

TWO BAPTISMS.

Although this subject has already been treated at length in these columns, the many inquiries from new readers make its consideration again necessary.

Immersion or baptism (Greek – dipping) in water, as practiced by John the Baptist and afterward by our Lord and his disciples, had a different significance at first among the disciples from what it came to have after the Spirit dispensation was fully opened and its teachings received.

John came and his disciples, preaching repentance of sins, and used immersion as a token or sign of the putting away of sin by the repentant one. Not that the immersion put away the filth of the flesh – sin – but it illustrated it. Jesus' disciples did a similar work among the people (John 4:2). And after Pentecost, even, the Apostles, for a time at least, used the emblem in this same way. For instance, Acts 2:38,41; 8:12,13,38. In each of these instances open sinners were to exemplify the putting away of their sins, and this, indeed, is the usual significance of the ordinance among Christians to-day.

But baptism came to have a new and very different significance to the Apostles, under the guidance of the Spirit, as they came to discern its deeper meaning as illustrated both by the words and act of Jesus. In Jesus' case, surely, it did not typify a putting away of the filth of sin, for the question he put, but which his opponents never answered, was, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" and the record is that "in him was no sin."

Jesus' baptism or immersion into water typically expressed his death, into which he voluntarily went for our sins. It represented the full consecration of his will to the Father's purposes and plans for our redemption. It was when "Jesus began to be about thirty years

of age" – manhood according to the law – and therefore, the proper time for him to sacrifice his fully-developed manhood. And the act of baptism represented in the one act of going down into the water and rising from it, his going down into death, and his trust in the Father's promise that he should not be left in death, but should have a resurrection. (Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:31)

When Jesus presented himself to John – regarding it, and properly, as the symbol of repentance and reformation – John was surprised and said, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" He recognized Jesus' sinlessness and knew that he needed no repentance. Jesus answered, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us (the church of which he was the head) to fulfill all righteousness." And his death, which his immersion symbolized, was indeed the fulfillment of all the righteous demands of justice against the condemned race of Adam.

That which was expressed in that brief, symbolic act, was fully carried out in the three-and-a-half years of his ministry – for during that time he died daily, or was continually giving his life strength – sacrificing himself – for the sake of the Lord's truth, the Lord's children, and humanity in general. The act of immersion meant in symbol all that sacrifice which, commencing at Jordan, was completed at Calvary, and also his triumph as a new creature in the resurrection. Baptism into death meant sacrifice and suffering unto the end, both to Jesus and his followers – all who would share the present sufferings and the final glory. **[R445 : page 5]**

To all who would share the heavenly glory, the question comes as it did to James and John, "Are ye able to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Matt. 20:22). And if we have indicated our willingness, we have the promise that the ability shall be supplied; for our leader is our surety. And again, Jesus says: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straightened until

it be accomplished" (Matt. 20:22; Luke 12:50). All must see that not the watery-symbolic death, but the reality, is here referred to.

After Pentecost, under the leading of the Spirit, the Apostles came gradually to apprehend this deeper and more forcible significance of baptism when applied to Christians – to those who sought to follow the Master's footsteps of self-denial and crucifixion of the flesh to heavenly glory – the first resurrection. If by any means they might know him and the power of his resurrection (to spiritual conditions) and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death (Phil. 3:10). They came to see that to be baptized with his baptism meant much more than John's, much more than putting away the filth of sin; that it now meant consecration – to sacrifice – of that which already was justified in God's sight. Hence it is that we find Paul so ably teaching and exhorting believers, who were already justified from sin by faith in the Redeemer, to put on Christ by baptism; to become members of the "little flock" – "members of his body" – by being immersed into Christ. We quote his words:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized (immersed) into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" – walk as those having heavenly, not earthly, hopes and aims. How different is this meaning to the saints from that conveyed by John's baptism? So different, indeed, that the Apostles soon came to see that John's baptism, though the same in outward form, did not at all represent a baptism into Christ, and some who had been once baptized with the idea of putting away sin-filthiness were commanded to be baptized again, and thus express the new and deeper meaning to baptism (Acts 19:1-5 and 10:48).

From these few brief testimonies we hope that all will be able to recognize the two baptisms (two in import; one in outward form). All may add to the evidence by the use of Bible references or a concordance. And let all clearly distinguish between the heart-work which is the real, and the watery-type, which is the shadow. All should see, too, that the outward form has even greater weight and is the more proper to be observed by those who see the reality. We must not only believe with the heart, but also confess with the mouth – a symbolic act.

The immersion, which typifies a death of the human nature, we regard as being no longer proper, except for those who, in heart, had already made the consecration – presented themselves living sacrifices, as shown in preceding article on Sanctification – but who may not before have seen the beauty, significance and propriety of the symbol. But immersion, as practiced before the Gospel dispensation – called John's baptism, or the baptism unto repentance, as indicating a change of life, and thereafter a putting away of the filth of the flesh – is now in order again, as illustrating the very consecration that natural men should make to come into full harmony with God.

Does Paul dissent from this statement concerning two baptisms when he says, we have "one baptism?" No, he addressed the Church, those following in Jesus' footsteps, being baptized, not unto John's baptism, but into Christ – into the anointed company of which the anointed Jesus is the head. Some inquire, Who could properly administer the ordinance? We answer, any one, it matters not who, but all our preferences would naturally lead us to prefer that the administrator should be a brother in Christ. The formula of words, which it is our custom to use toward those being immersed into Christ, is as follows: "Brother _____, in the name (by the authority) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, I

baptize thee into Christ." Our formula for those now covenanting to renounce sin and pursue righteousness is, "Brother_____, in the name of Jesus Christ, thy sins be forgiven thee; go and sin no more."

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"If ye continue in my word...ye shall know the truth." (John 8:31.)
