Christ!" He can now sing:

"Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God, the Just, is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me!"

2. The question as to our authority for baptism. (1 Cor. 1:12-13)

This time it is Paul who asks the question, and a negative answer is anticipated. Here is the question: "Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" Insipient sectarianism had crept into the assembly in Corinth, and the believers were dividing themselves into parties or factions, each calling itself after the name of its favorite teacher. Paul roundly condemned them for this and, in plain language, showed them the abysmal folly of following such a course of conduct. He pointed out that only if Paul had been crucified for them, or they had been baptized in his name, had they any right to call themselves after him. It is in this connection that he adds: "I thank God I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say I had baptized in my own name." (vs. 14-15)

Into whose name had they been baptized? Matt. 28:19-20 answers the question. They had been baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The very fact that they were called "Christians", and "saints", should have reminded them that they were called by this name because of the One who had been crucified for them, and into whose name they had been baptized. It is the name of the Lord Jesus that alone gives virtue and value to baptism. Eliminate His name, and the rite becomes utterly meaningless and merely an empty form.

Just as the bread and wine, at the Lord's supper, has no virtue in itself, except as it speaks of the One whose body and blood it symbolizes; so baptism has no value, apart from what it sets forth; the believer's union with the One whose death, burial and resurrection is symbolized in the ordinance.

The chief error of denominationalism lies in the fact that believers take to themselves names that are not common to all the people of God. The consequence is that Christians, instead of being united together, are separated into various folds, formed by humanly constructed walls that the New Testament knows nothing at all about. Christendom has within it hundreds of different sects, each of which is striving to increase its membership and influence, and the exhortation of the Word goes unheeded: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3)

Notice, in this connection, that the believer is not exhorted to *manufacture* a unity, but to *maintain* the unity which God has already formed. The modern Ecumenical movement is simply the attempt, on the part of man, to manufacture something which has been in existence for nearly two thousand years!

Christian baptism is intended to be a unifying thing, for we are assured there is "One Lord, one faith and one baptism." (Eph. 4:5) It is said concerning all true believers: "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28) In His wonderful prayer, recorded in John 17, our Lord said: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we are. . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

The spectacle of many denominations, each calling itself by a name of its own, and each seeking the place of preeminence, is not calculated to impress the world with the unity that baptism should illustrate and pro-

claim. Instead, the world is impressed by the disunity and confusion that obtains among the various denominations. Both the authority for baptism, and the name in which the believer is baptized, is that of our Lord Jesus Christ, the name that is above all other names. May it be ours to be content to own no name but the one He has given to us, and which includes *all* the people of God!

3. The question as to the subjects of baptism.

This time it is Peter who asks the question: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10:47) These words should settle, once for all, the question as to who are the fit subjects for Christian baptism. Only one class of people is contemplated as being qualified for Christian baptism, and that is those who have received the Holy Spirit upon their acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord. This, as we have noted before, eliminates all thought of infants and unsaved older people. It is for believers only. Let us get this fact firmly in our minds, and be absolutely assured concerning it.

Our Lord pointed out this fact to one of the most religious, moral and sincere men of his day, whose name was Nicodemus. Knowing full well his moral character, sincerity and religious attainments, our Lord said to him: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God!" (John 3:3) To Nicodemus' credit, he did not blandly acquiesce to this statement, but inquired: "How can a man be born again?" This provided the Lord with the opportunity of explaining to him just what the new birth was, and why people had to experience it if they would see and enter the kingdom of God.

The new birth is the impartation of divine life to a

soul who was previously "dead in his trespasses and sins." This divine life, or spiritual life, becomes the possession of every sinner who will own his need of Christ and receive Him by faith as his own Savior. The moment he trusts in the Son of God, the Holy Spirit indwells that person, imparts to him a divine nature and seals him to be Christ's possession for all eternity. As the hymn writer has put it:

"Soon as my all I ventured
On Christ's atoning blood;
The Holy Spirit entered,
And I was born of God."

Only those indwelt by the Holy Spirit have any right to baptism, as Peter put it so forcibly in the home of Cornelius. Let each reader make certain that he or she has experienced this new birth, and is thus a fit subject for Christian baptism.

4. The question as to the object of baptism.

This question was put by Paul to twelve disciples whom he met near Ephesus: "Unto what then were ye baptized?" (Acts 19:3) Let us briefly describe the setting. While Paul was in Corinth, a certain Jew named Apollos, from Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He is described as being "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, and instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit he spake and taught diligently, knowing only the baptism of John." (Acts 18:24-25) He had probably been baptized by John the Baptist who, as we know, baptized unto repentance, with a view to faith in the Messiah that was to come. Doubtless Apollos returned to Alexandria before Christ began His public ministry, so was unaware of the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He then began to preach the message of repentance which he

heard from John, and baptized those who believed his message.

With this partial knowledge, Apollos came to Ephesus and, by his fervent preaching of repentance, had won some converts and baptized them. From Ephesus, Apollos came to Corinth, and began to preach in the synagogue in that city. Two of Paul's dear friends, Aquilla and Priscilla, heard him and perceived his lack of knowledge of the advent of the Lord Jesus, and of His life, teaching, miracles, substitutionary sacrifice, death, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and the advent of the Holy Spirit to form the Church.

Accordingly, they invited Apollos to their home, and there "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." The result was that Apollos drank in the message of the Christian gospel, believed on the Son of God, and now used his eloquence to good advantage, for we read: "He mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing that Jesus was Christ (or the Messiah)" In the meantime, while Apollos was still preaching in Corinth, Paul came to Ephesus, and there found twelve of Apollos' converts. He immediately sensed the partial knowledge of these men, and put the question to them: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" To this they answered: "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Paul's next question was: "Unto what then were ye baptized?" They replied: "Unto John's baptism." At this, Paul pointed out to them that the One who they had been taught was yet to come, had come and suffered for our sins, died and risen again. We can well picture the joy of these men as they heard, for the first time, the good news of the full, free and eternal salvation Christ had secured for sinners by His finished work on Calvary.

When these men heard the gospel, they believed it and, on their profession of faith in Christ, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul then laid his hands on them and the Spirit of God came upon them. This incident answers the question as to whether a person, previously baptised in infancy, or as an unsaved person, should be re-baptized on his profession of faith in Christ. The answer is an emphatic yes.

Christian baptism is to a *Person*. When a person is asked "Unto whom were ye baptized?" he should be able to reply: "I was baptized unto Christ, and thereby confessed my identification with the Lord Jesus, who bore my sins, died for me and rose again to secure my justification." Thus Christ is the alone Object of baptism. The believer is the property of Christ. Having been baptized unto Him, he is to fulfil the purpose for which he was baptized, and that is to live unto Him, for we read: "And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." (2 Cor. 5:15)

It is interesting to note that this is the last of the various groups which were brought into the Church of God. First were the Jews on the day of Pentecost. Then followed the Samaritan group, who were a mixture of Judaism and Paganism. Then came the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius who were, by the Holy Spirit, brought into the Church. Finally, this little group was added who had only known the message and baptism of John. They too were brought to hear the glad tidings, and the Spirit of God indwelt them. Today there are but three classes of people in the world: the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of God. The message of the gospel is now for all, and there is no further distinction between Jew and Gentile. Both are alike sinners and therefore need to be

saved, and each is to be saved on exactly the same terms, namely, faith in the Person and work of the Son of God.

5. The question as to the spiritual significance of baptism.

Again, this question is asked by the great apostle Paul: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3) We shall not dwell long on this particular question for we have dealt somewhat fully with this, under the heading: "The spiritual significance of baptism." Suffice to say, that the tremendous meaning of this ordinance is a challenge to the spiritual intelligence of every believer. There are depths of meaning in it that have never been plumbed. It can truthfully be said of this subject what the Lord said to Joshua: "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." (Josh. 3:1) May it be ours to live in the good of this wonderful truth, and appreciate it more and more as we travel on the upward, homeward and heavenly pathway!

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

SOME QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT REGARDING BAPTISM

(Continued)

6. The question as to the practical purpose of baptism.

This is found in 1 Cor. 15:29. We have looked at this question in another connection: "What shall they do who are baptized?" We will leave out the three words following and, from this partially quoted text seek to answer the question as to what is expected of a believer who, in obedience to his Lord's command, has been baptized. What shall these people do? Spiritual perception of the meaning of baptism must be balanced by a corresponding practical expression of its truth in the life. Needless to say, this should be true of all believers, whether scripturally baptized or not. With this question in our minds: "What shall they do who are baptized?" let us seek to answer it from the Word.

(1) The believer should be a worshipper.

Worship is the Christian's highest occupation. It is the thing that God the Father is said to seek from His blood-bought children. (John 4:23-24) Prayer occupies us with our needs; praise occupies us with our blessings; but worship occupies us with God Himself, to the exclusion of our needs and blessings. Worship is the ascription of worth to One who is worthy. Surely, as a believer contemplates all the worthiness of the triune God, His holiness, righteousness, justice, truth, mercy, loving kindness

and infinite grace, as revealed in all its perfection, and displayed in all its harmony in the life and death of the Lord Jesus, he will be moved to fall down and worship the One who alone is worthy, and hail his Redeemer as "the chiefest of ten thousand, and the altogether lovely One!"

In the last book of the Bible there is described a wonderful scene. The Lord Jesus is seated on the throne of His glory, and before Him are gathered all the redeemed of all ages. As they look upon the Lamb of God, now crowned with glory and honor, they burst into a song of praise and sing: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" (Rev. 5:6-14) It will be noticed that there is not a single petition in this song. It is occupied only with the excellences of the Lamb of God who had redeemed them to God, by His blood "out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." (v, 9)

Worship is the result of the combination of four things: remembrance, contemplation, wonder and gratitude. To render this in a worthy manner the believer must take time to be alone, even as David did, as described in 2 Sam. 7. When he had received the message from God through Nathan, we are told that David "sat before the Lord." As he did so, three things happened. First, he got right thoughts of himself. (vs. 18-21) Second, he got right thoughts of God. (v. 22) Third, he got right thoughts of the people of God. (V. 23)

This truth of worship has been greatly neglected in Christendom and, in many cases, is practically forgotten. Many true Christians seem to be more occupied with their service for the Lord than their worship of the Lord, and

this is always to their spiritual loss. We need ever to keep first things first, and worship always takes precedence over everything else in God's purpose for His people. True worship will always result in worthwhile service, but service without worship will soon degenerate into drudgery. Surely, as the believer is occupied with all God is, as revealed in the Person of His beloved Son, the effect will be that he will "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." (Ps. 96:9) *What shall they do who are baptized?

(2) *The believer should present his body to God as a living sacrifice. (Rom. 12:1)*

No Christian will amount to much until he has, deliberately and willingly, presented his body and all its members to God and said, from his heart to the Lord Jesus: "Lord, I am Thine, bought with Thy precious blood to be Thy purchased possession for ever. Realizing that I am no longer my own, I now place myself unreservedly at Thy disposal, to be what Thou would'st have me to be; to go where Thou would'st have me to go; and to do what Thou would'st have me to do. Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee, take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise!"

What tremendous possibilities are wrapped up in the human body, and particularly in the body of a believer! The Christian's body is the divinely appointed vehicle through which the Lord Jesus may glorify Himself, when and if this body is placed unreservedly at His disposal. Paul's great ambition was that Christ should be "magnified in his body, whether by life or by death." (Phil. 1:20)

*See author's book: "Worship, the Christians Highest Occupation" from the same publisher.

No wonder he became the outstanding Christian of his day! If baptism teaches anything, it is that the believer should henceforth live a Christ-magnifying life, and "show forth the praises of Him who hath called him out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Pet. 2:9-10) What shall they do who are baptized?

(3) *The believer should now become an apt pupil in the school of Christ.*

The same One who said: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," also said: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matt. 11:28-30) Like Mary, of Bethany, the believer should take time to sit at the feet of the Lord and hear His word, for none can teach as He. (Luke 10:39)

The Lord has many lessons to impart, but we must be willing to take the necessary time and effort of heart to learn these lessons. To do this, we must regularly and devotedly read the word of God, for this is the text book in the school of Christ. We must both take and make time for this study of the Bible. He who would be a student must be studious. He must pay close attention to what he reads, develop his powers of observation, and learn to concentrate. Above all, he must learn that prompt obedience to the truth he learns, is the only way he will make progress in this school. The great Teacher Himself declared: "If any man will *do* His will, he shall *know* of the doctrine." (John 7:17)

As the Lord taught His disciples of old, even so today, He will teach His pupils lessons that will stand them in good stead as they seek to live the Christian life. He will teach them the lessons of true humility. (Matt. 18:1-4)

The lesson of childlike confidence in the Father's care. (Matt. 6:25-34) The lesson of the necessity and value of love to all His own. (John 13-34-35; 15:12-14) The lesson of prompt and wholehearted obedience to His commands. (John 15:10; 14:15) The lesson of the secret of abiding in Him and its consequent fruitfulness. (John 15:1-7) These, and many other lessons, He will seek to impress on the hearts of all who will take the time to sit at His feet and hear His word. What shall they do who are baptized?

(4) *The believer should keep in touch with Him by prayer.*

In this way the Christian expresses his absolute dependence on Him in all the various departments of his life. One has well said: "Prayer makes God's presence real, His power felt, His will clear and His blessings available." The poet has put it thus:

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The majesty on high."

(James Montgomery)

Our Lord anticipated that His people should be prayerful, and therefore gave them much instruction re-

garding its necessity and value. It was in response to the request: "Lord, teach us to pray," that He gave them the pattern prayer which begins: "Our Father, which art in heaven." (Matt. 6:1-15) This beautiful prayer contains many of the elements essential to true prayer, such as reverence, aspiration, submission, dependence, confession, mercy, humility and supplication, etc.

God has provided "a throne of grace", to which every believer is invited to draw near, and there spread, before the Lord, all his needs and problems. In this way, he will be enabled to "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:16) The Lord Himself is our Example in prayer. In Luke's gospel, which presents Him as the dependent Son of Man, He is described as praying eleven times. On one occasion He spent the whole night in prayer. John 17 has been well called "the holy of holies," for this prayer of our Lord gives us an insight as to what constitutes real prayer.

True prayer suggests at least four things. First, it is the realization of a need. Second, a confidence that God can supply that need. Third, the expression of a desire. Fourth, the anticipation of an answer. The value of prayer is seen in many ways. It gives an increased sense of the presence of God, for as we draw nigh unto Him, He will draw nigh unto us. (Js. 4:8) It grants renewed strength. (Isa. 40:31) It imparts divine wisdom. (Js. 1:5) It grants an engarrisoning peace. (Phil. 4:6-7) It provides abounding joy. (John 16:24) It guarantees all sufficient grace. (2 Cor. 12:8-9) It supplies all our needs. (Matt. 7:7)

In view of the scriptures referred to, the tremendous value of prayer can be appreciated. As well may a person attempt to live without air as a child of God to live without prayer. May it be ours to take full advantage of the

throne of grace and prove, by joyous experience, the truth of that lovely hymn:

“What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pains we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!”

(Joseph Scriven)

What shall they do who are baptized?

(5) *The believer should live a life of separation from the world.*

In baptism, the Christian takes his place as having died with Christ, and being risen with Him to live for Him. As he does this, he will find himself separated from the world which despised, rejected and crucified his Lord and Master. Christ left His disciples in no doubt as to this. In His wonderful prayer, recorded in John 17, the Lord spoke much of the relation of His disciples to the world. He declared, first, that His disciples had been given to Him by His Father out of the world. (v. 6) Second, that they were sent by Him back into the world. (v. 18) Third, that they were in the world. (v. 11) Fourth, that they were not of the world. (v. 16) Fifth, that they were hated by the world. (v. 14) Sixth, that they might be kept from the evil in the world. (v. 15) Seventh, that through His disciples, the world might be led to believe on Him. (V. 21)

We must be careful to distinguish between separation and isolation. The believer is not to be *isolated* from the

world. He must earn his living in it and learn to get on with people. He will have to work with worldlings in school, workshop, office and home. He will meet all kinds of people, good, bad and indifferent, and will be surrounded by an atmosphere that is anything but conducive to spirituality. But while he is *in* the world, he is most definitely not *of* it. He is *separated* from it, he does not belong to it, he is a partaker of a divine nature that has forever separated him from the system that governs it.

The Christian can be likened to a ship that sails the seven seas. This ship is in the sea and surrounded by the sea, yet the sea is not in the ship! It is separated from the sea by its hull and superstructure. So also is it with the Christian. Though surrounded by a world that lives its life in opposition to God, yet the child of God is separated from it by the fact that he is "in Christ," and is also indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Thus he is "other worldly." His "citizenship is in heaven," and he is a "stranger and a pilgrim" in the world. (See 1 Pet. 2:11; Phil. 3:20)

The Christian living in the world can also be likened to a diver at the bottom of the sea. Though surrounded by an element that would otherwise drown him, yet he is able to breathe and move around in that environment, because he draws his life-sustaining air from the boat moored above him. In the boat there is a machine that maintains a constant supply of air to him down below. So it is with the believer, who lives in a world whose atmosphere would stifle him. How then can he exist in it? The answer is that he draws from his Savior, who dwells above, that life-sustaining grace, power, wisdom and guidance that enables him not only to live spiritually, but to actually "grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior."

Monasticism makes the mistake of advocating isolation from the world in a monastery cell, but that cell door only shuts the person up to his worst enemy—himself! Our Lord lived in the world, and rubbed shoulders with men and women. He was not isolated from men, but He was absolutely separated from them. He could say, “I am not of the world.” (John 17:16) The Pharisees contemptuously referred to Him as “the Friend of publicans and sinners,” and we can thank God for the truth of this accusation! But though He was *with* them, He was not of them, for He was “holy, harmless and undefiled and separate from sinners.” (Heb. 7:26)

The Christian must therefore be careful to maintain his separation from the world. It is when the sea gets into the ship that tragedy strikes; or when the diver’s air hose is cut that he is at the mercy of the sea. It is only as the Christian maintains his separation *from* the world that he can be of any use *in* the world. A person can only pull another person out of a pit when he is out of it himself! Therefore the need for the believer to rule himself with an iron hand when it comes to the pleasures, pomp, popularity, policies, power, and pelf of this world. Many a believer has lost his spiritual power by flirting with the world. What shall they do who are baptized?

(6) *The believer should seek to loyally serve his Lord and Master.*

Christ is not only Lord of the believer’s life, but He is also the supreme Master of all his service. Every Christian is a “minister,” for this word simply means “servant.” In fact, in the Greek, the word means “slave.” A slave is a person who has been purchased to become the property and servant of another. The believer is the property and servant of the Lord Jesus. No one is really free

until he has become the servant of the Son of God. There is no freedom like the service of the Savior. He is the best Master anyone could possibly have! The believer, by his baptism, proclaims: "I am no longer my own, but I belong, body, soul and spirit to the One who bought me with His precious blood, to be "His purchased possession to the praise of His glory." His motto now is: "Not I, but Christ!"

Our Lord likened Himself to a nobleman who took his journey into a far country. Before he started on his way, he called his servants to him and "gave to every man his work." (Mark 13:34) Likewise, each Christian has been given a task to do, and is responsible to the Lord to faithfully perform the service given him. The word, "responsibility," has been well defined as, "my response to His ability." A Christian without a task is a spiritual menace, for "Satan still finds plenty of work for idle hands to do." It will be recalled that Paul's first question, after he was saved was: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

The Lord gave two parables to emphasize the responsibility of His servants. The first was the parable of the pounds. (Luke 19:12-27) In this, the Master gave each of His servants one pound, and said "Occupy (or do business) for Me till I come." Thus, in this case, each servant was equal in responsibility. In the parable of the Talents, (Matt. 25:14-30) the Master gave each servant a different amount, "according to their several abilities." Thus, in this case, there was an inequality of ability. The Master recognized there was a difference in the skill of His servants and arranged accordingly. Thus, while all Christians are equal in *responsibility*, all are not equal in *ability*. Happy is that servant to whom the Lord can say in a coming day: "Well done, thou good and faithful

servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" May it be ours to thus earn His commendation and reward! It will be a more than ample compensation for all the toil of the way!

There is plenty of work for each Christian to do. The field is large and the laborers are few. There is the work of witnessing for Christ, of testifying to others of His saving power and satisfying grace. This is a work that every Christian can and should do. The Lord Himself said: "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." (Acts 1:8) To a man out of whom He had cast a legion of demons He said: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." (Mark 5:19) As a believer tells simply, and in a humble manner, what the Lord has done for him and then backs up this profession with a consistent life, others will become interested and desire to know such a wonderful Savior. Prayer for courage and guidance will work wonders. There is no joy comparable to that of soul winning.

Then there are others whom He has fitted to preach the gospel. This gift must first of all be coveted and, when it is given, it must be developed by exercise and stirred up in an atmosphere of prayer and devotional study of the Holy Scriptures. Preachers are both born and made. Many a person with a gift to preach has neglected to develop it, and consequently has lost the gift. This is a tragedy indeed, and to be avoided at all costs.

There is also the gift of teaching. The difference between a preacher and a teacher is simply this. A preacher *proclaims* the word of God, while a teacher *explains* the word of God. These gifts are distinct and seldom combined

in one person. The Sunday school provides a wonderful outlet for the development of this gift. What an honor to be able to sit before a class of boys or girls and teach them the word of God! Then again, one may gather the children into one's own home to tell them the "old, old story of Jesus and His love." Many have been won for Christ by this means.

Then there is the task of visitation. There are many who are unable to come out to a gospel meeting because of sickness or other causes. The visiting of institutions provides a great and fruitful field of service. Hospitals, jails, old people's homes and shut-ins all welcome someone who will take an interest in them. Many have been led to Christ in this way. Kind deeds to the unfortunate and the needy neighbor has also prepared the way for the Savior, "who went about doing good." The exhortation is still in force: "Do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10)

What shall be said about the great foreign mission field, with its teeming millions without Christ. Into these fields have gone many hundreds of men and women with the glad news of a dying Savior's love, a risen Savior's power and a coming Savior's glory. Hundreds of thousands of one-time heathen are now rejoicing in the knowledge of Christ and His salvation.

"Shall we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Shall we, to men benighted
The lamp of truth deny?
Salvation! O salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till earth's remotest nation
Has learned Messiah's name!"
(Heber)

What shall they do who are baptized?

(7) *The believer should be an anticipative person.*

To the Thessalonian believers, Paul wrote: "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. 1:9-10) Glad expectation should fill the heart of every Christian as he anticipates the return of his Lord and Savior. The basis of this hope is found in the words of the Lord Himself. Let us listen to them and allow their import to sink deep into our hearts: "In My Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2-3)

Words surely could not be any plainer than these. The Lord Jesus Himself, in Person, is going to return again! Let us get this glorious fact firmly in our minds. Not only do we have the words of the Savior, but we also have the angel's attestation of this coming great event. At the ascension of the Lord, two angels addressed the disciples as they gazed upward at the ascending Lord and said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)

Added to this testimony are the inspired words of Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in

the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. 4:16-18)

Thus the believer should be a person characterized by a joyous expectation. As he was "planted together in the likeness of the death" of his Lord, he shall one day share His eternal glory, and not only be *with* the Lord, but *like* Him for all eternity! This is the hope of the Church as a whole, and of each believer in particular. The last words of the Bible express this joyful expectation: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" Truly:

"With such a blessed hope in view,
We would more holy be;
More like our risen glorious Lord,
Whose face we soon shall see!"

This, then, answers the question: "What shall they do who are baptized?"

7. The question as to the hindrances to baptism.

"What doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36) Inasmuch as we shall devote a special section to this question under the heading "Hindrances to Baptism," we shall not enlarge on it here, except to point out that this is a good question for every believer to ask himself, who has not yet been baptized in a scriptural manner. If he finds nothing to hinder him, then he should have it done as quickly as possible. Like David, he should be able to say: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." (Ps. 119:60) Prompt, unquestioning obedience is the keynote to all spiritual success.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

IX. WHAT BAPTISM IS NOT

Having viewed baptism, at considerable length, in a positive manner, let us now look at the subject negatively, and discover what baptism does not accomplish. Man is naturally a creature of extremes. He allows the pendulum of his thoughts to swing from one extreme to the other. We have seen that some deny the validity of the ordinance, while others magnify it out of all proportion to the place it is given in the Word. While baptism is an important ordinance, for it was instituted by the Lord Himself, it must not be allowed to take the place of faith in the person and work of Christ. Now let us see what baptism is not and cannot do.

1. It does not produce the new birth.

This is brought about, as we have seen, by the hearing and believing of the word of God, as applied by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. It is made good in the experience of a person through faith in the accomplished redemption secured by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, and a personal acceptance of Him as Savior and Lord. While the process of regeneration is a profound mystery, the means by which it is produced is described in simple language.

Of one thing we may be certain, water baptism has nothing to do with bringing it about. Baptism is the pictorial setting forth, to others, of the means by which this new birth was made possible, namely, the sacrificial death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Three

agents are used in the new birth. First, the word of God. Second, the Spirit of God. Third, the work that Christ accomplished on the cross when He bore our sins, took our place, died in our stead and rose again for our justification. No mention is made of water baptism in this connection, for it has nothing to do with securing our eternal salvation. Faith in the word of God, trust in the Person and work of the Son of God, brings about the indwelling of the Spirit of God, and results in the believer being born of God. As one has said:

"Come as a sinner, and trust now in Christ,
Who bore thy sin and shame;
Then, by the Spirit of God, through the Word,
Thou shalt be born again!"

In spite of the clear setting forth of the truth concerning the new birth, thousands of clergymen, and some of them true Christians, after sprinkling a few drops of water on the head of a baby and the recital of some prescribed prayers, announce that the baby, through this ceremony, has been born anew, and is now a member of the body of Christ and an heir of the kingdom. Here are the actual words taken from the Protestant Episcopal Church, (U.S.A.) "Book of Common Prayer." (page 280)

After the child has been sprinkled and the sign of the cross has been made on his forehead, the minister now says: "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks to almighty God for these benefits. . . . We give Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this child with Thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for Thine own child, and to incorporate him into Thy holy Church." This, as can easily be appreciated, is in flat contradiction to the

word of God which states that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Here is a baby, unconscious of what is taking place, being declared "regenerate", "incorporated into the Church of Christ," simply because a few drops of water have been sprinkled on its head!

Whatever the mode of baptism may be, immersion, sprinkling or pouring; however high the ecclestical position of the clergyman who performs the ceremony; and however ornate the ritual accompanying it, it is utterly powerless to accomplish the regeneration of a single soul. Regeneration is not produced by water, but by the word of God, applied by the Spirit of God, and through faith in the Son of God. It is difficult to understand how clergymen, some of whom are evangelical in their belief, can go through with a ceremony of this description, for which there is no scriptural warrant whatever.

2. Baptism does not bring about the salvation of the soul.

There are many thousands of truly born again believers, who are living godly and Christ-honoring lives, but who have never been baptized as Christians subsequent to their regeneration. The reason is not far to seek: they have never had this truth put before them for their intelligent consideration. They have been assured that their baby baptism was the equivalent of believer's baptism, so consequently give no thought to the scriptural mode of baptism. Are these unbaptized Christians lost? Ten thousand times no! They are as much saved as every other believer, and eternally secure in Christ. They are equally members of the mystical body of Christ, "the Church of the living God." They are "blessed with all the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 1:3)

It is to be regretted that these dear brethren have not seen their privilege of thus obeying the ordinance that their Lord left to be observed. Perhaps some, through the reading of this book, may be led to see this truth, and thus publicly and intelligently obey the Lord, and experience the joy that comes from prompt obedience to Him in this rite.

3. Baptism does not make disciples.

All that baptism does is to *mark* them. We have already pointed out that it was said of Christ: "He *made* and *baptized* more disciples than John." There are those who would translate Matthew 28:19-20: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them," etc., as: "Go and make disciples *by* baptizing" etc., but this is not a *translation* but an *interpretation*, as Dr. Handley Moule has clearly pointed out. Disciples are first made through the preaching of the gospel and faith in the message on the part of the hearer. Then only are they fit subjects for baptism. We reverse the order at our peril.

The vast multitude of baptized "Church members", who have never been born again, testify to the folly of man in seeking to "improve" on the pattern laid down in the New Testament. There are no short cuts to God's way of salvation. Therefore the need for clear thinking and plain teaching on this vital question of the necessity for regeneration before baptism. Baptismal water is no substitute for the precious blood of Christ, apart from which no soul can be accepted before God.

4. Baptism does not introduce the believer into the body of Christ, the Church.

This is made possible only by another baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and which, as we have seen, took place at Pentecost. Scripture leaves us in no doubt

as to this, for we read: "In one Spirit were ye all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13) The body of Christ was formed at Pentecost: "That event was historic, unique, final and corporate". As in the fall of Adam, all humanity is seen as fallen in him; so at Pentecost, all believers are viewed as being baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, the Church. The following comment on this verse by the well known and able expositor of the Word, Mr. W. E. Vine, is worthy of our close attention.

"This passage would signify that upon that occasion (i.e. Pentecost) the whole Church was, by the Holy Spirit's action, incorporated into one integral company, a spiritual entity. That those who were already believers on that day, and those who would afterwards believe, were thus actually and prospectively formed into the body of Christ, all the members having been in the mind of God according to His eternal counsels. The verse obviously does not refer to a coming of the Holy Spirit upon individual believers as a baptism, accompanied by outward signs."

Thus it is the baptism of the Spirit, and not water baptism that has introduced the believer into the mystical body of Christ, the Church. There is a vast difference between being introduced, by water baptism, into the membership of a religious denomination, and being introduced, by the Spirit's baptism, into the Church. The bane of Christendom is the fact that there are millions of members of denominations, who know nothing of membership in the body of Christ, of which the Lord Jesus is the Head, and every born again believer a member. Baptism therefore is only for those who are already members of the body of Christ. Let us ever keep this distinction in our minds.

5. Baptism does not bring about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

This takes place the moment a sinner trusts Christ as his own personal Savior, and rests in the work He accomplished on the cross. There are many scriptures that make this crystal clear. "In whom (Christ) ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13) We learned, from Acts 10, that baptism in water followed the reception of the Holy Spirit on the part of Cornelius and his friends: "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Then again, we read in 1 Cor. 6:19 "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, and ye are not your own?" The solemn words of Romans 8:9 should be seriously pondered by all: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

Let us dismiss from our minds any connection between water baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit. There is no mysterious and magical quality in the waters of baptism. It was this false notion that caused the idea of infant baptismal regeneration in the first place, and which has wrought such untold evil. To announce that a child, on its baptism, has been thereby made a "partaker of the Holy Spirit" is a flat contradiction to what God's word so clearly reveals.

6. Baptism does not wash away sins.

The objection may be raised that Saul, of Tarsus, after his conversion, was told by Ananias to: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16) In the first place, we know,

from many other scriptures, that it is the blood of Christ, and not water that cleanses from all sin. In Rev. 1:5 we read "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins by His own blood." In Eph. 1:7 we read: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." In 1 John 1:7 is found the well known statement: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." These are just a few of the many scriptures that could be quoted.

Scripture does not contradict itself. Apparent contradictions will disappear as they are interpreted in the light of their context. This verse in Acts 22 is the happy hunting ground for those who teach that water baptism is essential to one's eternal salvation. Let us look at this verse for a moment. It will be observed that there are two pairs of statements. The first is: "Arise and be baptized." The next is: "Wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Each pair of statements in the Greek is in the aorist tense, which denotes an act complete in itself. Arising is connected with baptism. The washing away of sins is connected with calling on the name of the Lord. Thus sins are washed away, not by baptismal water, but by calling on the name of the Lord, for we read: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. 10:13) Thus it is the call of faith on the name of the Lord Jesus, and not the waters of baptism that results in the cleansing from sin.

All the waters of the oceans of the world can never take away one sin, let alone the sins of a lifetime. Others have pointed out that Saul, by being baptized in the name of Christ, thus repudiated his former life of rebellion against the Son of God, whom he had previously regarded as an imposter. His baptism was his announcement that the One, whom he had previously despised and rejected,

was now his Savior and sovereign Lord, to whom he now pledged his allegiance from that time on, and we all know how consistently he lived up to the significance of his baptism.

7. Baptism does not bring a person into “the house of God”, or into any “circle of privileges.”

This is the fallacy of the “Household Baptists.” The idea was borrowed from the Old Testament rite of circumcision, which was the sign of the covenant of God with Israel, and which was only performed on the male children. To argue from this that Christian parents, by having their children baptized, bring them, by this act, into a circle of special privilege is to misapply the type. As we have indicated earlier, Israel was figuratively a redeemed people, and their children correspond, not to literal infants of Christian parents, but to *spiritually new born babes in Christ*, a vastly different thing!

It is most important to keep this fact in mind, for much has been built on this mistaken assumption. By all means let all the spiritually new born “babes in Christ” be baptized, not to bring them into “the house of God,” or into any “circle of privilege;” but because they are already in it! Every born again believer is a member of the body of Christ, not by physical birth, plus baptism, but by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

8. Baptism is not the door of admittance to participation in the Lord’s supper.

While maintaining firmly that baptism by immersion, subsequent to regeneration, is the plain teaching of Scripture, care must be taken not to make this ordinance the door to a believer’s participation in the Lord’s supper. Nor should it be made the basis of our fellowship with other believers, who have not yet been brought to see,

from the Word, the distinctive truth of what is involved in Christian baptism, and the privilege of gathering, in scriptural simplicity, to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread.

We must ever keep in mind the fact that every believer in Christ has been united to Christ, who is the Head of the mystical body, the Church, and that every believer is therefore a fellow member in that body. This is the fellowship into which God has called all Christians. (1 Cor. 1:9) This is the unity of the body, which every believer is called upon to *keep*, and *not to make*. (See Eph. 4:3)

Practically every genuine Christian we meet has passed through some form of baptism, so called. In a great number of cases they were sprinkled as babies. When, in later years, they were brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, they were assured that their christening was true Christian baptism, and they were satisfied to accept this assurance.

By all means, as we have the opportunity, let us put before these people, in a kind and courteous way, what God's word teaches concerning the mode and meaning of Christian baptism. But let us never forget that these Christians are our brothers and sisters in Christ, as much loved and cared for by the Lord as all other believers. We should therefore extend to these believers that love, care, courtesy and consideration that becomes members of the same family, and never allow ourselves to forget that all Christians are described as being "All one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28)

Many a godly believer has been cruelly hurt and permanently stumbled because of the harsh, hyper-critical, uncharitable and contemptuous attitude adopted towards

him by a better taught believer, or a company of believers, who utterly failed to take into consideration his spiritual environment. For an assembly of believers to adopt the rigid and inflexible rule that no believer shall be permitted to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread, until he has been baptized as a believer, is to adopt an exclusive principle which is not laid down in the New Testament. By such an attitude, baptism is thus made the door of admittance to the Lord's supper. A good question for such assemblies to consider is this: How many of the disciples, with whom the Lord instituted the Supper, had been baptized, as believers, unto His death?

Any believer, who has seen from the Word, the truth of gathering simply to the name of the Lord Jesus, apart from the ecclesiastical forms invented by men, and seeks fellowship in a scriptural assembly, should be treated, not with cold suspicion, but with warm Christian love. If he has not yet been baptized as a believer, this truth should be faithfully and courteously placed before him. If, however, he honestly and sincerely fails to see the truth of Christian baptism, this ordinance should not be insisted on as a condition for welcoming him to participation in the Lord's supper.

To compel his submission to an ordinance he *cannot* see, in order to comply with an ordinance he *can* see, is not only to go beyond the teaching of the New Testament, but is the height of unreasonableness. We must not expect this Christian to see, in an hour, what it took some of us years to learn! Apollos is a case in point. He was an "eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures," but was not clear on Christian baptism. Fortunately, there was a godly couple in the assembly named Aquilla and Priscilla, who took him aside privately, and "expounded unto him the way of the Lord more perfectly." (Acts 18:24-28) O, for

more Aquillas and Priscillas!

Of course, if the person interviewed, says: "Yes, I see, from the Word, that I should be baptized as a believer, but I shall not submit to this ordinance; then such an one should be refused his place at the Lord's supper on the basis of his flagrant disobedience to the known will and word of God. Such cases, however, are likely to be very rare.

Once it has been established that this unbaptized believer is a truly born again person, and is sound in doctrine and moral in his life, and has expressed himself as being willing to be baptized, once he has seen it from the word of God, he should be welcomed to participate in his birth-right privilege of fulfilling his Lord's request: "This do for a remembrance of Me." Let us ever keep in mind that it is *life* in Christ, and not *light* on the word of God, that is the determining factor in the welcoming of believers into an assembly of Christians. The divine principle is: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also has received us, to the glory of God." (Rom. 15:7) Many a person, thus received, has speedily learned and obeyed the truth of Christian baptism.

Mr. Henry Pickering, for many years editor of "The Witness," tells the story of a Christian lady who had not been baptized as a believer. She came to an assembly and expressed her desire to have fellowship with the believers in the Lord's supper. The elders courteously placed before her the truth of Christian baptism, but she could not see it. Finally she remarked: "Well, if it your rule that I *must* be baptized before I can have fellowship with you, although I do not see it, I am willing to fall in with your wishes." At this, Mr. J. R. Caldwell, also an editor of "The Witness," held up his hands in horror at such

a tragedy because of a man-made rule! Accordingly the dear sister was welcomed, simply because she "belonged to Christ." Mr. Caldwell then described how, shortly afterwards, this lady saw the truth of baptism and was gladly baptized.

We trust enough has been said as to what baptism does not do. It is indeed a blessed ordinance, but to credit it with accomplishing what the Word does not warrant, only brings the spiritual significance of it into disrepute. The Bible speaks of those who are "wise above that which is written." (1 Cor. 4:6) To claim for an ordinance that which is not substantiated by the general teaching of the word of God, can only result in confusion of thought, and baptism is too important and too beautiful an ordinance to be treated in such an unworthy manner.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

X. THE BAPTISMAL FORMULA

It is to be regretted that the formula used in baptizing believers has also become the subject of quite a little controversy, and this by good and able men in the Scriptures. Some affirm that the formula given by our Lord in Matthew 28 which reads: "Baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," has been superseded by the shorter form given in the Acts of the Apostles. The question has been raised as to whether the formula used in Matthew belongs to a different dispensation from the one used by the apostles in the Acts. The words used in the Acts are variously rendered as follows: "In, (or on) the name of Jesus Christ;" (2:38) "Into the name of the Lord Jesus." (8:16) "In (or on) the name of the Lord." (10:48) It will be seen that, in each case, the wording is different, so that certainly a new fixed formula is not in view at all, otherwise the same words would have been used.

The simplest and the best solution to this problem is to view the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew as the correct *wording* to be used in baptizing, and the words used in the Acts as the statement of our *authority* for the use of these words. This authority, needless to say, is vested in the Lord Jesus Christ, who declared: "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." He it was who gave the commission, and who alone had the authority to do so, so there is no need for controversy or division in this matter.

There are some who teach that a new commission

was given to Paul, as described in Acts 26:15-18, in which the baptismal formula, given in Matthew, is not mentioned and, in fact, baptism is not mentioned at all. Did Paul understand that he was not to baptise? Most decidedly not, for we are not only told he was baptized himself, but that he baptized others, such as Crispus and Gaius and the twelve disciples of John, as well as the household of Stephanus. 1 Cor. 1:17 is often quoted as though Paul was here denying the validity of baptism when he said: "Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel." But Paul is here saying in effect: "Christ sent me *not so much* to baptise as to preach the gospel." It is simply a question of emphasis. It is as though he is saying: "Christ sent me not so much to perform the actual manual act of baptizing, as to proclaim the gospel."

While Paul did not often perform the manual act of baptizing, he saw to it that it was done to those who were saved under his ministry. Baptism was not the *principle thing* with Paul, but he did not belittle it, or relegate it to a place of no importance. On the contrary, he saw to it that it was performed on all those who believed through his ministry, and strongly emphasized its spiritual significance in his epistles, as we have already seen. See Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8; Rom. 6 1-14; Col. 2 12; etc.

Let us look a little more closely at the commission given by the Lord Jesus to His disciples, as recorded in Matt. 28.

1. The time it was given.

It was after the cross and His victorious resurrection. The work of redemption, which He had come to accomplish, had been done to God's complete satisfaction, and God had raised Him from the dead. Thus it was in the power of an endless life that the Lord gave this commis-

sion to His disciples. The cross was forever past, and the glorious dawn, that should never know an evening's sunset, had come. It was therefore a time of victory.

2. The One who gave it.

It was the Lord of glory, the One who could say: "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore!" (Rev. 1:18) He was the One to whom the Father had committed all things, and to whom He had given "a name that is above every name." All the prerogatives of Deity were His: omniscience, the knowledge of all things; omnipotence, the ability to do all things; omnipresence, the ability to be in all places at the same time; immutability, or unchangeableness in all His divine attributes. This is the Person who gave the commission. Many a commission, given by man, has failed of accomplishment because of a lack of power to carry it out. Not so with this one! What His omniscience has planned, His omnipotence will perform!

3. The ones to whom it was given.

It was given to living disciples, who knew Him, who had heard His wonderful teaching and seen His marvelous miracles. It was not given for a people to carry out that would be living in the dim and misty future of another dispensation, but to a people who were actually existent on earth at that particular time. We mention this because some people teach that this commission was given to be carried out in the Millenium, and therefore can only apply to a people who will be living at that time!

But what are the facts? This commission was given by the Lord to disciples whom He had chosen, whom He knew and loved, who had shared His rejection, who had witnessed His death and now were witnesses of His resurrection. Thus it was given to living disciples to carry out

in their lifetime. To suggest that the Lord gave to living disciples a commission that He knew they could not possibly carry out until nearly two thousand years later is, on the very face of it, utterly unreasonable, and opposed to all the rules of Bible interpretation.

4. The commission that was given.

This was threefold: (1) To teach, or make disciples of all nations. (2) To baptise those disciples. (3) To teach them to observe all things. Let us consider each of these separately.

(1) To teach, or make disciples of all nations.

The word is “matheteuo.” It is also found in Acts 14:21, where, “had taught many,” is literally: “had made many disciples.” Disciples, in the New Testament sense of the term, are made through the hearing and believing the message of the gospel. Thus a Christian is a disciple. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians.” (Acts 11:26)

The Acts describes how the early Christians carried out the commission the Lord had given them. When great persecution arose against the Church in Jerusalem, the believers were scattered abroad and, as they went, they carried the gospel with them. Some of them travelled as far as Phenice, Cyprus and Antioch. Their testimony was greatly blessed of the Lord, and “a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.” (Acts 11:19-21) An assembly of believers was formed at Antioch, and both Barnabas and Paul were used of God to build up the saints in the faith and a thriving testimony was carried on in that city. It was from this assembly that both Barnabas and Paul were commended to the work of the Lord, and began their missionary journeys. Thus these early disciples took the commission of the Lord literally and, as a result,

"disciples were made of all nations."

(2) *To baptise disciples.*

Once the disciples were made, through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, they were to be baptized on the authority of Christ, and in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in baptism, the great truth of the Triunity of the eternal Godhead was affirmed, for both Father, Son and Holy Spirit were united in the redemption of fallen humanity. The Father, in infinite love, gave His beloved Son. The Son, moved by matchless grace, clothed Himself with humanity and left the glory of heaven to come into a world of sin, darkness and rebellion. He came to make it possible for God, on a perfectly righteous basis, to receive, pardon and relieve every lost and guilty sinner that will rest in the work Christ accomplished, by the sacrifice of Himself, on the cross. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, came to convince men of their sin and then lead them to receive Christ as their Savior. He then proceeds to indwell them and impart to them a divine nature, by which they are enabled to live the Christian life. It is fitting, then, that the name of the triune God was named on all who, through trusting Christ, became His disciples.

The fact that the actual wording of the formula, given in Matthew, is not mentioned in the Acts, does not mean that it was not used. Only the authority for the act of baptism is given in the Acts, that of the Lord Jesus. A somewhat similar case is recorded in the Old Testament. Aaron, the high priest of Israel, was given the actual wording of the blessing with which he was to bless the children of Israel. This is described in Numbers 6:25-27, and was as follows: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gra-

cious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace; and they shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

As far as we can discover, in the Old Testament, these actual words were never recorded as being used by Aaron, or by any of the other high priests that succeeded him. Does this mean that they were never used? By no means, for God gave Aaron explicit instructions to use these actual words. However, we do read that on various occasions Israel was "blessed in the name of the Lord." Doubtless on these occasions, though we are not told, these were the words used in the blessing. So also is it in the case of the words of the formula given by the Lord in Matthew 28.

Still another case may be cited. In Acts 2:42 we are told that the early disciples "continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and prayers." In Acts 20:7 we are informed that "the disciples came together to break bread." Now we know that at the Lord's supper there were two elements, the bread and the cup. Does this mean that the disciples only broke the bread, but did not partake of the cup? Of course not, the one included the other. So again, is it in the matter of the wording of the baptismal formula. "In the name of the Lord" *includes* the words given by the Lord Jesus in His commission. There was no need for these words to be constantly repeated each time a baptism was described, for these words were well known to all the disciples.

(3) *To teach them to observe all things.*

Disciples, having been made by regeneration, were baptized in the Triune name. They were now to be instructed in the commandments and the teachings of the Lord Jesus. Again, the book of Acts will reveal how faith-

fully this part of the commission was carried out, and the disciples were instructed in the word. See Acts 11:26; 14:21; 15:35; 18:11, 23; 19:10; 20-17-21; etc. It is important to notice that the work of an evangelist is not over when souls have been won for Christ. He must see to it that they are baptized and then taught the basic truths of Christianity. Only in this way will they be rooted and grounded in the faith, and enabled both to grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior. Thus we find, in the Acts, the threefold commission of the Lord was carried out faithfully.

5. The promise with it.

“And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (age).” Thus the continual presence of their Lord was guaranteed right to the end of the age. Seeing that this present age has not yet come to an end, this promise *applies to this present time*. Compare this with the closing verses of the Gospel of Mark: “And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, confirming the word with signs following.” (v. 20) How blessed it is to know that the believer, as he goes forth at his Lord’s command, goes not alone. He has the assurance of the One who promised: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Heb. 13:5) Truly, “He is faithful that promised,” so each child of God can count with certainty on the fact that He will be true to His word. With David he can confidently say: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.” (Ps 23:4) Thus the “go!” of His commission is accompanied by the “lo!” of His promised presence and power. This is the “mighty ordination of the pierced hands” which is the portion of each believer.

From what we have gathered in our study of the baptismal formula, it would appear that, when baptizing a believer, the following words could appropriately be used: "On the authority of the Lord Jesus, I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

XI. HINDRANCES TO BAPTISM

The question, put by the eunuch to Philip: "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" should be a good question for each Christian to ask himself who, as yet, has not been baptized as a believer on his profession of faith in Christ. There are many hundreds of such believers in the world, and it may be that the reader is one of them. To you, we would courteously enquire: "What doth hinder you to be baptized?" Let us try to discover some of the reasons why so many have not yet been baptized.

1. It may be due to a lack of knowledge regarding its necessity to obedience to the Lord's distinct command.

The introduction of infant baptism in the third century soon spread throughout the then known world, and came to be viewed as the correct form of baptism. The Reformation did little to alter this, for the Reformers incorporated this into their doctrine and, in some cases, maintained that baptism actually regenerated the child. The result, as we have seen, has been disastrous. It has caused very many to imagine they are right with God on the basis of their baptism as children, though living thoroughly worldly lives, with no desire for God or spiritual things.

In other cases, many of these people are religiously inclined, and love the trappings of an ornate religious service. They imagine that, by their faithful attendance at the various services and submission to certain rites and

ceremonies that this, in some way they cannot explain, will ultimately result in their salvation. Should any of these have the direct question put to them: "Are you saved?" or: "Do you know your sins are forgiven?" or: "Have you been born again?" they would not know how to reply. Perhaps some would answer: "Well, I hope so," or: "I cannot say for sure," or: "No one can know this for certain until after he dies."

If the reader doubts this, he can experiment for himself on many Church members. He will be surprised and shocked at the answers he receives to these vitally important questions. Many of these people sit under the ministry of ministers, who actually deny the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible, and belittle some of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. Consequently, the clear message of the gospel is never heard, and man's need as a lost and guilty sinner, and God's remedy in the gift of His Son, never falls on their ears. Thus, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." (Rom. 10:3)

But, thank God, there are many thousands of men and women who have been saved and are living godly lives. But many of these have never had the truth of Christian baptism set before them. It is to such that these words are addressed, and for whom this book has been principally written. We have sought, in plain language, to place this truth of Christian baptism, before them, and sincerely trust the effort has not been in vain. To the Christian reader, who has not yet been baptized as a believer, we would put the question again: "What doth hinder you to be baptized?" Once a person has seen this truth from the Scriptures, he can no longer plead ignor-

ance of it. Once more we quote the words of the Lord Jesus, which He addressed to His disciples: "If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them." (John 13:17)

2. In some cases prejudice hinders a Christian from being baptized.

Prejudice has been wittily defined as consisting of "being *down on* what we are not *up on*." Prejudice is a wrong opinion formed before proper investigation has taken place. It is most difficult for a person to disabuse his mind of the things taught him from his childhood. Certain impressions are made during that period which will persist throughout the rest of his life. If it was a correct thing, well and good; but if incorrect, it warps the mind against the truth.

Such a thing is the truth concerning baptism by immersion, subsequent to conversion. Ministers who believe in, and practice infant baptism, will naturally do their best to create the impression that Christian baptism is not according to Scripture. These ministers are quite sincere in their contention but, unfortunately, they are sincerely mistaken. To dissipate such prejudice against Christian baptism is not easy. Only the word of God, applied by the Spirit of God upon a person, willing to give this matter his sincere attention, can avail to accomplish this. Only as this subject is approached with an open mind, a submissive will and a holy determination not to act until he is absolutely convinced in his own mind of its truth, will it be of any benefit. Many, who for years were prejudiced against believer's baptism, have, by prayerful and intelligent study of the word of God, been led to see its scripturalness and act upon it to their own joy, peace of mind, and future usefulness in the service of their Lord and Master.

3. In some cases, it may be pride that hinders.

This would be particularly true of those who, for many years, have taken an active stand against baptism by immersion after conversion. For such to acknowledge that they have been wrong in their thinking is a bitter pill to swallow, and a most difficult confession to make. This, it will be recalled, was the difficulty that George Muller had to face, but which he overcame. To some it may entail a certain loss of social and religious prestige. In some cases it might mean their severance from a religious denomination which teaches infant baptismal regeneration. For such to be publicly baptized would mean a break with ties they have long enjoyed. The question, to them, is whether it is worth while to obey the Lord in this ordinance He instituted. Here is where the Lordship of Christ becomes involved in their decision. Once it has been settled that Christ is Lord of all, then obedience becomes the only logical thing, cost what it may, lead where it will.

To some, baptism by immersion appears to be a somewhat undignified affair. There is certainly nothing glamorous about a scriptural baptism. The descent into the water, the burial under the water and the emergence from the water is not calculated to impress the worldly spectator with the dignity of the person thus baptized. But neither was the baptism of suffering and death, through which the blessed Lord passed, in order that He might redeem us by His precious blood. He hung upon that cross, a spectacle to angels and men. His face wet with the spittle of men, naked in all His shame, blood flowing from His hands and feet. His ears were assailed with the blasphemies of the very sinners He had come to seek and to save. Yet, it was for "the joy that was set before Him that He endured the cross and despised

the shame." That joy was the accomplishment of the Father's will, and the redemption of poor guilty sinners like you and me.

In view of this, should a believer shrink from obeying the One who did all this to make possible his eternal salvation? The answer is surely obvious to every true believer in Him. Thus, whether it is a lack of knowledge, or prejudice, or pride that keeps a believer from following the Lord in the ordinance He instituted, he should give himself no rest until he has obeyed what he knows it is God's will for him to do. Then, like Ezekiel, he can joyfully say: "I did so as I was commanded." (Ezek. 12:7) Remember, there is no substitute for prompt obedience to the known will of God.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

XII. THE MESSAGE OF BAPTISM

We shall think of three classes to whom this message of baptism comes. First, to the unsaved, or the unregenerated. Second, to the unbaptized believer. Third, to the baptized believer.

1. The unregenerated.

It may be that these pages have been scanned by one who has not yet had the experience of the new birth, which the Lord Jesus declared to be absolutely essential to either seeing or entering the kingdom of God. (John 3:1-16) Perhaps, as you have read, the conviction has been deepened in your soul that you do not know the Lord Jesus as your own personal Savior. You do not yet have the blessed assurance, from the word of God, that your sins have been forgiven, and that you are the present possessor of eternal life, and that you shall never perish. Perhaps the unspoken cry of your heart is: "What must I do to be saved?" or: "How can I know, beyond any peradventure and doubt, that I am truly a child of God, that Christ is my Savior, the Holy Spirit my indwelling Comforter, and God is my Father?"

If this is your question, then rest assured it is God Himself that has put this desire into your heart, and He is able and willing to answer it! We are told: "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9) He has demonstrated His willingness to save sinners by giving His beloved Son to secure their salvation, for we read: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that who-

soever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Thus God's gift of His Son has made your salvation *possible*.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God came from heaven to make this salvation *actual* by his incarnation, life, death and resurrection. He has left us in no doubt as to why He came, for He said: "I am come to seek and to save that which is lost." (Luke 19:10) "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

To secure this salvation for sinners, the holy, harmless, sinless and undefiled Son of God willingly went to the cross. He there assumed the liability for all our sins, bore them in His own body, and received, at the hands of a holy God, all the penalty due to our sins, which was death. Thus we read: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3) All the work needed for the salvation of every sinner who will trust Him, was accomplished to God's complete satisfaction. The evidence of this is that God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him at His own right hand where He now is, "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him" (Heb. 7:25).

All that is left for the sinner to do in order to be saved is to come as a sinner, believe that Christ's death has satisfied all the claims of a holy God and a righteous law. Then, by a definite act of faith, to receive the Lord Jesus as his or her own personal Savior and confess Him as the Lord of the life. Hear the glad message: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the

dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:9-10)

The moment a sinner believes on Christ, God declares him to be saved, and assures him he is the possessor of eternal life, that his sins are all forgiven, that he is at peace with God, that he is "blessed with all the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, that he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit who imparts to him a new nature, that he is guaranteed eternal security and is promised a home in heaven for all eternity. Remember, it is not a question of *"feeling saved,"* but of *"being saved,"* and feeling *happy* because he is assured of that fact by the word of God. The following scriptures, a few out of many, emphasize the assurance of salvation. Read them carefully and believably. John 5:24; 1:13-14; 10:9-10; 10:27-30; Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 3:20-26; 1 John 5:11-13.

2. The unbaptized believer.

If, from what you have read, you are convinced, from the word of God, that you should be baptized in a scriptural way, may it be yours to obey promptly and be baptized. The privilege of being a believer is very great, but it also brings with it a corresponding responsibility. The old hymn puts it very succinctly:

"When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
When we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey!
Trust and obey, for there's no other way,
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey!"

(J. H. Sammis)

In the last book of the Old Testament, where Malachi describes the apathetic and backslidden condition of the nation of Israel, as a whole, they are represented as saying: "What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?" (Mal. 3:14) Thus they viewed the ordinances, which God had commanded Israel to keep, as being unnecessary and unprofitable. It is to be feared a somewhat similar attitude prevails in many quarters in Christendom as to the necessity for obedience in this matter of baptism. May this not be true of the reader!

The great step of intelligently and openly submitting to baptism by immersion may entail some readjustment of ecclesiastical relationships, a certain loss of prestige in certain circles, and perhaps the cooling of certain friendships; but the compensating joy of prompt obedience to the Lord's will is more than ample reward for all the loss. The obedient believer will learn, as David did long ago, that in the keeping of His commandments "there is great reward." (Ps. 19:11) The judgment seat of Christ is ahead, at which all the motives of our lives will be reviewed and rewarded, if they are found worthy of His approval. See 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Rom. 14:7-12.

3. The baptized believer.

We have previously drawn attention to the fact that it requires the whole lifetime of the believer to experience all the spiritual significance that is involved in baptism. It is something he must ever keep before him as he lives to the glory of the One, whose he is and whom he serves. The believer should therefore have three facts continually before him.

(1) *His identification with Christ.*

He must never allow himself to forget that all that he was, as a man in the flesh, came to an end in the sight

of God at the death of Christ. He is now viewed as "a new creation in Christ Jesus." Henceforth he is no longer to live for self, but for the One to whom he has sworn allegiance. He must ever keep in mind that he is distinguished from the worldling by several things.

First, he is the possessor of a new life, by which to live the Christian life. Second, he has a new nature communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, which enables him to understand and appreciate spiritual things. Third, he enjoys a new relationship in the family of God, who has now become his Father. Fourth, he has a new citizenship, which gives him a dignity no worldling could possibly have. Fifth, he possesses a new motive in life, the constraining love of Christ and for Christ, who has now become to him "the chiefest of ten thousand and the altogether lovely One." Sixth, he has a new standing before God, that of a perfect acceptance in His sight because he is in Christ Jesus. Seventh, he looks forward to dwelling eternally in a new home with his Savior and Lord. He enjoys all this because of his identification with the One into whose name he was baptized.

(2) *His renunciation for Christ.*

The believer must also continually keep before him the words of his Lord: "The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." (John 15:20) The attitude of the world toward Christ has not changed. The Christian must therefore be prepared to share the rejection of the world, and this he certainly will experience if he lives the kind of life expected of him by the Lord. It is written: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:12) The believer must not expect to be popular with a world that crucified his Lord. The Christian life

is one of renunciations, but which are balanced by more than adequate compensations.

(3) *His dedication to Christ.*

The believer is no longer His own property, but belongs wholly to the One who bought him with His own most precious blood, to be His own "purchased possession to the praise of His glory." (Eph. 1:14) He should ever keep in mind the exhortation addressed to all believers: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:1-2)

If the Christian life is to be lived as it should, it must be lived under the absolute control of the One in whose name and into whose death, burial and resurrection we were symbolically identified at our baptism. Only in this way shall Christ be "magnified in our body, whether by life or by death!" (Phil. 1:21) May this be true of both reader and writer, for His name's sake!

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

XIII. SOME BAPTISMAL HYMNS

We could not do better than conclude this study of baptism by inserting a few hymns written on this subject, and which speak for themselves.

“Around Thy grave, Lord Jesus,
Thy empty grave we stand,
With hearts all full of praises,
To keep Thy blest command;
By faith, our souls rejoicing
To trace Thy path of love,
Through death’s dark angry billows,
Up to Thy throne above.

Lord Jesus, we remember
The travail of Thy soul,
When, in Thy love’s deep pity,
The waves did o’er Thee roll;
Baptized in death’s cold waters,
For us Thy blood was shed,
For us the Lord of glory
Was numbered with the dead.

O Lord, Thou now art risen,
Thy travail all is o’er;
For sin Thou once hast suffered,
Thou liv’st to die no more:
Sin, death and hell are vanquished,
By Thee, the Church’s Head,
And lo, we share Thy triumphs,
Thou first born from the dead!

Into Thy death baptized,
 We own we with Thee died;
With Thee, our life, we're risen,
 And in Thee glorified.
From sin, the world and Satan,
 We're ransomed by Thy blood,
And now would walk as strangers,
 Alive, with Thee, to God."

(J. G. Deck)

"Is it Thy will that I should be
Buried in symbol, Lord, with Thee;
Owning Thee by this solemn sign,
Telling the world that I am Thine?

Gladly I yield obedience now;
In all things to Thy will I'd bow;
I'll follow where my Savior led,
And humbly in His footsteps tread.

This emblematic watery grave,
Shows forth His love who came to save;
And as I enter it I see
The price my Savior paid for me.

Forth from Thy burial, Lord, I come,
For Thou hast triumphed o'er the tomb;
Thy resurrection life I share,
My portion is no longer here.

O may I count myself to be
Dead to the sins that wounded Thee,
Dead to the pleasures of this earth,
Unworthy of my heav'nly birth.

Lord Jesus, when I gaze on Thee,
And all Thy radiant glory see,
That joy will far exceed the shame
I bear on earth for Thy loved name."
(Anon)

“Buried in the grave of Jesus,
We believe what God has said;
Faith, His judgment acquiescing,
Reckons that we now are dead.

Death and judgment are behind us,
Grace and glory are before;
All the billows rolled o’er Jesus,
There exhausted all their power.

First fruits of the resurrection,
He is risen from the tomb;
Now we stand in new creation,
Free, because beyond our doom.

Jesus died, and we died with Him,
Buried in His grave we lie,
One with Christ in resurrection,
Seated now in Him on high.

We await the full redemption,
When the risen One shall come;
And our mortal body changed,
Shall be fashioned like His own.

Lord, we share in Thy rejection,
Thy reproach, O may we love;
Here we stand, in Thine acceptance
In the Father’s sight above.

(J. A. Trench)

“O Lord, while we confess the worth
Of this, the outward seal,
Do Thou, the truths herein set forth,
To every heart reveal.

Death to the world we here avow,
Death to each fleshly lust,
Newness of life our calling now,
A risen lord we trust.

And we, O Lord, who now partake
Of resurrection life,
With ev’ry sin, for Thy dear sake,
Would be at constant strife.

Baptized into the Father’s name,
We’d walk as sons of God;
Baptized in Thine, we own Thy claim,
As ransomed by Thy blood.

Baptized into the Holy Ghost,
We’d keep His temple pure;
And make Thy grace our only boast,
And by Thy strength endure.

(Mary Bowley Peters)

“Beside this emblematic grave,
We seek Thy blessing, Lord,
On those who are to be baptized,
In keeping with Thy word.

Thou didst this ordinance ordain,
That all who trust in Thee
Might, in this way, confess to all
Their union, Lord, with Thee.

Thy death and burial, O Lord,
Is in this rite portrayed,
When Thou, in grace, upon the cross
Bore all our sins and died.

Thus Christians, by this act confess
That they, with Thee, have died
To sin and self and, to the world
They now are crucified.

As from the grave Thou didst arise,
Triumphant o’er Thy foes;
So, in this rite they testify,
With Thee they also rose.

May Thy rich blessing rest on these,
Who thus Thy word obey;
May they in grace and knowledge grow,
And walk with Thee each day!”
(Alfred P. Gibbs)

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