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BAPTISM AND ITS IMPORT.

THAT our Lord and his apostles practised and enjoined upon all their followers – "even to the end of the world" or present dispensation – an outward rite called *baptism*, in which water was used in some manner, cannot reasonably be questioned. This was not only the case during our Lord's ministry in the end of the Jewish age, but also under the Spirit dispensation after Pentecost, as is abundantly proved by the Scriptural record. – Acts 2:41; 8:12,36,38; 9:18; 10:47,48; 16:15,33; 18:8; 19:3-5; 22:16.

Nor is it correct to assume, as some do, that baptism belonged among the ceremonies of the Jewish Law, and that it, with all other features of that Law, ended at the cross (when our Lord "made an end of the Law, nailing it to his cross"); for baptism was not a part of the Jewish Law. The washings enjoined in the Law, performed at the laver in the court of the tabernacle, were neither immersions nor sprinklings, but simply cleansings, and were not practised upon *the people*. The one tribe of Levi alone had access to the court of the tabernacle and to the laver which stood between the gate and the tabernacle. – Exod. 30:18-21.

Nor will it do to say, with others, that the apostles, on coming out of Judaism, erred for a while; that they failed at first to discern that the [R1540 : page 179] real baptism was that of the holy Spirit at Pentecost, and improperly kept up the *water baptism* after the Jewish age, to which it belonged. In this, as in the matter of not eating with the uncircumcised, they claim Peter erred, and others of the apostles with him to some extent. They claim, too, that Paul confesses to an error when he says (1 Cor. 1:14-16), "*I thank God that I baptized none of you*, but Crispus and Gaius...and the household of Stephanas;" also when he says (Col. 2:20,21), "Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to *ordinances* – touch not, taste not, handle not."

Thus an *apparently* strong argument is built up, the fallacy of which many do not discern. This is the result of a too superficial examination of the subject, and a jumping at conclusions from certain texts whose connections have not been thoroughly studied nor understood.

As already shown, baptism was not a feature of the Law Covenant; hence it was not at all a part of that which our Lord ended and cancelled at the cross. It is a great mistake to class *baptism*, which is a symbol of the New Covenant, with the "*ordinances*" of the Jewish Law Covenant mentioned by the Apostle. (Col. 2:20,23.) In verse 14 he shows that he refers to ordinances that were *against* the Jews, *i.e.*, which restricted their liberties. Can any one say this of baptism? In what sense is it against any one?

What the Apostle does refer to as the Law "*ordinances*," contrary to or against the Jew, were ceremonies and fastings, celebrations of the new moons and sabbaths, (verse 16), and particularities about the eating of clean and unclean animals, the wearing of clothing made of linen and wool mixed, etc. These ordinances included not only those originally introduced [R1540 : page 180] by Moses, but also others subsequently added by the Scribes and Pharisees who sat "in Moses' seat." (Matt. 23:2.) These forms and ceremonies had become so complex and bewildering a mass that those who *attempted* a strict observance of them found them extremely burdensome – a yoke of bondage. Our Lord referred to the same bondage and weariness (Matt. 23:4); and, again (Matt. 11:28-30), to the same class he held out *grace* instead of the Law, as the only way of life, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden [with the Law's *unprofitable* and multitudinous ordinances – which, because of your weak, fallen condition cannot profit, but only annoy and weary you, and are therefore '*against*' you], and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am

meeke and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

It is furthermore evident that *baptism* is not one of the ordinances referred to in Col. 2:14, when we read to the contrary in verse 12, that we who are buried with Christ in baptism *are therefore* (even if Jews formerly under the Law Covenant) not liable or subject to the ordinances of verse 14. Thus baptism is placed in contrast with the ceremonies of the Law.

The idea that baptism does not belong to the Gospel age, but ended at the cross, is again proved erroneous by the fact that it was after his resurrection, during the forty days before his ascension, that our Lord, while giving special instruction concerning the new dispensation, or Gospel age, *specially mentioned baptism* as the outward symbol by which believers were to confess him – "even to the consummation of the age" then just begun. – Matt. 28:18-20.

And those who claim that proper baptism is that of the holy Spirit *only*, and that water baptism is therefore *wrong*, should be effectually silenced and converted from their error by the Master's commission to his Church to preach and baptize to the end of the age. For how could the disciples baptize any one with the holy spirit? Surely that is God's part. On the other hand, the Lord's words could not have meant that his followers should teach all nations, and that those who believe would be baptized with the holy spirit by God, for then why would he give particular directions to the disciples as to *how* it should be done – "In the name [or by the authority] of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit" – ? It is evident that our Lord's directions refer to the *symbol*, to water baptism only; because we can do no more for others than to teach and symbolically to baptize them: we cannot believe for them, nor make them believe; neither can we consecrate for them, nor make them consecrate. But we

can *teach* them, and, when they believe for themselves and consecrate for themselves, we can baptize them in water. And by this act they confess their faith in Christ's death and resurrection, and their own consecration to be dead to the world and alive toward God, that in due time they may share in Christ's resurrection.

Furthermore, God specially recognized *water baptism* under the Spirit dispensation by in some cases withholding certain "gifts" (miraculous manifestations conferred upon believers in the beginning of this age, for the purpose of manifesting God's approval of the teachings of the gospel) until the water baptism had been properly performed (Acts 19:3-6); as in another case the gifts were bestowed first, to teach Peter that water baptism and every other feature of the gospel favor were open to the Gentiles. – Acts 10:44-48.

When the Apostle Paul thanked God that of the Corinthian Church he had baptized only a few (1 Cor. 1:11-17), he was not assuming that he had since become wiser than to do so again – wiser than the Master who commanded his disciples to teach and to baptize unto the close of the age – but for totally different reasons: reasons which only those who read the entire epistle to the Corinthians *connectedly* can recognize. He had heard that the church at Corinth was split into factions, divisions (literally, *sects*), some calling themselves Paulites, others Apollosites, others Peterites and others Christians. He was sure he had in no way aided such sectarianism, and was glad he could say, I never authorized you to call yourselves **[R1540 : page 181]** by *my name*. Were you baptized into the name of Paul, or into the name of Christ? Since the majority were Paulites, and since Paul had founded the church at Corinth, it might appear to some that he had been seeking to make converts to himself – Paulites instead of Christians; and, as it resulted thus, he was glad to have it to say, that very few of those calling themselves Paulites

had been baptized by him, as he said – "*Lest* any should say, I baptized in mine own name."

The great Apostle has been ignominiously styled "The blear-eyed Jew," and there is little room for doubt that, after he was struck down in the way to Damascus (Acts 9:4,8), he never fully recovered his sight. This "*thorn*" (figurative) he besought the Lord thrice to remove, but it was left as a reminder of previous error, and hence served to keep Paul humble in the service of that Master whom he had once persecuted. (2 Cor. 12:7.) It was probably because of this difficulty that, when on trial, he did not recognize the High-priest, whom he would otherwise have known by his peculiar garb (Acts 23:5); and for the same reason that all of his epistles were written by an amanuensis – except one, and that one of the shortest of them, closing with a statement which indicated that he could write only with difficulty and that his readers could appreciate this, knowing his disadvantages. He says: "Ye see how *large* [with what large characters – indicating that he could not see to write a fine hand] a letter I have written unto you with *mine own* hand." (Gal. 6:11.) Again, when wishing to mention their love for him, and their willingness to do for him the most useful service, he says to them (Gal. 4:15), "I bear you record that, if possible, ye would have plucked out *your own eyes*, and have given them to me." And it was evidently for this same reason that Paul never baptized any of his converts when he could avoid it – when others were present who could see to the service better than he.

Even had Paul's sight been good, the facts that he was a more able preacher than others, and that many could baptize as well as he, would have been sufficient reasons for his course; for it was thus with the Master, as we read (John 4:1,2), "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John; though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples." Judging from his unfitness for performing baptism, and his talent for teaching, Paul concluded that

preaching, and not baptizing, was his special mission (1 Cor. 1:17), though his own record shows that, when occasion required and no one else was convenient to render the service, he did not allow even his own unfitness to hinder or prevent this obedience to the Master's precept and example.

WHO ARE TO BE BAPTIZED?

Our Lord authorized first the teaching of the gospel, and then the baptism of such as *believed* in him as the Redeemer, and accepted the gospel call to become his followers. The apostles followed this rule, and we have no testimony anywhere that they baptized others – neither unbelievers, nor infants, nor idiots. True, it is recorded that several "households" were baptized, and from this it is argued that probably there were infants in some of those families, and that therefore it is probable that infants were baptized, though none are mentioned. But, we answer, some families contain idiots, and some families number one or more unbelievers; shall we therefore conclude without [R1541 : page 181] other evidence that the apostles disregarded our Lord's command, and baptized unbelievers? Nay, verily! It is far more reasonable to conclude that in the few cases where households are mentioned they consisted of only adult believers; or that, since the custom or general usage would prevent misunderstanding, it was proper enough to say "household," even if there were in them children too young to be "*believers*," and who therefore would be understood as not included among those baptized.

THE FORM OF BAPTISM.

The Greek language is remarkable for its clear and definite expression of thought, and it was therefore well fitted to give expression to divine truth. Its flexibility is well illustrated in the following words, each expressing a different [R1541 : page 182] shade of thought, yet all having a similar significance. Thus *cheo* signifies to pour; *raino*, to sprinkle; *louo*, to wash or

bathe; *nipto*, to wash a part of the person; *bathizo* (from *bathos*, the bottom), to immerse or plunge deep; *rantizo* (from *raino*), to sprinkle or shed forth; *bapto*, to dip or dye; *baptizo*, to dip, immerse or cover.

This last word, *baptizo* (rendered baptize in the common version Bible), is used by our Lord and his apostles when referring to an ordinance which they practised, as well as enjoined upon all followers of the Lamb. From this word, selected from among so many others of various shades of meaning, it is clear that a sprinkling or even a washing of a part of the person was not the thought, but an immersion or covering of the whole person – whatever it implies. *Immersed* is the correct translation; for *baptized*, as rendered in our common English Bibles, is not a translation at all, but a mere transfer of the Greek word into the English. *Immersed* is the English word which corresponds in meaning to the Greek word *baptizo*.

Not only does the Greek word signify to bury, immerse or cover, but the connected Scripture narrative of itself, without the particular strictness of the Greek word used, would imply that the baptism was one of *immersion* and not of *sprinkling*. The English, as well as the Greek, shows that our Lord went *down into* the water and came *up out of* the water. And the Apostle Paul frequently speaks of baptism as a *burial*, which would be a very inappropriate figure with any other form than that of immersion.

It has been suggested by some that in the case of the jailor who believed and was straightway baptized (Acts 16:33) the baptism could not have been by immersion, because he and the others could not have left the jail for the purpose; but, on the contrary, it is now known that at that time the jails were provided with bathing reservoirs, most suitable for the immersions. And, furthermore, it is to be remembered that of John the Baptizer it is written, "John was baptizing at AEnon near to Salim, *because*

there was much water there." (John 3:23.) No one can for a moment suppose that if John sprinkled his converts, the largeness of the water supply would have been a consideration. It was probably at a pool in the river Jordan.

It is generally admitted by scholars that immersion was the common practice of the early Church; but with the beginning of the third century came great confusion on this as on other subjects. On the one hand some placed all the value upon *the form*, some even insisting on three immersions, because our Lord had said in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, not seeing that *in the name of* simply signifies *in recognition of*; others claimed that as our Lord's head bowed forward in dying on the cross so they should be immersed, not as in a burial, but face downward; others insisted that the baptized must be nearly naked, as our Lord was when he died; and still others went to an opposite extreme, and, while holding that *a* form was all important, claimed that *the exact* form was unimportant, and for *convenience* substituted sprinkling.

This latter finally became the standard mode in the church of Rome, from which it reached Protestants. Immersion, however, is still the recognized form in the oriental churches. As we shall show presently, all these errors as to *form*, resulted from losing sight of the real significance of baptism. A claim frequently made, but not generally appreciated by those who make it, is that the Greek word *baptizo*, though it generally is used in referring to some thing or process (as the dying of cloth) which requires *dipping*, has been found in classical Greek writings used in places where the evident thought was that of *washing* without *dipping*. To this we answer that the word *baptizo* is not limited to a certain form of action, but rather carries the broad idea, *to cover*. And, so far as the word goes, the entire person is baptized if the entire person is wet, or *covered* with water in any manner.* But if the entire

*An illustration of this use of the word is found in 1 Cor. 10:1,2. The Apostle declares that all Israel were baptized (immersed) into Moses, and gives as the form, that they were covered with water (though not wet); the walls of the sea being on either hand and the clouds of water over head.

[R1541 : page 183] person to be baptized should be wet, or covered with water, who will claim that dipping was not the original as well as the easiest method of doing this?

WHO MAY IMMERSE?

No limitations are mentioned in the Scriptures as to who shall perform this ceremony of baptizing believers in water, though only *the Church* was ever commissioned, either to teach or to baptize. Although knowledge on the part of the one performing the ceremony is not required, it is, of course, desirable; but both faith and knowledge are necessary on the part of the one immersed. Sometimes the one performing the ceremony may be far inferior in every way to the one for whom it is performed (Matt. 3:14); and he might even, if necessary, be a believer not of the Kingdom or Church class. (Matt. 11:11.) Certainly all who are authorized to *teach*, are equally authorized to *baptize*; and that includes every true follower of Christ – "even to the end of the age," according to the general call to the ministry, commission and ordination of Matt. 28:19,20 and John 17:14-23. And this commission evidently does not exclude from this service the females of the "body of Christ" (Gal. 3:28), only that modesty, convenience, etc., indicate that they should avoid such public services except in rare cases of necessity.

THE SIGNIFICATION OF IMMERSION.

In considering the signification of immersion, the change from the Jewish to the Gospel dispensation must be recognized. The Jews, by their covenant, the Law, occupied a relationship toward God very different from that of the Gentiles (who were

without God or hope – Eph. 2:12); for, by God's arrangement, they were recognized and treated, under the provisions of the *typical sacrifices*, as though they were *justified* from Adamic guilt and penalty, and were, *as a nation, consecrated to God*, and treated as though they were to be made the Bride of Christ. The provision, too, was that when the true Lamb of God should come those truly consecrated among them, "Israelites indeed," might, by accepting the true Lamb and true sin-sacrifice and atonement, enter upon *actual justification*, and carry with them their former consecration. In other words, an Israelite, consecrated indeed, living at the close of the Jewish age, when the real sacrifice for sins was made by our Lord, would be treated as though he *had always had the reality*, whereas really he had up to that time only a typical justification.

Therefore, in the opening of the Gospel age, Jews were not preached to in the same manner as Gentiles. The latter were told: – Ye who were once aliens and strangers have been brought nigh, and may now have access to God and may *enter into* covenant relations with him. Therefore, come to God by Christ who has abolished distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, not by taking favors from the Jews, but by ushering believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, into the blessings and favors of the New Covenant, which the Law Covenant merely typified. (Eph. 2:13-19.) The Jews were told the opposite: "Ye *are* the children of the prophets, and of *the covenant* which God made with our fathers....Unto *you first*, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless *you*, in turning away each of you *from his iniquities*." "Repent, and be baptized, each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the holy Spirit; for the promise is unto you [*belongs* to you], and to your children." – Acts 3:25,26; 2:38-41.

The point to be noticed is that Israelites were *already* consecrated, and heirs according to the Law

Covenant; and the only reason they, as a nation, had not been merged at once out of the Jewish typical state into the Gospel realities, as the apostles and other individuals had been, was that they had not been living up to their covenant relationship. Hence they were told to *repent* or turn back into the true covenant relationship with God, and to enjoy their privileges as children of the covenant. They had sinned in not living up to what they could of their covenant, and they were to show that they renounced their previous state of sin by immersion – washing away their transgressions [R1541 : page 184] in symbol, after praying in the name of Christ. (Acts 22:16.) In like manner baptism by John, and by Christ's disciples when confined to the Israelites, signified repentance for covenant violations, and a *return* to covenant relationship, and was intended as a preparatory work; for those who fully received John's testimony, and reformed, and became Israelites *indeed*, did receive Christ, and did pass into the higher favors of the Gospel age. – John 5:45-47; Matt. 21:31,32.

To these, already children of the covenant and already heirs of the promised blessings, water baptism meant a renouncing of sins of unfaithfulness, [R1542 : page 184] and more: it meant their renunciation of the national sin of crucifying Christ – for the rulers representing that nation had said, "His blood be *upon us and upon our children.*" Hence Peter exhorted, saying, "Let *all* the house of Israel know that this Jesus whom *you* crucified, God hath made both Lord and Messiah." And when, in view of this *national sin* which each shared, they inquired, "Brethren! What shall we do?" Peter answered, "Reform and be immersed, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins [and specially for your share in this national sin of crucifying Messiah], and ye shall receive the gift of the holy Spirit." (Acts 2:36-39.) To those who accepted, it meant not only a renunciation of their national error of crucifying Christ, but a stepping *out* from the dispensation and control of Moses *into* that of Christ. Because in acknowledging Jesus to be

the true Messiah, they were acknowledging him to be the long promised Savior, Lawgiver and Teacher greater than Moses and typified by him.

But baptism could not mean *repentance* in either of these senses to the Gentiles who had never been under the Jewish Covenant, and who had no direct responsibility for the death of Christ. Hence (after the "elect remnant" of Israel had been received, and the Gospel message went to the Gentiles, to select out of them the number necessary to complete the body of Christ) in the epistles to the Gentile churches we hear no further exhortation to be baptized as a sign of repentance, or as a symbol of washing away of sins. And since we by nature are not Jews, but are of the Gentiles whose fathers were aliens and foreigners so far as God's covenants and promises were concerned, therefore, we should not apply to ourselves that idea of baptism which was applicable only to the Jews, but that idea which the Apostle unfolds in Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12.

The full import of baptism, the reality, of which immersion in water commanded by our Lord is the *symbol*, is clearly shown by the Apostle in the above cited passages. "Know ye not that as many of us as were immersed into Christ were immersed *into* HIS DEATH? Those who know this fully, and they alone, truly appreciate the water immersion commanded, and its weighty and appropriate significance.

"IMMERSED INTO CHRIST."

They who see the "high calling" of this Gospel age – to joint-heirship with Christ Jesus our Lord, as members in particular of the "body of Christ," of which the Redeemer is Head and Lord – know that our attainment of that high honor depends upon our acceptableness as members in that body of Christ. (Rom. 12:1; 8:17,18.) They also know that no one is "called" or invited into this "body of Christ" – "the Church of the firstborn" – except

those who already are *believers*, who own Christ as their Redeemer or Justifier, and who are therefore justified freely from all things by faith in his blood. Such, and not sinners, are invited to become joint-sacrificers and joint-heirs with Christ. Under the Law, the blemished of the flock were not acceptable on the Lord's altar, typifying God's rejection during *this* age of all imperfect offerings. Our Lord was the *actually* spotless, unblemished, perfect Lamb of God, sacrificed for our sins; and in inviting some to join him in sacrifice, and afterward in glory and honor, the Father accepts only such as are first made "whiter than snow," and who, because of faith in and acceptance of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, are *reckoned perfect*, and hence are acceptable to God as joint-sacrificers. [R1542 : page 185]

"WERE IMMERSSED INTO HIS DEATH."

This is given as the true significance of water immersion. The *real* baptism, therefore, is this immersion into a sacrificial death with Christ; and the water immersion, though a beautiful figure which graphically illustrates the real baptism, is only its figure or symbol.

But how much is meant by the expression, "immersed into *his death*?" In what way was our Lord's death different from that of other men?

His death was different from that of other men in that theirs is a *penalty* for sin, while his was a *sacrifice* for the sins of others, to release others from their penalty – death. We, with all others of Adam's family, involuntarily share Adam's death – the wages of sin. And we, with all the Adamic family, were redeemed by Christ's death, and granted a right to a probation for a restoration to all the human rights and privileges which Adam lost for us. We who believe this good news accept those redeemed rights and privileges even now, and begin (*by faith*) to enjoy them, believing that what Christ died to secure, and has promised to give, is as

sure as though already possessed. We have joy and peace in believing these "good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people;" and by faith we already reckon ourselves as in possession of those good things which, at the second coming of our Lord Jesus, are to be brought unto all who hate sin and love righteousness.

It is when we are in this *justified* condition, repossessed of the human rights lost through Adam, but redeemed by Christ, that the call or invitation is extended to us to become something far higher and far grander than perfect men fully restored to the likeness of God in the flesh (though *that* is so grand that only few appreciate it): we are invited to become joined with the Redeemer in the glories and dignities of the *divine nature* (2 Pet. 1:4), and co-workers with him in the great work of the Millennial age – the work of restoring the obedient of the race of Adam to perfection and to all "that which was lost" in the fall.

But the *invitation* to share this great dignity, far above angels (Heb. 1:4; Eph. 1:21; 1 Cor. 6:3), is accompanied by certain conditions and limitations. This prize is not given because of *works*, for no works which could be conceived could purchase or earn so high an exaltation as that offered. The offer is a *favor*, unmerited by anything which we have done, or can do; and yet the *conditions* may be said to be the price, or cost to us, of the prize offered. It is not, however, an *equivalent* or *corresponding price*. The price to us is a mere pittance in comparison to the value received, and "not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." And when we consider that we had nothing to give, until first purchased by the precious blood of Christ, it will be clearly seen that the high honors to which we are called are not of works of our own, but of grace, through Christ. For even our pittance was forfeited by sin, and had first to be redeemed, before it could be accepted.

The requirements or conditions, attached to the invitation to share with Christ the coming glories and dignities, are plainly stated: – Each one accepting it must share his *death*, be immersed or buried into *his* death, if he would be of that "little flock" of joint-heirs, the "body of Christ," – otherwise called "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." To be sharers in his death means that as our Redeemer spent his life, not in (even lawful) self-gratification, but consumed it in the interest of truth and righteousness, in opposing sin and in doing the work and executing the plan of the Father, so we must use our time, talents, energies, rights and privileges. Redeemed by him and given to us, we not only *consecrate all these* to the Father's service, but we must use them faithfully *even unto death* – as he hath set us the example – walking in his footsteps as nearly as possible. If thus we be dead *with him*, we shall in due time live with him (Rom. 6:8); if thus we suffer with him, and in the present life endure *afflictions* even unto death (whether the death of the cross or some other form) for *righteousness'* sake, we are counted as sharers of *his death*; and all who share "*his death*" will also share "*his resurrection.*" – See Phil. 3:8-11.

As "his death" differs from the Adamic death, so "his resurrection" differs from the [R1542 : page 186] restoration resurrection which he has secured and will make possible to all men. His resurrection is in Scripture pointed out as different from that of the world redeemed by him. It is emphasized in the Greek – "the resurrection," and also designated the "first [chief] resurrection." His resurrection was to the divine or immortal nature, a spiritual body. And so many of us as are immersed into Christ – immersed into his death – shall also obtain a share in "his resurrection" – "the resurrection" – as described in 1 Cor. 15:42-53. We, who have borne the image of the earthly father, Adam, who also lost it for us, have again received it by faith in Christ's sacrifice, and have now surrendered it, as joint-sacrificers with him of human nature. Thus we become partakers of a new nature,

and shall, in the resurrection, bear the image of that new, divine nature. – 1 Cor. 15:49.

Note how pointedly the same writer mentions this in the passage under consideration. "***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 a ***new life***. [Our new natures are reckoned as ***begun*** now, and are to be perfected at our resurrection in the Lord's likeness.] For ***if*** we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, [***then***] we shall be also [sharers] in the likeness of ***his resurrection***." – Rom. 6:4,5.

It is evident, then, that baptism in water is the symbol of a complete and, to those who would be joint-heirs with Christ, an indispensable self-sacrifice; an immersion with our Lord into his death; an immersion which began and is counted from the moment the ***justified believer*** consecrated himself and surrendered his will to God, though to secure the prize promised it must continue until the close of the earthly life. It was from this standpoint that our Lord spoke, when he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." (Luke 12:50.) He had already [R1543 : page 186] performed the symbol at Jordan, but he was now referring to the consummation of his baptism into death. His will, surrendered to the Father's will and plan, was already buried; but as the dark hour of Gethsemane and Calvary drew near he longed to finish his sacrifice. It was from this same standpoint that he spoke of baptism to the two disciples who asked to sit, the one at his right hand and the other at his left, in the kingdom. "He answered and said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask – Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Matt. 20:22.) He referred here to the baptism into death, and showed that none need expect to share the kingdom except those who

share this baptism of death. Thus the Apostle's explanation of the symbol exactly concurs with that of our Lord.

These are not two baptisms – one into water and the other into Christ's death – but one. The immersion into water is the symbol or shadow of the immersion into death. If there is a shadow, there must be a substance; and a clear, strong light falling upon a substance produces a shadow of it. It is for the instructed child of God to distinguish between the substance and the shadow, and by recognizing their relationship to see in the two parts "one baptism." Since the two parts were recognized as one baptism by the Apostle, it is doubtful if any one fully appreciates the ONE, TRUE BAPTISM without seeing both the substance and the shadow.

Recognizing the true import of baptism, we see that, next to faith in Christ, it is the one important and essential step by which the Church glorified shall be entered; for only such as are conformed to, and have fellowship in, our Lord's death will, as "members of his body," share the first or chief resurrection, to be *with* and *like* the Head. It is not surprising that some have mistaken the shadow or symbol for the real, and made it a test of membership in the church upon earth: this is but a natural mistake. All who see the *real* immersion, as well as the *symbol*, and yet ignore the latter, should carefully examine themselves to see that their wills in this matter are *really* dead and buried in the will of Christ. And if they refuse obedience to the Lord's word and example in this, they should make unquestionably sure to themselves the strength and validity of any arguments to the contrary, by which they set these aside.

But some inquire, Is it *necessary* for me to be immersed in water, if I am confident that I am fully consecrated – immersed into Christ? Would the Lord reject me for so small a matter as a failure to go through a form?

Do not forget that the present age is not one of commands and compulsions. God does not command and compel the obedience of his Church. This is a time in which, as a great favor, believers are *privileged* to offer their wills and their all in *self-sacrifice* to God. It is 'the *acceptable* year of the Lord" – the time in which God is pleased to accept *our sacrifices* (through Christ) and to give us certain exceeding great rewards promised to those who surrender their little *all*, and who thus become followers in the footsteps of the High Priest of our order. – Heb. 3:1. [R1543 : page 187]

Those who see this clearly know that the Body of Christ has not been given a law of commandments, nor been dealt with as were the Jews; for "*Ye* are not under law, but under favor." Theirs was the house of servants, and it is proper to command servants; but, if we are new creatures in Christ, we belong to the "house of sons" (Heb. 3:5,6); and God deals with us as a true Father with true sons. True sons, and the only ones whom he will acknowledge, possess the *spirit* of adoption, the spirit of obedience, the spirit of sons, and need not to be commanded and threatened; for such, both by word and deed, and in matters both small and great, declare, "*I delight* to do thy will, O my God." For such, no self-denial is too great, and no act of respect and obedience too small; and, ignoring pride and all human philosophies and expediencies as unworthy to be weighed at all in opposition to the Father's wisdom, these learn that *to obey* is the best of sacrifice. – 1 Sam. 15:22.

No, God will not compel you to be immersed, either really or symbolically. These opportunities to sacrifice convenience, worldly opinion, etc., are privileges which we should highly esteem and covet, because by these we are able to show the Lord the depth and sincerity of our love and the reality of our consecration. It is on the basis of this and hundreds of other *little* things that we are now being *tried* – to see if we are as

earnest as we have professed to be. If we are ashamed to confess Christ before men by the very simple way which he arranged, we may well expect that he would be ashamed to call us overcomers and joint-heirs, and to confess us as faithful followers. He could not do so honestly and truthfully, and hence we may be sure he will not do so. And if, after we see how much our Lord has done for us – first, in our redemption, and, secondly, in the great offer of the crown and divine nature – we allow a trifling sacrifice of contemptible pride to hinder us from a small act of obedience which our Redeemer and benefactor requested, our own self-contempt and shame should prevent our taking crowns and places (even if offered them) with the little band of faithful overcomers who valiantly sacrificed much, and thus *proved* that they loved much.

While therefore we do not say that none will be of the "little flock" except those who have been *immersed into water*, as well as into the death of Christ, which it so beautifully symbolizes, we do say, that we do not expect to find in that "little flock" a single one who has *seen* water immersion to be the will of God, and who has refused to obey. Let us remember that obedience in a small matter may be a closer test than in a large one. Had Satan attempted to get Eve into the sin of blaspheming the Creator, he would have failed; had he attempted to induce her to murder Adam he would have failed; hence the test of obedience in a very small matter was a much more crucial test. So now God tests our professions of love and devotion and obedience most thoroughly by some of the smallest matters, of which the symbolic immersion is one. God's decision is, He that is *faithful* in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is greater.

Though "Baptists" do not generally grasp the full import of immersion, but look at the water rather than the death which it symbolizes, yet the holding of the symbol has been valuable, and shows the Lord's wisdom in choosing the symbol; for even the

truth with reference to the symbol has been unpopular, ever since its rejection by Antichrist centuries ago, and in very many cases has it required the true consecration, the true burial of the will into Christ's will, before the believer was willing to brave the scorn of the world by obedience to an unpopular ceremony.

Even those who practice sprinkling, and that upon unintelligent (and hence unbelieving) babes, hold that *baptism* is the door into the Church of Christ, and none of the nominal churches receive into membership others than those who have gone through some ceremony *called* "baptism." They thus receive infants into their churches, on the ground that only church members will be saved from everlasting torment. True, this like other doctrines is little taught in our day, and is fast losing its influence over the people, yet millions of parents to-day believe that their children would be consigned to everlasting torment if they should die without being sprinkled with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Especially do Romanists, Episcopalians and Lutherans fear an omission of this sort, and some Presbyterians and Methodists no less so.

An illustration of this, and one which shows the power these errors put into the hands of the priestly or clerical class, came under our observation in this city about nine years ago. The parents of the infant were Lutherans, but had a disagreement with the pastor of the congregation about non-payment of church dues and non-attendance at meetings. The child grew seriously ill, and the father and mother by turn went many times to implore the cold hearted, error teaching, hireling shepherd to come and sprinkle their babe and save it from the eternal damnation he had taught them would otherwise be its portion. But he refused [R1543 : page 188] to come, telling them that they deserved the punishment. After further effort they secured another priest "just in time" to allay their groundless fears.

Thus it is evident that no matter how careless they may be as to the exact *form*, all the principal sects view baptism as the *door* into the church, the *door* of salvation, the *door* into the body of Christ, as truly as do Baptists. We, on the contrary, hold that neither the sprinkling with water nor the immersion in water is the door into the "body of Christ," now being elected or chosen out of the world; but that *the immersion into Christ's death*, which begins in full consecration, is the door by which justified men become members of the Body of Christ which is the Church. We insist that all who thus become members of "THE CHURCH *whose names are written in heaven*," should, as soon as the precept and example of the Lord and the apostles, and the *appropriateness* of the symbol, are seen, make haste to show their obedience and consecration before men.

BAPTISM AND THE TABERNACLE.

The true baptism is illustrated in the Jewish Tabernacle, but not by the Laver which stood in the Court full of water, at which the priests washed their hands and feet. No, that is a symbol of the cleansing effect of the truth upon the outward conduct of believers in general. It symbolizes the putting aside of filthy practices – lying, stealing, etc., and the putting away of filthy communications out of our mouths, – slanders, envy, strife, backbiting, [R1544 : page 188] etc., – a cleansing as proper for the natural man as for the consecrated saints.

The vail at the door of the Tabernacle represented the same thought as baptism – namely, *death*. When the priest passed the first vail, it represented him as passing out of sight, buried from the outward things; and his shut-in condition, was enlightened only by the lamp and supplied by the shewbread – representing the spiritual nourishment and enlightenment granted all who are immersed into Christ.

The second veil represented the end of the *reckoned* death in *actual* death; and the Most Holy represented the full fruition of all the exceeding great and precious promises made to those who become new creatures in Christ Jesus by sharing *his death* and also *his resurrection*. In the Most Holy comes the full realization of what the Holy gave but a foretaste. Thus we see that a complete immersion or burial from sight was necessary to reach the Most Holy. And as the Tabernacle had but the one entrance, it clearly teaches that none can attain that state or condition which it typified (the divine nature) without first passing through the first veil, representing consecration or death to the world, which baptism in water also beautifully illustrates.

For a full explanation of the significance of the entire Tabernacle service, see *Tabernacle Shadows of the Better Sacrifices*.

WHO MAY BE IMMERSSED.

In John's baptism of the Jews into reformation, he demanded of some that they should first show by their lives that they had reformed before they went through the symbol of reformation. In the use of baptism after Pentecost however, the only condition imposed was faith in Christ. It seems to have been taken for granted that none but true, sincere persons would thus profess faith in and allegiance to so unpopular a leader as the crucified Christ. But the water immersion, though it was a public profession of Christ by the one immersed was not necessarily an endorsement of such by the apostles and the Church. The Church could not and did not decide whether the one symbolically immersed had been *really* immersed into Christ. The symbol indicated this; and they explained the symbol, and urged all that had consecrated in symbol to see that they were really dead to the world and its plans and aims, and alive toward God and his plan.

This is evident from some instances, as that of Ananias and Sapphira and Simon the sorcerer. (Acts 5:1-10; 8:13,20-23.) To the latter, though he had been baptized, the Apostle declared, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." So, now we do not need to decide for others who may wish thus to confess Christ (except it be very evident that they do it as an intended mockery). It is *their* act alone, and represents their conscience toward God; and the knowledge of ignorance of the one performing the symbol cannot affect the matter either favorably or unfavorably. The real baptism is that which cannot be seen, except in its influence upon the conduct; and the real church which is joined is the Church whose names are written in heaven, whose members cannot be positively known until the close of this age, when they shall be glorified with the Head.

THE MANNER OF THE SYMBOL.

The immersion, since it symbolizes a burial should be backwards, in water sufficient for the purpose, and convenient as circumstances will permit. It should not be done with secrecy [R1544 : page 189] it is intended as a *public confession of faith*, and the only form of such public confession, used by the early Church, of which we have any record. Yet its publicity should be to fellow-believers rather than to the world. Hence, while it should in no way be kept secret from the world, it is unnecessary to give public notice except to the fellow-believers of the Church. In fact, so solemn is the occasion to the Church, who realize its deep significance, that the presence of the worldly, unless they be seekers after God and therefore more than mere curiosity seekers, is not desirable. Such public notice, we gather from the record, was the custom in the early Church.

Some think that because John the Immerser and the Lord's disciples baptized publicly in the river Jordan, therefore all should be immersed in public view in a river. But let it be remembered

that the whole Jewish nation was the *Church* according to their Law Covenant; therefore *public* view was public to the professed Church of that time. As for the river Jordan, John and the disciples evidently used it as the most convenient place at their service. If the river was an important factor, why not the *same* river – Jordan?

It should be noted that when the eunuch believed and was immersed, only Philip was present; when the jailer believed and was immersed (Acts 16:33), it was not in a river, but in a bath or some other convenient arrangement in the prison. And we know that the ruins of the church buildings of the first two centuries show that they had special, annexed buildings prepared for the convenience of immersions.

The form of words used by the apostles and the early Church is not given, which shows that the *form of words* used is much less important than the act, and the *meaning* which it expresses. We may gather, however, from Acts 2:38; 8:16; Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27 and 1 Cor. 1:13, that baptism "*into Christ*," into the name of the Lord Jesus, was the thought; and that it was expressed in words. We may also presume that our Lord's words, "Baptizing them *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit*," were not disregarded, but somehow expressed on such occasions. The thought is, that believers, by immersion into Christ's death, are joined to Christ as members of the little flock "which is his body;" and that their right or privilege to be thus accepted in the Beloved is in the name or by the authority of the Father, through the merit of the Son and by the impartation to such of the holy Spirit of truth. We now give the form of words which it is our custom to use on such occasions, and our general procedure, for the convenience and satisfaction of those who may have occasion to use the suggestion.

We first have, privately, some assurance on the part of all who are about to be immersed, that they recognize the *death* of Christ as their ransom price, and that they *are already* consecrated wholly to his service, and desire to now confess all this in the symbol which Christ enjoined. Then, the announcement having been publicly made before the congregation, we meet at an appointed time and place for the service; and there, after briefly explaining the real immersion and its water symbol, offering thanks to God for the privilege of thus following in our Lord's footsteps, and expressing our trust in his promises to give grace and strength sufficient to enable those who have consecrated all to his service to be dead indeed to the world and its aims and ambitions, and alive only to God's service and the study and carrying out of his plans; and after specially requesting a blessing upon those about to symbolize their covenant, we receive the candidates in the water. Then (in the usual manner, with one hand in front, at the throat, and the other at the back of the neck) we say, if the name of the candidate be John, – "John, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit – by this authority – I baptize thee into the name of Christ." We then let him down, backward (as a corpse), until immersed, covered completely; then raise him to his feet. After again changing our clothing in the provided rooms, we meet in the presence of the congregation (who, meantime, worship God in prayer, songs of praise, etc.), and with convenient words we extend to the newly immersed ones the right-hand of fellowship in the name of the great Head of the Church, and on behalf of the entire church whose names are written in heaven; exhorting that they walk worthy of the *name* of Christ which they have confessed and taken; and that they run earnestly in the race for the prize of the high calling which they have publicly entered.

THE FAMILY NAME.

It is evident that all through the Gospel age baptism into Christ has symbolized union with him and membership in the one body – the bride. But now in the harvest or lapping of the Gospel and Millennial ages, a new question arises, viz., While it is still appropriate for all of this class who have not done so, to confess Christ by this symbol, what about others, of the restitution class, who shall now confess [R1544 : page 190] Christ and desire to consecrate themselves – to relinquish their wills and have the will of Christ only? Seeing that such will sooner or later apply for baptism as a symbol, and that it would be a proper symbol of consecration for others as well as for the *body* of Christ, and that it is not incumbent upon us to decide to which class those belong who apply to us for immersion – the question arises, Would the same form of words be appropriate for both?

We answer, Yes; for though the class referred to will not be of the bride of Christ, they will be of the Christ *family* – children of the Christ; and it is proper for children to bear their father's name. Christ is to be the "Everlasting Father" or *life-giver* to the restored human race; and hence it will not be improper for them also to take his name. Therefore, as we now view it, it will be proper to baptize such *into the name* of Christ; and we doubt not that all of the world who shall come into harmony and receive the gift of life from the Life-giver in the next age, will also be known as *Christians*. As before pointed out, however, the *words* of the immerser cannot affect favorably [R1545 : page 190] or unfavorably the interests of the immersed: the importance rests in the obedience of the act and what it signifies of consecration to the one immersed.

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND OF FIRE.

We need not examine this subject at length here; it was discussed in our issue of June '92. We merely remark that the

immersion in holy Spirit which began at Pentecost, is *not* symbolized by water baptism: it follows, but is totally different from an immersion into Christ's death, which the water immersion symbolizes so perfectly.

BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD.

"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead are not to be raised at all? [If there is no resurrection baptism is a symbol of nothing further than the death of our mortal bodies.] Why then are they baptized on behalf of them? – 1 Cor. 15:29.

This has been considered a very obscure passage, because the real meaning of immersion (as symbolic of death) has been generally lost sight of. Some have been led to the absurd conclusion that early Christians were immersed *for* or *instead of* their dead, unbelieving friends and relatives – supposing that Paul here referred to and commended so senseless a thing. On the contrary, the Apostle here refers to the fact, then well understood, that each one of those who had been immersed had symbolized his own death – had cast his lot among those dead with Christ, to share his sacrificial death (giving his life in the service of the truth – with Christ – Col. 1:24), in prospect of a glorious resurrection to share with the Redeemer the work of blessing and restoring the world.

Paul is combating and disproving the theories of some who were teaching that there would be *no resurrection*. He appeals to various arguments to prove the falsity of such teaching. He proves that the dead can be raised by divine power by the fact of Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12-18); and then, in the verse under consideration, he shows how absurd it is for those who by immersion have symbolized their consecration to *death* to disbelieve in a future life. He asks such doubters of a resurrection, Why, then, were you baptized for the dead, if you hope for

nothing? Wiser and better far it would be, if there is to be no resurrection of the dead, that we should make the most of the present life, enjoying all its pleasures, instead of consecrating ourselves to death in baptism and then living a life of self-sacrifice, which is a daily dying.

But, in this as in all things, the beauty and harmony only appears from the true standpoint. Those who regard sprinkling as baptism can see no meaning in the passage; neither can those who deny water baptism interpret it without giving the inference that this great, inspired Apostle was foolish. Neither can those who see the symbolic water immersion, only, appreciate the passage. Its beauty and force can only be discernible from the standpoint herein set forth, viz., a recognition of the death with Christ to self-will, to the world and to all worldly interests, and also of the water immersion as its proper, appropriate and provided symbol. In conclusion we quote the inspired record.

Peter said: "Can any man forbid water?" (Acts 10:47.) Paul said: "So many of you as were immersed into Jesus Christ, were immersed into his death....For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6:3-5.) "Then they that *gladly* received his word were immersed,... and *they* continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship." – Acts 2:41,42.
