

BAPTISM: WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

By H.A.Ironside

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

Several years having elapsed since the first publication of this booklet, and a new edition being called for, I have considerably revised my former paper, though altering nowhere the teaching therein set forth. Further study and experience have only confirmed what was first written, although I believe I see many kindred truths in a much fuller, broader way than I did some years ago.

The revision consists largely of additional matter which I hope may make clearer what is now sent out, and commended to the prayerful consideration of the people of God into whose hands it may fall.

The great essential is Christ, not baptism; but they who love His name will seek to keep His word. But in this it is well to remember that an unkind, critical spirit is far more to be deplored than divergent views and practices in regard to ordinances, however precious.

H.A.IRONSIDE
Fruitvale, CA, March 1915

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

While, in the pages that follow, controversy has been so far as possible (consistently with the object of presenting what I believe to be the truth as to Baptism) sedulously avoided, yet it is hoped a careful perusal may prove helpful even to those who have been troubled by conflicting views. The pamphlet presents the conclusions I have been obliged to come to after utterly denying for a number of years any present importance attaching to this ordinance, and after a careful study of what others have put forth on the subject, as well as much time spent, I trust before the Lord, over the word of God.

The apology for its publication, if such be needed, can be stated in a few words. In going about, now for some years, seeking to "do the work of an evangelist," I have been importuned again and again for a paper expressing my thoughts on this question. Finding no publication that seemed to me altogether suitable (so few being at all full without being exceedingly controversial), I have tried to give as clearly and briefly as possible, what I believe to be the scriptural teaching upon it.

The query as to whether baptism brings its subject into the Kingdom of Heaven, the House of God, or the Body of Christ, has not really been touched. Here I need only to say that I do not believe it brings one into any of the three. To my mind the importance of it is not in regard to what it brings one into (and, as others have noted, Scripture NEVER says it brings one into anything), but in that it is the clearly expressed will of the Lord Jesus for His disciples, and therefore should possess marked interest for all who desire His approval. I presume that those known as Friends, or Quakers, with numbers of other Christians who recognize no ordinances (though they assuredly lose much by such neglect), are yet in the Kingdom, the House and the Body. At least, I know of no Scripture that teaches, directly or indirectly, otherwise.

Baptism certainly is connected with the sphere of profession; that is not disputed, but insisted on; only let there be profession and not infantile unconsciousness. The Word is simple: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal.3:27). This can only be true of professed believers, who, in this act, publicly put on Christ, or, in other words, acknowledge Him as their Lord. That it is not, properly speaking, a Church ordinance, but a Kingdom ordinance, I also admit and teach, because, unlike the Lord's supper, baptism had a place before the Church began, and will have one after it has been taken to heaven; but whether tribulation saints will enter into its import as Christians can is very questionable.

I am not wholly ignorant of what esteemed brethren? to whom I am indebted for much, have penned on "Household Baptism," etc., though I remember that others, equally gifted and godly, have differed radically from them; so I would beware of following either unless I have a clear Scriptural basis for so doing. I confess that while reading the books of the former, their theories seemed very plausible and had certain charms for me; but when I turned from their writings to the word of God I could not find the theories. It seemed to me that they had read their teachings into Scripture, not out of it; rather eisegesis, than true exegesis. (Persons desirous of investigating the question of the baptism of children in households, in order to weigh what may be said for the practice, will find the leading arguments clearly and graciously stated in "Christian Baptism," by Waiter Scott; "Reasons for my Faith as to Baptism," and "A Review of Objections to Household

Baptism," by F.W.Grant. "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge." The principle, at least, of this verse is doubtless applicable here.)

I ask an equally careful comparison of my statements in the following pages with the unerring guide, the Word of Truth. " Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. "

H.A.IRONSIDE
Oakland, CA, April, 1901

BAPTISM: WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

Introductory

So much has been said and written on this subject, so various and conflicting have been the opinions expressed, so widely divergent are the meanings even, given by scholars to the very word *baptism*, that one naturally hesitates to write on such a theme. But a verse in the only Book that is authority in the matter says: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). With such a word as this before us, who, really anxious to know the mind of the Lord on any question, need fear to search for himself, in humble dependence on Him whose word it is? Let us then turn to the pages of the blessed volume which alone can thoroughly furnish "the man of God unto all good works" (2 Tim.3:16,17), and of which we are told, "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps.119:130). A similar word comes to encourage us from Ps.19:7; "The testimony of the Lord is *sure*, making wise the simple" (last clause).

Simple though we are, then (perhaps the simpler, the easier taught), we need not fear to turn for the time from every human channel to the great river of divine instruction itself, and ask, "What saith the Scripture on Baptism?" That it has much to say upon the subject is evident. It cannot therefore be to the glory of God to ignore it. Where He has spoken He would have us reverently listen and obey.

And first, I would desire to press on the reader the former part of the verse last quoted, as it brings before us the great subject of

Conversion to God

"The law (doctrine, see margin) of the Lord is perfect, CONVERTING THE SOUL." One who does not know what it is to have truly turned to God, in other words, one who has not been born again (John 3:3), need not expect enlightenment in divine things. Scripture plainly declares of such that they " have the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph.4:18); and again, " There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom.3:11). See the first twenty verses of the chapter.

Has my reader ever been truly converted to God? If such is your profession *how* was it brought about? On what are you now resting for salvation? Are you at this moment a believer *in* the Lord Jesus Christ, or do you just believe what the Gospels tell us *about* Him? Do you know the joy of forgiveness, of justification from all things' (Acts 13:38,39). Can you truthfully say: " Therefore, being justified by faith, we *have* peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God?" (Rom.5:1,2). If this be a knowledge foreign to you -- something your soul has never yet entered into -- if these questions must all be answered in the negative, I entreat you to consider for a moment your solemn condition in the presence of God.

If unsaved, you are by *nature* a sinner (Rom.3:19), by *practice* a transgressor (Prov.13:15); by *nature* a child of wrath (Eph.2:3), by *practice* a son of disobedience (Eph.2:2, N.T.); by *nature* an alien (Eph.2:12), because born at a distance from God; by *practice* alienated (Col.1:21) and an enemy to God. You are lost by *nature* (Matt.18:10,11) because of a lost race; lost also by *practice*, because of having deliberately wandered away from God (Lk.19:10).

Terrible, then, is your situation, awful your condition, and do what you will, you are absolutely helpless in yourself to retrieve it. *Baptism will not assist you here*; church membership will avail you nothing; to partake of the communion is but to eat and drink judgment to yourself (1 Cor.11:27-29); religious efforts are all in vain. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6), and it can never rise above its own level. Cultured, it is only cultured flesh; religionized, it is but religious flesh; no amount of care and cultivation can change it into "spirit." Just as flesh is born of the flesh, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There must be a new birth. Without it there is no hope, no salvation, no heaven; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor.15:50).

One alone can meet your case, and that One, the Eternal Son of God, of whom it is written: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him to them gave He power (the right, or authority) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13). Here is hope for you, and here alone. Godly parentage will not insure salvation-- "not of blood." Good resolutions and well meaning professions will avail nothing-- "nor of the will of the flesh." Ordinances, by whomsoever administered, will never save, but only mock-- "nor of the will of man." The Holy One, who has been so grossly sinned against and rejected so long, alone can save and bring about the new birth-- "but of God."

"The Word become flesh" (John 1:14) told a religious doctor that, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God " (John 3:5). That is, the word of God, likened to water,* from its cleansing efficacy (Eph.5:26) is that by which new birth is brought about (James 1:18; 1 Pet.1:23-25). This word is applied by the Spirit, and the believing sinner is born anew.

(* I am aware that many have fancied the Lord here was referring to baptism. That such was by no means the case I think the following note, from the pen of an honored servant of Christ, will make plain to any one who carefully weighs the facts pointed out: "CHRISTIAN BAPTISM-- * * * Is not that rite intended here by the water? Let us clear this point. 1st: Christian baptism was not instituted till after the Lord's resurrection; and signified burial with Him unto death (Rom.6:4; Col.2:12). Obviously that could have no meaning nor effect till the Lord had died. Now the Lord was speaking of life through birth, and of a blessing THEN to be enjoyed, not of burial unto death. 2nd: Before His death the kingdom of God was preached, and men were pressing into it (Lk.16:16). 3rd: The apostles were made clean by the Lord before His death, through the word which He had spoken to them (John 15:3), and so before the institution of Christian baptism, of which the Twelve and others had no need, and to which they never submitted. Of a vital work in the Foul the Lord spoke to Nicodemus, and not of a sacramental rite to which the person is now subjected. Of the soul, and not of the body, have we teaching here." --C.E.Stuart in "Tracings from the Gospel of John "

I might add that the way the Lord Jesus Himself speaks of "the water that I shall give him," in John 4:14, is, to my mind, proof conclusive that in neither the third nor fourth chapters does He refer to an ordinance, but to "well of water springing up into everlasting life."))

Have you, then, believed God's word? " For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not *condemned*; but He that believeth not is *condemned already*, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God " (John 3:16-18). "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

"Dost *thou* believe on the Son of God?" (John 9:35).

If so, then to you, as a believer, the remaining pages are addressed.

John's Baptism unto Repentance

We now go on to look at our subject proper. And first, we speak of John's baptism unto repentance.

This is quite distinct from Christian baptism (Acts 19:1-7). By it the Jew expressed his repentance and his need of forgiveness. It could not speak to the people of the death of Christ, though, no doubt, in God's mind, that was what was set forth; i.e., the fact that nothing but death was due the sinner, and that the Lord Jesus was to die in the stead of the guilty. His own baptism was the pledge of this; but I speak of that later. For the Jew it was the owning that the baptized one deserved nothing but death and judgment. It expressed self-judgment, and so it was called a "baptism unto repentance."

That the mode of administering it was the same as that of Christian baptism, however, I suppose no one would call in question, for, though we read of change in formula and object, we have no record of a change in mode. It is self-evident that the apostles, some of whom began baptizing shortly after becoming associated with the Lord, simply went on practicing the same manner in baptizing that their former teacher accustomed them to, as some of them had been followers of the Baptist prior to their hearts being directed to "the Lamb of God" (John 1:35-40)-and possibly all, as Acts 1:21,22 seems to teach. They certainly learned no new manner of administering it from Christ. See John 3:22,26; 4:1,2.

("An interesting point in connection with the disciples' practice was suggested to me by a brother since writing the above. When the mothers brought little children to Jesus, the disciples drove them away. Could they have so acted if they or John had ever practiced baby baptism? Jesus, on the other hand, received and blessed them, UNBAPTIZED, as the Christian parent can rest assured He does to-day. Re did not say, as it writer on household baptism, some years ago, that parents who brought unbaptized children to Him in prayer for

blessing, were only bringing Cain's offering! Christ declared that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Baptism is not needed to put them in it. They are already of it, it is the simple, child-like one who is recognized as a true subject of the Kingdom.)

Of John, then, we read that he came "preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt.3:1,2). The result is recorded in verses 5 and 6: "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him *in* Jordan, confessing their sins."

Mark similarly testifies (chap.1:4,5): "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea; and they of Jerusalem, and were baptized of him *in* the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."

If the significant little word "in," found in both these passages, be not conclusive as to the mode of his baptism being by immersion; if any can tolerate the amazing conception of John's taking the candidate into the water, then pouring or sprinkling upon his head as he stood there waist-deep, a passage in John's Gospel would seem to effectually dispel such an illusion for those who have ears to hear. "And John also was baptizing in Ænon, near to Salim, *because* there was much water there; and they came and were baptized. "If "much water" is the cause for choosing a certain place for baptizing, surely then baptism could have been neither by sprinkling nor pouring.

To this, the scriptural mode of baptism (abundantly confirmed by other passages, (see Acts 8:38,39; Rom.6:3-5; Col.2:12) our Lord Himself assents, for of Him it is expressly stated that He "was baptized of John in Jordan" (Mk.1:9), and He "went up straightway out of the water" (Matt.3:17), which could not be true if He did not enter the mystic stream that told of what He must yet endure for those under sentence of death, with eternal judgment beyond it.

The Baptism of Jesus

was not, however, as an example for us, though His word, "Thus it *becometh* us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt.3:15), certainly should remind us of that obedience which becometh all who profess to know the Father, whom He has revealed. But this, as we have observed, was a "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Lk.3:3), although He was "the Holy One of God," as demons even confessed (Mk.1:24) and Gabriel also testified (Lk.1:35).

What wonder, then, that John should "forbid Him" (Matt.3:14), knowing Him to be the Son of God (John 1:29-34); though strangely troubled on a later occasion (Matt.11:2) when the looked-for power did not seem to be manifested? All, however, was in perfect keeping with the time, as "Suffer it to be so *now*" (Matt.3:15) suggests. He who, as a babe, had been circumcised on the eighth day according to the law, would now, in subjection to the Word given forth by John, put Himself in company with the repentant part of the nation. As the Shepherd of the sheep, He enters the fold* by the door of submission to the rites of the law and the divine testimony of the time. To Him John, as the porter, opened and He entered in, but only to lead out His own sheep, whom He called by name. This could not be, though, until as the Good Shepherd (John 10) He laid down His life for the sheep. Other sheep there were not of the Jewish fold, therefore Gentiles. These He would bring, and He says "There shall be one flock (not fold,** all His sheep are outside of that now) and one Shepherd" (v.16). John's ministry was distinctly separative. The moral condition of the people at his appearing in the wilderness is graphically portrayed in the book of Malachi; notice there God's nine-fold controversy with them (Mal.1:2,6,7,12; 2:13-16,17; 3:7,8,13-15). Yet we see a remnant distinguished from the mass in chapter 3:16-18. Such a company we notice in the early chapters of Luke; Simeon, Anna, no doubt Mary herself, Zacharias and Elizabeth, and all who "looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

(* Judaism as owned of God, and only of the baptized portion of it could that be said; the nation was Lo-Ammi (Hos.1:9), i.e., "Not My people.")

(** It is well known that the word translated "fold" in the latter part of verse 16 is quite distinct from the word in the former part. The one should be "flock," the other "fold.")

Those baptized by John take outwardly this remnant place. By His own baptism the Lord identifies Himself with them, and likewise sets His seal upon the ministry of His forerunner. 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; He 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. Of old His Spirit in the psalmist had declared: "O my soul, thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord; my goodness extendeth not to Thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight" (Ps.16:2,3). Was not

His baptism but the reiteration of this? The "excellent of the earth" were, in His eyes, not the proud, self-righteous Pharisees, but the humbled 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.

The looked-for King, anointed as such by the descending Spirit (Matt.3:16,17; John 1:32-34), associates Himself with this separated company -- though His baptism in the Jordan is but a shadow of a far more solemn immersion (Lk.12:50) 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. His baptism is the pledge of this, as also the intimation that the way to His glory is by the cross. Prophets of old had testified how that Christ must "suffer these things, and to enter into His glory" (Lk.24:26), and Peter tells us they spoke of "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet.1:11).

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. One has well said: "He was baptized to identify Himself with a rejected remnant. We, by baptism, are identified with a rejected Christ." The testimony of John was but preparatory. After the birth of Christianity we find that persons baptized unto his baptism were re-immersed when the full truth of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus was declared (Acts 19:1-5). We have no record, however, of the re-baptism of those who had submitted to John's ordinance prior to the cross. Their association with Christ had already identified them with Him, and the twelve and others, unbaptized themselves save "unto repentance," began the work of the new dispensation by baptizing three thousand on the day of Pentecost. It is, then the awful,

Baptism of Wrath upon the Cross,

which our Lord Jesus endured as our Substitute of which, in its fullest sense, Christian baptism speaks.

The prophetic psalms tell us, in no uncertain way, of this. Who can conceive the depth of such passages as the following:

"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts; all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me"(Ps.42:7). In the preceding verse, touchingly and fittingly indeed, the Holy Sufferer exclaims, "I will remember Thee from the land of Jordan!" "This, truly, was the entering of the anti-typical ark into the floods of Jordan at the time of the harvest when it "overfloweth all its banks" (Josh.3:14-16). On the cross, the sinner's just desert was meted out to Him when "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Floods, not of water, then rolled o'er His spotless soul in those three awful hours of darkness in which the face of God was hidden from the Holy Sufferer; billows of judgment and wrath when God "made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor.5:21). He could well say, "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me"(Ps.69:2). Solemn, too, it is to hear His cry in the 14th and 15th verses of the same psalm: "Deliver me out of the mire, and let Me not sink. Let Me be delivered from them that hate Me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the waterflood overflow Me, neither let the deep swallow Me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon Me." Here He has in view, not only the judgment of God righteously meted out to Him as the sinner's substitute, but also the cruel baptism of insult and hatred, which men whom He would fain have saved caused to roll over His devoted head. Another psalm, the 88th, has again more particularly in view the curse of the broken law, so that He can exclaim: "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" (vs.6,7). How the "Selah" at the close appeals to the believer! Oh, my soul, I pause" indeed, and "consider" with how great a price thou wast redeemed and from how great a death thou hast been saved!

The above quotations give us some slight idea of what Jesus meant when He said: "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Lk.12:50). In a limited sense could His disciples share this baptism with Him (Matt.20:23). That which came from man only, (but not from God) they too could go down beneath, as in the case of James (Acts 12:2) and of John (Rev.1:9) who said, though knowing not what was involved in it at the time, "We are able" (Matt.20:22).

This is the great and solemn truth which above everything else baptism pictures to us, as we shall see both Romans and Colossians witness. Could aught but immersion, a complete overwhelming, figure such a scene as that which we have glanced at in the above scriptures? And how unspeakably precious the privilege to be thus baptized unto His death!

We turn next to consider the place of

Baptism in the Commissions

It is after having passed through all the agony of the cross that the risen Lord gives the commissions as narrated in the closing chapters of the *Synoptic Gospels*. *Luke* does not mention the baptism at all. He is occupied with the gospel. Baptism is *not* a part of that, as 1

Cor.15:1-4 bears abundant testimony, as also 1 Cor.1:17. The gospel is concerning God's Son (Rom.1:1-4), and not concerning ordinances, however blessed, or works, however proper to the man already justified by faith and a subject of grace (Titus 2:11-14).

We shall look, then, at the commissions recorded in Matthew and Mark. In chap.28:18-20 of the former, we read: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye *therefore*, and teach (disciple, or make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in (unto) 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 (completion of the age). Amen."

The thought of baptizing nations, as such, we see no warrant for here unless preceded by national repentance. All nations are to be taught the gospel. If indeed the nations as a whole become disciples, then to baptize them is in place, but that, though it shall actually be, is in a future day (Zech.14:16). At present at least, it is, in my judgment, to individuals that the commission applies.

Markedly enough, neither here nor yet in Mark 16 is the believer or disciple told to be baptized, for it was to His servants that the word was addressed by the Lord. Consequently the command is rather to the preacher to immerse the disciple; but would any real lover of the Lord Jesus plead this an excuse for evading responsibility in the matter, shifting it altogether upon the shoulders of the servant, and being careless himself as to whether the divine pattern had been carried out! Do not the words, "Teaching *them* to observe *all* things whatsoever I have commanded *you*," show us the importance of the recipient of the gospel seeing for himself that God's word is carried out?

Surely the heart that beats loyally to its absent Lord remembers His saying: "If a man love Me *he will keep My words*" (John 14:23), as also the other passage, "If ye love Me, *keep My commandments*" (v.15).

And if these considerations be not enough, is not Peter's message in Acts 2:38 imperative as to it? "Repent, and *be baptized* every one of you," etc. Here is command and by the Holy Ghost. So, in Cornelius' house, "He *commanded* them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48). Baptism, therefore, if not directly commanded by the Lord in person, is by the Spirit in the apostle, and is surely one of Christ's "words " which he who loves Him will "keep." As to formula, it is "Unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Being, as it is, "baptism unto death," it is fitting that it should be unto the name of the Trinity--for how unitedly do Father, Son and Spirit participate in the offering of the Son of Man upon the cross! It was God, as Father, who withheld Him not, but gave Him out of love to the world (John 3:16); while He, the Son, was the voluntary sufferer (John 10:17,18); and yet it was "through the eternal Spirit that He offered Himself without spot to God"(Heb.9:14). Nor does "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5) nor the kindred passage quoted above from Acts 10 set this aside. Do not these scriptures simply keep before us in whose authority it was done--the former bringing out especially the contrast between the baptism of John and that of the Lord Jesus? It would not seem to be the formula that is in view at all. I take it that a full scriptural formula would be: "In the name of the Lord Jesus, I baptize thee unto the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

In Mark 16:15,16, baptism is directly connected with believing, and in such a way as to make it the public seal of faith, as, in some sense, "confession with the mouth" is in Romans 10:9,10.

Here we read, "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." Significantly, we do not read, "He that is not baptized shall be damned." Justification before God is by faith, apart from works (Rom.4:4,5); but it is taken for granted that a true believer will be desirous of fully identifying himself with his Lord, and thus baptism is looked upon as the very first act of faith, which alone gives it value, for apart from that it is a meaningless form. Some might be immersed in all good faith on the part of the evangelist, who were not real believers at all, as in the case of Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-13,18-23), but nowhere in Scripture do we read of any laborer *knowingly* baptizing one who was not saved, and *never* of the baptism of any too young to exercise faith in the Son of God.*

(* Philip baptized "both MEN and WOMEN" (Acts 8:12). If little children were also subjects of baptism in apostolic days, this, one would think, would have been the place to mention it. Let the present day evangelist follow Philip's example and he need not fear that he in acting contrary to Scripture.)

Baptism presupposes knowledge on the part of the subject as to its purport, as is clear from the apostle's appeal, "know ye not," in Romans 6:3, where he speaks of

Baptism unto the Death of Jesus Christ.

We will quote the passage referring to this in full.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid (or, by no means). How shall we that are dead [or, died] to sin live any longer therein? 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 up 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.6:15).

(* "Unto" is probably a more suited word here. The Greek preposition will bear either rendering. See 1 Cor.10:2. Israel are said to have been "baptized unto Moses." It is the same word. They were separated to Moses as leader; and we to Jesus Christ as Lord.)

Here all would seem to be simple; but, alas, even over so clear a Scripture there has been much conflict of opinion. The doctrine of grace in the previous chapters, which show that a man is "justified by faith without (or, apart from) the deeds of the law" (Rom.3:28), with the additional teaching of the change of Headship, from Adam to Christ (Rom.5:12-21) ; that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience unto death] of One shall many be made righteous" (v.19), might lead some one to ask: "If all be of grace why not indulge myself as I please? The greater my sin, the greater the grace that will bring me through." For answer, the apostle makes an appeal to the foundation truth symbolized in baptism at the very beginning of the Christian course.

"By no means," he exclaims: "We died *to* sin," i.e., died out from under its dominion, because Christ with whom we are now identified died to it (v.10). It must then no longer control us. We are not to live in that *to* which we died. Was not our baptism a burial unto His death? Did it not say we had died with Him and were now buried with Him? "Know ye not that so many of us as were immersed unto Jesus Christ were immersed unto His death?" Here definite knowledge is connected with the ceremony-- "*Know ye not?*" They should have been aware of this at the time. He is surprised at the ignorance of any among them who does not realize that his former condition is over forever.

In baptism I own that in myself I have no hope. Death is my just portion. But Christ has died, and that for me. His death is my only ground of confidence. Therefore I am buried to it. But not that alone. His death is my death. I died with Him. All that I was by nature God dealt with judicially in the cross of Christ. So having died it is right that I should be buried. My old condition is at an end, and of this the watery grave is witness.

Faith says: "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal.2:20). Baptism is the confession of burial with Him. Henceforth "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" or, as we have it in the chapter before us, "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."

If sin would seek to control me, I am to point back to the grave and say, I was buried there. I died with Christ from under your authority. You cannot expect my service this side of the tomb. I am a resurrection man. Baptism has outwardly separated me from your sphere. (It was a fine answer a brother once gave when the question of secret societies was being discussed. Turning to him one said: "But you are a Free Mason, are you not?" "No," was the reply; "I am not." "But you certainly were once; and a Free Mason once, a Free Mason until death," was the retort. "True; but I buried the Free Mason in Lake Ontario," he answered; and it was evident that he at least had entered into the purport of Baptism.)

In Colossians the same truth is enforced, more briefly, yet with perhaps added pungency: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in *putting off the body of the flesh* ("The sins of" is generally considered an interpolation, and should probably be omitted), by the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in baptism, wherein [or, in whom] also ye were raised together with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead" (2:11,12).

Here it is clearly taken for granted that all who are rightly subjects of baptism have been raised with Christ "through the inwrought faith of God," as some would translate it. Not that this is true of all the baptized, but it is God's order -- not man's confusion -- that is in view. According to the divine pattern the baptized are a company of people who are actually circumcised with the circumcision made without hands-- that is, have seen the end of the flesh (as before God) in the cross, and now stand on resurrection ground. Circumcision was a cutting off of the flesh. But Christ was cut off for me. So the flesh is gone from God's viewpoint. I died when Christ died, and so I have been circumcised in His death. As to baptism and circumcision viewed as one ordinance succeeding the other, it is enough to say that of old, a natural-born Israelite was to be circumcised the eighth day; in the present dispensation the one who, by new birth, is brought into God's family, is to be baptized. There is a similar thought in Peter's first letter. Commenting on the typical aspect of Noah's deliverance through water (saved by the waves of judgment which, while they overwhelmed the ungodly, carried him and his over to a new earth) he says: "The like figure [antitype] whereunto baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer [demand] of a good conscience toward God) ... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21).

Noah saved through the flood of wrath in the ark shadows forth the believer's deliverance from judgment, as baptism clearly expresses, i.

e., salvation by the work of Christ. He endured all the curse, even as the ark bore all the brunt of the storm; but the believer can say, "His death was mine." It is not to baptism that any efficacy attaches; that could only put away outward filth. There is not the slightest justification here for the ritualistic dogma of baptismal regeneration. The only thing that gives the answer which a good conscience demands, is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. That apprehended, baptism is full of meaning. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom.4:25).

Connecting closely with the scripture from Peter's epistle is the question of

Baptism for the Remission of Sins.

If the reader will turn to the book of Acts, chapter 2, it will be observed that the main points of Peter's address on the day of Pentecost are these: God had promised to raise up one of the seed of David to sit on his throne (verse 30), but ere He was manifested in His glory He was to pass through death, and in resurrection Jehovah would give Him a place as Man on *His* throne, there to sit until His enemies were made a footstool for His feet (verses 25-34).

The greater part of this had been already fulfilled. *All* should be. Jesus of Nazareth (verses 22-24) had been slain by the Jews, but God, in resurrection, had made Him Lord and Christ (verse 36).

Consider for a moment the result of such a message if really believed. Messiah was promised. He came. By wicked hands He had been crucified and slain. Jehovah had accepted Him. His foes (*they* were numbered among them) were to be made His footstool. What of Israel's hopes now? What should they do to escape the threatened judgment! All this and more would be involved in the anxious question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (v.37).

Notice, it is not the query of the Philippian jailor: "What must I do *to be saved*?" (Acts 16:30). The thought of personal salvation is perhaps included in it, but it is rather what shall we do to escape the impending fate of His foes, as part of the nation that had rejected Him? In accordance with Psalm 2, Messiah had been set at nought by the rulers and the people; yet God's decree would stand. How, then, could they "Kiss the Son" and avert His wrath.

The nation as such had forfeited the favor of God, and with it the outpouring of the Spirit promised through Joel (verses 17-21). What should they do to obtain it again?

The answer is simple. Let those who confess the guilt of themselves and their nation, be baptized in the name of the rejected and Crucified One. This would be manifestly snapping the link that bound them to the apostate people. They would then be out of the sphere on which governmental wrath must fall. Administratively their sins would be remitted. They would not share in the judgment so soon to come upon Messiah-rejecting Judah (Luke 21:16-24).

Governmental or administrative forgiveness refers to earth, not to heaven. We speak of God's dealing in chastisement with people here as His governmental ways. Such dealing would be averted by baptism, which was in itself the confession of sincere repentance. It was remission of this nature to which the Lord referred when He said, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). This power Peter was exercising when he offered remission of sins to all who submitted, upon repentance, to baptism. Quite in keeping with this it will be found that Gentiles are *never* told to be baptized for the remission of their sins. To Paul, a Jew, Ananias conveyed a similar message (Acts 22:16). The erstwhile "persecutor of the way" (v.4) must be baptized, calling upon the name of Jesus, and his sins would be forgiven him. As part of the nation he must share its fate. As baptized out of it and unto Christian ground, his sins would be *governmentally* washed away. This, of course, does not touch the question of how he was *eternally* saved. His own message to others is this: "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*" (Acts 13:38,39).

To Cornelius, Peter carried a like message, assuring him that, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that *through His name whosoever believeth* in Him shall receive remission of sins." This is eternal forgiveness before God, and upon receiving it by faith, Cornelius and his company were subsequently baptized (Acts 10:43-48).

I should not judge that one could preach baptism for the remission of sins, save in a much more general sense, after the dispersion of the nation and the demolition of the temple (Matt.24:2). It is never mentioned in any of the epistles. It was God's message for the time, which soon passed away, leaving the mass of the people of Israel hardened and impenitent. A word which, I believe, bears upon this is found in Gal.2:7, where Paul says, "The gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me as the gospel of circumcision was unto Peter." See

also verses 8 and 9. Of course, as above intimated, in a general sense, even among Gentiles and throughout the dispensation one's sins could be said to be remitted by baptism-- not before God, but before the Church (John 20:22,23). That is, the past sins are no longer held against the baptized person by the public body of believers. This cannot, however, be pressed too far.

Let us now inquire as to what God has said concerning the

Baptism of Households

If what I have penned in the foregoing be the mind of the Lord as revealed in Scripture, I see no difficulty whatever as to this.

Baptism, we have seen, is unto Christ's death, those to be baptized are "men and women" (Acts 8:12) who have professedly availed themselves of that wondrous provision for salvation, who, it is taken for granted, are risen with Christ, capable of being appealed to in such words as "*Know ye not*;" therefore by no means infants or persons incapable of understanding the truths of the gospel.

If "so many of us" were baptized, the same "many" are supposed to "walk in newness of life." Persons unable so to *walk* are never contemplated as having been baptized at all, either here or elsewhere in the Book. If so, it should be easy to point to them, but there are no such cases mentioned.

From Colossians we also see they are persons who have been circumcised by the circumcision of Christ and are subjects of "the inwrought faith of God."

Peter, too, presumes that they had the demand of a good conscience: by faith they had apprehended Christ as risen for their acceptance. If, then, Scripture speaks of households being baptized, and there is not a hint of one of the members being still "children of wrath," must I not take it for granted they were all professedly Christians?

In the case of the household of Cornelius, first in point of time, therefore the *fitting precedent for all the rest*, we are not left in doubt as to this, as Acts 10:44 clearly states that "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on *all* them that heard the word;" and in verse 47 the apostle asks, "Who can forbid water that these should not be baptized which *have received the Holy Ghost* as well as we?" "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (v.48). As to Lydia's household, in chapter 16, if the faith of the head be alone mentioned, why doubt that of the other members when God's order has been already declared? To sanction the baptism of infants, or unconverted adult members of a household by appeal to this passage one must first prove that Lydia was a married woman; second, that she was a mother; third, that her children did not believe; and fourthly, that a new but unrecorded revelation had been given to Paul, commanding the baptism of all such when the head of a house acknowledged Christ in this solemn ordinance.

It is noteworthy that in verse 40 we are told that Paul and Silas "went out of the prison and entered into the *house of Lydia*: and when they had seen the *brethren* (not the babies) they comforted them and departed." It is surely just as reasonable to suppose that these unnamed brethren composed the household of the "seller of purple" as that she had small children with her at this time!

As for the case of the jailer, though some would alter the translation to make it convey the thought that *all the household rejoiced*, yet he alone believed (!), many learned men agree that the 34th verse as it stands, gives a fair equivalent to the original text: "When he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." And the 32nd verse plainly says, "They spake unto them the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." All were capable of hearing the word, and all believed.

No wonder he and all his were baptized straightway! How one would rejoice at witnessing many such baptisms of households!

Another household remains to be noticed: that of Stephanas, which Paul mentions as having baptized, in 1 Cor.1:16, and which he does not forget to record "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints," in chap.16:15. Many have been troubled over the fact that there is a slight difference in the Greek words translated "household" in the first chapter and "house" in the last. The former word is said by some to refer exclusively to the family, while the latter includes the servants, though not excluding the former. This does not affect the position here taken in the slightest degree, for no babes are mentioned as having been in Stephanas' household, and we dare not add unto the words of God (Prov.30:6). Paul's words in chap.1:14-16, "I baptized none of you save Crispus and Gaius ... and I baptized *also* the household of Stephanas" do not teach, as some would have it, that the latter were infants when baptized: but simply that they were not locally connected at Corinth at all times. They were "the first-fruits of Achaia," the province in which Corinth was located, but not necessarily local after addicting themselves to the ministry of the saints. There is not the slightest hint that any other than the baptism of professed believers had been practised in their case, while, as if to clinch the proof and ward off all objectors, in Acts 18:8 we are informed 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." Doubtless the household of Stephanas would be numbered among these.

That the children of believers are already in a sphere of blessing and *not* introduced into it by baptism is clear from 1 Cor.7: "For 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" (v.14). That is, though the children of mingled Jewish and Gentile parentage were unclean until circumcised (see Paul's action in regard to Timothy, Acts 16:1-3), the child of one Christian parent is clean, outwardly holy, because of the parent's faith. To be born in a Christian family is to be born in a place of privilege, the limits of which are in no sense defined by baptism, much less is it the door into it.

Israel baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor.10) in no sense warrants the baptism of children, merely because they passed through the sea with their parents. That was a *national* baptism. Christian baptism is individual.

The fact that, in Eph.1:4-6, three circles are apparently mentioned, embracing, as many teach, and, so far as I can judge, correctly -- the Church, the sphere of profession, and creation -- does not warrant anyone putting people into the sphere of profession till they have something to profess. Simon Magus was the first person who, we know, was baptized while unconverted; and such a mistake is ever likely to occur, as the baptizer cannot read the heart, but it is bad enough to baptize people ignorantly who are in that condition; terrible, it seems to me, to do it knowingly.

As God would have it the church should include the entire sphere of profession. It is man who builds in wood, hay, and stubble (1 Cor.3). The divine order is ever that of Acts 18 above mentioned, "hearing, believed and were baptized."

This passage would clearly prove that the apostle did not mean to slight baptism when, in 1 Cor.1:17, he says, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Though this was quite in keeping with his commission (Acts 26:16-18), yet he evidently took care to see that his converts were baptized, though he did not always do it himself.

His reasons for being thankful that, at Corinth, he had baptized so few are given in vs.10-17, but twice he grounds appeals to these very Corinthians on the fact of their having been baptized as professed believers. In this chapter, when fellowship is in question and they were setting up other heads than Christ; he asks, "Is Christ divided! Was Paul crucified for you ? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (v.13)

The only name to which a believer should gather is the worthy Name to which he was baptized.

In chapter 15, where the resurrection is in question, how strong a point he makes when he speaks of

Baptism for the Dead.

The Corinthian saints had fallen into the Sadducean error (Acts 23:8) of denying the resurrection of the dead. In refutation of this he first reminds them that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was a fundamental truth of the gospel (1Cor.15:1-4); then asks: "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" adding: "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ; whom He raised not up if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (vs.12-17). All for the believer depends on the glorious fact that He

"Who bowed His head so low,
Underneath our load of woe,"

could not be holden of death. It was the resurrection that expressed God's perfect satisfaction in the work of His Son, and tells of sins forever gone. They were laid upon Him (Isa.53:6) when He hung on the tree (1 Pet.2:24). There are none on Him now. The believer rests in this and has perfect peace.

How, then, could the Corinthians call in question the resurrection of the saints when they began with the resurrection of the Saviour?

Furthermore he adds that if there be no resurrection " then they also which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (v.18).

How inconsistent they were, then. Most miserable if they had no hope beyond this life (v.19), and yet they were taking the places by baptism of those who had " perished " before them--if there were no resurrection of the dead. It will be noticed that verses 20-28 are distinctly parenthetical. The argument is continued in verse 29, " Else what shall they do who are baptized for [some would translate over] the dead [plural, dead ones], if the dead [ones] rise not at all? why are they then baptized for [over] the dead [ones] ?"

If those preceding them have only *perished* why have they by baptism publicly put on Christ and thus exposed themselves to shame and reproach in this life, with no brighter prospect for the future? How unreasonable an appeal if many of them, or any, had been baptized as infants! In what sense could such be said to be baptized for the dead? If it be seen that it is a question of voluntarily taking the places of those that had fallen asleep all is clear.

By their very baptism they placed themselves in peril from the hatred of those about them to the gospel. What did they think to gain by it if they believed there was to be no resurrection! Why then put themselves in a place, by submitting to baptism, where their lives (which they should surely prize and desire to enjoy as long as they could) were likely soon to be forfeited, when they had no legitimate hope of blessing after death? They were only filling up the gaps already made by death-- were but baptized for those who had perished, if their system was true, and were likely soon to share their fate.

Surely in the state of things then prevalent nothing could be more telling. As for himself and those with him, he asks, "And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" (v.30). A foolish thing this, that he who might have the favor of the world should have its enmity, put himself where he was daily subject to death, if this life were all. What advantage in contending with "beasts" at Ephesus, for instance (see Acts 19:23-41), for a mere speculation, if the dead rise not! Was not the heathen poet Menander (who drowned himself) wiser than either them or him who said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die?" He was at least consistent.

All is simple here; no superstitious practice of baptizing living persons for the benefit of dead ones is hinted at. It is just a military figure-- they were filling up the ranks, taking the places vacated by those who had already " fallen asleep in Christ."

Who has Authority to Baptize?

The question of authority is one that troubles many, and one that certain religious bodies makes much of:

(a) As to this I submit the following: Any brother possessing the ability to preach or teach is under responsibility to the Head of the Body (Col.1:18) to use the gift conferred upon him by the Spirit (1 Pet.4:10,11; Rom.12:4-8).

(b) Any brother who ministers the word to the unsaved is responsible to see to the baptism of those who receive it (Matt.28:19,20).

(c) Ordination to preach or teach or administer the ordinances is unknown in Scripture. We do read of ordination to "serve tables" (Acts 6:1-6), and of the laying on of hands in the case of Barnabas and Saul (who had, however, been recognized teachers and preachers for some years previously) in Acts 13:1-3, as also ordination of elders to act as overseers (bishops) where it was a question of local rule simply, and not necessarily of public ministry at all (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-10; 1 Tim.3:2-7). We read, too, of a gift in Timothy which was given him by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (1 Tim.4:14), but nowhere, we repeat, do we read of human ordination to fit or authorize a man to teach, preach, evangelize, baptize or administer the ordinance of the Lord's supper. (I mention several helpful books on this and other church subjects: "Lectures on the Church of God," W.Kelly. "God's Call to His people," E.S.Lyman)

Quite the contrary, we are told that in the case of gifts it is the Spirit who divides to "every man severally as *He will*" (see 1 Cor.12:4-11), proving conclusively that even in Timothy's case the gift was not imparted by the presbytery; but to their expression of fellowship by "the laying on of hands" the Spirit of God added the gift mentioned.

As to administering ordinances, in the case of the Lord's Supper, a presiding minister is unknown in Scripture (see 1 Cor.11:20-29); and we have the cases of Philip* and Ananias as proof that no special ordination was required to baptize. The former baptized those who received the gospel in Samaria as well as the Ethiopian treasurer of Queen Candace (Acts 8:5-13, 36-39); the latter, who does not seem even to have been a preacher at all, is sent by God to baptize Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:10-18).

(* I write this remembering Philip's ordination to serve tables, previously mentioned. That, in no sense, made him a public minister. Acts 6

carefully distinguishes it from the ministry of those preaching the Word.)

I devote a few words to another question that troubles many; namely,

Baptism and Fellowship

Scripture never intimates that like views of baptism are required to fit saints for communion at the Lord's table. The rule is given in 1 Cor.10:16,17: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion of the blood of Christ*? The bread which we break, is it not the *communion of the body of Christ*? For we being many are one bread, and one body; *for we are all partakers of .that one bread.*" Membership in the body of Christ is the only church membership known in the New Testament. This is the basis of communion. All who have been saved through the precious blood of Christ, who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and members of the one body, have a place at the Lord's table unless grave moral or doctrinal evil is practiced or held by them, or tolerated by association (1 Cor.5; 1 Tim.1:19,20; 2 John 10,11).

Baptized every communicant *should* be; the order of Acts 2:41, 42 is clear enough as to that; but there is no Scriptural warrant for insisting that only those who see and practice the immersion of professed believers are to be received at the Lord's table. This would be to make a new *communion of baptism*, as, alas, has been done, and hence a narrower fellowship than that recognized in God's word."*

((* I heartily endorse the following, written by a brother beloved in the Lord (now deceased), though one who would have differed from me as to much I have penned in this paper:

"It is a great truth that the Lord is teaching many over again in the present day, after it had been buried in the rubbish of ecclesiastical traditions for centuries, that God has a Church upon earth. It is our part, then, not to be making churches, but to acknowledge what He has already made. The various 'churches' spoken of in the New Testament are but severally the 'church of God' in such or such a place. Nothing is owned but this-- the church of God. Membership is in this, not in local bodies. 'Ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.' It was thus .body openly manifested and recognized, to which an apostle could write epistles, and of which, if one member suffered, all the members suffered with it, or if one member were honored, all the members rejoiced with it; where each had its place and service from God Himself, one Spirit animating it, and the eye could not say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

"Into this membership man cannot admit, but the Lord only. 'The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.' Our part is only to bow to what He has done, and to 'receive one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.' Now all making terms of admission is plainly out of the question, for we do not admit at all. It is only, 'receive ye one another,' where any one within the Church (that is, any believer) has as much title to receive me as I him. It is true that we are to 'judge those that are within' (1 Cor.5:12), and if 'any one that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no, not to eat' (v.11). So also, if one come and 'bring not the doctrine of Christ,' the word is, 'Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds' (2 John 9,10). But this is only the maintenance of the discipline of God's dense, and is quite another thing from making terms of admission into the body. Here it is simply 'judging those that are within,' not admitting them within. Will it be contended that error as to baptism is a thing equally liable to discipline? or that Baptists may not walk with Paedo-Baptists, in equal purity of life, and equal zeal for God's glory? I find the rule here: 'Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations' (Rom.14:1). And, 'whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing' (Phil.3:16). And so walking, not as making light of truth, but respecting others' consciences, we may hope and pray for that to be fulfilled to us, which is further written: 'And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this to you' (v.15).

[From "Baptism: Its Scriptural Place and Use", by F.W.Grant. Now out of print.])

A brother who believes quite differently to me on baptism may have far more fervent love for the Lord Jesus than I. Together we can enjoy sweetest fellowship, while respecting each other's conscience as to a question that has provoked much strife in the church; nor need I hold any the less tenaciously to what I believe to be the truth as to it, because I refrain from judging him as walking wilfully when he sees it not?

Re-baptism: Is it Sectarian?

Having stated what I understand Scripture to teach on the above, I now take note of a subject that has often been put to me in the form of a question: "If one has been improperly baptized, that is sprinkled, or, in fact, baptized in any mode, before professing faith in Christ, should he be re-baptized when he does confess Him as Saviour?"

"Is not the fact that it was done unto the name of the Trinity sufficient? Are we to make more of the mode than of the name? Would not this be sectarianism!"

To these queries, earnest ones often, one might simply reply: "What is God's revealed order?" and there leave it. For the sake of honest souls really troubled about it, however, I will seek to answer it more at length.

As to the first part of the question, I know of absolutely nothing to justify a Christian's neglecting to be baptized after he believes. The fact that such a question can be asked only shows, in my judgment, how far from scriptural order the Church has drifted. Is man's failure, then, to hinder my obedience to the literal teaching of Scripture?

Whatever forms or ceremonies one might have gone through in his unconverted state, they were all lifeless and meaningless to him then. The argument of the 6th of Romans could never apply to one who had not been baptized unto Christ's death, and this, an infant could not properly be, for as yet it knows nothing of that death; while an unbeliever, as such, certainly could not, for he is still living in his sins as though that death had never even taken place. Had he realized his need of the death of Christ and rested upon it, he would be a child of God (Rom.5:8-10). Baptism while he is in such a condition of soul, is just a solemn mockery. It would simply be part of the "dead works" from which he repents, because solely of the flesh and not in any sense of faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb.11:6).

In the case of what is called "christening," the sprinkling of an unconscious infant, where is there any act of obedience on its part, or *on the Part of those Performing the ceremony*? It is surely absolutely unscriptural and often demoralizing: and in its worst phase, when coupled with the soul-destroying dogma of baptismal regeneration, totally denies the Scripture doctrine of new birth by receiving the word of God (1 Pet.1:23); whereas, apart from that doctrine, it is a meaningless rite, and, as all know, borrowed from Rome. Shall I, then, because men choose to link the name of the Trinity with an ordinance of their own devising, fear to dishonor that name by re-baptism as it is called? And would I become sectarian in so doing? How so? Sectarian, because I insist on literal obedience to the words of the Lord Jesus and His apostles, and because I ignore mere human inventions to which they have unauthoritatively linked that worthy Name? I do not understand such reasoning.

There is, in the second part of the question before us, an implication that often proves a snare to souls. It practically says, "You make too much of God's order, too little of His Name. In honoring implicitly His prescribed mode, and literally keeping His words, you are in danger of dishonoring His Name."

Is this tenable for a moment? Does it deserve any better name than sophistry? How can I better honor the name than by yielding obedience to the Blessed One whose name it is? Will He connect His name with that which is contrary to His revealed word just because man does?

How many other things are done professedly in and unto that Name to-day which we know to be only dishonoring to it, and in no sense owned of God, because without any warrant from His word?

As to the subject before us: He has clearly made known how He would have all ordered. He has given us, as already noted, His own pattern. It should be ours to ignore all men's blunders and go on in simple obedience to it, just as though the mistakes had never been made.

Yea, let me rather err in a too literal subjection to His word, if that be possible, than go hand in hand with the traditionalists who "teach for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt.15:9). Thus shall I be assured of His approbation in that day.

A Parting Word

And now, reader, a word in closing. Are you sure you are saved! If so, have you "kept" the word of the Lord Jesus, and obeyed the instruction of the Holy Ghost by being baptized since you professed faith in Christ?

In Hebrews 8:5 the spirit calls our attention to the Lord's care as to His house in the wilderness, "For see, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." This left no room for man's thoughts in that day. God's pattern settled everything.

The house of curtains has long passed away, but God has a habitation (Eph.2:22) on earth now, even "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim.3:15). Is it to be thought for a moment that He is less particular as to its order than He was in regard to the "shadow" of old?

What, then, is the "pattern" now! Do we not find it in Acts 2:41, 42? "Then they that ("**Gladly**" is generally omitted by the Editors) *received His word* were *baptized*: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' *doctrine* and *fellowship*, and in *breaking of bread*, and in *prayers*." Have you, then, received the word? If so, have you been baptized? If not, I pray you ponder the words of the Lord Jesus: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

APPENDIX

HAVING presented the reader, as clearly as I know how, with what God's word teaches, so far as I have been able to apprehend it, on Baptism, I desire to add the testimonies of several honored servants of Christ, all of whom are now with the Lord, on this much controverted theme. These are all extracts from their books, the titles of which are given in each case. The reader who can consult these works will find it helpful to read the entire connection.

A note from C.H.Mackintosh. (C.H.M.)

"I complain not 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 been thus 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. Reasonings I have had, inferences, conclusions, and deductions; but of direct Scripture authority not one tittle." --*Things New and Old*. Vol.15, page 48.

Historical point of interest, from Andrew Miller. (A.M.)

"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 apostolical fathers never mention it." --*Short Papers on Church History*, chapter 13. The entire chapter is very interesting and illuminating.

Extract from J.G.Pellet. (J.G.P.)

"I believe Galatians 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. I do not see in 1 Peter 3:21 anything to give the mind a pause. For while it owns that the answer which the conscience is enabled to give, when it reads and receives the value of the resurrection of Jesus, is the great thing, still it *implies* the putting of a believer's body under water. It seems to me to take that as the granted form of the ordinance." --*Showers Upon the Grass*, page 44.

Expository Remarks on Acts 16, by Wm.Kelly. (W.K.)

"Made a disciple, Lydia was baptized (John 4:1) 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 (Acts 8:12), were baptized. 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 children or of husband. She may have been a widow without a family, or never married. She had a household, and we hear (v.40) 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 1, is there the least proof that any were baptized except confessors of Christ, and... the baptism of infants has no Scriptural warrant." --*Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*. Vol.2, pages 54,55.