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I. BAPTISM UNDER THE TWO DISPENSATIONS.¹

OF the three definitions of baptism given in our Westminster Standards, the most complete is that found in the Larger Catechism. It constitutes the answer to Question 165, and is in these words: "Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's."

This definition has primary reference, of course, to ritual baptism, but it distinctly indicates that "the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," derives its significance from the fact that it has been appointed by Jesus Christ to symbolize the benefits that come through *real* baptism, which alone introduces to membership in the invisible church.

This real baptism is effected through that operation of the Holy Spirit by which the soul is united to Christ, and thus has secured to it remission of sins and adoption into the family of God; by which it is regenerated and its resurrection unto everlasting life realized. It is to this baptism that the apostle refers in 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are

¹ *The Great Baptizer.* A Bible History of Baptism. By Samuel J. Baird, D. D. 12mo, pp. 489. Philadelphia: James H. Baird. 1882.

one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." Again he says, Rom. vi. 3, 4: "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."

In these passages, and others of similar import which might be cited, the term is used in the well-known secondary sense, in which it indicates the transaction by which whatever is baptized, be it person or thing, is brought under an influence that completely pervades and controls it. Here the influence is that of the Holy Ghost, as is distinctly stated in one of these texts, and as distinctly implied by the context of the other; while the subjects are those who are chosen to constitute the body of which Christ is the head.

If we recall, in connection with these words of Paul, the declaration of John the Baptist, recorded by several evangelists, the Scripture representation is complete: "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but *he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.*" (Mark i. 7, 8.) This prediction was signally fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; but not less truly has it been fulfilled whenever a soul has been renewed. The administrator of real baptism is the Mediatorial King himself, who, in the exercise of his sovereign prerogative, applies redemption by shedding forth his Holy Spirit upon those that are his. Thus does he provide for their being raised to newness of life, cleansed from their native defilement and corruption, and made fit to constitute that "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

It will not be disputed by any that the mode of introduction into the invisible church has been the same from the beginning. It is true that only upon the ascension of Jesus into heaven was he, as God-man, formally installed Mediatorial King. Then, as Son of Man, "God exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince

and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." But his blood had availed before it was shed, and he had applied salvation before he was exalted, as the reward of what he suffered. From the moment the scheme of redemption for sinners was inaugurated—that is, from the date of the fall—the Son, as "heir of all things," has administered the affairs of the kingdom of grace, and has been calling effectually through his Spirit those who are appointed unto everlasting life. This is to say, that real baptism has been administered in all ages alike, and that all true believers, under all dispensations, have been equally the subjects of it.

Now, as real baptism stands related to entrance into the invisible church, so does ritual baptism unquestionably stand, under the New Testament dispensation, to entrance into the visible church. As the first removes an obstacle, otherwise insuperable, out of the way of spiritual fellowship with God, and introduces the subject of it as an actual member of the family of God, so the latter removes an obstacle which hinders outward fellowship with God, and introduces the subject of it to the privileges of that body of men who profess the true religion and separate themselves from the world as the people of God.

The obstacle, in the first instance, is the corrupt nature, with all that it involves, which, according to the scriptural conception of it, gives rise to a real pollution and defilement which none but the Holy Ghost can purge away. The obstacle, in the second instance, is a ceremonial defilement, symbolical of that real pollution; an appointed "uncleanness" which rests upon every human being at birth, and which can be removed only by the ritual "washing with water," instituted by Christ to that end.

It is not to our purpose, at this stage of the discussion, to dwell upon the significance of baptism with water as it is a *seal* of the blessings conferred by the baptism with the Holy Ghost. We confine attention, for the present, to the fact that it sets forth, in a most impressive manner, though it be symbolically, the great truth that without "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," it is utterly impossible to come into the true fellowship of the saints or be recognized by God as his child.

Just here the question presents itself, whether, under the Old Testament dispensation, real baptism was symbolized in the same way as under the New.

It will be remembered that our Saviour in his conversation with Nicodemus deals chiefly with what we have designated real baptism. To the astonished Pharisee he declares that, "Except a man be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God." When Nicodemus reveals his utter ignorance of the whole subject, the divine teacher proceeds to state his meaning more plainly in the words, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God." This implies that there was a symbolical use of water which set forth the work of the Spirit, otherwise this utterance was no explanation of his first declaration. That it was an adequate explanation, and ought to have been understood by Nicodemus, is indicated by the rebuke which our Lord administers when Nicodemus still stumbles and inquires how these things can be. "Jesus answered, and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?" The appropriateness of the rebuke thus administered clearly depends upon the fact that the reference to water in connection with the Spirit's agency in the new birth should have called to mind symbolism full of light for "a master of Israel." If we turn now to the Mosaic institutions, we find the presumption raised by our Saviour's dealing with Nicodemus abundantly justified.

For the best understanding of the matter, it will be necessary for us to take a brief survey of the Levitical regulations concerning ceremonial defilement, and we shall find no better exposition of the subject than that given by Dr. Samuel J. Baird, in his *Bible History of Baptism*. He says:

"In the laws of Moses there were two grades of uncleanness defined: uncleanness of seven days, and uncleanness till the even. The former was a symbol of that essential corruption which is in us by nature, to which are essential the redeeming blood of Christ and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, without which no man can see God in peace. Uncleanness till the even symbolized those casual defilements to which God's renewed people are liable by contact with the evil world. The ritual, concerning the uncleanness seven days, was designed to signalize the light in which man's apostate nature, and the depravity and sin thence resulting, appear in the sight of a God of ineffable holiness. To this conception the word *unclean* was designed to give expression, the intense meaning of which is liable to

escape the casual reader of the Scriptures. It signified, not the mere external soiling of the living person, but death, corruption, and rottenness within the heart, the fermenting source of pollution poured forth in the outward life. To impress us with a just sense of the exceeding evil of this thing the Spirit employs every variety of figure expressive of deformity and loathsomeness. . . . David in his penitential psalm indicates his sense of this radical evil of his nature. 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and *cleans* me from my sin. . . . Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the *hidden part* thou shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be *clean*; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Create in me a *clean heart*, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.' (Ps. li. 2-10.) Isaiah and other sacred writers represent the same evil by the figures of the vomit and filthiness of a drunken debauch, and by every kind of abominable and loathsome thing. (Isaiah xxviii. 8; Prov. xxx. 12.) By the designation, unclean, the moral deformity of Satan and the 'unclean spirits,' his angels, are described. And in the accounts of the riches of grace and glory in store for the church, the crowning feature is the exclusion of the unclean. (Isaiah xxxv. 8; lii. 1; Rev. xxi. 27.)

"For the purpose of inducing a profound sense of this evil and loathsomeness of sin, as working in the heart, the ordinances respecting the uncleanness of seven days were appointed, each having its own lesson." (Pp. 60-62.)

The significance of the period for which the uncleanness lasted is thus set forth by the same author :

"The defilement was for seven days. God's work of creation ended in the rest of the seventh day. That day was hence appropriated as a type of the final rest of Christ and his people upon the completed work of redemption. . . . [See Heb. iv. 4-9.] But the Sabbath thus reserved for God's people, coincides with 'the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.' Hence a seven days' uncleanness was typical of such a corruption of nature as is essential and therefore persistent to the end; and the exclusion of the defiled from the camp and the sanctuary signified the sentence of the judgment of the last day, when those whose natures are unrenewed, and whose sins are unpurged, will be excluded from the Sabbath of redemption and from the new Jerusalem, and remain finally under the woe of the second death." (Pp. 64, 65.)

This uncleanness of seven days symbolizes, then, exactly the same condition of the natural man as that which is symbolized by the uncleanness which is purged away by the washing of water in Christian baptism.

Now, let us see the provision made under the Mosaic economy for the removal of this ceremonial uncleanness, which, while it lasted, excluded from fellowship with the people of God. We will take the case of one who had contracted it by contact with a dead body.

For use on such occasion there were kept on hand the ashes of a red heifer, which had been slain without the camp, its blood sprinkled towards the door of the tabernacle, and its carcass, entire, burned along with cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet. (See Num. xix. 1-9.) A small portion of these ashes was taken and mingled with living water, which was then sprinkled, by any person clean himself from defilement, upon him who was to be purged. This was done upon the third day and again upon the seventh, the administrator using as his instrument a bunch of hyssop dipped in the "water of separation;" *i. e.*, this water appointed to abolish separation. The ashes of the red heifer were a reminder of a sin-offering, which pointed to the blood of him who should in the fulness of time offer himself without the gate. In the living water we have the cleansing element, which signifies the Holy Spirit, who alone can purge away that corruption of nature symbolized by the ceremonial uncleanness which rested upon the man undergoing purification. That this was the significance of the water of separation cannot be doubted in the light of David's language in the fifty-first Psalm: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. . . . Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

In every application of the water of separation there must be, as administrator, a *clean* person, who, being himself in fellowship with the Head of the visible church, was capable of representing him who is the only true and real baptizer with the Holy Ghost. The symbolism here is found to be exactly parallel with that of the "washing with water" under the New Testament. The ceremonial was complicated with elements which were appropriate only to the time that then was; but there was the same sort of hindrance to the outward fellowship of Jehovah as that which attaches to the unbaptized now; there was the same purging of it away, as the condition of that fellowship by the sprinkling of water upon the unclean.

In view of this striking parallelism between the sprinkling of the water of separation under the Mosaic economy, and the "washing with water" in Christian baptism, the inquiry naturally suggests itself, whether, under that dispensation, the application of the water of separation was required in the case of every individual as the condition of outward fellowship with Jehovah. Or, to state the question in another way, whether all contracted seven days' uncleanness, from which they must be purged in order to the enjoyment of the privileges of the visible church.

Dr. Baird, in his *Bible Baptism*, maintains the affirmative of this question, on the ground that all infants were included with their mothers in the seven days' uncleanness which attached to every woman who bore a child, and that this defilement of both could be removed only by the application of the water of separation. He says:

"It was a fundamental article of the faith from the beginning that men are all natively unclean. Job, Eliphaz, and Bildad, each severally states it as an unquestionable proposition, that man born of woman must be so. (Job xiv. 4; xv. 14; xxv. 4.) David cries: 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. . . . Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.' (Ps. li. 5-7.) He not only recognizes the radical nature of his moral corruption as born in him, but indicates the remedy under the very figure of sprinkling with the water of *nidda* [נִדְדָא], *separation*], to which the hyssop refers. The Lord Jesus, speaking at a time when the Old Testament ordinances and system were still in full force, testifies, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.' (John iii. 6, 7.)

"To signalize this native corruption of man and the remedy, the ordinances concerning the defilement of *nidda* and its cleansing were appointed. In them the new-born infant was regarded as the product of overflowing corruption, and as a fountain of defilement to the mother, who thus became unclean, until purified with the water of separation.

"The child was identified with the mother in this uncleanness, (1), as being its cause in her; (2), as being subject to her touch, which was defiling to the clean; and (3), as being bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, born of her body.

"In accordance with the doctrine of man's native defilement, above illustrated, it was characteristic of the law that it recognized none as clean unless purged by water of sprinkling. The infants at Sinai were so purified and admitted to the covenant as well their parents. So it was with the daughters of Midian [Num. xxxi. 18, 19]; and no other principle was known to the law,—no other practice tolerated by it. 'The man' (the person) 'that shall be unclean, and shall not purify

himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord; the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean.' (Num. xix. 20.)" (Pp. 83, 84.)

As corroborating this view, our author produces evidence that our Saviour was himself purified along with his mother by this only method of purging the seven days' defilement by the application of the water of *nidda* :

"It is a remarkable fact, that while we have in the Scriptures but one single example specifically mentioned of the purifying of an infant from this ritual defilement of birth, that example occurs in the person of Him respecting whom the angel said to Mary, 'That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' (Luke i. 35.) In the same gospel in which is this record we read, respecting Mary, in the common version, that 'when the days of *her* purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.' (Luke ii. 22.) But it is agreed by critical editors that this is a corrupted reading, which is wholly without authority from any respectable manuscript. Instead of 'the days ($\alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\varsigma$) of *her* purification,' it should read ($\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega\upsilon$), 'the days of *their* purification'; that is, of both mother and child. Besides all the other authorities, the three oldest manuscripts, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Alexandrinus, unite in this reading. [*Cf.* the Revised Version, *loc. cit.*, which adopts the emendation.] How the mothers were purified, we have seen; and from these facts, we know the children to have shared with them in the baptism." (Pp. 84, 85.)

It would be difficult to exaggerate the significance of this fact, so clearly stated, that Jesus received, and therefore needed, the ritual purification with the water of *nidda*. If he, though personally sinless, was, by reason of his birth from a woman, ceremonially unclean, and must be purged of it before he could be presented to the Lord (that is, could be recognized as fit for the fellowship of the visible church,) it follows that this must have been true of every child born under the old dispensation.

Incidental reference has already been made to the daughters of Midian, the facts concerning whom furnish additional proof of our author's thesis:

"On account of their licentious wives against Israel, Midian was doomed to destruction. In the campaign which followed, none were spared, except the female children. These were reserved for bond-servants. (Num. xxxi. 18; and compare Lev. xxv. 44-46; and Deut. xxi. 10-14.) But from the days of Abraham, all bond-servants had been by divine authority and command endowed with equal right and share with their masters in God's favor and covenant. And as Israel itself had been purified from the defilements and idolatries of Egypt, and ordained as the peculiar people of God by baptism of blood and water at Sinai, so these chil-

dren of licentious Midian, spared from the destruction incurred by their parents, and about to be joined with Israel as God's people, must be cleansed and admitted in the same manner.

“During the expedition many of the army had become defiled by contact with the slain, and were therefore to be cleansed with the water of separation, according to the law. Moses, therefore, issued orders to the men of the army: ‘Do ye abide without the camp seven days; whosoever hath killed any person, and whosoever hath touched any slain, *purify* both yourselves and your *captives* on the third day and on the seventh day.’ In these directions as to the third and seventh days, we recognize the exact requirements of the law with respect to the water of separation for the purification of sin. But the narrative is still more specific. ‘Eleazer, the priest, said unto the men of war which went to the battle, This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord commanded Moses. Only the gold and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead, everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean. Nevertheless, it shall be purified with *the water of separation*, and all that abideth not the fire, ye shall make go through the water. And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterwards ye shall come into the camp.’ (Num. xxxi. 19-24.) ‘The water of separation’ here, is, in the original, ‘the water of *nidda*’—the water, that is, in which were mingled the ashes of the red heifer. With this, therefore, it was that these daughters of Midian were baptized and cleansed. There were thirty-two thousand of these captives thus rescued from the destruction incurred by the licentiousness and crimes of their own people, purged from their uncleanness, engrafted into the family of Abraham, and endowed with the blessings of the covenant. All were ‘women children’ (Num. xxxi. 18); and undoubtedly many were mere babes; the first recorded example of distinctively infant baptism.” (Pp. 81, 82.)

In this transaction we have distinctly set before us the mode in which outsiders, or Gentiles, were purified before they could come into the communion of the visible church under the old dispensation. There is evidence that always to the end proselytes, male and female, received this baptism, and only through it were they fully incorporated with the people of God. And this being true, it justifies our citing another passage as evidence that the water of separation must be applied to all, male and female, who were born of the seed of Abraham, as the condition of participation in outward fellowship with Jehovah. That passage reads: “One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. One law and one manner shall be for you and for the stranger that sojourneth with you.” (Num. xv. 15, 16.) This, being true of the ordinances relating to the various offerings and

the passover (Ex. xii. 49; Num. ix. 14), applies equally to the ordinance concerning the sprinkling of the water of *nidda*.

This use of living water mingled with the ashes of the red heifer was the form which ritual baptism took under the Levitical ceremonial, but it was not its original form. Just as the passover, which antedated the Levitical institutions, was, during the time those institutions were in force, regulated by them, and in the fulness of time losing its typical element, passed over into the Christian sacrament of the Lord's Supper, so did baptism with water antedate those institutions, yet was regulated by them while they prevailed, and then, losing its typical accompaniment, survived as Christian baptism. We discover the institution first in connection with the ratification of that covenant which Jehovah made with Israel at Sinai, by which the visible church received its complete organization, when the entire body of the people accepted Jehovah as their God, and were all, together with their little ones, baptized with water and with blood. Says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, *with WATER and scarlet wool and hyssop*, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament (covenant) which God hath enjoined unto you." (Heb. ix. 19, 20.)

Here we find the same essential elements as in the application of the water of *nidda* afterwards. There is the blood, which was afterwards represented by the ashes of the red heifer, a reminder of a completed sacrifice, of which not only the blood had been sprinkled, but the whole body had been consumed; there is also the water mingled with the blood, as the living water was mingled with the ashes, and the same is sprinkled upon all the people, old and young, with the hyssop branch, all which represented most distinctly that baptism of the Holy Ghost administered in virtue of the blood shed upon Calvary. Who can fail to see in it a sign of that baptizing office of him who "came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood"? (1 John v. 6.)

It has already been intimated that this Sinai transaction, ante-

dating, as it did, the imposition of the Levitical institutions, completed the organization of the visible church. That church then took the shape which it has preserved, without *essential* modification, to the present day. A careful study of those chapters of Exodus (xix.—xxiv.), which give us an account of this covenant, proves that Dr. Stuart Robinson, in his *Discourses of Redemption*, states the facts correctly:

“It was a covenant with this church as a *representative* body, standing for the church of all succeeding ages. Moses, forty years after, when this generation that stood before Sinai had all perished, expressly says to the next generation, ‘The Lord made this covenant, not with our fathers, *but with us, even us who are all here alive this day.*’ By parity of reasoning the church that stood at Sinai, thus representing one, represented all succeeding generations. And, accordingly, thenceforth in the succeeding ages, including that of the apostles, the inspired teachers regarded the church as still under this covenant. And you will observe how, under the New Testament dispensation, Stephen says, ‘Our fathers *received the lively oracles to give unto us;*’ that is, they stood there as representing us.

“It was a covenant *wholly spiritual* in its significancy. Moses, just as Jesus afterward, sums up its provisions in the generalization, ‘Love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, soul and strength.’ And the apostle expressly argues that, so far from disannulling the previous covenant of spiritual blessings with Abraham, as representative father of all who believe, and who thus constitute the true circumcision, it is intended to include that covenant, and both confirm and develop more fully its provisions of spiritual blessing.”

It is important to notice that upon this occasion all the people publicly assented to the provisions of the covenant; and when Moses told them all the words of the Lord, they responded, “All the words which the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” (Ex. xxiv. 7.) Here was the public profession of faith and engagement to be the Lord’s, first made by the people; and upon condition of this profession made, the seal was affixed, in the sprinkling of the water and the blood. This baptism was administered to “*all the people,*” says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 19), among whom were included, as we learn from the detailed account of the renewal of the covenant on the plains of Moab, the “*little ones*” as well as the adults. (Deut. xxix. 11.) Then, as now, the rite was administered to the children upon profession of faith on the part of the parents.

Passing over the centuries during which the Levitical institutions were in force, we come down to the days of John the Bap-

tist. It was a time when there seems to have been an especial need for a renewal of the covenant. On account of their sins, Jehovah had for four hundred years withdrawn his presence from his people. Instead of true devotion to the service of God according to the spirit of the engagement ratified at Sinai, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient," "an intense zeal of self-righteousness was cherished, under the two forms of a fanatical pride in the blood of Abraham, and an ardent devotion to the external forms and rites of religion; to tithes and offerings, to fastings and purifyings,—to 'righteousnesses of the flesh,'—whilst the spirituality and power of the divine law were obscured and set aside by the glosses and interpretations of the elders. Such was the religion of the scribes who 'sat in Moses' seat,' as instructors of the people. The great mass of the nation, led by these blind guides, were with them hastening to destruction; while the few who still sought after the God of their fathers were as sheep without a shepherd."¹

As the condition of renewal of the covenant, and the reinstatement of Israel, practically excommunicated for centuries, there must be repentance and renewed engagement to be the Lord's. John was sent to preach that repentance, to mediate the return of the apostate people, and to affix again the seal of the covenant.

"The same office of warning and testimony on behalf of the forsaken covenant which Elijah exercised towards the ten tribes, John fulfilled to the Jews. To understand the full force and significance of his mission, the fact must be distinctly appreciated that Christ's humiliation and sufferings, however momentous in themselves, and however transcendently important to us, were a mere transient incident in the work undertaken by him. His coming into the world was a coming to the throne, to which the cross was a mere stepping stone,—a means to his exaltation, and to the achievements of his sceptre, in purging his Father's floor. In those achievements, justice and judgment are as conspicuous as grace; and if the latter witnessed a first signal and glorious display in the scenes of Pentecost, the former was as signally illustrated in the destruction and desolation of the city and land that rejected their King. It was with a view to the crisis thus created in the history of Israel by the coming of Christ that John was sent as his forerunner and herald. John did not ignore that abasement of Christ which was the antecedent condition and means of his exaltation and glory. But his distinctive theme, the subject which filled his heart and inspired his tongue, was the throne, the kingdom, the power and justice. Of it he was the official herald, and from it his preaching and

¹ *Bible History of Baptism*, p. 226.

baptism took their form and significance. His commission was threefold: (1), To announce the kingdom of heaven at hand, and herald the coming of the King, the Messenger of the covenant, the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost and with fire; (2), To identify and point him out in the person of Jesus; (3), To prepare the way before him. In fulfilment of the first and second of these functions, John preached the coming of 'One mightier than I,' who should baptize Israel with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He pointed out and announced the Lord Jesus as that coming One,—'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,'—'the Son of God.' And by connecting this testimony with his proclamation and baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, he anticipated the preaching of the apostles, and summed and published the gospel of atonement and remission through the blood of Christ. By this preaching and by the seal of baptism to those who received his testimony he fulfilled the third function above mentioned, and 'made ready a people prepared for the Lord.' (Luke i. 17.)

"There were two termini to which John's baptism sustained peculiar and intimate relations, and from which his ministry derived all its significance. The first was that 'day of the assembly' at Sinai, when Israel entered into the covenant by which she took God as her King and received the baptismal seal sprinkled by the hand of Moses. It was the office of John to announce the personal coming of the King of Israel; to warn them of the penalty of the violated covenant; to announce the remission of sins and restoration of the covenant to those who should repent and return to their allegiance; and to certify this by the renewal of the broken seal.

"The second terminus to which John's baptism looked was that day when the covenant King of Israel should appear in person, assume his throne, and enter on the functions announced by John under the figures of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and the baptism of fire. Of the former, so conspicuous in the prophecies, the baptism of Israel by Moses and that now administered by John were alike typical. The grace of the Holy Ghost, administered by the enthroned Baptizer, was the end and fulfilment of both."¹

Looking, as did this renewal of the covenant under the ministry of John, directly to the transition of the visible church from the old dispensation to the new, which was to be preëminently the dispensation of the Spirit, it was especially appropriate that the rite which sealed it should assume that simple form which employs water alone. Contemplating across fifteen centuries the bloodshedding on Calvary, upon the basis of which the covenant of Sinai was made, Moses mingled the element which symbolized the Spirit's work with the blood which typified that transaction in virtue of which alone the Spirit could be given; and it was provided that, in all the ages intervening, there should be, whenever the water was applied, a reminder of that sacrifice in the ashes of the red heifer mingled with it. But now the offering of the sacrifice

¹ *Bible History of Baptism*, pp. 230-232.

itself is imminent. John can point to him who is to lay it upon the altar, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" The kingdom of God is at hand. He who was to wield its sceptre, and to whom those who repented were to be obedient, in whom they were to recognize their sovereign Lord, was already engaged in that atoning work which culminated when his blood was shed. There was no need longer of the blood of bulls or goats, or of the ashes of an heifer. Therefore, living water alone was employed.

The fact should not be overlooked that John was not the only administrator of this baptism. Our Saviour himself took up the theme upon which John had dwelt, and he and his disciples went throughout the land preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." To those who responded to this call, the disciples, under the direct authority of Jesus, administered the rite of baptism; and so numerous were those who received it at their hands that the Apostle John could say that "Jesus made and baptized [by the hands of his representatives] more disciples than John." (John iv. 1, 2.) This was unquestionably the same baptism as that of John. The forerunner himself was clearly of this opinion, for certain of his disciples, disturbed by the fact that Jesus seemed to be superseding him in his peculiar office, came to him with the plaint, "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him." Whereupon "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, *but that I am sent before him.*" (John iii. 26-28.) The reply is relevant only upon the supposition that John meant to say that Jesus was appointed of heaven to supersede him in the office which he had filled of calling Israel to a renewal of the covenant, and affixing the seal of baptism in the case of those who responded to the call. There is no reason to doubt that the office thus assumed by our Saviour, he continued to discharge to the end, and that, throughout the three years of his earthly ministry, the disciples administered this baptism to all those who professed repentance and claimed to be looking for the kingdom.

When mention is made again of baptism it is by the Lord himself, after his passion and resurrection. The scene is Mount Olivet, and he is about to take his departure from the earth. Matthew tells us (xxviii. 18-20) that "Jesus came to them [the disciples] and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Can any one who candidly considers the facts suppose that the Lord speaks of a new rite, which he now, for the first time, ordains? In that case he must have expounded its nature and described its mode. Shall we assume that such explanations were given, and yet no record was made of them? The supposition is gratuitous, and unsupported by a single hint from any one of the evangelists. The only rational conclusion is, that the baptism of which he speaks was a familiar rite, concerning which they needed no instruction.¹ We are justified in assuming that the only change he made was that which he expressly mentions, namely, that the rite which before could be administered only to those who were of the literal seed of Abraham, or had been formally incorporated with that seed, was now to be administered to the Gentiles also, upon the sole condition of their accepting the teachings of the apostles and professing themselves disciples of Jesus the Christ, the ascended Lord and Head of the church.

Against the view presented in this article, as to the essential identity of baptism under the Old Testament and the New, two objections doubtless will be urged.

The first is, that it ignores the fact that, under the old dispensation, circumcision was the seal of the covenant; that it was the rite initiatory to the privileges of the visible church; that it is represented by the New Testament writers as signifying the same truths as does baptism under the present dispensation, by which

¹ See Armstrong's *Sacraments of the New Testament*, "The Doctrine of Baptisms," § 7.

rite it has been superseded as the ordinance through which members are admitted to the fellowship of the visible church.

The objection fails to take notice of the fact that all along we have kept steadily in view that, under the old dispensation, it was an indispensable condition of membership in the visible church that one should be identified with the seed of Abraham after the flesh. In the case of all the males the rite of circumcision must be administered. The great design was to keep the literal seed of Abraham distinct from all the nations, inasmuch as of that blood Christ was to be born. Circumcision was the seal of the covenant which insured this consummation, and therefore it was set in the flesh of the males only, from whom the descent was reckoned. By circumcision, strictly and immediately, was meant the shedding of the blood of the promised seed of Abraham *par excellence*. Hence, by implication, it meant the crucifixion of our old man with him. It thus implies a work of grace to which the agency of the Holy Spirit is indeed necessary; but it is presented in a light essentially different from that represented by baptism. Baptism signifies the primary office of the Spirit—the imparting of life to the dead soul; the other the consequent death of the old man. The former is the primary grace, which is comprehensive of all else. The latter exhibits *one* of the consequences resulting from it. This view of the significance of circumcision is in exact harmony with all those passages of which Deut. xxx. 6, Rom ii. 28, 29, iv. 11, and Col. ii. 11, may serve as examples.

Now, when our Lord gave his final commission to the disciples on Mount Olivet, he abolished the connection between the literal seed of Abraham and the visible church. By virtue of that act he abolished circumcision as a condition, on the part of the males, of being recognized as members of that body; and, in that he left baptism as the only seal of the covenant, he virtually ordained that it should fill, not only the place it had always filled, but also stand in the place of circumcision, so far as it had been a condition of the recognition of membership in the visible church. There is a true and proper sense, therefore, in which baptism, under the New Testament, supersedes the circumcision of the Old. Those who before must be both circumcised and baptized, now receive

only the washing of water, and on that condition are recognized as fit for the outward fellowship of Jehovah.

The second objection is, that it is essential to Christian baptism that it should be administered "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and since John's baptism and that of the disciples before the passion of our Lord, not to speak of the earlier baptisms, were not administered with this formula, it cannot be identified with the rite under the new dispensation.

After a careful study of all the passages of Scripture bearing upon this point, we have reached the conclusion that, however appropriate this formula may be in connection with the administration of the sacrament of baptism, our Saviour does not mean to prescribe it as a form to be used, but simply intends to require that all who are baptized shall, as a condition, make confession of the triune God, and in being united to the visible church shall be brought into outward relations with God as now revealed as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The preposition employed is *εἰς*, "into the name," and indicates the character of the profession which must be made. But although the profession of the Israelite before the advent was not explicitly a profession of faith in the triune God, it was such implicitly. Will any one affirm that profession of faith under the Old Testament was essentially different from that under the New? Will any Presbyterian deny that profession of faith under the old dispensation opened the way into the same outward fellowship that profession of faith in Christ now does?

Dr. Baird very significantly remarks on this subject of the formula:

"The silence of all the evangelists, except Matthew, as to the words in question is wholly inconsistent with the supposition that they were given as a formula. The importance of the rite is of common agreement. And resting, as it does, as an obligation on every soul that hears the gospel, it is the first and foremost of all the practical duties of those who receive it. If, therefore, the formula was now given as an element in the administration of the ordinance, it is of the first and universal moment. How, then, is it possible for three of the evangelists to have ignored it in their several versions of the gospel? Evidently they attached to it no such significance as obtains with those who hold it as of the essence of baptism.

“The fact that it is not once used or alluded to in the whole subsequent history and epistles is conclusive. Those records are a testimony, as much by silence often as by utterance. But on this subject they are not silent. On the day of Pentecost, Peter calls upon the inquirers to be baptized ‘(ἐπιτί) for the name’s sake of Christ.’ (Acts ii. 38.) The Samaritans and the twelve disciples of John at Ephesus were baptized ‘into (ἐπί) the name of the Lord Jesus.’ (Acts viii. 16; xix. 5.) And Paul distinctly implies that the Corinthians were baptized into the same name. ‘Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?’ (1 Cor. i. 13.) How these facts are consistent with obedience to Christ’s command we have already seen. . . . He that is spiritually baptized into Jesus Christ thereby receives the Spirit, and is united in Christ to the Father. He is baptized into the three.”¹

In connection with this question concerning the identity of the baptism of John and of the disciples of Jesus with Christian baptism, distinct note should be made of the fact that there is no evidence that any one who received that baptism, and from that time adhered to Jesus as the promised Messiah, ever received baptism after the new dispensation was ushered in. There were comparatively few who understood the import of the profession which they made, but there were some—the eleven disciples, the seventy, and a few scores besides. It is evident the twelve disciples of John, of whom we have an account in Acts xix. 1–7, had failed completely to apprehend the significance of the transaction which John mediated. Paul explains to them the nature of John’s baptism, of which they had to that moment remained in profound ignorance, although they had received the rite at John’s hands: “John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that *they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.*” (Acts xix. 4.) Luke adds, that “when they heard this,” that is, when they understood what was the real nature of the profession which John called upon the Jews to make, they made that profession, and then “they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts xix. 5.) The repetition of baptism in their case was due to the fact that they, through ignorance, had never renewed the covenant, and were to that day that Paul expounded it to them as truly outsiders as were the three thousand upon the day of Pentecost.

¹ *Bible History of Baptism*, pp. 439, 440.

It is not our purpose to dwell here upon the bearing of this identity of baptism under the two dispensations, upon the question concerning the subjects of the sacrament, or that concerning the mode. In either case any multiplication of words were superfluous. If the proposition for which we contend be admitted, there can be no doubt, in the mind of any fair-minded person, that the infant seed of believing parents are to receive the seal of the covenant upon the faith of their parents, as they did from the first institution of the visible church to the day when our Saviour appointed that same seal for all the nations. As little question can there be that the water is to be sprinkled, as it was for fifteen centuries before our Saviour's advent, to represent symbolically the shedding forth of the Spirit of all grace, by the Great Baptizer, upon all those who are subjects of "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." In all the Old Testament Scriptures there is no trace of immersion. We are fully persuaded that in the New Testament there is no more warrant for it than in the Old.

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