

Signed, Sealed and Delivered

A Study of Holy Baptism



The Rt. Rev. Ray R. Sutton, Ph.D.

Baptism:
Signed,
Sealed, and
Delivered

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To my children . . .

Stephen and Jenifer, our daughter-in-law

Seth

Sarah

Samuel

Esther

Evelyn

Austin

And to my grandchildren . . .

Gabriel

Daniel

All of whom belong to Jesus Christ through
Holy Baptism into the Name of the Triune
God!

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Foreword

Signed, Sealed, and Delivered

The major theological distortions in contemporary times coalesce around the sacrament of Baptism.

Pelagianism, the perennial crabgrass of theological lawns, has no true place for Baptism. Post-modernism's deconstruction evacuates all objectivity to any new birth. Conservative traditionalism, anxious to retain sacramental objectivity, often forfeits the Gospel proclamation and expression of faith that promises any sacramental efficaciousness. Contemporary Marcionism's omission of Old Testament revelation jettisons the indispensable fulfillment of covenant and sacrifice in Christian Baptism.

For these reasons it is refreshing indeed to have a careful and scholarly treatment of the foundational sacrament of Christian salvation. In an age characterized by the denigration of theology, this work is a significant scholarly contribution on the subject of Baptism, which builds carefully and authentically upon the work of the outstanding figures in the Church's history. Particularly valuable is Bishop Sutton's dependence upon, and reflection of, the great but neglected Anglican reformers and Caroline divines: Thomas Cranmer, Richard Hooker, John Bramhall, Simon Patrick, Lancelot Andrewes, George Herbert, and especially the great 18th century scholar, Daniel Waterland.

The thorny but unnecessarily divisive subject of "regeneration" is nowhere, that I know of, as clearly and simply put to right. The boundaries of interpretation around this historically contentious issue are biblically, historically, and theologically so clearly drawn that one can see

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no justification for further divisiveness on this subject. The mistaken inferences of 17th century Puritans and 19th century divines are demonstrated, and the biblical, patristic, Reformed, and Anglican 17th and 18th century teaching amply revealed.

The case for infant baptism is shown not only to be grounded in scripture and early church practice (recalling for us the perdueing achievement of A. A. Hodge) but the issue is put in the context of the Christian understanding of family. Marriage and family are indispensable assumptions of Christian nurture. Baptism, in the context of the human family and covenant community, links Gospel, Scripture, Church, and Covenant into a congruent whole of exciting pastoral and practical implications.

In a contemporary world of distressing cultural and ecclesiastical centrifugal forces, *Baptism: Signed, Sealed, and Delivered* promises counter forces of unity among many presently separated Christians. The context for preaching, mission, conversion, pastoral care, and social action must be grounded in such an understanding of the sacrament of Baptism and its corollary, the Christian church family.

C. FitzSimons Allison, D. Phil. (Oxford)
Episcopal Bishop of South Carolina (retired)

Preface

An author once described writing a book as analogous to “birthing a child.” As a parent, I would not want to equate the true miracle of human birth to a book. As an author on the other hand, I can appreciate my friend’s comment as an *analogy* to birth. If this is the case, I believe the current work was conceived in my mind a few years ago when I was doing my own doctoral work at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.¹ I had wanted to write on the topic long before that time. It was my study at Oxford that actually afforded me the time to reflect on and arrive at a concrete approach to the subject.

I was researching in historical theology on the topic of the sacramental theology of an important Anglican theologian of the early eighteenth century, Daniel Waterland. As part of my research, I investigated Waterland’s own critical interactions with the baptismal theology of the revival around the preaching of George Whitefield and John Wesley. Waterland wrote as a reformed Anglican theologian (confessionally bound by the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion) on the topic of regeneration as it relates to the Sacrament of Baptism. While appreciating many aspects of the preaching of Whitefield and Wesley, he was concerned that the complete separation of regeneration from Baptism could have detrimental effects on the Reformation doctrine of salvation, the Church and the Sacraments. His comments

¹The program of study was through Coventry University in association with Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University, under the supervision of the Rev. Dr. Alister McGrath, Principal of Wycliffe Hall and professor at Oxford University.

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mentioned in Chapter Four of this book could be construed as virtually “prophetic.”

Waterland’s work provoked my own further research into the study of Holy Baptism, a period of gestation to use the birth analogy. A number of people encouraged me to write on the subject during a time of further reflection in my life. They pointed out the need for a substantial defense of a Biblical and classical Anglican view of the Sacraments, especially on the topic of Baptism. They noted a glaring neglect of reference to their theological position in such writings as the highly regarded work of the twentieth-century systematic theologian, Louis Berkhof. He refers to this Reformed Anglican view of Baptism as within the sphere of Reformation thought, but he does not indicate a citation to any work explaining such an approach.² It seems there has not been a major analysis from this perspective in over a century and a half, even though there have been smaller studies to be sure. I refer to one of the last extended treatments of Baptism written by the significant Reformed and classical Anglican scholar, Archibald Boyd, *Baptism and Baptismal Regeneration*.³ In fact, I have chosen the title of my book based on a succinct statement from his important work. He writes in his chapter on the “Baptismal Service”: “Still, throughout it all, the covenant lives on, *signed, sealed and delivered*, if man had but faith to see it and energy to use it. And nothing more or less than this does our Baptismal Service say.”⁴

The moment of actual labor to give birth to the current study began when the bishops of the Reformed Epis-

² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1939] 1969), p. 477.

³ Archibald Boyd, *Baptism and Baptismal Regeneration* (London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1865).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

copal Church asked me to write a study on Baptism. I was honored and appreciative. What started as a study became a book. There were simply too many important issues that needed extensive treatment not only for the Reformed Episcopal Church, but for the larger evangelical, Reformed and Anglican communities as well. Since the book addresses concerns of all these groups, it is my hope that the study will reach into all of them.

I have used a rather mixed style of writing, what could be described as a level aimed at the educated layperson as well as at the academic. Americans will be accustomed to this mixture. Others, especially my friends in the academic community, will be frustrated by it. In my defense, I ask the reader's patience by keeping in mind that the study comes out of the mixture of ministry to which the Lord has called me. For a number of years, I have served in pastoral ministry while also working in a seminary. I have had to speak to both worlds and on many occasions at the same time. I know that my style runs the risk of not adequately satisfying either lay or academic communities. I also realize from my previous publishing experience that I can strike the balance, which is my hope and prayer for this work. No doubt two books are really needed, one for lay and the other for the academic. Budgets and time do not permit two different studies. The best that can be done is the accompanying study guide and other teaching materials as they are available. Perhaps enough interest will be generated that other studies in the Sacraments and Baptism can be generated.

I should call to the reader's attention some other aspects of how I have written this book. I have stood on the strong shoulders of the evangelical and Anglican scholar, the Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Bromiley.⁵ I am impressed by his

⁵Geoffrey Bromiley, *Children of Promise* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998).

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Trinitarian development of the doctrine. In addition, the reader will notice that I have built on the work of the Rt. Rev. Dr. Theophilus Herter, late Presiding Bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church and Professor of New Testament at the Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia. He wrote his doctoral dissertation at Westminster Theological Seminary on *The Abrahamic Covenant in the Gospels*.⁶ It is an invaluable work that the Reformed Episcopal Church has recently published. I believe that I have extended his basic thesis in my own book.

Also, I have returned to the classical Anglican approach of referring to the Sacraments with "upper case." I have capitalized words such as Sacrament, Baptism and even Circumcision. I have also put Bible and Scripture in upper case reflecting a Word and Sacrament emphasis.

Finally, I take this occasion to thank so many who have been in one way or another part of this project. I thank the bishops of the Reformed Episcopal Church for the opportunity to write this work as well as for their very helpful critique of the draft. I especially thank the Rt. Rev. George Fincke, my dear friend who encouraged me in this work and produced some of the study guide. I also thank my own bishop, the Rt. Rev. Royal U. Grote, who has helped on the study guide as well.

I thank my colleagues at Cranmer Theological House for reading and for offering so many good suggestions to improve the manuscript. I thank the resident faculty who saw and commented on the first draft: the Rev. Dr. Curtis Crenshaw, the Rev. Dr. Daniel Dunlap, the Rev. Dr. Peter Newman Brooks and the Rev. Mark Quay. I am especially indebted to the Rev. Dr. Crenshaw's research on Titus 3:5, on which I relied heavily for my exegesis of the pas-

⁶ Theophilus Herter, *The Abrahamic Covenant in the Gospels* (Houston: Classical Anglican Press, 2000).

sage. I also thank the trustees for their support, especially the Rev. Dr. M. Allen Dickson who read and made a major suggestion that improved the presentation of the book.

I thank my wife Susan who read and helped edit the manuscript with her own keen theological and practical eye. What a blessing to have such a godly, learned and beautiful helpmate for these twenty-nine plus years of our wonderful marriage.

Finally, I thank my children and grandchildren to whom the book is dedicated. I am grateful to my children still under roof for their patience and understanding when dad was relentlessly hibernating at the home office to complete the study. As always, they make me very proud. My prayer and hope for them is that they will always live as covenant keepers of the covenant into which they were placed at Holy Baptism.

The final draft of this book is appropriately born (completed) on the Feast of Epiphany, which means "appearing." This great feast often involves the celebration of one of the first appearances of Christ to the world, His Baptism. For this reason, it is one of the special times of the year for Baptisms to be performed in the Church.

The Feast of Epiphany, 2001
The Rt. Rev. Ray R. Sutton, Ph.D.

Introduction

Swim in Your Baptism

The great king approached the old Bishop. The powerful ruler, Findcath mac Deago, walked only slightly ahead of the Druid priests accompanying him. He had heard of this famous, articulate Briton who had been a slave in his own land, escaped, and returned as a Bishop; Patrick was his name. Findcath came to the Bishop because his Druid priests had given him an old prophecy. He wanted to know if it were true.

Findcath made his way to the place where Patrick sat; it was called the "Bishop's stone." As the entourage surrounded the old Bishop, the king spoke up, "Bishop, I come in the name of the gods to determine if your God is the god of all gods. For many years I have heard how my brother chieftains call on your God and receive new life at the well of washing. My Druids say it is time. They believe you fulfill the prophecy sung by their bards, and their bards before them. Tell me, are you the man of this prophecy?"

Patrick leaned forward on his stone, "I have heard of this prophecy but I have never seen it. I don't know the words. Can one of your Druids recite it to me?"

The king motioned with his bronze staff to one particular Druid. The priest stepped forward and sang:

Across the sea will come Adze-head,
Crazed in the head,
His cloak with hole for the head,
His stick bent in the head.
He will chant impiety,

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From a table in the front of his house;
All his people will answer:
"Amen, Amen."¹

When the Druid had finished, a hush fell over the mound where they met, which was just in front of the wooden chapel on top. They looked to the aging Bishop for an answer.

Leaning on his staff, Patrick stood. "Yes great king, I am the one."

Suddenly the entire group fell on the ground before Patrick, repeating a Druid mantra over and over again. The Bishop, shocked and dismayed, raised his wooden shepherd's staff and exclaimed, "Stop." Then quickly he moved toward the king and asked him to come and sit with him, saying, "King, you should not bow to me but I to you. Come let us talk of Christ the true King before whom we all must bend our knee."

And so the king arose and gathered with his Druid priests around Bishop Patrick. The king explained, "I heard how you spoke to my brother about the One and Three God. He told me of your meeting. Is it true that you pulled one of our shamrocks from the ground and taught that your God is One and Three just as the clover is One with three petals?"

"Yes great king," responded Patrick. "But you keep speaking of my God, nor *our* God. He can be your God too for He is the One, True God who sent His only Son, Jesus, to die for the sins of the whole world, even this Gaelic land."

Findcath then asked, "What should I do?"

Moved by the king's desire to convert, Patrick said, "Those who have gone before and into whose lineage I have been brought, the Apostles Peter, Paul, John and

¹ Daibhi O Croinin, *Early Medieval Ireland* (London: Longman, [1995] 1996), p. 32.

others, instructed that you must believe in Jesus Christ and be baptized for the remission of your sins. Come, let us go to the well of washing."

The king got up and commanded his Druids to come and join him with the Bishop. So they walked a short way up the mound toward the chapel, to the well of washing just in front of it. It was a pool waist deep with a deeper hole in the center. A staff was stuck in the ground beside the well. On top of it was a cross with a wooden circle overlaying the cross.

The Bishop said, "Come, let us all stand in the waters of cleansing." All gathered around as the Bishop spoke to them: "Turn to the west and spit, saying, 'I renounce Satan and all of the vain pomp and glory of the world.'" All spun to the west and did as the Bishop instructed.

Then the Bishop asked, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" They all answered, "I do."

The Bishop asked the final question, "Will you obediently follow Him all the days of your life?" All responded, "I will."

After their response, the Bishop told them to dip in the water three times and that he would pour and sprinkle water over their heads. And so one by one they did, as the Bishop spoke the words over them and called their name, "I baptize you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

When the baptisms were complete, they stepped out of the baptismal pool. The Bishop instructed them, "Today you have put on Christ. You have bound Him to you like the armor on a Roman soldier's chest, a lorica, is tied to him. Now you belong to Christ. As you have been washed in the well of washing and poured and sprinkled with water from above, so have you received the Spirit from heaven. You are surrounded by Christ as the waters swelled around you in the regeneration of new life." He

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then called on them to sing a hymn that he had written about what he had just taught, called *The Lorica*:

I bind this day to me forever the strong name of the Trinity by invocation of the same the Three in One and One in three.

I bind this day to me forever by power of faith, Christ's Incarnation; His baptism in the Jordan river; His death on cross for my salvation; His bursting from the spiced tomb; His riding up the heav'nly way; His coming at the day of doom; I bind unto myself today.

I bind unto myself the power of the great love of cherubim; the sweet "well done" in judgment hour; the service of the seraphim; Confessors' faith, apostles' word, the patriarchs' prayers, the prophets' scrolls; All good deeds done unto the Lord, and purity of virgin souls.

I bind unto myself today the virtues of the starlit heav'n, the glorious sun's life-giving ray, the whiteness of the moon at even, the flashing of the lightning free, the whirling wind's tempestuous shocks, the stable earth, the deep salt sea, around the old undying eternal rocks.

I bind unto myself today the power of God to hold and lead, His eye to watch, his might to stay, His ear to hearken to my need; the wisdom of my God to teach, His hand to guide, his shield to ward; the word of God to give me speech, His heav'nly host to be my guard.

Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me; Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

I bind unto myself the Name, the strong Name of the Trinity; by invocation of the same, the Three in One, and One in Three. Of whom all nature hath creation; Eternal Father, Spirit, Word: Praise to the Lord of my salvation, Salvation is of Christ the Lord.²

When the hymn was over, they all knelt and prayed. The Bishop told them to pray with words that their new King, Jesus, had given His first followers. When the prayer was over, Findcath stood, embraced the old Bishop and heard the following advice, “My King you now belong to Christ and Christ belongs to you; go and live your Baptism.” With this instruction, the king and all of his converted priests turned and re-entered their world as new men.³ In the words of the title of this book, just as they had been signed and sealed by God’s grace in Holy Baptism, so their Baptism was to be delivered in the form of a new walk before God in the world.

Good Advice to a New Convert

Was it Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century German Reformer, who stated that King Findcath mac Deago went out to “swim in his Baptism”? Perhaps it might seem curious to modern Christian ears. Think of all those books out there today about the Christian life. There are all kinds of “keys” and “secrets” to the “successful Christian life.” Most of them don’t even mention the place of Holy Baptism, let alone refer to it as a kind of spiritual swimming pool for the Christian’s nurture. Yet for Luther, by swimming in and participating in this sacred rite a Christian

²This hymn and its main theology will be explained in Chapter Eight.

³This story is historical fiction, created around historic facts but compiled in a narrative form for the purposes of this book. However, the theology and baptismal practices of the story are based on specific tradition and history in early Christianity.

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receives among other things encouragement, assurance and instruction for the whole Christian life.

We can only grasp the meaning of Martin Luther's approach by understanding that he believed the Holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament, call a Christian to view Baptism as a foundation block of the entire Christian life. Certainly Jesus Christ is the corner stone; He is not to be confused with the Sacrament itself. We should not forget that it was the same Luther who championed the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation by faith in Him alone. He desired to lift up a clear Gospel to a Church that he thought had driven the Good News into confusion and oblivion. He wanted to restore precisely that a person is saved by Christ and Him alone, not magical drops of water or anything other than "merely Christ," to quote the twentieth-century "reformer" at Oxford, C. S. Lewis.

We should also remember that the same Luther held that Holy Baptism was the essential foundation of the Christian's walk with Jesus Christ. I think Luther would tell us today that the Gospels and the writings of St. Paul in particular present the teachings of Baptism as lessons for the Christian life. Most of what we need to know about traveling with God is contained in seminal form in the instructions of Baptism. Hence, Luther instructed his students to "swim in their Baptism."

Baptism was not only an important a part of initiation into the Life of Christ in His Church, it was the summation of the Christian's life in Christ. As a result, Luther, and most of the other Reformers, elevated Baptism back into a place of importance in the Church, where it had been in the early Church. Believe it or not, in the late Middle Ages prior to the Reformation, the first Sacrament had fallen into a sort of "second-class," de-emphasized standing. The Eucharist, Holy Communion, received so much attention and discussion that Bap-

tism was relegated to little importance. Along with this neglect went the building block of the mission of the Church. The Great Commission is set out in Jesus' own parting words to His disciples as He ascended into heaven: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (St. Matthew 28:19-20). There is no doubt about the role of Baptism in the making of disciples. It is a pool in which to swim.

Today we have come full circle. We face a spiritual crisis even greater than the one of Luther's day. Not surprisingly, Holy Baptism has once again lost its Scriptural place in the modern Church, which brings me to some of the essential reasons for this book.

Christianity without Church

A contemporary watchdog of Christianity, George Barna, observes one of the critical problems confronting the Church:

Studies we have conducted over the past year indicate that a majority of the people who made a first-time "decision" for Christ were no longer connected to a Christian church within just *eight weeks* of having made such a decision! While the evangelistic efforts of some churches and parachurch ministries have garnered positive results, the sad fact is that most of those efforts are wasted because new believers are not being effectively absorbed into a healthy community of believers and, in most cases, never move from "decision" to "conversion."⁴

⁴ George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Word: Nashville, 1998), p. 2.

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Barna offers a stunning commentary on an evangelism that does not fold believers into the community of believers, the Church. How could this be? One of the major reasons is the neglect of the doctrine of Sacraments in an attempt to emphasize faith. Baptism easily becomes part of the theological negligence. Sometimes those who emphasize the Bible the most miss the most blatant Scriptural connections such as the important relation between Baptism and the Church. In His Great Commission, the Lord specifically told his disciples that discipleship begins with Baptism. All too often this is not a theme of evangelists today. Hardly ever is the subject of Baptism even raised in relation to making disciples. But then, this is the difference between simply seeking converts and making disciples. Nowhere does Jesus call for His disciples to make converts. Rather, He tells them to "make disciples." The difference is critical.

The making of a disciple is a process to be worked out in the context of a community of believers. One can and should be converted to Christ. But this is only the beginning, not the end. Without Baptism, conversion becomes the end and not the beginning of the process of discipleship within a community of believers. When this happens, all too often there is the absence of the development of sound, pure Christian character, the lack of obedience. To the contrary, Christian Baptism profoundly emphasizes the insertion into God's community of believers. It calls the Christian to see that his life is to be bound up in that community, apart from which there is no spiritual health and life, indeed no life in Christ. This is Barna's point. The same point was also observed by C. S. Lewis in his important book, *Screwtape Letters*. The work is a fictitious (yet not so fictitious) series of letters between a demon (Wormwood) and his uncle (Screwtape) who is giving advice on how to undermine a certain new disciple. Among the many insights about the wiles of the Devil and

his demons that surface in the exchange is the importance of discipleship being worked out in the sphere of a local communion of believers. In one particular letter, Screwtape writes with great concern that "... the patient has continued to attend one church, and only one since he was converted."⁵ Seeking to uproot the new believer, he reminds Wormwood, "Surely you know that if a man can't be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighborhood looking for the church that 'suits' him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches."⁶ Somehow conversion and community must be brought together. Mr. Barna does not go deeply into solutions; he is primarily an analyst. For the answer, we should look to Jesus and the Holy Scriptures. When we do, we find the prominent place of Baptism as the segue into the kingdom of God, the community of the faithful.

The way of absorbing a new convert into the Church has always been Biblically and historically understood by means of profession of faith via the Sacraments, Baptism and even Confirmation. This has been demonstrated many ways but perhaps most profoundly by the requirement of proof of Baptism and confession of faith when Christians transfer from one Church to another. In contrast, the minimizing of Baptism has only contributed to a shallow, uncommitted, anti-church/non-church type of Christianity that stands weak before the hoards of cults and advancing eastern religions. Once the Church was called the "company of the committed." Today it is viewed as the gathering of individuals with confused social agendas. In the words of another, "A Christian gospel which is

⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters* (New York: The MacMillan Company [1959], 1966), p. 72.

⁶ *Ibid.*

all affection and no demand is flabby.”⁷ The correction to the problem begins at the beginning of the disciple-making-process, which brings us to Holy Baptism as the vital link to a community of the committed.

Christianity without Catechism

Not only do we find a contemporary Christianity that presents Christ without the Church, we often find Christianity without catechism or teaching. One leader of a ministry dedicated to discipleship has commented, “Thirty years of discipleship programs, and we are not disciplined.”⁸ I appreciate his honesty. What is the solution?

Just as Jesus’ *Great Commission* connects Baptism and the Church as the context for the making of disciples, He also calls His followers to mold disciples by teaching them. The word *disciple* means “learner.” Jesus not only tells His disciples to make disciples by baptizing, but by “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). Baptism should be connected to teaching. From the earliest days of Christianity, this learning process was understood as *catechizing*. The English word is derived from a Greek term found in St. Luke’s introduction to his Gospel. Luke tells Theophilus, the recipient of the Gospel, that he wants him to “know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed” (Luke 1:4). The word translated *instructed* literally means “catechized”. Theophilus had been instructed or catechized. This was the way of shaping a new convert into a mature Christian. When the Church has been strong, this has always been the way. At times of weak-

⁷ Kenneth Stevenson, *The Mystery of Baptism*, (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998), p. 69.

⁸ Jim Petersen, *Lifestyle Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1993), pp. 15, 21.

ness, not surprisingly the Church has fallen into ignorance, superstition and arrogance. Today is no different. The modern Church and society are lost in ignorance.

Have you seen Jay Leno on the *Tonight Show* ask people on the street some of those basic questions about the Bible? He asked two college-aged women, "Can you name one of the Ten Commandments?" One answered, "Freedom of speech." Leno then interrogated further the other woman, "Complete this sentence: Let he who is without sin . . ." Her response was, "Have a good time." Leno then turned to a young man, "Who according to the Bible was eaten by a whale?" Confidently the young man replied, "That's easy . . . *Pinocchio*." This matches another study that I've seen. Most Christians cannot even name the four Gospels.

The average person in our culture or Christian in the Church does not know much of anything about the Bible. This fact can be illustrated by a conversation between couples at a basketball game. They spotted a guy with a big rainbow colored head of hair who was wearing a "John 3:16" sign. John 3:16 has been called the most familiar verse in the Bible: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Unfortunately the verse was not written out on the sign; only the reference was mentioned. The two couples began discussing the meaning of the sign. Reduced to guessing, one thought it must be an ad for a new restaurant in town. The others ditched that idea since "who would send someone out with orange hair and a hand-drawn sign to advertise anything?" Another thought the "John 3:16" sign might be a signal to someone to meet at the john on the third floor, stall 16. So there you have it, a sea of confusion swallowed by an ocean of ignorance.

But what does the teaching on Baptism have to do with correcting the ignorance? Jesus makes Baptism the

basis of the teaching in His Great Commission. First, Baptism offers the paradigm of all Christian teaching. The Lord tells His disciples to "baptize in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This is called the Holy Trinity, One God, Three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All of the ancient creeds of the Church are organized according to the Trinity and as such become the basis for all catechisms. If it is not Trinitarian, then it is not Christian. Moreover, Jesus' own statement about Baptism calls for the correct understanding of Baptism to follow the contours of the Holy Trinity. This is what the present study attempts to do. The doctrine of Baptism will be unfolded in relation to the Holy Trinity, presenting the foundation for the proper Christian paradigm as well as the correct approach to Baptism itself.

Second, the proper teaching of and approach to Baptism not only offset ignorance, but also present Baptism as the way of Christian living. St. Paul tells the Roman Christians, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, . . . even so also should we walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Baptism contains in it the way of walking. As the title of this book indicates, the Sacrament is to be signed, sealed, and delivered. The Church has always understood this principle. For this reason teaching on Baptism and catechesis based on the baptismal model have been considered to be at the foundation. Christianity is not simply a set of ideas, a program, or even a plan. It is a baptismal life in Christ. The course of this study will therefore converge on Baptism as a way of spirituality. Both as a paradigm and a way, the teachings of this important doctrine lead to a restoration of catechetical training. This will result in a person's being able to "swim in his baptism."

Canon and Canons of Persuasion

Moving from the reasons for this study, we should turn by way of introduction to the method or approach, the fundamental issue of Canon and canons of persuasion. Let us not confuse the two. The Canon is Holy Scripture itself. By the phrase *canons of persuasion*, I mean the guidelines for determining what God expects concerning the Sacrament of Baptism, or anything. Regarding Baptism, we want to know the interpretive procedure for determining everything from what it means, the recipients, the mode, and even the very service itself. What is our methodology? What are our principles of hermeneutics, or interpretation?

First, we should begin with Canon, Holy Scripture, as our guide to all matters, especially the Sacrament of Baptism. It is clear from the earliest days, even in Biblical times, that the Word of God written is the primary standard for the people of God. God is the authority revealed in His Word, which makes the Bible the authoritative document for the Church. For this reason even Jesus Himself continually appeals to the importance of the Scriptures as being fulfilled. If they were not authoritative, then they would not need to be fulfilled in history. In one of the most graphic examples of how Jesus indirectly establishes the authority of Scripture, He led a couple of disciples in a Bible study on the Emmaus road after He was raised from the dead. Very carefully, He showed to them how He was revealed in the Old Testament (Luke 24). A cursory reading of the remainder of the New Testament supports Jesus' methodology. The primary source for the writers of the New Testament is the Old Testament, meaning revealed Scripture given to the Church was understood as authoritative written communication from God. This takes us to the matter of canons of persuasion.

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What are the principles, the canons, for understanding the Canon? At the outset, we meet in any study of the Sacrament of Baptism the requirement of some that only certain parts of the Bible can be allowed to guide our interpretations. This is a canon of persuasion. For example, some people will raise the point that the New Testament nowhere commands infants to be baptized. Think about this objection. At first it may sound plausible, but it is a totally unbiblical objection. Why? Where in the New Testament does the New Testament tell us that the New Testament has to command us to do something only the New Testament commands? The obvious answer is that there is no command that calls for this requirement. I don't know of a single chapter or verse that says the New Testament has to command something before we are obligated. Nowhere does Scripture require only the New Testament for that matter, and nowhere does the Bible tell us that only the commands of Scripture are binding. Yet, this New Testament hermeneutic is so often assumed as though Scripture teaches the requirement of this canon of persuasion.

As a matter of fact, the New Testament specifically indicates otherwise. St. Paul tells Timothy, "From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17). The key to this passage is the definition of "all Scripture." At the time St. Paul wrote these words, much of the New Testament had been written. St. Paul, however, recalls how Timothy had known the Scriptures from his infancy according to the original text. If Timothy were in his late twenties or thirties, probably early forties, this would mean the Scripture learned from his youth was not the

New Testament. His youth takes us prior to the writing of the New Testament. Therefore, the apostle says that the Old Testament is profitable for a number of things. Moreover, nowhere does he indicate that only the commands of the Old Testament are binding. Rather, all of the Old Testament in principle and practice as well as command is profitable. We should conclude that based on God's revelation and the witness of the Church, the whole Bible in principle and practice should be our guide to understanding the Sacraments. This will be the approach in this study.

Second, the Bible as the primary authority, the Canon, mandates that the Church and its historical interpretations of Scripture are the primary canons of persuasion. Holy Scripture cannot stand alone without the witness of the Church. The Apostle Paul also presents the Church as the "pillar and ground of the Truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). The Bible was not given in a vacuum; it was given to the Church. Moreover, the Church was created before the New Testament was written (cf. 2 Peter 2:20-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; Acts 15:1-29). It is the pillar that holds up the Truth. The Truth, however, is to be above the Church, not vice versa; the Church is to be subordinate to God's Word written. There is a hierarchical order of Scripture to Church (not the reverse), but there is also an organic relation between the believing communion and the Bible.

In this sense, the Bible in a vacuum apart from the Church is not self-interpreting. Certainly the great Reformation axiom of "Scripture by Scripture," which says that Scripture should be interpreted by other Scripture, is valid. Even so, Holy Scripture was not revealed with cross-references in the original text. The Church, or someone, put those references in the margins. As a matter of fact, cross-references can completely control the interpretive outcome. They can be very misleading or they

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can be helpful. The key is whether or not the cross references are based on the historic understanding of the Church. Granted, the Church is not infallible; only the Scripture is infallible. Nevertheless, if the Church is the pillar upholding the Truth, the Church is necessary for the Truth to be understood. The Church is the primary witness of the Truth, without which the Truth cannot be correctly interpreted. This means that the historic interpretation of the Church is important for the proper interpretations of Scripture. This is reflected in the writings of the inimitable Swiss Reformer, John Calvin, who was not only fond of calling the Church his mother, but also of maintaining a high view of the Church. He writes:

For there is no other way to enter life unless this mother [the visible Church] conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels [Matthew 22:30]. Our weakness does not allow us to be dismissed from her school until we have been pupils all our lives. Furthermore, away from her bosom one cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or any salvation, as Isaiah [Isa. 37:32] and Joel [Joel 2:32] testify. . . . On the other hand, those who turn to the cultivation of true godliness are said to inscribe their names among the citizens of Jerusalem [cf. Isa. 56:5; Ps. 87:6]. For this reason, it is said in another psalm: "Remember me, O Jehovah, with favor toward thy people; visit me with salvation: that I may see the well-doing of thy chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the joy of thy nation, that I may be glad with thine inheritance [Ps. 106:4-5; cf. Ps. 105:4, Vg., etc.]. By these words God's fatherly favor and the es-

pecial witness of spiritual life are limited to his flock, so that it is always disastrous to leave the church.⁹

Novel interpretations about anything, let alone the Sacrament of Baptism, should be avoided. We should arrive at the same views of Baptism as the Church of all ages. Believe it or not, the Church of the English Reformation opposed the late Medieval Church for its novelty. The English Reformers argued instead that they wanted to return to the original doctrines as contained in the Holy Scriptures and as always believed at all times by all of God's people.

Third, Scripture calls us to think Christianly as the next canon of persuasion. Interpreters of Scriptures should use sanctified reason. The use of some kind of reasoning is unavoidable for that matter. The issue then becomes what kind of reason: secular or sanctified. An example of the necessity for sanctified reason to understand Scripture concerns one of the most basic interpretative issues: "How does the Bible have to say it before we believe it?" Some people expect what they call "chapter and verse" before they will believe anything. But the Scriptures expect God's people to do many things that they do not come right out and say. For example, there is no verse that says explicitly that women can or should take Holy Communion. Yet no Christians to my knowledge advocate a male only Eucharistic service. How do we come to such a conclusion without a chapter and verse? We have to reason from inference. Yes, we have to use our sanctified mind, and allow the corporate sanctified mind of the Church of all ages to guide us.

The methodology adopted in this study is the Canon

⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*; John T. McNeill, ed.; Ford Lewis Battles, trans.; (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960, 1975), p. 1016 (iv.1.4).

of Scripture and its canons of persuasion, tradition (what I am calling the historic interpretations of the Church), and reason sanctified by the Holy Spirit. As understood by the judicious Richard Hooker, these three are not parallel. Tradition and reason are subordinate. On the other hand, Scripture itself mandates that it not be divorced from the Church and Christian reason. As someone has articulated this three-legged stool, the legs being Scripture, tradition and reason, it should really be a three-legged stool with one leg longer than the others. The proper hermeneutic is, "Scripture and its tradition and its reason, nevertheless it is Scripture with tradition and reason." Our study will lay a foundation in Scripture, the whole Bible, but it will also appeal to the historic Church's interpretations and hopefully think Christianly through the subject. Scripture and its tradition and its reason come to bear on our treatment of the foundation of discipleship, Holy Baptism.

Conclusion

The great realities of Baptism more than ever need to be signed, sealed and delivered into the lives of the baptized. Just as it was necessary for Luther's followers to understand Baptism if they were to "swim in it," so we should reconsider the significance of this important doctrine as we enter a new millennium. How appropriate to study the introductory rite of the Church as we start another thousand years in the life of the Church! Please recognize at the outset that we are not simply talking about a dusty, irrelevant doctrine. We are engaging a discussion about a practice that meets us at the very threshold of the Kingdom of God. We are approaching a subject critical to the mission, growth and nurture of the Church. Before analyzing specifically the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, how-

ever, let us define the term *Sacrament* in the next chapter.

1

A Sacrament: Covenantal Grace Signed, Sealed and Delivered

My friend declared as he sat there with his newly adopted child: "*Signed, sealed and delivered.*" The culmination of an arduous, difficult series of steps had finally come, resulting in a happy conclusion, an end that began a beautiful beginning.

Perhaps you know the story. A lovely couple was not able to have children. After many frustrating years, they decided to adopt. The process was long and tedious. So it should be. Human life is too important. The parents did not give up, however, under the mountain of forms to be signed. Eventually the day came when all of those forms were approved. After the new mom and dad picked him up at the orphanage and took him home, a new relation was formed between parent and child. As I greeted the parents when they arrived, I'll never forget the father's words, "signed, sealed and delivered, . . . The papers have

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been signed, the union has been sealed, and now our son is home, really all the way home."

No other words could better express the meaning of a Sacrament: *signed, sealed and delivered*. With these words and actions a new relationship was created between child and parents. So with a Sacrament a new union is established with God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, especially when a person is baptized. Baptism is called a *Sacrament* in the historic Church. A Sacrament is a Biblical reality but the actual word, like the Trinity or Incarnation, is not literally found in the Bible.

Sacrament is derived from the Latin, *sacramentum*, which was used by the Church to describe those special signs and seals of the covenant. From its usage, one of the meanings of *sacramentum* is "oath." *Oath* is a Biblical word (Hebrews 6:17). Therefore, the word *Sacrament* is not used in the Bible, but the word defining a Sacrament is found in Holy Scripture. More importantly, what the Church has historically called the Sacraments (Circumcision, Baptism etc.) involves an oath. An oath is always associated with these special covenant signs and seals.

The oath in Scripture is a pledge upon entering a covenantal arrangement. It is in many examples a self-maledictory oath.¹ A self-maledictory oath meant that one called down the curse of death on himself should the covenant oath be broken. In the case of the self-maledictory oaths of the Bible, they are consigned. A person received an oath taken by another, namely the Lord Almighty. You could say that God co-signs our oath to make it good with His own. God takes this kind of oath when He calls for Abram, the Patriarch, to slay and sever animals on the ground (Genesis 15). This was the tradi-

¹ Meredith Kline, *By Oath Consigned* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968),

tional way of entering a covenant arrangement. Normally the two parties would walk between the animals and burn them afterwards as a seal to a self-maledictory oath. In other words, it was an oath to the death. Because God took this oath on Himself with Abram, and Abram did not, the Lord was volunteering His own death on behalf of Abram. God fulfilled His oath on the Cross, through the death of His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

God's oath was transferred to Abram by means of the covenant sign itself. God promised death to Abram's seed if he did not circumcise the males in his household (Genesis 17:14). This promise of death meant the self-maledictory oath of God was a covering as long as Abram was faithful to the covenant. If he ever decided not to obey God, the self-maledictory oath would be applied to him and any of his seed. They would be cut off. This is the nature of the Abrahamic covenant. It is mentioned in connection with the oath consigned by covenant, which explains the Biblical meaning of Sacrament. The sign of the covenant is not simply a sign. God attaches pledges, sealing life and death to the sign itself. He promises to convey His blessing or cursing by means of a designated symbol. Traditionally for this reason, a Sacrament is defined as a sign and seal.

The Book of Common Prayer joins with the Church of all ages, ancient and Reformed, and expands the sign/seal meaning to an "outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." The *Articles of Religion*, the famous sixteenth-century confessional statement of Anglicanism, defines a Sacrament as follows:

Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only

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quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him.²

The Prayer Book and *Articles of Religion* language is drawn directly from Scripture. St. Paul speaks of the Old Testament rite of Circumcision, "And he received the *sign* of Circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith" (Romans 4:11). Notice the Apostle's description: *Circumcision is a sign and seal of the righteousness of the faith*. St. Paul also links Circumcision and Baptism, when he explains, "In Him you were also circumcised with the Circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the Circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in Baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11-12). Baptism is New Covenant Circumcision. It replaces the Old Testament rite of blood with the rite of water, making Holy Baptism all that Circumcision was and even more. For the moment, however, let us consider how the language of sign and seal, *an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace*, is specifically based upon Holy Scripture going all the way back to the beginning of God's revelation.

Sacrament: A Biblical Concept

A Sacrament is a special, Biblical symbol created or used by God to convey His grace. In one sense, we should understand how a symbol is never a mere symbol. Even a non-sacramental symbol is representative, that is, it conveys a reality (though not Grace) beyond itself through the physical object. For example, a national flag, like the American flag, is not simply a piece of cloth. This is why people rightfully become upset when someone attempts to

² Article 25.

disgrace the flag (burning, trampling etc.). It is more than mere fabric. It is a cloth with the symbols of our nation, those stars and stripes of red, white and blue. It represents the nation. In one sense, it embodies our nation such that to attack the flag is to go against the nation. Also, where the flag officially stands, even at embassies around the world, a piece of our nation is extended to a distant place. The flag is a symbol that is more than a symbol. The same is true of a Sacrament, only a Sacrament is used by God to apply grace through faith.

The Sacramental Nature of Original Creation

The power of a symbol can be understood only by going back to how God made the world. From the outset in the Book of Genesis, God created physical things to transfer spiritual realities. He formed everything to manifest the truth of Himself. St. Paul speaks of the original creation in the following manner:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God (Romans 1:20-21).

The whole world was originally made Sacramental. Everything in creation revealed God and declared His glory. This is not the same as saying the creation was God; this would be pantheism. Nor was the creation neutral, a kind of evolving accumulation of secular molecules that just happened to be picked up and utilized by God. Rather, "In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), which means that every single atom down to its electrons has God's signature. The creation

does not nominally reveal God; it really makes Him known because it was formed by Him for His purposes. Because this is indeed our Father's world, the creation was created to relay the reality of His Being. His "invisible attributes were clearly seen," even "His eternal power and Godhead" were understood from the beginning. The extent of this knowledge about God was fairly sophisticated. St. Paul tells us that they "understood by the things that are made." The physical, created world was made to be an outward and visible sign of God's attributes and His eternal power and Godhead.

Moreover, St. Paul asserts that more than knowing about God, "they knew God" through the outward and visible. His selection of the word *know* is theologically pregnant with meaning. It is used in the early chapters of Genesis to imply a personal intimate knowledge. This could refer to a sexual or a personal knowledge. In reference to knowledge of God, it indicates a true personal relationship. Since the physical world was designed to impart this level of intimate knowledge, the created world for Adam and Eve was not simply a symbol, nor was it a pantheistic extension of God's Being.

God could be known at a number of levels by means of the original creation. At the same time, God was/is distinct in His Being from the creation's essence. God made the world with a Creator/creature distinction. The Creator and His creation, however, were not originally separate. The best way to understand symbol and reality as inextricably bound together without confusing, or co-mingling it with God Himself, is to say that the world was sacramental in nature and function. It was made an outward and visible sign to convey an inward and spiritual grace. Although the physical world indelibly carried God's fingerprints, God was not in matter nor was He somehow removed from creation. He was Creator, distinct but not separate from His creation.

Beyond the general sacramental nature and function of the original creation in its entirety, God created two special trees in the garden, a tree of life and a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These trees functioned as Sacraments in a more specific sense. Both trees were symbols and both were more than symbols; they communicated eternal, spiritual realities to Adam and Eve. In the case of one, God warned, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). At the moment of disobedience, the first man and woman passed from life into death (Romans 5:11-12). The physical was used to apply a spiritual reality, in this case a negative one.

God did more, however, than curse. He judged and redeemed the man and woman by sacrificing animals and promising a Seed to come (Genesis 3:15), Jesus Christ, who would crush the head of the serpent, the one who had deceived them. This promise was vividly fulfilled when the Cross of Jesus was pounded into a hill called the *place of the skull* (Golgotha). Jesus' feet touched a hill that symbolically became the head of the serpent, when the reality of the Death of deaths destroyed Satan. This demonstrated that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was no mere symbol. It caused the death of all of mankind and, yet, due to the mercy of God, it evoked the death of Jesus Christ on a cross (a "tree" in the Greek) to save the world. The tree of evil really conveyed real death, although the power of death was not physically in the tree itself. God used the tree as a real symbol to convey what His Word had promised. The promise of God was attached to the physical tree in such a dynamic, yet mysterious way, that to eat of that tree brought about the real, spiritual and physical death of all of humanity.

In a similar way, the tree of life (Genesis 2:9; 3:24) was a special Sacrament in the first creation. After the

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man and woman had been restored, God sent them out of the garden. He placed an angel with a flaming sword at the entrance of the garden "to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24). Why didn't God want them to eat of the tree of life? Apparently the tree of life would have transferred something to Adam and Eve. If they had eaten of the tree of life in their condition, prior to the Incarnation and the final work of Christ's Redemption, they would have been forever frozen in the horrible position of being like the devils, immortal rebels, unable to receive mercy. Christ had not come, ascended on high and led captivity captive, to use the language of St. Paul (Ephesians 4:8-10). Jesus had not yet "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers," to quote from the *Te Deum*, among the oldest extra-Biblical hymns in the Church. God's post-fall restraint from the garden was a mercy. Nevertheless, we see that God created the physical world to convey spiritual realities in a general and a special sense.

After the fall, the physical world still revealed God; it was created good and never became inherently bad. Because the world (animals and plant life) is not human, it could not and cannot sin. Granted, the physical world suffers from the effects of the fall, namely the curses issued by God on creation, such as thorns, sweat, increased pain and so forth (Genesis 3:14-19). Even so, the world remained Sacramental by design; it did not become sinful but cursed. Humanity on the other hand did become sinful and fallen because it disobeyed God. Thus, the fall limited humanity's ability to receive grace from God by means of natural (general) revelation. The problem was in the sinfulness of mankind, not in creation itself. According to St. Paul, "Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:21). So Creation fell in that it came

under the curse. It did not become essentially evil; only humanity did!

The creation was originally good and remained good. It still continued to reveal God for who He really is, and as such, it could be utilized by God in a consecrated way to become a means of grace. In other words, it would take a special work of the grace of God to enable man to meet God by means of the creation, specifically symbols. Elements such as water, bread and wine under certain circumstances could become special means of grace, Sacraments. In his sinful condition, mankind cannot recognize nor receive what creation offers. Humanity can no longer come to a personal saving knowledge of God through the creation. Humanity can attain to a general knowledge of the world and even God; certainly all truth is God's truth, indicating a unity in knowledge. Nevertheless, only special grace applied through the Word and the Sacraments can open the eyes of sinful humans unto salvation. In a way, this is the importance of recognizing the sacramental theology of the Bible. It acknowledges that only grace applied to humanity can return the physical world to its original purpose as a special means of grace (Romans 8:19-23). The world remains effected by the fall awaiting the final resolution of all things in Christ.

The Sacramental Nature of the Redeemed World

Just as the fall had effects for the physical world, so Christ's death has ramifications for the creation. Christ died for the whole world, including the natural, as stated in one of the familiar verses of Holy Scripture, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). The Greek word for "world," *kosmos*, means "orderly universe," and refers primarily to the physical and by inference to humanity (cf. also John 1:29). The

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Cross of Christ sets in motion the removal of the curses and effects of the fall. We can now sing in one of the famous Christmas Carols, *Joy to the World*, immortal words such as,

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest
the ground; He comes to make his blessings flow far
as the curse is found. Far as the curse is found. Far as,
far as the curse is found.

Consider the incredible theology of this statement, essentially an interpretation of John 3:16. The coming of Christ's redemption restores the creation, eventually removing the effects of the fall such as the thorns on the ground. Moreover, that marvelous refrain, "Far as the curse is found", repeats itself three times. The theology of proclaiming that redemption goes as far as the curse means that redemption is coextensive with the fall. The amazing seventeenth-century Anglican vicar, orator and poet, George Herbert, made a similar point in one of his influential series of poems (*The Temple*) with the marvelous phrase, "the plaister equall to the crime." The cure offsets the ill. Redemption extends as far as the effects of sin; it does so at a personal and cosmic level. In the following poem Herbert uses his powerful descriptive statement as he considers his own Baptism. It is the point to which he returns to be reminded of the great offsetting reality of redemption.

As he that sees a dark and shadie grove,
Stays not, but looks beyond it on the skies;
So when I view my sinnes, mine eyes remove
More backward still, and to that water flie,

Which is above the heav'ns, whose spring and vent
Is in my deare Redeemer's pierced side.

O blessed streams! Either ye do prevent

And stop our sinnes from growing thick and wide,
 Or else give tears to drown them, as they grow.
 In you Redemption measures all my time,

And spreads the plaister equall to the crime.
 You taught the Book of Life my name, that so,
 What ever future sinnes should me miscall,
 Your first acquaintance might discredit all.³

However much the fall undoes, redemption reclaims definitively, progressively, and culminatively at the Second Advent. God makes "the plaister equall to the crime." Granted, Herbert spoke of the crime of his personal sins being covered by God's "plaister" at his "first acquaintance" at Holy Baptism. Yet, his apt phrase captures the sense of the larger circle of redemption to all of creation.

The original paradise and purposes of God in that first greatest of all the wonders of the world are reproduced in greater glory and splendor as the City of God. Another way of putting it, the work of Christ was not simply personal in its ramifications; it was and is historical and cosmic in its extent. The "plaister" is "equall to the crime" that affects the whole world. At the Cross, a real transition occurred in history such that the powers of evil were broken over the physical world. The curse was removed. Thus since the dawn of Christianity on that first Easter Sunday, the whole world has appeared in a kind of spiritual living color once again. It not only has returned to its original purposes, but it has become an instrument of the means of grace for the new covenant in Christ. As such, Christians have taken great concern not only for sacramental theology, but for nature itself, especially animals. Faithful Christians such as St. Francis of Assisi and C. S. Lewis have drawn upon the significance of the

³ *The Works of George Herbert*, edited with commentary by F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), pp. 43-44.

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sacramental character of the redeemed creation to remind the Church of the wonders and spiritual mystery of God's world. Nature, however, even redeemed nature, is not enough to provide salvation. Peculiar means of grace are required to set apart the physical for sacred use, which brings us to those special, post-fall Sacraments in the Old and New Testaments of Holy Scripture.

The Special Biblical Sacraments

The two most prominent Old Testament Sacraments were Circumcision and Passover. In the New Testament, Baptism and Holy Communion are Gospel Sacraments, the two Sacraments actually commanded by Christ. In the Old Testament we learn much about the sacramental character of other objects such as manna, quail, and a rock, all used to convey the grace of God. Once again after the original creation, God designated physical substances to convey spiritual reality. "It has pleased God to employ physical things as avenues for mercies. Jordan to Naaman, and Moses' rod to the Red Sea, and the trumpets blast to Jericho, were all, symbolically and sacramentally, invested with power, while yet in themselves they possessed none."⁴ St. Paul specifically describes the Sacramental nature of these Old Testament rites and objects to the Corinthian Church:

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that

⁴ Archibald Boyd, *Baptism and Baptismal Regeneration* (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1865), pp. 174-175.

spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).

Israel partook of all of these physical actions and items. St. Paul speaks of them, however, as in some sense being the pre-incarnate Christ. Were they only symbols, outward and visible signs? To the contrary, they were also selected by God to apply inward and spiritual grace. In the words of the famous Swiss Reformer, John Calvin, they were not "naked symbols." They were Sacraments. In the case of Holy Communion, the Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians that the bread and wine were not simply symbols. He cautioned,

For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many are dead (1 Corinthians 11:29-30).

The Sacrament of life could be harmful to one's health, if taken in an unworthy manner. How could a mere symbol have this power? The bread and wine of Holy Communion are more than signs. They are covenant seals, sealing the life or death of the person who partakes in a lawful or unlawful manner. Jesus said to eat and live (John 6:32ff.). St. Paul warned of eating and dying.

Holy Baptism is also described as a sign and seal in the New Testament. St. Paul writes to the Church in the city of Rome, "And he received the *sign* of Circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith" (Romans 4:11). In a letter to the Colossians, he speaks of Baptism as an extension of Circumcision, actually fulfilling the bloody, Old Covenant rite in the waters of the New Covenant Sacrament. His language is precise, "In Him you were also circumcised with the Circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the Circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in Baptism, in which

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you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11-12). Notice very carefully St. Paul's logic. Christ's death is the removal of sin, called Circumcision. The Cross is the Circumcision of the sins of the world, which was pictured in Jesus' own Circumcision at eight days. Putting it another way, the circumcising work of Christ at the Cross is also called a baptismal death in the Gospels: "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the Baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized" (St. Mark 10:39; see also Romans 6:3-6). This death was not only the Cross but it was the martyrdom of the Apostles foretold by this statement of our Lord.

In his letter to the Colossians, therefore, St. Paul coalesces Circumcision and Baptism, Old and New Testaments, to form a Sacramental continuity between the means of grace in both covenants. In fact, the rite of Circumcision had always pointed to the coming of the One who would remove the body of the sins of the flesh. As long as the Old Covenant people of God believed, they understood the meaning of Circumcision. When they turned from the Lord in unbelief, they tended to see Circumcision as less than a covenant sign picturing the work of Christ; they reduced it to an ethnic symbol, declaring only that they were Jews (Romans 2). St. Paul reminds the Christians at Rome that it was a sign and seal first and foremost of the righteousness of the faith, not simply an ethnic, cultural, or even a political symbol. It was a Sacrament of grace for all races, nations and peoples of the world for all time. Now we can see not only that *Sacrament* is a Biblical concept, but that Baptism is a Biblical Sacrament that replaces Circumcision.

An Outward and Visible Sign

What is meant by the definition of a Sacrament as an *outward and visible sign*? First, God uses physical substances to signify in some sense what He actually conveys by His grace. These substances symbolize what God intends to effect. There is no inherent connection between the substance of the sign and the thing signified, meaning there is no magical quality about the substances picked by God to serve as Sacraments. Luther is reported to have once announced that he would baptize with beer if no water were available. One implication of Luther's comment, although perhaps not directly intended in this context, is that he denied any inherent magical feature in water.

Second, certain substances suit God's intentions better than others because of their own symbolic character. God selects these for Sacraments. Water is used in Baptism because water most effectively symbolizes what God wants to be understood by the meaning of the Sacrament. For example, water is a detergent, the world's best detergent for that matter. It cleans better than any substance known to mankind. It therefore appropriately symbolizes cleansing, one of the inherent meanings of Baptism.

Water is also associated with the formation of life. The original creation of earth was a ball of water surrounded by water (Genesis 1:1ff.). Out of this water, on the third day of creation God raised up (the literal Hebrew meaning of the verb) land and put the original creation on it. In addition, aquatic life is described as "teeming" in the waters.

Then, *new life* as well has to do with water. Babies are formed in water in the mother's womb. When a woman has a baby, her "water" must break for the baby to come forth. Therefore, it should be no surprise that this

symbol, water, is called upon by God to represent (and convey) life, moreover, new life and birth.

The same principle of outward and visible applies to the second Sacrament. God uses food for the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Not only is food associated with the trees in the garden—by food man fell—food has a basic, created symbolism to it that suits God's purposes. Man cannot exist physically without sustenance; so man cannot live spiritually without the food of Christ. Moreover, all food reminds humans that things must die for them to live. Death is part of life. So death is the way to spiritual life as well, the death of God's only Son, Jesus Christ. The bread and the wine "show forth" His death until He comes because he instituted them on the night He was betrayed (1 Corinthians 11:26). Since all food takes us to the cross if we understand that something has to die for our life to continue, how much more should the very food set apart by our Savior lead us to His death! After all, at the Last Supper He referred to the bread and the wine as His Body and Blood.

In addition, bread and wine also point to the Resurrection of Christ. Bread and wine require yeast to rise. Even if the bread intended for communion should be unleavened, it is clear that Jesus used wine to symbolize His blood. Wine must ferment to become wine, which means it has to expand by a yeast agent at work. The juice of the grape in a sense rises, being transformed into a new, second life of the grape. The elements symbolize appropriately the Resurrected, Living Christ, who drank the Eucharist anew with His first disciples on the first day of the week.

A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign. It is appointed by God to symbolize uniquely the work of Christ. Yet these symbols cannot stand alone without teaching. St. Augustine warned that "symbol without teaching leads to idolatry." The meaning of the symbols must be ex-

plained for them to be properly understood. For this reason, we should also clarify in what sense these outward and visible signs are also used to convey an inward and spiritual grace.

An Inward and Spiritual Grace

The Sacrament is sometimes misunderstood. It does not mean some kind of magical operation of an outward and visible sign resulting in an inward and spiritual grace. We do not imply what was distorted in the later Middle Ages, "a work working" (*opus operatum*). This phrase was never intended to teach that the Sacraments work automatically apart from God and the work of Christ. In the original sense intended by Augustine in his debates with the Donatists, the phrase is true with reference to validity of the Sacrament regardless of the character of the one administering.⁵ The phrase wrongly came to imply automatic grace in the elements of the Sacraments, in the water, bread and wine. Regarding Baptism, certain scholars had begun to teach that this Sacrament was the infusion of the habit of grace, and that somehow, grace was transferred from the priest to the waters and then to the person baptized by the waters of grace. The belief was that the priest was infused with the Being of God and that this Being of God was inserted into the waters of Baptism when they are blessed. With this view, an inherent theological and practical problem resulted in what the Reformers called a transferal of the Being of God to inanimate objects. God's attributes cannot be contained in water, bread and wine. Turning it around, such objects do not manifest the non-communicable nor communicable attributes of God after consecration. They cannot love nor speak. They are inanimate and as such incapable of re-

⁵ See Appendix Two, *The History of Baptism in One Easy Lesson*.

ceiving the Being of God. Yes, they can be consecrated for God's use, but this is different from implying infusion or change in substance.

God does apply grace at Baptism, which is why the historic sixteenth-century Reformed confessions all call Baptism a means of grace. The English Reformers even referred to the Sacrament as an *inward and spiritual* grace. Importantly, the inward and spiritual should be understood as referring to the *person* receiving the Sacrament not the Sacraments. The grace of the Sacrament occurs by means of God's working in relation to the consecrated elements.⁶ Yet this grace is not a substance. It is the formation and cultivation of a covenant relation. In this sense it can be described as covenantal grace. It is the official beginning of God's presence with a person in a special sense. The "doyen of the devotional writers on the sacrament" in the late seventeenth century,⁷ Bishop Simon Patrick of the Church of England, produced an astounding work, *Aqua Genitalis* (literally "The Water of Birth"), in which he makes a simple observation establishing the connection between Christ's presence and Holy Baptism. For him it was a matter of straightforward analysis of the Great Commission. Christ commands, "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19), immediately followed by the words, "Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age" (28:20). Jesus promises to be with His disciples when they baptize, which means He is also in some sense with those who are the recipients of Baptism. This presence is referred to

⁶ In what sense this happens and how God works in the person at Baptism, we will discuss in Chapters Four and Five.

⁷ John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England 1646-1689* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 348.

with the classic theological language of "inward and spiritual grace."

It should be mentioned that Reformed and Anglican theologians often speak of grace in another sense. This is the grace decreed by God unto eternal election. Richard Hooker, for example, refers to this grace when he argues, "In which respect we justly hold it to be the door of our actual entrance into God's house, the first apparent beginning of life, a seal perhaps to the grace of Election, before received."⁸ The infallible, irresistible "grace of Election," grace "before received," cannot not be added where God has not imparted it. It is sometimes referred to as prevenient grace. This is not necessarily the same as covenantal grace. Covenant or sacramental grace can be the means of applying electing or prevenient grace. According to Hooker the latter type of grace might also not be applied, if God has not ordained it. If He has, then the Sacrament would be the appropriate Biblical means for applying it.

Covenantal grace is conveyed by means of the Sacrament. It is Christ's mysterious presence at Holy Baptism forming a special, covenant union. God uses the Sacrament to form and formalize the covenant relation. It is similar to marriage. Two people may be in love before the marriage ceremony. The ceremony makes the union official and an even greater union possible. On the other hand, they might not be in love. The love may come later, or in some tragic cases it may never be part of the marriage. The grace of the Sacrament, therefore, is a covenant union that results from the work of God through Baptism. We will discuss in greater detail the nature of this union at Baptism, Christ's presence through the

⁸ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book V, LX.3. See also, John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book iv.15.22.

power of the Holy Spirit, in subsequent chapters (especially Chapter Five).

The proper understanding of inward and spiritual guards the true objective nature of the Sacrament. Late-Medieval theologians thought of objectivity exclusively in terms of the elements themselves. Objective meant tangible or physical. Reformed theology defined objective in terms of a legal act. Roman theologians have objected to the Reformed view as being entirely subjective. Infusion and transubstantiation views, however, only made the Sacraments subjective, and the elements mechanical and able to be manipulated. The Biblical and ancient model restored at the Reformation, offered once again to the Church the proper sense of the objective nature of the Sacraments and salvation. The Sacrament of Baptism correctly defined, as an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, means God uses Baptism to unite a person to the objective, substitutionary work of Christ. It is objective in that it establishes a covenant union. It is a sign and seal of the work of Christ to the person being baptized (or receiving Holy Communion), which brings us to clarification on how the Sacrament becomes effectual.

The Validity of the Sacrament

We should not confuse what makes a Sacrament valid (whether it is a true Sacrament) with efficacy (the source of grace). A Sacrament becomes effectual because of God. He is the one who has ordained to use the physical to convey spiritual reality. Even so, He never turns loose, as it were, and allows the physical to operate without His involvement. Granted, He is not in the elements, but He sovereignly ordained to use them to apply His presence in some sense to the recipient. The sixteenth-century Anglican scholar, Richard Hooker, importantly emphasizes that "whether we preach, pray, baptize, communicate,

condemn, give absolution, or whatsoever, as disposers of God's mysteries, our words, judgments, acts and deeds are not ours but the Holy Ghost's."⁹ The validity of the Sacrament is another matter. Validity has to do with whether or not the Sacrament is in compliance with Scriptural requirements to be a Sacrament. The following comments help us to understand the distinction between efficacy and validity.

First, there is the requirement of faith. Holy Scripture speaks of personal faith in conjunction with the Sacraments, which keeps them from being mechanical. Jesus spoke of the need to believe in reference to Baptism in His final commission: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Faith is to accompany the Sacrament. Condemnation results from not believing. This does not mean that the Sacrament is an option. After all, Jesus did command Baptism. There is no example of anyone in the New Testament who believed in Christ, after Christian Baptism was instituted, who was not also baptized. Sometimes people are told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, followed by Baptism (Acts 16:31). At other times they are called to believe, or repent, and be baptized (Acts 2:38-39). The Apostle Paul was commanded after he had been blinded, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). In all of these cases, belief is never envisioned as separate from Baptism, but neither is the Sacrament called for without the presence of belief. Faith keeps the Sacraments from being mechanical. It is part of making the Sacraments effectual unto grace.

⁹ *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker*, arranged by John Keble, revised by R. W. Church and F. Paget (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), V, 77.8.

Faith is involved in the efficacy of the Sacrament. Belief in Christ is required of the adult at an adult Baptism, and of an infant and his sponsors at an infant Baptism. Thus, the proper objective view of the inward and spiritual leaves room for the faith of the recipient or the sponsors. God uses blessed, or consecrated, water to apply grace through faith, but all of these aspects are present for the Sacrament to be effectual. The Sacrament of Baptism is used by God to unite the faith of the person or sponsor to the objective, finished work of Christ. In the final analysis it is Christ who saves through these means.

Second, the Word of God makes the Sacraments effectual. Just as God spoke the world into existence at the creation of the world, so His revealed Word is re-creative. It too is a means of grace. The Psalmist declares, "This is my comfort in my affliction. For Your word has given me life" (Psalm 119:50). The Coverdale translation in the Book of Common Prayer uses the wording, "for thy word hath quickened me." This is regenerative language, meaning the Holy Scripture is a means of grace by the power of the Holy Spirit. God uses His Word to *quicken* the hearts of those who hear. We could therefore say that the Word of God written is sacramental in its nature, letters and words being utilized by the Holy Spirit to arouse belief in the heart.

The Word of God is used by God to play a role in transforming everyday elements into a means of life. St Paul writes, "Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26). St. Paul is particularly fond of using *word* as a reference to the Word of God written (Colossians 3:16). The "washing of water" refers to Baptism and the "washing of water by the word" indicates that the Word of God attached to the Sacrament converts it from a common to a sacred sign and seal. In the words of Thomas Cranmer's *Catechism*:

“Without the word of God water is water, and not baptism; but when the word of the living God is joined to the water, then it is baptism, and water of wonderful wholesomeness.” Luther and other Reformers made similar comments, Luther’s own *Catechism* being virtually identical to Cranmer’s.

A word should be mentioned, however, that the use of the Word of God in relation to the Sacraments was not simply the recitation of a formula. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes offers an important point in this regard:

The efficacy of a sacrament is indissolubly linked to the word of which it is the sign — not, however to the word as a mere pronouncement of a formula of consecration, but to the word as a proclamation of the gospel to those who receive the sacrament. . . . To be effective, the sacraments must be addressed, word-wise, to men and women, as to intelligent, responsible, and needy persons who must inwardly believe the word thus proclaimed to them.¹⁰

Hughes adds, “The necessity of this inward belief had been stressed long since [the English Reformers] by Augustine, in passages with which the Reformers were well familiar.”¹¹ He quotes Augustine, “Whence has water so great an efficacy as in touching the body to cleanse the soul, save by the operation of the word, and that . . . not because it is uttered, but because it is believed.”¹²

The thinking of the English Reformers, therefore, moved from the efficacy of Holy Scripture through the power of the Holy Spirit to the efficacy of the Sacrament. The Scriptures are clear about their own effectual nature,

¹⁰ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers* (Abington, PA: Horseradish, [1965] 1997), p. 170.

¹¹ *Idem.*

¹² *Idem.*

how the Holy Spirit uses them to apply grace (Romans 10:16-17). Based on the plain sense of Scripture, Cranmer and other Reformers saw the Ephesian reference (5:26) as pointing to the role of the Word of God in the conjunction with the very Sacraments commanded by Christ.¹³ This should not be construed in any mechanical sense. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to make the Sacrament into a declaration of the Gospel and thereby effectual when received in faith. Moreover, the element of mystery does not disappear, but the relation between the Word of God and the Sacrament does provide a parallel between the Holy Scripture as a means of grace and the Sacraments as a means of grace, particularly in our consideration for this study, the Sacrament of Baptism. If God can use letters (symbols) combined to make words written on a page, albeit under the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, to apply grace by faith, surely he can use the same means to convey His presence through water, bread and wine.

Third, a minister or Christian layman is required to perform a valid Baptism.¹⁴ Normally, not just anyone can perform a valid Baptism. In Holy Scripture, duly set apart ministers, elected or appointed by the people and ordained by the Apostles and their successors (Bishops and Presbyters), are normally involved in administering the Sacraments (Acts 6). From the earliest days of Christianity, however, the Church has allowed Christian lay-

¹³The exegesis for the Ephesians 5 passage as well as others used in support of Baptismal regeneration will be developed in Chapter Five.

¹⁴Regarding the second Gospel Sacrament, Holy Communion, the Church has understood the necessity of an ordained minister with proper intention for valid consecration with certainty (*Bebaiō* was the Greek word used in the historic Church). There is no provision for a layman to consecrate or serve as President of the Eucharist. However, a discussion of this issue is not within the purposes of the present work. It is for a study on Holy Communion.

men (male or female) to administer Baptism in cases of emergency. Although the Reformers were divided on this point, the Anglican Church has always stipulated in its canons that a Christian layman may validly baptize when a minister is not available. The requirement is water applied with the Trinitarian formula.

This point is sometimes tied to the matter of intention.¹⁵ The intent of the person (or Church) performing the Sacrament can affect its validity. To use a very simple example, one of my sons once pretended to be a minister and he went around the neighborhood pretending to baptize children, some of whom did not particularly want to be baptized! He used real water and the Trinitarian formula. When I spoke with him about the matter, he told me that he was only “playing like he was baptizing”; he

¹⁵With reference to the validity of the Eucharist, some would argue for strict Apostolic order (clergy ordained by Bishops in Apostolic Succession). Among those with this emphasis, some would argue that Apostolic succession is not enough to make a Sacrament valid. Intent with authorization to ordain under the authority of the Papacy is also required. At the other end of the spectrum from those who define validity based on order would be those who emphasize faith. For them faith validates and the order is not particularly the issue. Classical Anglicanism generally maintained a balance between faith and order. Episcopacy is for the “full being” (*plene esse*), or “well being” (*bene esse*), not the “being” (*esse*) of the Church. In other words, churches and clergy can exist without Bishops. Moreover, Anglican orders do not involve papal authorization and intent, but then, neither did the Eucharistic services in the Early Church prior to the development of the Papacy. The intent of the Papacy does not have Apostolic precedent. Yes, there were Bishops of Rome but their authority and therefore their intention was not what the Papacy later became! Finally, for the most part Anglicanism has not totally denied the orders of Protestant churches, recognizing them as in some sense valid but irregular. Accordingly, Anglicans have sought to regularize them where possible. The doctrine is called *per saltum* (by a leap), which says that the higher order validates and regularizes the lower ones. The famous example for Anglicans is the situation where Bishop Lancelot Andrewes (early seventeenth century) was involved in the consecration of Presbyterian clergy to the Episcopacy even though they had not been made Deacons and Presbyters by a Bishop.

knew that he was not really a minister and that he was not really trying to baptize anyone. His baptisms were not valid. As is noted in footnote 15, this requirement of intention can become more complicated, particularly in reference to the Sacrament of Holy Communion, in which a properly ordained person is required for a valid Sacrament. Nevertheless, when the Church is not certain that someone has been baptized, or validly baptized, it baptizes conditionally. The minister conducts a baptismal service and simply inserts the words, "If thou art not already baptized, [name of the person], I baptize thee in the Name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Even though we can note requirements of validity—God's Word, faith and a proper person to administer—the efficacy of a Sacrament is still a mystery. It is God who works mysteriously by means of water, bread and wine. The mystery of the work of God by means of the Sacrament (especially a valid one) through faith cannot be rationally comprehended any more than the Trinity or the Incarnation can be fully grasped by human reason alone.

Grace Without the Sacrament

It is even possible for God to apply grace when a Sacrament is being administered invalidly or apart from the Sacrament altogether. In His sovereignty God may choose to give grace in "extraordinary" circumstances. Historic Christianity as expressed in classical Anglicanism has been careful to maintain this point. In an exchange with a personal friend, the famous seventeenth-century Archbishop of Armagh, John Bramhall, once entered the discussion of the possibility of receiving grace without the Sacrament. He wrote concerning unbaptized infants who die before they can be

baptized. While asserting the importance of Baptism, he made a distinction that unbaptized infants are more likely to receive grace from God than unbaptized adults who would presumably be able to have a say in being baptized.¹⁶ Kenneth Stevenson succinctly summarizes Bramhall's points defending the case for the possibility of infants receiving grace without the Sacrament:

First of all, the grace of the sacraments is indeed communicable without the sacrament, as witness those early Christians who went to their deaths as martyrs without the opportunity to be baptized. Secondly, the *desire* for baptism was accepted in early times for baptism itself. . . . Thirdly, the medieval Schoolmen taught that abortive infants did not go to hell. Fourthly, Jewish children could be saved without circumcision, so that the uncircumcised were not excluded from the covenant. Fifthly, it was the custom of the patristic Church to delay baptism, because it was restricted to certain seasons, for example Easter and Pentecost.¹⁷

Bramhall in no way attempted to remove the responsibility of Baptism. He only wanted to underscore that God in His merciful sovereignty can apply grace without the Sacrament in unusual situations, which means grace is not exclusively, though normally, tied to the Sacraments. Importantly, a little over two centuries later the Reformed Episcopalians made the same point in their *Declaration of Principles*. They attempted to defend as well that grace is not *inseparably* tied to the Sacrament of

¹⁶*The Works of John Bramhall*, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology (Oxford: Parker, 1842), vol. I, pp. 178-180.

¹⁷Stevenson, *The Mystery of Baptism*, p. 93.

Baptism.¹⁸ They correctly maintained that Jesus is Lord of the Sacrament and His heavenly Father is the author of grace.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to define a Sacrament as an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Based on the language of Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer, a Sacrament signs, seals and delivers, beginning with Baptism. But this statement leaves much to be desired. The next question we have to tackle is, "What exactly is signed, sealed and delivered in the Sacraments?" What is signed? What is sealed? What is delivered? As we shall see, my friend's comments at the beginning of the chapter about his new, adopted son's being signed, sealed and delivered, are a wonderful analogy of the Sacraments, starting with the precursor to Baptism, Circumcision in the Old Testament. In the next chapter, we will look at the background to Baptism in the Abrahamic covenant in Circumcision.

¹⁸See Chapter Five for a fuller discussion of Declaration of Principles IV.5, which denies, "That Regeneration [in the nineteenth-century sense] is inseparably connected with Baptism." At the same time, the more classical definition of *regeneration* will be developed and defended in the chapter.

2

Circumcision in the Presence of the Triune God

In the previous chapter, Sacrament was defined in the Scriptural language of *sign* and *seal*, or to use the words of the historic formularies of the Church, *an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace*. This precise language found in the New Testament refers to Circumcision in the Old Testament, “And he received the *sign* of Circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith” (Romans 4:11). Elsewhere, the same author (St. Paul) connects Circumcision to Baptism, explaining the latter as a replacement of the former, “In Him you were also circumcised with the Circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the Circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in Baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11-12). Through Christ, a person enters the true meaning of Circumcision. Through Baptism, a person is somehow associated with Christ and the reality of Circumcision. Therefore, the way to a proper understanding of Baptism is through the Old Testament background of Circumcision.

When the Old Testament context of Circumcision is considered, the complete passage explains the rite as part of the formation of the Abrahamic covenant. The mindset of Holy Scripture is straightforward. If Circumcision is the precursor to Baptism, then the Abrahamic covenant anticipates the New Covenant. To interpret correctly what Baptism signifies and seals, Circumcision should first be understood as an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace of the covenant behind the New Covenant, the Abrahamic covenant.

The Abrahamic Covenant

In the Book of Genesis, God Himself defines Circumcision in a fuller sense as His *covenant*. Consider God's conversation with Abraham.

When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abraham and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless [righteous]. . . . I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. . . . This is My *covenant* (Italics mine) which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your fore-skins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. . . . and the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My *covenant* (Genesis 17:1-14).

Circumcision was given as a sign and seal of God's *covenant* with Abraham and his children. To receive Circumcision was to be in covenant with God. Not to receive

it meant breaking covenant with God. So what was this covenant?

The Biblical covenant is similar to, though not the same as, other arrangements in the ancient near-eastern world. Scholars of recent years have pointed out the resemblance between ancient near eastern suzerainty treaties and the Biblical covenant.¹ A suzerain was a great, near-eastern, geo-political lord of the ancient eastern world. He would impose a covenant with lesser lords, called vassals. Instead of being destroyed by war, the vassals could enter a kind of covenant agreement, actually a treaty. These covenants were written down in the form of treaty documents. Their structure was very similar to the Book of Deuteronomy (preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, sanctions and successional statements).² Since the Book of Deuteronomy can be construed as a cov-

¹ George Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: Biblical Colloquium, 1955). Meredith Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1972] 1978). Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper* (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1993).

² In my book *That You May Prosper*, I have explained the covenant as having a similar structure to the suzerainty treaties. Using primarily Meredith Kline's research, I observed that the Biblical covenant has five essential elements: transcendence, hierarchy, ethics, oath by sanctions, and succession; someone suggested the acrostic THEOS. Through continued study, I have come to believe that these five are essentially threefold in terms of the Triune God. A covenant consists of initiation by God (the Father), mediation by a representative (the Son), and incorporation into a sacred union by the Spirit: through the righteousness of faith, the Sacraments, and progressive formation. The latter understanding of the covenant is reflected in this book. Clearly there is a parallel between the fivefold and threefold breakdown of the covenant, the last two points being developments of the third. The more recent view of covenant does not negate the insights of earlier work. Rather, it seeks to expand on it and even strengthen it, for the points of the covenant are now viewed as a direct reflection of the Persons of the Godhead. Covenant is a union initiated by God that is legal and organic, where two become one without ceasing to be two. This mystical union between God and His people is formed by God the Father through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

enant document, perhaps it could be a type of treaty between God and His people. Time does not permit a full discussion of the parallel between suzerainty treaties and the Biblical covenant.

Although there are parallels with suzerainty treaty documents that assist our understanding of God's covenant, the Biblical covenant is unique. God is the ultimate Suzerain, but the Biblical covenant is not primarily a geo-political covenant in any secular sense, nor is it only a legal arrangement between God and His people. Yes, it formed Israel into a nation, but Israel was to be unlike the other nations. Israel was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, a nation of priests (Exodus 19:6), not simply a secular political entity. They were to be a spiritual kingdom leading the nations of the world to worship the One, True and Living God. The Biblical covenant is therefore much more than the other, ancient near eastern models.

The Abrahamic covenant precedes the later, Deuteronomic settlement. It was the original covenant with His people. God's initial covenant was based on grace, not on law. For certain this covenant of grace obligated God's people to righteousness, as we shall see, but it is God's righteousness that satisfies the Suzerain's own standard. Furthermore, the Abrahamic covenant describes a mystical union between God and His people, conveying His special presence. This is something that no secular, suzerainty treaty could accomplish with the Living God of the Bible. The most that secular people had to remind them of their suzerain was a copy of the treaty document. God's people had the Word of God written, but they had more; they had God Almighty, the ultimate Suzerain, personally with them. To summarize the covenant with Abraham based on what we find in Genesis 17, *the Biblical covenant is union with the Triune God (1) initiated by the promise of God (The Father), (2) by means of a representative (The Son), and (3) formed by the Lord's*

presence (the Spirit) (3a) on the basis God's righteousness by faith in the righteous living out of faith, (3b) involving a sacramental sign and seal of new life (3c) for future generations. These are the elements of the Biblical, Abrahamic covenant. After we consider them in greater detail, we will then be in a position to understand how this covenant is fulfilled in the signs and seals of Baptism.

Union with the Triune God

Before considering the various aspects of the Abrahamic covenant, we should recognize at the outset that this covenant involved the Triune God, which makes this arrangement totally unique. We are told that "Almighty God" appeared to Abraham (Genesis 17:1). This was probably a theophany of the Triune God. It is the similar name for God used when He later appears to Abraham by the terebinth trees of Mamre (Genesis 18:1). Significantly, the passage says the Lord *appeared* to Abraham. As the patriarch lifted his eyes he saw "three men standing by him" (18:2). Yet, when he addressed them, he spoke to the Lord, singular, as well as in the plural (18:3). Even though Abraham spoke to the Lord, he recognized a plurality as is suggested by the following conversation:

My Lord (singular), if I have now found favor in Your (singular) sight, do not pass judgment on Your (singular) servant. Please let a little water be brought, and wash your (plural) feet, and rest yourselves (plural) under the tree (Genesis 18:3-4).

The interchange with Abraham, and even Sarah, continues with references to the Lord as singular and plural. "They" speak to them, reiterating the promise of a seed, a son. This provokes laughter from Sarah, to which the Lord (singular) questions Abraham, "Is anything too hard for the Lord (singular)?" (18:14).

After the conversation, "the men [plural] rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them [plural] to send them [plural] on the way." At this point the text states, "The Lord [singular] said" (18:16). This begins the famous series of questions between God and Abraham, whereby Abraham reasons with God to spare Sodom if only ten righteous people can be found. At the conclusion, "the Lord [singular] went on His [singular] way" (18:33).

The Church has historically recognized this famous theophany as the appearance of the Triune God. The specific conversation of the Lord, yet three men, seems so clear that the traditional interpretation is sound. Granted, the Holy Scriptures eventually clarify this plurality of God as the Holy Trinity. The three persons of the Godhead are not called by name. Yet there seems no mistaking the fact that Abraham and Sarah recognized the Trinity in Unity by their conversation. This was the same Triune God who appeared to Abraham all during his sojourn (Genesis 12:1; 28:3; 35:11), especially in the passage where the Lord initiated the covenant (17:1ff.). Therefore, the Abrahamic covenant is not simply any covenant. It is a covenant forming a special union, which I am calling "Circumcision in the presence of the Triune God." This presence forms a special union with the Almighty, making it the covenant of all covenants in the Old Testament leading up to an even greater covenant, the New Covenant. Of course the Incarnation is what distinguishes the New Covenant. At the time of the Abrahamic covenant, the Lord had not become man. The union between God and man prior to the Incarnation was limited. Nevertheless, the Abrahamic covenant brought man into God's presence in a special way, though not in as complete a sense as when the Incarnation takes place. When the Incarnation occurs, the covenant made with Adam and Eve after their fall, in which God promised the woman a seed

who would crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15), is finally fulfilled.³ It is the covenant completed in Christ and applied to the Church as we shall see in the next chapter.

(1) Initiated by the Promise of the Father

God's covenant with Abraham did not begin in Genesis 17. It started much earlier with a gradual unfolding of a series of promises. The first promise is actually given in the garden, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; and He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15). This is sometimes called the first proclamation of the Gospel in the Bible. Although God spoke to the serpent, He was actually making a promise to the first couple. What was the promise? It was that they would have a son, who is literally called their *seed*. He would be quite special. This Seed would be so unique as to do mortal combat with the seed of the serpent. The Son of the woman would be wounded but He would vanquish the serpent, a fallen angel. The implication is that this Seed of the woman would be more than a mortal, for He would be able to destroy more than a mortal, a fallen angel. Of course, the ultimate fulfillment of this promise was/is Jesus Christ. The point in Genesis, however, is that God

³ Theophilus Herter, *The Abrahamic Covenant in the Gospels* (Houston: Classical Anglican Press, 2000). The Rt. Rev. Dr. Herter was one of the finest Reformed scholars of the twentieth century. Not only was he Professor of New Testament at Reformed Episcopal Seminary, he was a distinguished Bishop and Presiding Bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church. His outstanding work on the Abrahamic covenant was originally a doctoral dissertation written at Westminster Theological Seminary. The work in the present chapter as well as the next chapter builds on and extends Bishop Herter's thesis. The Abrahamic covenant is the pre-Incarnational expression of the New Covenant and the New Covenant is the Abrahamic covenant fulfilled in Christ and His Church.

promises a Seed, making the appearance of the Seed very important.

First, God reiterates the promise of a Seed to Abraham, meaning the covenant promise would come through him. Although the word promise is not used *per se* in the Genesis passages concerning Abraham, later Scripture refers to God's intent to bless Abraham as a promise. The Book of Deuteronomy begins, "May the Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has promised you" (Deuteronomy 1:11). Notice the specific reference to Abrahamic covenant language. The operative word is *bless*. In Genesis 12, God initiated His promise through Abraham. He promised to bless him with a seed, a word literally pregnant with meaning in the Book of Genesis. This blessing fulfilled the original promise given to Eve.

Second, it is specifically God the *Father* who issues the promise. Perhaps this is implied in some of the words for God that are used in conjunction with the promise. More direct reference to the *Father* is given in the opening chapters of the Book of Acts. As the disciples sat at their Master's feet once again, "He [Jesus] commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the *Promise of the Father*" (Acts 1:4). Then at the end of Peter's famous Pentecost sermon, the Apostle reassures his hearers that the "promise is to you and your children, and to all who afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). Using Abrahamic covenant language—"you and your children"—he speaks of the promise that Jesus tells us is from the Father. Thus, the promise to Abraham is initiated by God the Father.

In Genesis 15, God the Father stated the promise again to Abraham. This time, however, God did something more dramatic to emphasize the graciousness of His promise, impressing upon His servant that His covenant was of grace and not of works. God told Abraham to

gather animals and to separate them by cutting them in halves, a standard procedure for formalizing a covenant. When two parties wanted to make a covenant, they walked between severed animals and burned them with fire to seal their arrangement. It was a way of expressing that death sealed the agreement and violation of the covenant meant the death of the one who broke the union. In the case of Abraham there is one glaring difference between a secular covenant and God's covenant. After the great patriarch followed God's instructions of killing and separating animals on the ground, God caused sleep to fall on Abraham. God took this action. Then God Himself sealed the covenant with the fire of His presence. This is sometimes recognized as a self-maledictory oath, by which one party calls down death on himself should the covenant be broken by either party. This is indeed what God did eventually on the Cross, even though He did not break the covenant; humanity did. The Father poured out His love through the Son for the sins of the world. Nevertheless, what God did preceded and fulfilled whatever Abraham did.

Finally, in Genesis 17 God reissues His promise by way of a specific manifestation of His covenant through the rite of Circumcision. When God comes again to Abraham to apply His covenant in an even more personal sense by the rite of Circumcision, He takes the lead as He had previously done at every point. For the specific application of the promise of God on his person, the Lord restates the promise to Abraham, calling for a change of name, Abraham (Genesis 17:5), which literally means plurality added to Abram, an heir. One commentator has explained the new name in the following manner:

The etymology of the new name, the point of the story, is popular — *Abraham* only sounds like *ab-hamon*, "the father of a multitude." In other

words, the biblical explanation of the name is a sound play on the name rather than an exact etymology. The name *Abraham* is probably a dialectical variant of *abram*, with no appreciable difference in meaning. Its significance is from the word play. The patriarch thus originally bore a name that spoke of his noble lineage. But when the Lord confirmed the promise of posterity without number, he signified it by the new name. This new name, *Abraham*, was to be a perpetual reminder of the promise that the patriarch would be *ab-hamon*, "father of a multitude." There would now be a looking away from the noble lineage to the anticipation of progeny.⁴

God simultaneously promises with His words, yet He fulfills the promise. Circumcision is the personal application of the promise of God the Father and its fulfillment. Because the sign and seal of the covenant were placed on the organ of procreation, Abraham was reminded that God through this rite would bring about His promise.

This is a picture of the grace of the covenant. God initiated before Abraham had done anything. In the words of the famous St. Augustine: "Grace precedes faith;" indeed it precedes any human work. Israel was forever to be reminded that it was God's grace that made them what they were, not their human efforts. To quote the words of the perceptive hymn, "Amazing Grace" (written by the way by a good evangelical Anglican priest): "It was grace that brought me safe thus far and grace shall lead me home." The Biblical covenant with the Holy Trinity is graciously initiated by way of a promise from God the Father.

⁴ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), p. 332.

(2) Mediated by means of a Representative

Second, the Triune God mediates the covenant by means of representatives. Abraham was made God's covenant representative. God talked further with Abraham, "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations" (Genesis 4:18). The covenant was specifically with Abraham. To join the covenant meant entering some kind of sacred union with Abraham, who became the father of the covenant (John 8:39). Ultimately, this meant union with Jesus Christ. St. Paul tells the Galatians, "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). The Jews eventually rejected this reality, which explains why Jesus told them that their father was not Abraham, but the Devil (John 8:39-47). If the Jews of Jesus' day really had Abraham for their father, meaning if they were faithful to the Abrahamic covenant, then they would have believed in Christ. Therefore, the covenant was entrance into union with Abraham, which ultimately meant union with Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

The covenant not only made Abraham and his specific Seed a representative, but it made Abraham's descendants His representatives as well. Speaking to Abraham, God told him the covenant was with "[him] and [his] descendants after [him]" (Genesis 17:7). Who were these descendants? They were to become the nation of Israel through Abraham's son, Jacob, who was renamed Israel. Abraham became a nation through his son. The Seed creates a community, which in turn represents the Seed. To enter a union with the Seed, one had to enter the community. In the Old Covenant, one had to become part of the nation of Israel to unite with the Seed of Israel. Throughout the Old Testament, becoming part of Israel

became an issue. We should not miss the fact that Israel was not to be just a nation. It was to be a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:5), a holy nation. It was entrusted with mediating life to the rest of the world. It was a royal priesthood because it was not only to lead the Gentile nations to God, as Solomon did with the Queen of Sheba, but the nations came to God through entrance into the covenant community, Israel.

This demand for union with Israel created a tension in the Old Covenant. How could Gentiles come to God through Israel if they had to relinquish their national identity? They virtually could not. The only possibility was by marriage into Israel, such as was the case with Ruth. She is the Gentile bride who was able to come into the holy nation. This is a picture of the New Covenant, when another Gentile bride, the Church, would be allowed into the holy nation. Until the New Covenant, however, it was difficult, almost impossible, for Gentiles to convert without giving up their ethnicity. At the time of the Incarnation, Israel had worked out a way for Gentiles to be believers in Yahweh by becoming God-fearers, such as was the case of Cornelius (Acts 10). They were not able to come all the way into the covenant, however, until the New Covenant broke down these barriers. Why was this matter of becoming a member of the nation so important? One had to become a member of God's people, His representatives, to be united to Him. The Abrahamic covenant established this principle with Circumcision being the way to become part of His representative.

(3) Formed by God's Presence

Third, the Triune God actually forms a union with His people through His special presence. This presence is expressed in the words, "to be a God to you and your descendants" (Genesis 17:7). At other points, God summarizes

His covenant as, "I will be your God and you shall be my people" (Exodus 6:7). The only way to describe this relation is as a kind of union, a solidarity as some prefer to call it, by means of the Lord's own presence. This covenant solidarity was a unique kind of relation. God would be near and present with His people, and they would be close to Him. It is the formation of a oneness that can only be described as a mystery, a mystical union between God and His people. How was this union formed?

(3a) The Righteousness of Faith in the Righteous living out of Faith

The union was formed on the basis of righteousness by faith in the righteous living out of faith. The language, "I am Almighty God, walk before Me and be blameless" (17:1), relates to a similar statement two chapters earlier. The actual word for blameless is not *righteousness*, as mentioned in the comment, "[Abraham] believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). How do we relate these two statements? Very simply the righteousness by faith and the righteous living out of faith have an organic unity such that they can be distinguished but not separated.

First, righteousness was applied to Abraham by faith. In this sense, it was a forensic righteousness: "[Abraham] believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). Abraham was justified by faith before the Ten Commandments were written down, which is St. Paul's point in quoting from this very passage (Romans 4:3). The Abrahamic covenant was not to be merely an external relation to God. It was to be internal from a heart of faith. Abraham even believed God before he was circumcised. As an adult he entered covenant with God based on the righteousness of God through his own faith.

Second, the righteousness laid to Abraham's account by faith was expected to be worked out in his life by righteous living. Faith was the instrument of the righteousness, yet this righteousness was to become part of Abraham. Blamelessness was to be formed in his being or character. In this sense, righteousness was organic as well as legal. The very character of God was to be reflected in Abraham.

God could only be known by faith, but this faith was not to be alone, that is, without works. Yes, faith and works are distinguished in Scripture but they are not to be separated. Faith without works is no faith. To use the language of the New Testament writer, James, "Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17). The requirement of righteousness is forensic and organic. It is forensic in the sense that it is legal and representative. Justification is declared by God, a juridical act apart from any human work. This is the objective side of righteousness.

Righteousness is also organic. It is required to be worked out in the life of the person, the subject who believes God. It is not simply a legal act. It is subjective, meaning godly action in the life. Therefore, God's covenant calls for trusting and obeying, as a line from the old Gospel hymn reminds: "Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus." True faith without obedience is inconceivable. God's covenant calls for a righteousness that involves both.

Furthermore, true faith and true obedience imply each other. There is no true faith without obedience and no true obedience without true faith. St. Paul speaks of someone who might not be circumcised, but who has true faith, as having the essence of Circumcision. This is the whole point of referring to Abraham's righteous state prior to Circumcision: "And he received the sign of Circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which

he had yet being uncircumcised" (Romans 4:11). True faith without the Sacrament carries with it the meaning of the Sacrament, the righteousness of God.

Yet the rite itself is called the sign and seal of the righteousness of the faith (Romans 4:11). A person who had the sacramental sign was considered a believer. The Sacrament was a normative aspect of expressing faith, such that to have the Sacrament meant having the faith. Thus, Scripture sometimes refers receiving the Sacrament as the way of believing. This is true of Circumcision and Baptism. Peter, for example, told his audience at Pentecost to "repent and be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins . . . for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38-39). Was Peter implying somehow that one is saved by works or even works apart from faith? No, but someone might reach this conclusion if the Abrahamic covenant context of Peter's statement is not understood.

Notice how Peter moves into the very language of the Abrahamic covenant, "for the promise is to you and your children." He simply tells them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins without a direct call to faith. The covenant was so embodied by the Sacrament itself that to receive the Sacrament was to enter the covenant. True faith, righteousness by faith, was not envisioned as separate from obedience, the obedience of being baptized, which is the righteous living out of faith. So sometimes Biblical people call for faith by simply inviting to the Sacrament. In no way is this a violation of salvation by faith. It only points out the organic relation between faith and obedience, or in this case, faith and the Sacrament. Can someone receive the Sacrament without true faith? Absolutely, but people can also walk aisles, raise hands and sign decision cards without true faith. Even the Billy Graham Association has reported that less than five percent

of those who respond to revivals ever end up in the Church. The point is that God did not command that walking aisles, raising hands and signing cards was the appropriate response of faith. He commanded the Sacraments and obedience.

(3b) Involving a Sacramental Sign and Seal of New Birth

The formation of a union with God through His Abrahamic covenant involved a sacramental sign and seal, Circumcision, that uniquely portrayed the fulfillment of the promise. The rite itself was a sign. This sign literally concerned the organ of procreation. It was also bloody, involving pain and the removal of flesh. The imagery is graphic and real for one purpose: it was to remind Abraham of the fulfillment of the promise initiated by the Father and mediated by the Son, the patriarch's seed. This explains why the rite concerned the organ of procreation. It also indicates why it of necessity involved pain and the removal of flesh. In other words, the rite of Circumcision pointed to the Cross. The New Testament explains Circumcision as "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the Circumcision of Christ" (Colossians 2:11). The rite itself involved a sign that directly related to the meaning of the sign. God wants a visible sign. The covenant was to be internal but it was never envisioned to be invisible, or separate from Circumcision, the Sacrament. Faith was distinguished from the Sacrament, but it was not separated from it. It was to be visible through visible signs and seals.

Circumcision was also a seal. What did it seal? It sealed a new birth. Actually, it was a new birth by adoption into a new family. How do we know this? Abram and Sarai were both renamed, and renaming would only take place through the specific application of the seal God was giving them in Genesis 17. The new names were given in

this context, not any other. A new name meant new family and new covenant. Why would Abram and Sarai need to be adopted into covenant with God? Weren't they already in covenant?

For certain God had already made covenant with Abram when He called for walking between sacrificed parts of animals, sealing this covenant by the fire of His own presence (Genesis 15). But something significant happened between the first covenant promise and the giving of the covenant sign and seal of Circumcision. Sarai became impatient. She came up with a plan for Abram to produce a seed through Hagar, Sarai's maidservant. This resulted in the birth of Ishmael, who was not the promised heir. In God's graciousness, He still provided for a special promise to Hagar and her son. It was with Abram and Sarai that God was not pleased. The covenant had been jeopardized, calling for its re-establishment. This time it would be through a bloody rite, Circumcision. Abram and Sarai needed a new birth, an adoption back into favor with God. They were indeed adopted and given new names, Abraham and Sarah. By the sign they were sealed into a new relation with God. They were born again spiritually and covenantally.

Sarah became part of the covenant through her union with Abraham. She obviously was not circumcised. Abraham's role was that of mediator. He mediated the covenant relation to her, just as Christ would be the Mediator of a better covenant to a better bride. As such, grace was applied to her through her husband. The evidence of her inclusion was the change of her name as well. Dr. Allen Ross refers to the change of name as a "second seal" of the covenant,⁵ meaning grace was mediated to Sarah through Abraham's Circumcision.

⁵Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, p. 332.

(3c) Extended to Future Generations

Finally, the formation of union with God through the Abrahamic covenant extended to future generations, the children of Abraham. God spoke to Abraham that the covenant was “to [him] and [his] descendants after [him]” (Genesis 17:7). The male children were to be circumcised on the basis of Abraham’s, or the parent’s, faith. They were graciously entitled to entrance to the covenant of grace. It is important to note that the child was not born into the covenant. The child was to be brought into the covenant by means of the Sacrament. Moreover, the child would be cut off if he were not circumcised, meaning the child of a believer is entitled to be but is not automatically part of the covenant. Also, the Sacrament of Circumcision was not to be applied only to certain male children. It was not to be withheld from a male child presumed to be without faith. It was to be administered to all male children of all believing parents.

Importantly, the male children were circumcised on the basis of the faith of the parents. Faith was always required as well as expected. Adults were to have faith prior to Circumcision with the expectation that their faith would be lived out. One of those ways was to commit the next generation to the Lord by means of Circumcision. In fact, if a parent did not have his male child circumcised, he jeopardized his own spiritual status in the covenant. Even Moses was not exempt from God’s anger, when he neglected having his male child circumcised (Exodus 4:24-31). God was so angry that He was going to kill His special servant for neglecting the Sacrament. Thankfully, his faithful wife saved him and their son from God’s wrath. She took matters into her own hands because her husband was disobedient to the Lord. She circumcised the son, thereby averting judgment on the entire family. Surely this should give us some sense of how important

God's Sacraments are to Him. Part of the parents' obedience is the sacramental expectation that they will bring their children to God, beginning with the placement of the sign and seal of the covenant. This is the first step to assure a future generation of faithfulness.

In the case of an infant, faith is required though not necessarily present at the time of the administration of the Sacrament. Initially it is the faith of another, the sponsor or parent,⁶ that brings the child to the Sacrament with the expectation of faith later. So the pattern was essentially the same for adult and child. Faith is required for the Sacrament. In the case of the adult, it is required prior to the Sacrament. In the case of an infant, it is expected of the parent prior to the Sacrament. Just as Abraham's faith brought the others to the Sacrament of Circumcision with the anticipation of faith, so a parent was to carry his male child to the Sacrament with a similar expectation of faith.

The application of the Sacrament before personal faith teaches an important principle of grace. Significantly, Circumcision was practiced by other nations of the world in and around Canaan. For the pagans Circumcision was a rite of passage into puberty. It was a human work bespeaking man's inner strength into manhood. In God's covenant, however, this common practice is transformed into a sign and seal of the opposite of man's strength. God commands Abraham to circumcise his male children at eight days, certainly long before the child had become an adult. God calls for Circumcision shortly after birth to emphasize man's passivity in the covenant. Grace precedes faith, in other words. The Sacrament comes be-

⁶The case for "sponsors" or "godparents" will be made in the Appendix, which is a commentary on the Baptismal Office in the Book of Common Prayer. The Apostle Paul speaks of guardians of the covenant children other than the parents, tutors and *governors* (Galatians 4:1-2).

fore faith in the case of an infant to remind the covenant community of the larger work of grace in everyone's life. Grace precedes faith in both infants and adults. They believe because God works first.

Grace, nevertheless, requires perseverance. The Sacrament of Circumcision calls for perseverance for the Sacrament to be effectual. Those who continued in the faith and lived out what the Sacrament signed and sealed received the benefits. Those who did not lost the value of the Sacrament. They were not viewed as unbelievers; they were instead considered apostate. Apostasy was a real possibility, as evidenced by various children of the covenant. Not all of the descendants of Abraham continued in the faith. Some like Esau apostatized, that is, they left walking in the covenant.⁷ Return was always possible. Others came back into covenant faithfulness. The point is that life in the covenant is dynamic, not static. It involves perseverance on the part of everyone. As such, the promises of God extend generationally.

The kingdom of God in Genesis was a mixed body, meaning there were some who received the sign of the covenant who turned out to be unfaithful. The Sacrament inescapably creates a mixed body. The covenant community always consists of covenant keepers and covenant breakers. This is unavoidable. There can never be in this world/age a pure community of believers, no matter the effort put forth, even if he were a great patriarch. Some

⁷The possibility of apostasy will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Seven. This apostasy is to be understood in terms of the covenant, not the decree of God. The number of elect, decreed from the foundation of the world, can neither be increased nor decreased. The famous Reformed Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, remarked that God did not paint a yellow stripe down the back of the elect, so we can only preach to all men indiscriminately. This is simply another way of saying that we can only live by the visible covenant. From the point of view of this visible covenant, it is possible for anyone to apostatize, even those who "think" they are of the elect.

have opposed applying the Sacraments to children to avoid impurity in the community. They have been no more successful in avoiding apostasy than those who apply the Sacraments to children. It could even be argued that apostasy rises up more quickly when children are not brought into the covenant at the earliest age. Whatever the case, God commanded the Sacrament of Circumcision to be given to male children.

Conclusion

Thus the Abrahamic covenant in Circumcision consists of a union with the Triune God, initiated by the promise of the Father, mediated by means of a representative, and formed a union by special presence, on the basis of righteousness by faith in the righteous living out of faith, in connection with a sacramental sign and seal of the fulfillment of the promise, for future generations. This is the foundation to the statements made by St. Paul regarding the connection between Circumcision and Baptism, that is, between the Abrahamic covenant in Circumcision and the Abrahamic covenant in Baptism. Let us carry forward all of the vital principles of the Sacrament of Circumcision to the Sacrament of Baptism. We now have the proper means by which to interpret Baptism as a sign and seal of the Abrahamic covenant.

3

Baptism into the Triune God

The covenant with Abraham becomes a New Covenant through the Incarnation. Jesus was the Seed promised to Abraham, and through Him the Abrahamic covenant extends to the Church. The New Testament tells how it is fulfilled, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ, . . . and if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:27-29). How can a member of the Church be a *seed* of Abraham? We are not connected to Abraham through human parentage, unless we are Jewish. Even then, the human lineage to Abraham is not sufficient for salvation. Union with Christ is necessary, a union described in the text of Galatians as in some sense occurring through Baptism.

A consideration of baptismal passages in the New Testament reveals Abrahamic covenant language, beginning with the Great Commission. Jesus instructed His disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Immediately we should notice the emphasis on the Triune God. This is not simply any relation. Holy Baptism is union with the Triune God, just as the Abrahamic covenant was. Somehow the Triune God meets a person in Baptism, the point

at which a special relation with each Person of the Godhead—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—is normally begun. Some might respond to the previous statement, “But isn’t this Baptism into the ‘name’ only and not the Persons of God?” The answer is that the Name of God implies reality. His Name is not like a human name. Human names are merely nominal. For example, the first name of “Ray” means “king.” Does this mean the person is really a king? Actually, since a human name is only a symbol, it is not necessarily attached to reality. With God it is different. His Name is reality. The Apostle Paul refers to how “God has highly exalted Him [Jesus] and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Philippians 2:9-10). Bowing to Jesus’ name is reverencing His Person. The point is that there is no distinction between name and reality when it comes to God’s Name. To be united to His Name is to be joined to Him. For that matter, even in the human realm bearing the name of another means a real identity with that person has been formed, such as in marriage.

The nature of the union with the Triune God is suggested in Jesus’ phrase “baptizing into” as it literally reads in the original, Greek text. Some English texts will use the preposition “in” to translate the Greek preposition. Jesus’ use of a preposition that means “into,” even if translated “in,” reflects a critical development over what Circumcision could accomplish. The Old Covenant initiation rite brought man into God’s special presence, but it could not form a union described as “into.” The Old Testament never speaks this way. It is only through the Incarnation that a complete, mystical union is formed. The union is with God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Granted the Great Commission text speaks of being baptized *into* the name. First, it suggests more than simply coming under the authority of that name, al-

though this sense is not excluded. Rather, the Greek preposition *into* "indicates clearly what the meaning of the rite is, that it purifies and dedicates us unto the Trinity, bringing us into a covenant relation to him."¹ The seventeenth-century Anglican Vicar of Kidderminster, Richard Baxter, described this union with the Trinity: "Baptism is the bringing of this conditional promise, upon man's consent to be an actual mutual covenant . . . [therefore] truly believe in this God the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost, and present and resolvably consenteth to be his in *these relations*."² According to him, "these relations" are formed by means of the covenant of Baptism.

Second, Jesus' Great Commission language, especially His use of the preposition *into* which is often used in other New Testament baptismal passages, refers to a type of union called *incorporation*, meaning literally "one body." Through Baptism, an incorporation or union occurs. For example, the Apostle Paul describes the Exodus, "All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:2). In crossing the Red Sea and in being enveloped in the cloud, the people of Israel became one with Moses. They were not physically attached to him, meaning they were somehow linked to his clothing, or holding hands with him. Rather, they became one with Moses in a real, spiritual sense. Given the parallel between Jesus' baptismal formula and the Abrahamic covenant, the best way to describe the union is covenantal. In a similar way, Baptism into the Name of the Triune God involves a covenantal relation with each Person of the Godhead. This raises many questions, but at the outset we should recognize that taking the Bible at its word re-

¹R. L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, [1878] 1975), p. 762.

²*The Practical Works of the Reverend Richard Baxter*, edited by W. Orme (London: Duncan, 1830), vol. XIX, pp. 261-274. Italics mine.

quires us to acknowledge some kind of union formed, incorporation. Richard Hooker in the sixteenth century often emphasized the theme of incorporation, when outlining the contours of Reformed Anglicanism. For him, “. . . baptism is a sacrament which God hath instituted in his church, to the end that they which receive the same may thereby be incorporated into Christ.”³ The nature of this union and its relation to faith and the family will be addressed in the following chapters.

For now, as a mirror image of the Abrahamic covenant, Jesus’ Trinitarian language helps us to see that Baptism is used by God to open a relation with the Triune God. We should not be surprised. Something similar happened at Jesus’ own Baptism. Lancelot Andrewes, the early seventeenth-century Bishop and scholar (Director of the King James Translation Committee), described Whitsunday (Pentecost) as the “Feast of Baptism, . . . by the opening of heaven . . . For here is the whole Trinity in person. The Son [is] in the water, the Holy Ghost in the dove, the Father in the voice.”⁴ Jesus’ own Baptism involving the Holy Trinity made possible Christian Baptism by which a person is incorporated into union with the Holy Trinity. In the words of Bishop Andrewes again, “Indeed, his whole baptism is not so much his, as ours. . . . [for we are] in league with him, in the new league, [or covenant] never to be altered . . . so may we be, and stranger still; nay no strangers, but naturalized, and of the commonwealth of Israel.”⁵ Thus, the contours of incorporation by Holy Baptism into each Person of the Holy Trinity will guide the specifics of the doctrine of Baptism.

³ *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V 60.2.

⁴ *Ninety-Six Sermons by Lancelot Andrewes*, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology (Oxford: Parker, 1841), Vol. 3, p. 199.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 259, Brackets mine.

Baptism into the Father

Baptism incorporates a person into God the Father by way of His promise. The Father promises, as indicated in the previous comments about the Abrahamic covenant. This promise reaches back to the beginning (Genesis 3:15), and it extends all the way forward in time to the New Covenant. It is this very promise of the Father that Jesus links to Baptism.

And being assembled together with them [the disciples], He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:4-5).

The "Promise of the Father" was made to Abraham. This promise included a seed as well as the return of the nations of the world into covenant with the Lord. At Pentecost, this promise began to be fulfilled. Specifically, however, the promise was connected to Holy Baptism, when Peter told his converts to "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children" (Acts 2:38-39).

Peter relayed the Promise of the Father to them. Baptism is a promise, the Father's promise. Many mistakenly teach that Baptism is a sign and seal of personal, individual faith. This erroneous teaching is called *believer's baptism*, which is not to be confused with the faith that is required of all who are baptized. The Gospel is a call to faith: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31). The recognition of Baptism as union with the Promise of the Father in no way supplants faith; rather it is a call to faith. Cranmer's *Catechism*, which al-

most became the catechism of the historic Anglican Church, asks and answers the following question:

Question. What is required of persons to be baptized?

Answer. Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and Faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in the Sacrament.

Cranmer's answer is based directly on the language of Scripture. The promise is in the Sacrament. It calls one to faith.

An important distinction should be made between the call to faith and actual faith in the person baptized. Baptism should not be based entirely on foreseen, or perceived faith. No one can infallibly detect faith. None can read the heart of another individual to know for certain that the person being baptized, assuming he is an adult, truly believes. As a matter of fact, there is a clear example in the New Testament of someone who was baptized but who turned out to be a false believer. His name is Simon the Magician. He responded to the preaching of one of the early Deacons, Philip (Acts 8). Simon was captivated by Philip's preaching and apparent power. As a magician, he understood power. So he responded and was baptized. Soon after he fell away. Did Philip practice believer's baptism? Even this great Christian could not infallibly read hearts. He baptized those who professed faith. The most that any minister can assume is a profession, hence, professor's baptism.

Baptism is a sign and seal of something God does. What He does is promise forgiveness of sins through Christ. In Baptism a person becomes united with this promise. Even if a person turns out to be a false believer like Simon, he still has the promise of God on him. If a baptized person meets this promise in unbelief, it is to his own condemnation. The promise obligates a person to be-

lieve, but the baptized individual may or may not believe initially or in perpetuity. Either someone might profess faith before baptism and then fall away, or someone might grow into the faith obligated by the promise. All Baptism itself does in relation to the Father is convey His promise. Specifically, what is the promise?

The promise is the "remission of sins." Significantly, for Peter to call his audience to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins assumes that all of them have sin, including men, women and children. It is this sin that explains the need for salvation. Sin that would encompass all of those present to hear Peter is called *original sin* in the Articles of Religion.

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk;) but it is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. . . .⁶

Original sin began at the fall of Adam and Eve. Every person born into the world is infected with this original sin. The Apostle Paul describes the transmission of sin, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). How could all have sinned if they were not present with Adam and Eve? The point of Paul's argument seems to be that everyone was present with Adam and Eve in some sense. For one, Adam was the human race's covenant representative. Legally, everyone was present in Adam in a similar way

⁶ Article 9.

that a representative of any kind speaks and acts on behalf of the constituency being represented. For another, everyone is biologically connected to Adam and Eve. All of humanity descended from them, the first couple. For this reason, King David described his prenatal condition as, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51). Even in the womb, from the moment of conception, the contamination of original sin is present. The presence of sin is legal or representative (forensic) and real, meaning mankind was represented in Adam and actually commits sin.

Of course, the remission of sins promised to Peter's audience includes actual sins, transgressions in thought, word and deed. As Article IX of the Thirty-Nine Articles indicates, sin is so much a part of human nature that people sin even when they are not aware of sinning. Humans come by sin naturally. They sin naturally because of the fall. And they sin well.

The Good News Peter brought to his audience and every audience since is the Promise of the Father, remission of sins. The word *remit* means "to cancel out," or "to remove." The element in Baptism is water, appropriate to the promise that it conveys. For this reason, Holy Scripture speaks of Baptism as a washing (Titus 3:5). The symbol of water applied in the Name of the Triune God conveys the promise as fulfilled through the finished work of Christ at the Cross, which extends the Trinitarian framework for analyzing Baptism to the work of the Son.

Baptism into the Son

Jesus speaks of Baptism as a Baptism into the Name of the Father and of the Son. In the second aspect of the Abrahamic covenant, we observed that the covenant formed a union with God's representative, ultimately

Abraham's Seed, the Son, but immediately it established a relation with God's people. In a similar way, to be baptized into the Son is to be received into His body, the Church. Returning to Peter's call to Baptism, the response is described as, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41). To what were they specifically added? They were brought into the Church, called the body of Christ in the New Testament.

Later in Acts, Saul of Tarsus (later to be renamed Paul) was struck down on the Damascus Road. At the blinding moment of the appearance of the Living Christ, the Lord asked one, simple question, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). Again, Jesus asked him the same question referring to Himself as the object of Saul's persecution. Notice that Saul was actually killing Christians, yet Jesus understood this as persecuting Him, His body. After his conversion, the same Paul was fond of calling the Church, the Body of Christ. In one instance, he speaks of "one body . . . one faith, one baptism," the "body of Christ," the Church (Ephesians 4:4, 12).

At Baptism, a person is united to the Son through His body, the Church. In the Office of Baptism in the Book of Common Prayer, the following statement is said after the actual baptism,

We receive this Child (person) into the congregation of Christ's flock; and do sign him with the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end. Amen.

Baptism is specifically reception into the Church. Notice how the wording of the prayer book reflects the very phrasing of Holy Scripture. One enters into union with

Christ through His body, the Church. The Church is the extension of Christ on the earth. As such, to enter it is to come into special relation with the Son through His Body. The entrance is Baptism.

Baptism into the Spirit

The Great Commission commands Baptism into the Third member of the Godhead: "baptizing into the name of the Father, and of the Son," and, Baptism into "the Spirit." The meaning of Baptism into the Spirit is indicated in St. Peter's sermon at Pentecost, in which he concludes a baptismal call, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, *and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). Peter does not say, *may*; he clearly uses a future tense verb without any implication of a subjunctive mood, which is normally used if *may* is intended. He informs the new converts that they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when baptized, *water baptized*. The work of the Holy Spirit is connected to the Sacrament, not separated from it. Jesus had told His disciples, "John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5). But when those days arrived, that is Pentecost, Peter tied the Pentecostal to the Sacramental. He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism. Granted, the Holy Spirit was not somehow physically contained in the water, as we indicated in earlier discussions about the nature of a Sacrament. Nevertheless, God conveys grace in terms of the Sacrament, using baptismal language that describes a union formed with each member of the Godhead.

Jesus contrasts His Baptism with the baptizing of John. It was not water vs. Spirit, as though the Spirit would work apart from Baptism. Rather, the contrast was between water Baptism without the Holy Spirit (John the

Baptist's Old Covenant ritual cleansing) and Trinitarian water Baptism involving the work of the Spirit. Sounds remarkably familiar to what Jesus told Nicodemus: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). The True Rabbi noted to Nicodemus what He again reminded His disciples before Pentecost, which Peter obediently applied after his Pentecost sermon. Jesus' Spirit Baptism was the Baptism of water and the Spirit, that is, Trinitarian Baptism into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Unless a person wants to deny the Great Commission of Jesus, there is no escaping the fact that water Baptism is in some sense Baptism into the Holy Spirit. The question is: "In what sense?"

Some of course have simply denied any connection between the Spirit and water Baptism. Jesus' baptismal formula is nominal, meaning in name only. One receives the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit at Baptism, but not the reality. If this is true, was Jesus really commanding His disciples to go out and make disciples by baptizing in name only with no reality attached to the Name of God? Was Jesus directing His disciples to create nominal Christians, a type of Christianity in name only? Was this the kind of baptismal practice that changed the world? A negative answer should be given to these questions is apparent. Baptism into the name of God, especially God the Holy Spirit, is not Baptism in name only. St. Paul speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit with reference to Baptism when he beckons the Hebrews,⁷ "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (He-

⁷Of course some scholars do not agree that St. Paul wrote the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. Apollos or Barnabus are two suggestions. However, the historic Church has agreed for the most part that it was St. Paul.

brews 10:22). The outward and visible sign is the "body washed with pure water," and the inward and spiritual grace is a "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience." This language indicates more than a nominal interpretation of Jesus' commission to baptize into the name of the Holy Spirit.

The Sign of the Holy Spirit

Baptism is a symbol of the Holy Spirit in some sense. What does Baptism into the Holy Spirit signify? Some maintain that Baptism is a sign of personal faith, leading to a misnamed *believer's baptism* theology that claims only to baptize those who have true faith. It is better named *professor's baptism*, because no one can infallibly read hearts. Anyone baptizing can only act on the basis of a profession, which may or may not reflect true faith in the heart.

Moreover, a careful consideration of St. Paul's language indicates that he does not exactly state that the Sacrament is a sign of *faith*. Instead, Circumcision is a sign and seal of *the righteousness* of the faith. As the replacement of Circumcision, Baptism is a sign of something objective, *the righteousness* of the faith, not the faith itself. In the Epistle to the Romans, *the righteousness of God* is the major theme. The entire argument of the book turns on this phrase. In short, *the righteousness* of the faith is none other than Jesus Christ Himself (Romans 3:21-26). Baptism is a sign of Christ and what He does through the Holy Spirit, not what man does. Baptism points away from the human and to the Divine, making the symbol of Baptism God-centered.

Specifically, Baptism is a sign of the *cleansing* work of the Holy Spirit. The substance itself conveys this meaning. Water is the greatest detergent made by God. Water removes physical impurity; the water of Baptism implies

the cleansing of spiritual impurity. Throughout Scripture, this image appears. In the great Noahic Flood, water was used to take away the corruption of earth. Peter refers to this event as an analogy to the Baptism of the world through the Resurrection of Christ (1 Peter 3:21). In addition, many Old Testament rituals involved purification, usually by pouring consecrated water over objects and people (Leviticus 8:6; Exodus 30:17-21). The Prophet Isaiah, however, speaks of how the Servant of the Lord will sprinkle many nations, cleansing them (Isaiah 52:15). Jesus brings this imagery together when He speaks of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with water Baptism (Acts 1:5 cf. 2:38-39).

Baptism is therefore a picture of how the Holy Spirit washes sin from the heart. Paul was told "to be baptized and *wash away his sins*, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). In particular, Baptism portrays how the Holy Spirit unites a person to Christ, so that His blood cleanses from all sin (Romans 6:5-6; Colossians 2:11-12). In the words from that astounding series of poems, *The Temple*, by George Herbert:

Beware of lust: it doth pollute and foul

Whom God in Baptisme washt with His own blood.

Baptism not only symbolizes cleansing, it also signifies the new life that comes from the Holy Spirit. The substance of water in a physical sense is involved with perpetuating and replenishing life. In the womb it provides the context for the first growth of an animal. In the world, it imparts new life by moistening the ground to facilitate growth. In Baptism, this symbolic aspect of new life is called *regeneration*. Jesus told Nicodemus, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). He speaks of being birthed of water and the Spirit, connecting new birth, regeneration, with water (Baptism) and

the Spirit. Baptism signifies the new birth of the Holy Spirit such that "Baptism represents regeneration in union with Christ."⁸ Paul tells Titus, one of the first Bishops of the Church, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus our Savior" (Titus 3:5). The "washing of regeneration" language is compatible with other Pauline statements, as well as Jesus' and Peter's language in relation to the baptisms performed at Pentecost. This washing is clearly a reference to Baptism.

Baptism into the Holy Spirit is symbolic. The reception of water in the name of the Triune God represents the cleansing and quickening of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The Articles of Religion define Baptism:

Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or New-Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed.⁹

Baptism is a sign of something God does. What He does is cleanse and give us new life in Christ. Baptism is a visual image of these great benefits of salvation.

Baptism is more than the visual, however, because the work of the Holy Spirit is not only symbolic. The Book of Acts tells the story of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which is also called a Baptism. God connects the work of

⁸ A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, [1860] 1972), p. 622.

⁹ Article 27.

the Holy Spirit with the Sacrament of Baptism, which we will come to in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The definition of Baptism in the Articles of Religion speaks of the sealing aspect of Baptism as well. As we have said, Baptism is more than a symbol. It is a seal, which means Baptism into the Holy Spirit is used by God to accomplish what it pictures. What He accomplishes by this seal is the subject of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. Some tend to stop at this point in their understanding of the Great Commission baptismal formula. They are not able to see the seal of the Holy Spirit in Baptism. His commission describes Baptism as incorporation into the Father by way of His promise, and the Son through His body, the Church, but what about Baptism into the Spirit? It is the unique work of the Spirit to provide the sealing aspect of the Sacrament. How? This is the subject of our next chapter.

4

Baptism into the Spirit (1)

Historical Definitions of Baptismal Regeneration

In the Abrahamic covenant, a third major aspect was the *formation of a union through God's presence*. The Lord became their God and they became His people. Circumcision in particular conveyed the real, spiritual presence of the Almighty. Circumcision brought God's people before Him and into His presence. Circumcision, however, was replaced by Baptism, so that Baptism into the Holy Spirit does no less than its predecessor. It too is used by God to manifest His nearness. Yet, it does even more than Circumcision. The New Testament uses language descriptive of an even greater union by means of the preposition *into*.

As the replacement of Circumcision (Colossians 2:11-12), Baptism not only pictures something, it accomplishes something by God's grace. The accomplishment is not in the water itself. God does it. But God does the accomplishing by means of Baptism. What He accomplishes signs and seals particularly by means of the Holy Spirit. In the words of Richard Hooker: "In baptism, besides the hand seen, that casts the water: the virtue of the Holy

Ghost is there, working, without hands, what here was wrought."¹

How does the Holy Spirit work by means of Baptism? Certainly Baptism symbolizes cleansing and the new life the Spirit. Now the question is, "What does God *seal* by Baptism into the Holy Spirit?" Interestingly, all of the options for answering this question tend to neglect the unique sealing contribution of the Holy Spirit. Some have offered that the promise is the seal; we have seen that this is the sealing of Baptism into the Father. Others have suggested that membership in the Church is the seal. This is true, but we have seen that this is the sealing work of Baptism into the Son. Jesus refers to being baptized into the Spirit, so the question is, "What is peculiarly sealed by the Third Person of the Holy Trinity?"

Based on Holy Scripture, the only credible answer to the question is *regeneration*, literally re (new) generation (birth). The seal parallels what it signifies, new life. In the words of the Reformation confession of Anglicanism, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion:

Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or New-Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed.²

Baptism is "not only a sign of profession." It is more. It is an "instrument" by which a person is signed and sealed. It is not simply a sign of regeneration; it is a seal of

¹ *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V, 59.5.

² Article 27.

regeneration. At the outset therefore, it should be kept in mind that this view, as expressed in the above article, was produced by a godly, Protestant Archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, who was martyred for his Protestant convictions. He was not a Roman Catholic when he wrote the Articles of Religion, nor when he died for his reformed convictions. He along with the Reformed Church of England, as it was originally called, affirmed this belief in baptismal regeneration.

Nevertheless, before developing further the view that regeneration is the seal of water Baptism into the Holy Spirit, a word of caution is offered leading to some basic definitions. The topic of baptismal regeneration became quite controversial in Anglicanism of the nineteenth century. Godly, evangelical and reformed people have argued for it and godly evangelical and reformed people have spoken against it. Some have wanted to keep the word *regeneration* in relation to Baptism, while others have not. Moreover, those who have sought to retain the word regeneration in association with Baptism did not all have the same definition of regeneration. Nor did those who wanted to separate regeneration from Baptism have the same meaning of regeneration.

We all know that arguments are many times waged without defining terms. Surely every married couple knows the pain of having an argument when one "thought" he knew what the other was talking about, that is, until one or the other stopped to explain what he meant. This is simply another way of saying, "Let us make certain that we know what definition we are arguing for or against before we differ at all." If we don't get our definitions correct, then we may be opposing something that the other person does not mean. We will be "ships passing in the night," as the saying goes. So before any hasty conclusions are reached, let us be aware of the range of definitions.

The Early Church Definition

In the history of Christianity, there have generally been four definitions of the word *regeneration*.³ They reflect different theological concerns at various times in the history of the Church. Some of these doctrinal preoccupations re-define the word so that it means something very different from its original intent.

First, in the early Church, regeneration simply meant Baptism. According to Edward Harold Browne: "... the fathers ordinarily call the Sacraments themselves by the name of the grace of the Sacraments. Thus Baptism is perpetually called *regeneration* or *illumination*; not the Sacrament of regeneration, but simply *regeneration*."⁴ He goes on to cite many Church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian and so forth. For example, he notes Irenaeus' comments where the Church Father refers to "baptism, which is regeneration to God," and elsewhere speaking of how Jesus, "Committing to His disciples the power of regeneration, He said to them go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them."⁵

Beyond this basic understanding of Baptism as regeneration, there was a very full and rich interpretation of the Sacrament in the early Church period. The first Sacrament informed their understanding of spirituality, which we will consider in Chapter Eight. For the moment, however, it is only important to note the early Church tendency to call Baptism *regeneration*, based on the

³ Archibald Boyd, *Baptism and Baptismal Regeneration* (London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1865), pp. 45-61.

⁴ Edward Harold Browne, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* (New York: Dutton, 1887, reprinted by Classical Anglican Press, 1998), p. 649.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 650.

straightforward language of the New Testament (John 3:5; Titus 3:5 etc.).

The Middle Ages Definition

Second, the Scholastic period of the Middle Ages tended to speak of regeneration as an "infused habit of grace."⁶ This meant something approaching the "renovation of the whole inner man." *Habit as capacity* was not so much a problem; Richard Hooker believed in something close to the habit of grace concept. Even the Reformed theologian of the seventeenth century Francis Turretin retained elements of Medieval categories by reference to this language. The difficulty with the habit of grace interpretation was the way in which it was combined with a mechanical view of the Sacraments.

According to this view, the substance of grace within the water was applied at Baptism, but not fully received until transubstantiated elements were ingested at Holy Communion. Baptism was minimized by comparison to the Eucharist. Grace had to be understood as somehow received through the waters of Baptism but different from the grace received in the body and blood of the Eucharist. Supposedly the infusion of a "habit of grace" somehow provided the necessary distinction. In reality it did not, at least until after the Reformation when Richard Hooker could maintain a concept of the habit of grace freed of the earlier, Medieval views of grace as a substance. Until the Reformation, however, the first Sacrament lived in the shadow of the Eucharist, especially in view of all of the discussions about the meaning of real presence. Consequently, these late Medieval views of grace as a substance created as many theological problems as they were innovated to resolve. The Reformation attempted to correct

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 640.

them by returning to Scripture and more ancient positions on the Sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Baptism. Hence, it was actually the Reformers of the Protestant Reformation who brought back a strong emphasis on the theology of Baptism, especially regeneration.

The English Reformation Definition

Third, the Reformers' view of regeneration associated it with Baptism but distinguished it from the converting work of the Holy Spirit. In general, they distinguished grace from substance regarding the Sacraments. They saw grace as the mysterious work of God, although the majority of them did not separate this action of God from the Sacrament. They spoke of the Sacraments as *means of grace*, not the grace itself. For this reason, they understood regeneration as covenantal change of relation, adoption as children and the first working of grace. Some of the Continental Reformers and the English Reformers, however, were divided over how this first working of grace was viewed, which really had to do with their understanding of grace.

The English Reformers, strongly influenced by Augustine, thought of grace as more organic. It was the seed of the Word planted at Baptism, but in need of cultivation to grow. It was not mechanical nor automatic. The famous German Reformer, Martin Bucer, uniquely conveyed this organic emphasis to the Baptismal Office of the Book of Common Prayer with the word *regeneration* in a Biblical and Reformation baptismal service he had written for the Archbishop of Cologne (Hermann). Recognizing the significance of this work, Thomas Cranmer invited Bucer to come to Cambridge, where he finished his life and career. During his active and influential ministry, Bucer was asked by Cranmer to critique the first edition of the Book

of Common Prayer (1549). He did and the revisions appeared in the 1552 edition along with the Baptismal Office that he had originally written for the Archbishop of Cologne.

It was Bucer's reformed revision of the Book of Common Prayer that preferred the use of the word *regeneration*, because it was Biblical and believed to be an anti-Roman concept. It offset a mechanical, scholastic approach. How? Regeneration was not understood as the conception of the Spirit. Analogous to physical birth, it was the new birth into the kingdom of God, transfer from one sphere to another. To say that one was regenerated at Baptism meant that God had adopted the person into the kingdom and that He had begun a work of grace through Baptism, albeit not the completion of grace.

Bucer and the English Reformers were careful to distinguish the work of the Spirit from the substance of the water. They referred to verses such as Titus 3:5 — by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit — to support a view that the washing (Baptism) was a different action from the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The two could take place at the same time, but they might not. The work of the Spirit is like the wind, according to John 3:8, blowing where He will. According to Bucer and a majority of the Reformers, therefore, a new covenant relation with God and His people was truly established at Baptism. Moreover, this new relation with God by grace needed to be nurtured with growing faith. Final salvation was not automatic if the person did not persevere in the faith. Taken as a whole, this view was very different from the mechanical, late Medieval view of salvation.

The English Reformers believed strongly in the consistency of their view of regeneration with the cardinal tenets of the Reformation: *By Scripture alone*, *By Faith Alone*, *By Christ Alone*, and *By Grace Alone*. In no way

was their view of baptismal regeneration a denial of any of these important Reformation commitments. Indeed, the same Nicholas Ridley who was martyred for his faith in opposition to Roman Catholic theology of transubstantiation concluded: "Water in baptism is sacramentally changed into the fountain of regeneration."⁷ This should not to be confused with a magical view of the water itself. His Reformed understanding of the Sacrament as a means of grace and not some kind of infusion of grace is reflected in his further comment: "The water in baptism hath grace promised, and by that grace the Holy Spirit is given; not that grace is included in water, but that grace cometh by water."⁸ Reformers such as Ridley demonstrate that their view of baptismal regeneration is with Reformed and Evangelical theology, especially the kind expressed in the Prayer Book, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Catechism and the Homilies named in the Articles of Religion.⁹

The Seventeenth-Century Puritan Definition

Fourth, although the sixteenth-century Puritans in Eng-

⁷ Nicholas Ridley, *Works* (London: Parker Society), p. 57.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁹ Although this will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six on infant Baptism, it will suffice to make a few brief comments about how some of the Continental Reformers differed in their view of grace from the English Reformers. Certain Continental Reformers, including Calvin, understood grace as a completed, final bestowal of a gift. It could not be lost nor added to. It is indefectible. Consequently, Calvin probably thought that only the elect were regenerated in Baptism, yet Calvin in his *Institutes* (Book IV, Ch. XV and XVI) comes very close to the baptismal regeneration views of the English Reformers. Zwingli did not believe Baptism was at all a seal; it is only a symbol. However, he did not oppose infant Baptism on this basis. For him, regeneration never took place at Baptism. These Continental Reformed views came to England after the Roman Catholic Queen Mary died, and her sister, Elizabeth, came to the throne. They fomented a new movement in England after the Reformation.

land still reflected more of the English Reformation views of the Sacraments, the seventeenth-century thinkers in this movement built on incipient ideas from sixteenth-century Puritans. One sees the first developments of such a tension in the Church of England Puritan, William Perkins.¹⁰ He distinguished outward and inward Baptism. He never completely separated the two. Distinguishing fit perfectly well within an Articles of Religion framework of theology. Separating the two would not. Unfortunately, what started out as a distinction between the internal work of the Spirit and the external application of Baptism in the writings of someone like William Perkins developed into a kind of reduction of regeneration to the internal only apart from the external, Baptism. Eventually, regeneration was understood as exclusively internal and completely separate from the Sacrament of Baptism altogether by theologians such as John Owen.¹¹

Among the English Reformers of the sixteenth century, regeneration had been associated with Baptism as simply the place of covenant birth, the point at which the Spirit might or might not completely renew (convert) the person. Full conversion could come later in life. The seventeenth-century Puritans tended to equate regeneration with the effectual call of God.¹² This call is the irresistible voice of the Spirit calling a person from spiritual death into life. Since this effectual call is invisible and internal, regeneration was viewed the same way. Since Baptism was thought to be visible and external, regeneration was understood as a separate work of the Spirit. The result

¹⁰*The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins* (London: John Leggatt, 1626), Vol. 1.

¹¹John Owen, *Works* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, [1965] 1972), Vol. 3, pp. 313-320.

¹²Note that the Westminster Confession of Faith does not have a chapter on regeneration because the effectual call is equivalent to regeneration.

was an important shift in the definition of the meaning of the word *regeneration*.

Once aspects of salvation were totally severed from the Sacraments, elaborate charts used to capture the scheme of salvation reflected the shift. In Perkins, the internal and external aspects are noted but Baptism remains connected to the order of salvation. Eventually, this changed. The order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) then appeared as a series of logical points occurring at a *single point in time*, and for the most part not a point in time associated with Baptism. The specific order of conversion in the larger order looked like the following:

Regeneration/Faith and Repentance/Justification

Because the order was collapsed chronologically to one point in time, regeneration took on a significantly different meaning. It became a synonym for conversion.

All baptized, moreover, were not understood as necessarily regenerated because regeneration was internal; Baptism was external. If one were regenerated at Baptism it was because he was the elect. The non-elect were baptized but not regenerated and never would be for that matter. The sign of regeneration was not Baptism but conversion. Only then could one know he was of the elect. If the order of salvation could have been viewed as unfolding over a period of time, however, as some reformed people maintained, regeneration could have kept more of its classical meaning. Hence, regeneration began to be reduced to conversion.

For a moment in the history of the English people, seventeenth-century Puritanism seemed to offer (to some) all the solutions to Church and society. Eventually this later expression of Puritanism crumbled. It began to

bear certain marks of the Anabaptist movement. As for the seventeenth-century redefinition of regeneration, it ultimately contributed to the further erosion of a rationale for infant Baptism, the Sacraments and the doctrine of the Church. It is no wonder that Puritanism fragmented and some elements of it ended up in Unitarianism. The concern to guard conversion drove some Puritans to separate the Sacraments from the order of salvation. The Sacraments are the very signs and seals of God's grace. Without them, a kind of universalism inevitably follows.

The Anglican scholars for the most part objected to this seventeenth-century Puritan development in theology. Reformed Anglicans preferred to see regeneration as adoption to be a child of God, engrafting, and the beginning of grace in the life of a person, which in their opinion was more consistent with Scripture as reflected in the Prayer Book and their Articles of Religion. This view maintained Augustine's and the first English Reformers' definition of regeneration that tied it to the Sacrament of Baptism.¹³

The Eighteenth-Century Use of the Seventeenth-Century Definition

The fourth definition of *regeneration*, the seventeenth-century Puritan understanding, eventually arrested the attention of a sizeable element in the Church of England. The belief that new birth was associated with Baptism existed among Anglican Protestants until the revivals of the mid eighteenth century. Two key figures, John Wesley and George Whitefield, changed this commonly accepted Reformed Anglican view. Both were and

¹³ This will be discussed in great detail in Chapter Eight.

remained Anglican priests. They adopted much of the seventeenth-century Puritan notion of salvation and the first Sacrament, separating new birth from Baptism. Wesley at times, however, spoke of regeneration as taking place at Baptism, "By water then, as a means, the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again,"¹⁴ while at other moments he separated the two, "Baptism is not the new birth."¹⁵ Even so, for the most part he joined Whitefield in tending to speak of regeneration as taking place only at the point of faith. Why? They lived at a time of great transition in English society. It was the period of the Enlightenment, when many were turning away from Christianity. Also, the revivalists were preaching to English citizens who had already been baptized shortly after birth. Many of these baptized people were not walking with God. The challenge was to restore the Church. The revivalists opted to innovate the notion of a separation of Baptism from new birth. Up to this point, Reformed theology in England understood the new birth as taking place at Baptism, meaning birth into the Church, the holy nation, and as a child of God. However, the revivalists redefined new birth apart from Baptism, an alien idea to Biblical theology. They taught that one could be baptized but not born again, in other words truly converted. It is true that one can be baptized and not truly converted, but if correctly understood, it is possible to be born again, a member of the holy nation of the Church, and not truly converted as well. Nevertheless, the revivalists preached and pressed for a second birth by faith exclusively apart from the Sacrament, in spite of the fact that Jesus taught new birth comes by water and the Spirit. Yes, a revival

¹⁴ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), Vol. X, p. 192.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 73.

broke out in England. It brought about true spiritual awakening in England and America.

Some would say that it was due to the new teaching on the new birth. Many still do, for Wesley and Whitefield established a pattern for revivalism that has continued to be used by most revivalists. They can be heard to speak of new birth apart from the Sacrament, which is directly contradictory to Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. All kinds of strange twisting of the Bible text in the third chapter of John's Gospel were exercised to avoid the clear meaning of water as a reference to Baptism. Their purpose was to preach faith in the Gospel without referring to its relation to Baptism, especially infant Baptism. Granted, they both had high views of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Surprisingly they had extremely low views of Baptism. Perhaps Wesley and Whitefield thought this to be the quickest way to true revival. In contrast, it seems Biblical language and theology may not point to a quicker way but rather to a *surer* way.

As a matter of fact, others in Wesley's and Whitefield's day, more classically reformed and evangelical Anglicans, expressed appreciation and at the same time concern that revivalistic preaching could undo the very thing attempting to be restored, namely the Church. On the one hand, these critics of a revivalistic approach simply concluded that the generally powerful preaching from Scripture and the proclamation of the Gospel revived the Church. It was not the teaching on the new birth *per se*. Even though they did not agree with this innovation, they still thanked God for courageous preaching like that of Whitefield and Wesley. These were great men of God greatly moved by God to preach His Word, but they were not infallible.

On the other hand, stern warnings were issued regarding the separation of the new birth from the Sacrament. The fear was that a kind of Christianity could

emerge from the new, new birth teaching that might end up in a churchless, sectarian fanaticism. Consider the warnings of the greatest Reformed Anglican theologian of the eighteenth century, Daniel Waterland.¹⁶ He was the powerful Cambridge Don and Archdeacon who defended orthodox Christianity against the liberals of his day, the Latitudinarians.¹⁷ Waterland won the day with his teaching and helped to keep the Church of England from falling into the hands of this movement. Although he was a classical evangelical and reformed Anglican, he was greatly troubled about the new birth teachings of the Wesleys and Whitefields. The following is a brief summary of his warnings.

First, Waterland observed that the New Testament builds on and calls God's Christians back to their Baptism (Romans 6). He thought that the new approach of decrying the Sacrament, even de-emphasizing Baptism altogether by disconnecting it from new birth, could lead to a false repentance. Some would repent without Baptism, thinking they had truly repented. In actuality, this is a repentance that leads to death. The Scriptures call for people to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38).

Second, Waterland was concerned that the new "new birth" teaching, separating new birth from Baptism, might undermine the progressive side of sanctification. By telling baptized Christians to be born again, they would be led into a kind of spontaneous view of conversion, where they could fall into the trap of believing in instantaneous sanctification. They might think of themselves as "wise at once, wise in a most eminent de-

¹⁶ Ray R. Sutton, *The Sacramental Theology of Daniel Waterland*, pp. 208-211. The Latitudinarians were a group who generally placed reason above Scripture. Extreme elements even denied the Deity of Christ.

¹⁷ This group denied the eternal deity of Christ, and committed other heresies.

gree, at a much cheaper and easier rate."¹⁸ Waterland raises an interesting question, "How compendious a method may it seem of arriving suddenly to deep learning without study, and to profound wisdom without pain of thought; without the irksome labor of languages, history, and critical inquiries, ordinarily requisite for a judicious interpreter of God's word, and a skillful guide of souls?"¹⁹

Third, Waterland was pastorally concerned that some true Christians might be made to doubt their salvation by calling for a new birth apart from Baptism. Many had walked with the Lord all of their lives, since the time of their Baptism. Were they to be considered unconverted, unborn again? Waterland asks, "Must they be called upon, to recollect the day, week, month, or year of their conversion, or regeneration, who from their Christian infancy have never been in an unconverted or unregenerate state at all?"²⁰ His point is that they should not. Good Christians could be made to doubt the already present work of the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, for Waterland "true religion requires a warm heart and a cool head."²¹ Pressing for a second birth when it had already occurred could produce an overly emotional type of Christianity, what he calls "passion . . . without reason, judgment, or sound discernment in the use of just and proper means."²² This can be the kind of passion that even supersedes Holy Scripture and the commandments of God, resulting in "amorous freedoms and fond familiarities."

¹⁸ Daniel Waterland, *Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1823), Vol. VI, p. 367.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 376.

In many ways, Waterland's warnings were considered prophetic, for his concerns have proven to be quite true. Movements that have drifted from the Sacraments and the Church have become sectarian. Today, many modern versions of revivalism have completely abandoned Jesus' Scriptural connection between new birth and the Sacrament of Baptism.

The Nineteenth-Century Use of the Seventeenth-Century Definition

By the time of the nineteenth century the seventeenth-century Puritan view of regeneration had generally become the understanding of the term even though Puritanism of the mid-to-late 1600s had long since died out. Only small pockets and few representatives were left who held to such theology. Ironically, those who embraced more catholic theology, as well as evangelicals, commonly accepted the seventeenth-century redefinition of the word by equating it with conversion. The difference was the two groups' understanding of how and when the conversion occurred.

We should not forget that the nineteenth century was a period of industrialization. The time became preoccupied with the mechanical, making the machine the metaphor of the age. This impacted theology. Among the evangelicals, conversion tended to become mechanical by means of a rigorous legal approach to salvation. The *decision* to believe became everything, a means to automatic salvation. Unfortunately, a decision is not necessarily the same as saving faith. Here is the problem with some of the mechanical aspects of nineteenth-century and twentieth-century evangelicalism.

On the other hand, within Anglo-Catholic circles the Sacraments were emphasized more as the channels of grace. Faith was viewed as a work and virtually

de-emphasized to underscore the work of God. The early Anglican distinction between regeneration and conversion tended to disappear. For some in this movement, later conversion in life pointed in the direction of works. The great Oxford Hebraist Edward Pusey wrote:

No change of heart, then, or of the affections, no repentance, however radical, no faith, no life, no love, sum up the idea of this "birth from above;" it takes them all in, and comprehends them all, but is itself more than all; it is not only the creation of a new heart, new affections, new desires, and as it were a new birth, but it is an actual birth from above or from God, a gift coming down from God, and given to faith, through Baptism; yet not the work of faith, but the operation of "water and the Holy Spirit," the HOLY SPIRIT giving us new life, in the fountain opened by Him, and we being born therein of Him, even as our Blessed and Incarnate Lord was, according to the flesh, born of it in the Virgin's womb. Faith and repentance are the conditions on which God gives it; water, sanctified by our Lord's Baptism, is the womb of our new birth; love, good works, increasing faith, its fruits in those who persevere; but it itself is the gift of GOD, a gift incomprehensible, and not to be confounded with or restrained to any of its fruits (change of heart, or conversion) but illimitable and incomprehensible, as that great mystery from which it flows, the incarnation of our REDEEMER, the Ever-blessed SON of GOD.²³

Pusey's comments are intended to emphasize salvation as a work of grace. If kept to this context, they offer wonderful insights into salvation as a gift and not a work.

²³Members of the University of Oxford, *Tracts for the Times*, 6 vols. (London, 1840-42; repr., New York: AMS, 1969), 2: tract 67, pp. 47-48.

It should also be kept in mind that Pusey never separated faith from the efficacy of the Sacrament, meaning the Sacrament was null and void without personal faith.

For many evangelicals, however, comments such as the one above were viewed in contrast to their own emphases on the need for conversion. On this basis, Professor Robert Pritchard concludes, "The Oxford divines had thus ruled out the possibility of a separate adult renewal."²⁴ Perhaps Pritchard's assessment overstates the case in reference to Pusey. Perhaps the latter would not absolutely "rule out the possibility of a separate adult renewal." He was generally understood, however, as viewing regeneration and conversion as one and the same without the earlier sixteenth-century Reformation distinctions.

Significantly, on the point of equating regeneration to conversion the evangelical nineteenth-century understanding of regeneration came also remarkably close to the seventeenth-century view. Many evangelical Anglicans advocated a similar, seventeenth-century definition of regeneration as conversion, also opting to separate regeneration language from Baptism.²⁵ Instead of returning to the more classical and English Reformation approach to regeneration, a number of nineteenth-century evangelical Anglicans curiously accepted the new definition of the word and objected to its use in the post-Baptismal prayers in the Prayer Book. Once the deviant meaning of regeneration was conceded, however, some sought to address the altered definition by countermanding statements. The Reformed Episcopal Prayer Book, for example, in its Declaration of Principles IV.5,

²⁴Robert Pritchard, *The Nature of Salvation: Theological Consensus in the Episcopal Church, 1801-73* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), p. 180.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 181-192.

correctly objects to baptismal regeneration as conversion as contrary to God's Word by denying "that Regeneration is inseparably connected with Baptism." Let it be understood that this condemnation does not apply to the original meaning of the word *regeneration* as found in other places in the Reformed Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. How do we know?

Although the word *regeneration* was removed from the post-baptismal prayers in the Office of Baptism, the theology of regeneration in the classical, English Reformation sense was still retained. More importantly, the very word in a baptismal sense was kept in the Collect for Christmas Day:

Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

This collect reflects Scripture, the theology of baptismal regeneration of the English Reformers, and the Reformed Episcopal Prayer Book even after the word *regeneration* was removed from other places. Furthermore, there is no question but that the original intent of the use of the word *regeneration* in this collect referred to all those who were baptized.

One, just as the collect refers to regeneration as resulting in "children by adoption," so the Articles of Religion specifically define Baptism as *adoption as a child of God* in Article 27. We should not forget that the prayer book and the Articles of Religion were written by the same people, primarily Thomas Cranmer, an English Reformer. The Collect for Christmas Day is part of this

seamless garment of theology, especially concerning the continuity of understanding when it came to the relation between Baptism and regeneration. Hence, the collect would have been understood as referring to all those who have been baptized.

Two, notice that the collect sounds like Titus 3:5, "But according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." The collect follows the language almost identically. This parallel supports the premise that the collect assumes the relation between "washing" (Baptism) and "regeneration."

Three, this baptismal theology of regeneration is expressed specifically in the Office of Baptism of the Reformed Episcopal Church, as is the case in all of the historic Cranmerian Prayer Books in the prayer after Baptism: "We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock." Again we see the language of adoption, which implies baptismal regeneration. In the Collect for Christmas Day, therefore, the presumption for the congregation of a Reformed Episcopal Church, "we being regenerate," includes all the baptized. The collect does not say, "Some of us being regenerate."

We should conclude that even among the faithful, evangelical Reformed Episcopalians, there was some retaining of the more classically Reformed and Anglican view of baptismal regeneration. No doubt, they saw it necessary to qualify the relation between regeneration and baptism, if an understanding of regeneration as conversion were meant. It should also be noted that baptismal regeneration was not Bishop George David Cummins'²⁶ issue. He was not totally opposed to using the word *regen-*

²⁶ George Cummins was the founding bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

eration in the Baptismal Office.²⁷ He was willing to allow an optional usage, and he preferred that the bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church would “formally declare in some mode, as proposed by Bishop Hobart, and unanimously adopted by both Houses of General Convention in 1826, that regeneration in baptism is . . . designed to indicate a sacramental and ecclesiastical change, a change of state and not of character.”²⁸ This was not done. It was achieved, however, through the Declaration of Principles of the Reformed Episcopal Church, which in his mind could allow for the use of the word in the Baptismal Office.

The issue of baptismal regeneration actually came to the Reformed Episcopal Church by means of Charles Edward Cheney, who opposed the use of *regeneration* (as conversion) in the baptismal office when he was a priest in the Protestant Episcopal Church. Operating with a seventeenth-century Puritan and nineteenth-century view of regeneration, he based his practice on precedent set in the Church of England that had allowed for the omission of the language.²⁹ The American Bishop over Cheney did not permit the removal of the word. He did not share Cheney’s evangelical views. Consequently, Cheney entered the Reformed Episcopal Church and became one of the first bishops.

It can be argued, therefore, that Reformed Episcopalians never completely gave up the theology, conceptually speaking, in the baptismal office. Moreover they even

²⁷ Pritchard, *The Nature of Salvation*, p. 188.

²⁸ A. M. Cummins, *Memoir of George David Cummins, D.D., First Bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1878), pp. 330-331.

²⁹ This was the famous Gorham Case. Gorham was a priest in the Church of England, who was taken to trial for not using the word regeneration in the baptismal office. He was acquitted, although the word regeneration was officially retained in the Book of Common Prayer (1662 version) of the Church of England.

kept the language of baptismal regeneration in the Prayer Book at particular places, leaving two views of regeneration in the modified Reformed Episcopal prayer book. Certain views of regeneration at the time warranted their concerns and explain their approach to the newer definition of regeneration.

Among many current Reformed Episcopalians emphasis is now being made on the other, earlier, Reformation use of *regeneration* in the prayer book. This understanding is much truer to Holy Scripture. The placement of *regeneration* in the Collect for Christmas Day reflects the sixteenth-century and classically Anglican (of the seventeenth century) view of baptismal regeneration as found in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. The Articles, by the way, are one of the unalterably received and binding documents of the Reformed Episcopal Church, which clearly teach baptismal regeneration in the more English Reformation understanding of the term. Finally, other dynamics in a post-Christian world press on the Church. Reformed Episcopalians along with the rest of the Christian world no longer face the theological problems of the late nineteenth century. They live in a post-modern, neo-pagan world, one that calls for a return to the historic, Biblical faith of the early Church and the English Reformation.

Conclusion

The history of the definition of regeneration reflects many concerns, some good and some bad. Given issues at a particular time in history, the Church has to clarify its theology to maintain orthodoxy. This requires, in the spirit of the Reformation, a constant return to Biblical and historical views. If the Church does not, then it can find itself drifting in the name of addressing current issues. Mid-course correction is constantly needed on the basis of Holy Scripture and the historic Christian faith. To this

end, the second part of this study on Baptism into the Spirit turns to the central passages in the New Testament on the subject, the Biblical view of Baptismal Regeneration in the next chapter.³⁰

³⁰For a very thorough study of the biblical texts, theology, and history of the meaning of regeneration, see Peter Toon, *Born Again: A Biblical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987). Toon covers the early fathers, Reformers and their confessions, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Puritans, and modern evangelicals.

5

Baptism into the Spirit (2)

A Biblical View of Baptismal Regeneration

A Biblical view of baptismal regeneration means something different from what it came to be understood by the seventeenth-century Puritans. The latter separated regeneration from the Sacrament of Baptism by connecting it with final conversion. The effect has been damaging to the Scriptural notion of covenant, to the Church, to the family and to pastoral care. Now after nearly two centuries of redefinition, the word *regeneration* should be restored to its Biblical meaning for important reasons.

First, the redefinition of the word *regeneration* has denied the obvious Biblical connection between regeneration and water Baptism. For the sake of faithfulness to Holy Scripture, regeneration should be interpreted as occurring at Baptism. The Apostle Paul refers to the “washing of regeneration” in Titus 3:5. As will be explained in considerable detail in the body of this chapter, the Greek word for “washing” is nearly always used in a ceremonial sense. This explains why the vast majority of orthodox commentators, even Protestant ones, have understood

the word as referring to Baptism. This being the case, regeneration is in some sense tied to Baptism in the Holy Scriptures. For a Christian, the Biblical meaning is always the surest and best way, even if it means adjusting theology and practice. So it is in the case of such an important word in Holy Scripture. To return to the Biblical approach of Baptism and regeneration, we should understand the two as connected, which leads us to other Scripture related issues.

Second, the redefinition of the word *regeneration* has contributed to an ongoing erosion of a *covenantal* understanding of a relation to God, the Biblical view of salvation. In place of this covenantal view of salvation has been put an individual understanding of salvation apart from the covenant signs, seals and means, as well as the Church itself. Personal experience and all kinds of other acts (walking aisles, raising hands and so forth) have been given greater priority than the Scriptural appointed means for declaring salvation. Clearly from a Biblical perspective, however, the larger construct of salvation is covenant in the Old and New Testaments. One is saved by entering the covenant through faith in Jesus Christ, which is normally manifested at Holy Baptism. He is then considered in the "state" of salvation. This is not a fictitious, artificial category; it is real. This is the precise language of the Bible, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

The relation between Christ and the Sacrament is unmistakable. Yet this connection should be understood in a covenantal way. It could be called a covenantal view of salvation. One is in covenant with Christ through Baptism, which means that God's promises apply to the recipient and faith is required for this covenant to have eternal benefit. It is possible to receive the sign and seal of the covenant without true, personal faith. Scripture clarifies that an unconsummated covenant sign with real faith

nullifies the Sacrament. St. Paul addresses this situation with the Jews who thought Circumcision meant automatic salvation, "For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision" (Romans 2:25). Notice that the apostle did not completely negate the importance of the Sacrament. He does not do as some movements and totally separate the Sacrament (Circumcision) from faith. He does not offer an alternative sign (signing a decision card etc.). Instead, he argues that the Sacrament is efficacious when obedience ensues. Indeed, he points out that it is "profitable" if a life of faithfulness follows.

To speak of internal faith, however, apart from its visible life and expression in the Sacraments and in the Church, does just as much, if not more, violence to the Biblical covenant. It denies the doctrine of creation that teaches God made His world with His personal imprint and not as impersonal matter; He ordained the physical as a means to convey spiritual reality. The doctrine of creation is worked out in the Incarnation: God became man or animate matter. So a purely individualist approach to salvation is to deny the Incarnation itself. Ultimately, this leads to a complete rejection of the Biblical view of salvation that speaks in terms of covenant, its signs and seals. Covenantally speaking a person is saved when placed in the covenant by means of Baptism. Biblical covenant, therefore, has been virtually lost as an important New Testament Biblical theological concept because the newer use of the word *regeneration* is susceptible to a completely individual view of salvation.

Third, the covenantal view of salvation is personal and corporate, bringing the doctrine of the Church into the Biblical meaning of salvation. The redefinition of regeneration as exclusively internal apart from the Sacrament has diminished the doctrine of the Church; it has removed the Biblical "profitability," to use St. Paul's lan-

guage, of the Sacrament. As subsequent exegesis will attempt to demonstrate, Holy Scripture associates regeneration and new birth with "water" in a number of passages (John 3:5; Titus 3:5 and so forth), which should be unmistakably and historically understood as references to Baptism, the Sacrament. This important connection brings salvation into the orbit of the life of the Church. Scripture never envisions salvation apart from the Church! Granted, there have been times in history when the personal side of salvation by faith needed to be elevated to offset erroneous views of the Sacrament. The personal aspect of salvation is still important.

The times of post-modern Christianity are very different from even fifty years ago. The Church is under full-scale attack in all of the societies of the West. To advocate views of salvation that undermine the Sacraments and the Church only contribute to the assault on the Church. Moreover, Biblically speaking it is impossible to be born and nurtured in the kingdom of God without the Church. A Biblical, covenantal and historical view of regeneration supports this truth. A purely internal, non-sacramental approach to regeneration can lead to the notion of salvation outside of the Church. This is a twisting of Biblical logic, for this is like saying one can be born without a mother. Furthermore, it is also like advocating that one can grow without the nurture of a mother. After all, if one can be made alive individually and internally by the Spirit without the Church and without the Sacraments, then why would one ever need the Church? Indeed, some would argue that the Church is actually detrimental to spiritual life and health. They advocate sects and cults as alternatives. Interestingly, they still implicitly confirm the doctrine of the Church by their insistence on the need for some kind of community. Unfortunately, they do so with a false church, which is to undermine salvation.

Fourth, the covenantal understanding of salvation in Scripture involves the family. A redefinition of the word *regeneration* has hurt the nurture of the family in the Church. Reducing regeneration to an internal work of the Spirit and detaching it from the Sacrament has damaged the entire rationale for placing infant children of believers in the covenant community by means of Baptism. The effect has not been positive at a time when Christian families need all of the support they can find. The safety net of Christian culture in the West is gone. This leaves the family spiritually and morally naked unless it has the Church, the womb of covenantal protection. If the children are left outside of the covenant in the name of a purely internal and individual approach to salvation, they forfeit the covenantal protection promised to them in Holy Baptism. This is completely the wrong direction when the Christian family is also under so much assault.

Instead, children of believers need to be included in the covenant community with all benefits from the earliest possible time. As the Apostle Paul admonishes, they should be raised up *in* the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-3). He does not advocate raising children *outside* of the covenant, waiting for some point of personal decision to begin catechizing and discipline. It is commonly acknowledged that a person is formed in his character by age four or five. God beats this curve by calling for the children of believers to be placed in the covenant as soon as possible after birth. He wants His children to grow up in Christ, to be formed long before age four, so that the child of God can be spiritually, morally and intellectually ahead of the children of unbelievers. In the long run, Christianity will inescapably emerge triumphant through its children, that is, if they are raised in (not outside) the covenant. The time has come to put the children of believers ahead of unbelievers. It starts in part with a correct view of baptismal regeneration as the point

of covenant new birth for a person, so that the child of God is nurtured with intense cultivation to become a strong soldier in Jesus Christ when he is older.

Fifth, the Biblical and covenantal understanding of regeneration forms a pastoral context for the nurture of a believer. An exclusively individual and internal definition apart from the Sacraments can result in believers being treated as unbelievers. The Biblical way to cultivate a Christian begins with Baptism, the placement of the person into the Biblical covenant and community. Since regeneration is associated with ceremonial washing, Baptism, the pastoral approach should be to assume the best. A baptized person should be treated as and counted as a true believer. If Baptism does not have any connection with the beginning of spiritual life, then the opposite approach can and does result. A television preacher once remarked, "I don't assume anything; my parishioners are unbelievers to be rooted out by my preaching; the ones that remain are the true believers." This is contrary to a charitable approach to fellow believers. Of all times this is no time to "shoot our wounded" in the Church. It is a critical hour to unite believers with solid pastoral care and training. With some people, it takes much longer to care for their souls to point of seeing a vibrant faith in their lives. The longer, patient perspective on pastoral care is necessary. The Biblical view of regeneration is helpful. It explains how a person could be regenerated at Baptism but not converted until much later in life. Or, perhaps a person is regenerated and converted, but something occurs in his life to disrupt the requirement for ongoing renewal. In both cases, the proper Biblical understanding of regeneration provides a pastor with the theological rationale not to give up, nor to write off any Baptized person. It allows for the presumption of belief, which sets the context for a more pastoral and longer approach to the cultivation of solid Christians.

For these vital reasons, it is important to return to a Biblical understanding of regeneration, one that clearly associates it with the Sacrament of Baptism. Scripture simply presents the word as new birth: new (re) generation (birth). In the natural realm, one does not physically become a person at birth; he becomes a person at conception. Birth is simply a change of state from inside to outside the womb. Similarly, the new birth is a covenantal and spiritual change of state. It is a change of state from outside to inside the kingdom. Just as it takes more than birth to become physically a different person, so the new person is a creation of the Holy Spirit. It is more than simply a legal change of state. The seed of the Word is planted, which should lead to becoming a complete new man in Christ. This should consist of a complete inward transformation. Nevertheless, Baptism is the beginning of this inward transformation. Such ramifications will be considered after we have come to a better understanding of the Biblical meaning, beginning with the ancient use of the word.

Meaning of Regeneration in Titus 3:5¹

The Greek word for *regeneration* (παλιγγενεσία) essentially means a change of state, not of the nature of a thing. In secular Greek, although secular usage is not an absolute guide, "the original term is constantly used in reference to that change which takes place in the earth's appearance, when winter gives way to the freshness of spring; by the Stoics, to describe an improved condition of the world; by Cicero, to express his return to the position and dignities which he had lost at the time of his banishment; by Josephus, in reference to feasts celebrated on ac-

¹ This section on Titus 3:5 was researched by the Rev. Dr. Curtis I. Crenshaw, but the final form is mine.

count of national blessings restored; by Lucian, to the awakening of a fly out of a state of stupor."² In each case, the state is altered, while the essence is not.

In the New Testament, the word *regeneration* is found only twice. In combination with other words it appears elsewhere in its word field. Correctly understood, however, it can be seen conceptually in other important passages such as John 3. As for the actual use of the word, two passages lay a foundation for the correct definition. The primary reference using the word *regeneration* in relation to salvation appears in Titus:

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (3:4-7).

In the Pastoral Epistles, the Apostle Paul instructs successors to the Apostles, two of the first bishops of the Church, Timothy and Titus. These letters follow a similar pattern of presenting the offices of Bishop and Presbyter as the embodiment of godliness, icons of holiness providing a window to the entire life of salvation. To this end the Epistle to Titus instructs the young Bishop about the qualifications of "elders/bishop."³ In chapter two the apos-

² Boyd, *Baptism and Baptismal Regeneration*, pp. 183-184.

³ This is not the place to debate whether there is a deliberate distinction between "elders" and "bishop" since Paul uses the plural for the former and the singular for the latter. There are many good studies on this. Most consider that in this particular context, Paul is using one for the other. But note that Titus is to "appoint" these men, making Titus in some sense over them. See Ray R. Sutton, *Captains and Courts: A Biblical View of Episcopacy* (unpublished manuscript to be published in 2001).

tle gives instructions for older men and women, younger men, bondservants, etc. Then in chapter three, Paul reminds Titus that all at one time were outside Christ (v. 3) but contrasts life outside of the covenant of grace with the grace of God now given to "us." Verses 4-7 of chapter three describe in one sentence God's grace in salvation. This is a somewhat involved verse that breaks down nicely by its various dependent clauses, all centered around one independent clause with its main verb: "He saved." In all the discussion about this passage, it is important not to lose the main Pauline point. God is the one who saves. What the Apostle offers is a brief summary of how God saves. Moreover, he intentionally uses language consistent with his other descriptions of salvation to avoid any ambiguity. The interpreter should therefore allow St. Paul's own language in Titus and elsewhere to control his understanding of the passage, especially the portion of the verse in question: "By the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (3:5).

One Preposition, Two Ideas

St. Paul's statement connecting two ideas with one preposition, "by," has been understood in a variety of ways. First, there is "a long tradition, stretching back to Theodoret, [that] interprets the clause as a virtual chiasmus: He saved us 'by a regeneration effected through the water and the renewal effected through the Holy Spirit.' By this means a distinction is drawn between the crisis of the new birth bestowed by baptism and the continual renewing of life by the Spirit—a view not inimical to the practice of confirmation."⁴ Here we would have this construction:

⁴G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1962), p. 210.

through the washing of regeneration

and

renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Grammatically, the Holy Spirit is the agent of renewal only, but this does not preclude His being the agent of regeneration theologically in the analogy of Scripture.

Second, there is another construction that sees the relationship another way:

through the washing of regeneration

of the Holy Spirit

and renewal.

Here the Holy Spirit is the agent of both actions equally, at least grammatically. The downside to this construction is that it would really require the preposition to be repeated again, since the "regeneration" and "renewal" would be equally parallel, which repetition is not likely.

There are several possible interpretations of the whole phrase:⁵ (1) through a washing of rebirth and of renewal by the Holy Spirit; (2) through a washing of rebirth and of renewal, both by the Holy Spirit; (3) through a

⁵I. Howard Marshall, *The International Critical Commentary: The Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), p. 316ff.

washing that effects rebirth and a renewal by the Holy Spirit. There are other possibilities, but these are the major ones. The key words and their meaning can help to sort out the best interpretation.

The Meaning of Washing

First, *loutron* (λουτρον) has been rendered either "bath" (passive) or "washing" (active). Spicq says that the meaning in the Septuagint is the active one, though it only occurs twice.⁶ Most modern scholars would agree, though the resultant meaning does not matter much. It only occurs twice in the New Testament: here and in Ephesians 5:26.

The more pertinent issue is whether it is metaphorical or if it refers to baptism. The arguments supporting water Baptism are overwhelming. The ancient fathers were almost unanimous that the word meant "baptism."⁷ There is not much debate about this argument. Though we cannot decide exegesis by counting the heads of the fathers, though they were closer to the Apostles and had a certain ecclesiastical and hermeneutical tradition in interpreting certain passages that should be given high priority. Indeed, it would take considerable exegesis to overcome their presumption of being correct.

The standard Greek lexicon renders *loutron* as "bath, washing of baptism," and regarding Titus 3:5 the render-

⁶ Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 2:410. The two occurrences in the LXX are Cant. 4:2; 6:5. Spicq is widely held as a very competent New Testament scholar. For a similar discussion see TDNT; 4:301-303.

⁷ For many quotes from the fathers, see David W. Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998), pp. 50-62.

ing is “the bath that brings about regeneration.”⁸ Another lexical argument that is very significant is from the Louw-Nida lexicon in which *loutron* is connected semantically with all the Greek words for Baptism (βαπτίζω, βαπτισμά, βαπτισμός, βαπτιστής).⁹ The same lexicon also states concerning *loutron*: “Ceremonial washing refers to baptism—‘washing, baptism.’” Regarding Titus 3:5, the authors state: “In Titus 3:5 *loutron* has generally been regarded as referring to baptism.”¹⁰ Concerning the other occurrence of *loutron*, “In Eph. 5:26 the phrase ‘washing of water’ has been generally interpreted as a reference to baptism. . . .”¹¹

Spicq adds to the discussion regarding *loutron* (wash) in Ephesians 5:26: “This purifying effect of bathing is highlighted . . . ‘purification carried out by means of and in the form of a bath with water,’—qualified by ‘with the word,’ a reference to the sacramental formula. This is a reference to baptism, which washes away sins (*apolouesthai*, Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6.11) and whitens the soul (*leukainō*, Rev. 7:14).”¹² Regarding Titus 3:5 he comments: “The rite of *loutron* symbolizes this transformation. Having been begotten by the bath, one comes out from it strong and well. Hence Titus 3:5—‘He saved us, according to his mercy, by a bath of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.’ St. Ambrose comments accu-

⁸ Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979, second edition), p. 480.

⁹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 53.41-53.43.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.43.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2:412-13.

rately: "The Father has begotten you by the washing."¹³

Finally, Lampe gives patristic evidence that *loutron* was virtually always connected with Baptism. He states that it was equivalent to the rite of Baptism in a treatise by Melito; that Chrysostom connects it with Baptism and by Justin in an *Apology*.¹⁴ It is seen as a "cleansing," as "conferring remission of sins," as "regeneration," as "union with Christ in death and resurrection," as "resurrection and immortality," as "replacing circumcision," and many other things.¹⁵

The Meaning of "Regeneration"

Second, the word "regeneration" (παλιγγενεσία) is used only twice in the New Testament, here and Matthew 19:28 (for similar thought see Acts 3:21; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1). In the Matthew passage, it is clear that the idea is "rebirth, regeneration" in the sense of the eschatological "renewing of the world in the time of Messiah."¹⁶ Kittel says: "The Jewish faith in the resurrection of the dead and the renewal of the world is clothed in this term."¹⁷ The term was used prior to the New Testament in everyday language to refer to any kind of rebirth or regeneration, such as life after death or the renewal of the world after the conflagration.¹⁸ Kittel further states: "In Jewish literature [*regeneration*] is found from the time of Philo. . . Philo uses [*regeneration*] of the restoration to life of indi-

¹³Ibid., 2:414.

¹⁴Edited by G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 812.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 812-13.

¹⁶BAGD, p. 606.

¹⁷Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the NT* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), 1:688. Abbreviated TDNT.

¹⁸Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 319.

viduals . . . and also of the reconstitution of the world after the flood. . . ."¹⁹ But in our literature, both the New Testament and the early fathers, "the concept of the new birth is already associated with baptism and conversion."²⁰

The only other passage to use the word *regeneration* appears in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). Jesus speaks of what is called the *heavenly state* after the Ascension of Christ and the martyrdom of the disciples. The regeneration is the other side of death or ascension, as is the case of the Lord. With reference to Christ, His state changed but not His essence. He had received a new body but He was essentially the same Incarnate Christ He had always been. His state changed, earth to heaven, but not His nature.

With reference to the disciples, the language is remarkably similar to the Apostle Paul's description of after life. He speaks of the implications of Jesus' Resurrection for the death of a believer. Because of Jesus' Resurrection, death for the believer is like the planting of a seed coming forth into life (1 Corinthians 15:35-49). The state of the person is simply changed, moving from this world to the next. Yes, the external body is shed but the soul enters the presence of the Lord. In the Matthew reference, Jesus explains a further detail for the disciples/apostles. Their life on the other side of death will be on twelve thrones. Regeneration in this passage is a change in state but not necessarily in nature. It confirms the use of the word in reference to salvation in Titus 3:5. *Regeneration*, there-

¹⁹TDNT, 1:687-688.

²⁰Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 320. Marshall notes that the term does not come from γεννάω (which is the word used in John and 1 John) but is associated with γίνομαι and γένεσις.

fore, as used twice in the New Testament, has a legal concept to it.

Kittel's interpretation of "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" in Titus 3:5 is to the point: "Here [regeneration] is the result of baptism and parallel to [renewing]. It does not mean only attainment to a new life with the end of the old life, nor does it mean only moral renewal; *it embraces both*."²¹ We will argue that "regeneration" and "renewal" are connected because of the one preposition connecting both but that they are not identical in meaning.²²

The conclusion may be drawn about the first part of the phrase ("washing of regeneration") that the "washing" is undoubtedly baptism, as understood by the fathers and most of the modern scholars. The construction "of regeneration" could be a genitive of possession ("washing belonging to regeneration"), genitive of quality ("regenerating bath"), or objective genitive ("baptism that effects regeneration"). From the meaning given in the sources above, it seems to be the last category. Furthermore, if baptism results in regeneration and baptism is a legal ceremony, it would seem to confirm the legal idea of regeneration in this context. Baptism would legally place one into the covenant. An illustration would be Colossians 1:13: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." Baptism takes us out of the covenant of death and places us into the covenant of life, the "place" of rebirth. Colossians 1:13 does not use the word *baptism*, but from Galatians 3:27 we can infer it, which does use the word *baptism*: "As many as were baptized into Christ,

²¹TDNT, 1:688, emphasis added.

²²Dr. Crenshaw's view is that it is often Pauline to connect two ideas with one preposition. The connected ideas are often related but rarely identical.

have put on Christ.” Once one is in the covenant, there he would also be subject to “renewal.”

The Meaning of “Renewal”

Third, the word *renewing* (ἀνακαίνωσις) means “renewal, of a person’s spiritual rebirth . . . ‘be changed by the renewal of your minds,’ Rom. 12:2.”²³ It is also semantically connected with other Greek words for “renew” (see Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:23).²⁴ From these three passages, “renewing” has an ongoing sense. Yet Mounce argues for a “once-for-all renewal because salvation is seen as an accomplished fact.”²⁵ He refers this to positional sanctification, a concept that can lead to antinomianism if one does not see position as necessarily effecting one’s practice. Mounce seems to contradict himself a few lines later when he concedes that Colossians 3:10, a parallel to Titus 3:5, is a continuing renewal. The counter to his argument is the passages just referenced (Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:23). Moreover, it is typical Pauline to “mix tenses” of salvation, as it were. Some theologians have unfortunately divided salvation so much that we cannot conceive that in one sentence an apostle can speak of many aspects of salvation. The apostles do not always neatly divide salvation into justification, sanctification, and glorification, but often mix them. We can divide them in concept but not separate them in function. Paul does neither here. Hence, Kittel’s comment on Romans 12:2 is to the point:

²³Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000, 3rd edition), p. 65.

²⁴Louw-Nida, *Lexicon of the New Testament*, 58.70-58.75.

²⁵William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), p. 449ff. Mounce is a very able Greek scholar, whose grammar we use at the seminary, but his baptistic, evangelical presuppositions are glaring at this point.

... [renewing] refers to the renewal of thought and will which Christians constantly need if they are to show by their moral conduct that they belong to the new aeon and are members of the new humanity. The subject of this inward renewal, which affects the center of personal life, is the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9-13; 1 Cor. 12:13) who dwells and works in the Christian. The saying in Titus 3:5 refers to the unique and basic beginning which the Spirit makes in man at baptism. Without any human cooperation there arises in baptism the [new creation] (2 Cor. 5:17) by the miracle of renewal through the Holy Spirit, who created a life that was not there before.²⁶

If the "renewing" is continual and if the Holy Spirit does it, we would have a subjective genitive in the expression "renewing of the Holy Spirit," with the resultant meaning being "renewing by the Holy Spirit." Moreover, we should relate it to the context here in Titus 3:5. It is under the one preposition "by" (*dia*), connecting it with Baptism. Yet it has a meaning of its own. The connection would seem to be that Baptism regenerates; that is, places one in the covenant, gives one standing with God, covenantal life. The "renewing" begins with Baptism, as Baptism is mentioned first and involves continuing, implying something already begun. This would be the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in us, which reflects our organic, living union with God. Hopefully, this renewal will culminate in justification and glorification.

Based on the findings concerning the above key terms in St. Paul's statement, position one seems to be correct:

through

the washing of regeneration

²⁶TDNT, 3:453.

and

renewal of the Holy Spirit.

As J. N. D. Kelly rightly states of this view:

[it] preserves the balance of the sentence better; and the fact that Pauline, and early Christian thought generally, connect the Spirit closely with baptism is decisive in its favor. . . . On this interpretation the effect of baptism is first defined in terms of regeneration or rebirth. . . . In this way early Christianity interpreted baptism in light of current eschatological ideas about the restoration of the world in the coming age, now believed to have dawned. This thought is elaborated in Paul's further description of baptism as renewal. By this he means the complete transformation, or elevation to a new order of being, which the Christian undergoes in baptism.²⁷

If one has the "washing," the assumption is that he has the "renewing." Without the former, one does not have the latter. From Hebrews 6:4-6, which seems to be a conceptual parallel to Titus 3:5, we know that some can be "enlightened," "partakers of the Holy Spirit," and yet fall away. But these were just as much in the covenant as anyone else, which is why apostasy is so heinous. But the point is that everyone in the covenant has been regenerated in the Titus 3:5 sense and is being renewed in the Hebrews 6 sense.

Whether one can lose the "renewing" is not the topic of Titus 3:5, but seems to be answered "yes" in Hebrews. Lest some misunderstand, the number of the elect does

²⁷J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), p. 252.

not increase or decrease, but we do not know who they are. Only God does. The elect reveal themselves to us by their perseverance, by revealing that they have persevering grace. That is not addressed in Titus 3:5.

New Birth in 1 John

Perseverance is addressed in the "new birth" in 1 John, which is a different Greek word from *regeneration* in Titus 3:5 with a different idea. John asserts clearly that the new birth he has in mind is persevering grace: "The one who is born of God does not [practice]²⁸ sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot [practice] sin, because he has been born of God" (3:9; see also 2:28; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18 for similar ideas).

Of course the difficulty some people have with this "sacramental" view is that Baptism itself cannot accomplish such. But no one says that the water itself does this. Furthermore, to conclude as one man "that a spiritual economy cannot be tied to a material agency as an indispensable channel of grace"²⁹ is to deny the Incarnation. Jesus was God incarnate, God with a body, and the greatest good was spiritually accomplished with His physical body as the God-man died on the Cross for our sins. Here physical and spiritual come together par excellence.

Furthermore, to reject the sacraments as accomplishing spiritual good by the power of God's Spirit is to fall

²⁸ Dr. Crenshaw states: "After studying the passage for 25 years and reading 50 plus commentaries, Calvin has the best exposition of it in his commentary, which is the gift of persevering grace. The use of the present tense with some verbs in John still seems to me the best answer to the seeming contradiction between those who sin (1 John 2:1-2, aorist tense) and these in 3:9 who cannot practice sin (present tense with certain verbs). The distinction is between those who are covenant keepers with an ongoing repentance, who sin and confess it (2:1-2), and those who give themselves over to sin, practicing it."

²⁹ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 209. He is quoting someone else.

into the heresy of Gnosticism, separating the physical from the spiritual. The theology of the English Reformation avoids the extremes without disconnecting the physical and the spiritual. One extreme is the view that the water in itself accomplishes conversion/regeneration. The other extreme is that Baptism does not matter. Reformed Anglicanism, in keeping with the fathers and good exegesis, maintains that the sacraments, by God's Spirit, are channels of grace that actually accomplish spiritual good. In Titus 3:5, Baptism effects regeneration, not conversion necessarily (though in God's good pleasure it could be). Also what begins at Baptism is the Spirit's renewing work, a covenantal work that reveals an organic connection with Christ (see John 15:1ff). All have this work, but only the elect have it to the end, and only God knows who they are.

Conceptual Parallels

The conceptual parallels to Titus 3:5 have not been addressed, but there are a number of them. In John 3:5 a very similar phrase appears: "born of water and the Spirit." Once again the early fathers were virtually unanimous that this was Baptism and the work of the Spirit, and once again most modern scholars agree. The parallels with Titus 3:5 are clear: one preposition governs two ideas: "of water and Spirit." "Water refers to Baptism and the Spirit to His work, just as in Titus 3:5 "washing" refers to Baptism, and the Spirit is mentioned later in the phrase. The Old Testament basis for John 3:5 is Ezekiel 36:25ff. If the "water" is Baptism, we have a legal view of "regeneration" and yet coupled with the Spirit.

Another parallel is Romans 6:4-6. In Baptism our old life has died in Christ, and we have been raised to newness of life. Moreover, there is the ongoing work of the Spirit that "the body of sin might be done away with, that

we should no longer be slaves of sin." Ephesians 5:26 and 1 Corinthians 6:11 have been considered but there are other parallels.

To conclude this exegetical analysis, St. Paul adds an important clarification with his statement: "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). The "washing" is definitely a reference to Baptism. No less than Calvin, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and even Matthew Henry, the famous Congregationalist Puritan, all agree that this verse refers to water Baptism.³⁰ We should not forget the language used regarding Paul's own Baptism, "Arise and *wash* away your sins" (Acts 22:16). With this background, it seems certain that he referred to water Baptism as the cause of this kind of regeneration.

Again it seems that regeneration is a change from one state to another. It would seem, however, that a distinction is made in Titus 3:5 between regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit. This is supported by the fact that "regeneration" has a legal, once for all meaning and "renewing" a moral, progressive meaning. Perhaps even "and" between "regeneration *and* the renewing of the Holy Spirit" would lend some support to there being a difference, assuming that we do not have a hendiadys here. The two are different events, not automatically occurring at the same time. Technically, regeneration is placement into the family of God establishing a new rela-

³⁰ The Westminster Divines, however, understood regeneration to occur only in the elect at Baptism. This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Eight. However, it should also be mentioned at this point that some later Reformed thinkers (especially the Dutch ones like Abraham Kuyper of the nineteenth century who was Prime Minister of the Netherlands) even allowed for regeneration to be separated from the other aspects of the order of salvation. He conceded that an infant could be regenerated at Baptism but come to saving faith much, much later in life. See Herman Hoeksema, *Believers and Their Seed* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, [1971] 1977), pp. 34-45.

tion to God. The “renewing of the Holy Spirit” is what traditional, classical Anglican scholars called *renovation*, the transformation of the inner man. It is the giving of a new spiritual heart (Ezekiel 36:25-27). This may occur at the time of Holy Baptism. It may happen at other times in a Christian’s life when personal faith in Christ is exercised, at confirmation, or at other times. It may be even hard to tell exactly when the renewing of the Holy Spirit takes place, especially if it happens early in a person’s life, especially at the Baptism of an infant. Regeneration is the beginning of the life in the kingdom of God, but it is not necessarily what some Anglican scholars have described as *renovation*. The latter is that complete inner change of heart that bears the fruit of justification and true salvation.³¹

Conclusion

The language of the New Testament does not equivocate. Regeneration is associated with the Sacrament of Baptism. A person is born covenantally from above; he is transferred from outside to inside the kingdom. This change of state and the first work of the Holy Spirit in a visible manner is birth by water and the Spirit. Now we are able to build on a Biblical and exegetical foundation to

³¹Distinguishing between regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit was common among Reformed Anglicans. The famous Calvinistic Bishop John Davenant, who attended the Synod of Dort on behalf of the Church of England, argues for such a distinction in his definitive work on Baptismal Regeneration, *Baptismal Regeneration and the Final Perseverance of the Saints*, translated by Josiah Allport (London, 1864), in which he also provides a history of interpretation for this view. See also, Daniel Waterland, *Regeneration Stated and Explained According to the Scripture and Antiquity, in a Discourse on Titus iii. 4, 5, 6* (London, 1740); and, Ray R. Sutton, *The Sacramental Theology of Daniel Waterland* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis at Coventry University/Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University, 1998), pp. 100-110.

establish a proper theological definition. In the next chapter we put the Biblical data together to arrive at an accurate definition. Then we will examine the ramifications.

6

Baptism into the Spirit (3)

A Theological View of Baptismal Regeneration

On the basis of Holy Scripture regeneration takes place at Baptism, water Baptism. The Titus 3:5 passage explicitly ties the word to "washing." The vast majority of historical interpreters (Patristic and Reformed) have concluded the same. Furthermore, regeneration is a change in state. It is not necessarily that inward change which can be associated with it. Nevertheless, regeneration is a change in state consisting of a legal and organic side.

The Legal Aspect of Regeneration

First, in a legal sense, the change in state at Holy Baptism is what can be called "covenantal adoption." Jesus offers the foundational passage for baptismal regeneration in His conversation with Nicodemus. He speaks of regeneration without actually using the term. Nevertheless, He speaks of it conceptually when He tells the Pharisee who came by night, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Nicodemus did not understand, asking, "How can a man be born when he is old?" (3:4). Jesus elaborates, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (3:5). Still Nicodemus did not follow Jesus' argument, raising another question, "How can these things be?" (3:9). Mystified at this teacher's ignorance, Jesus answers his question with a question, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?" (3:10). Jesus was teaching something that Nicodemus should have known. What was it?

Regeneration is being moved legally from one state to another. It is *covenantal adoption*, the new life of being transferred from one family to another. Nicodemus should have seen the connection between what Jesus was teaching and the Abrahamic covenant. The latter had always taught new birth by means of the Sacrament. When the first males were circumcised under Abraham, they became a new people by virtue of becoming a child in the new family, Abraham's in particular. This is not just citizenship or membership in the nation but sonship. The mechanism of birth by adoption should have been familiar to the Pharisee, not only from the Abrahamic covenant, but from common Jewish practices for receiving Gentiles into Israel. In first century Judaism, proselytes, Gentile converts, were received into Israel by a form of Baptism. Gentile men, women and children could be baptized, "esteemed . . . as new-born from their Gentile heathenism."¹ Literature from the first century describes the process as new birth: "If any one becomes a proselyte, he is like a child new-born;" "The gentile that is made a proselyte, and the servant that is made free, behold, he is like a child new-born; and all those relations which he had

¹ Browne, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, p. 628.

while either a gentile or a servant, they now cease from being so."

Granted, it was not Christian Baptism; it was a specific way of receiving Gentile converts. Nevertheless, when Jesus called for Nicodemus to be born of water, it should have been a clear indicator to him. The only twist was that Jesus' birth by water and the Spirit led to entrance into the Church. Moreover, Baptism is a second birth because it makes a person a child of God, adopted into His family. Bishop Lancelot Andrewes of the early seventeenth century, describes this adoption at Baptism in a sermon for Whitsunday, in which he applies the lesson of Baptism to the great feast celebrating the coming of the Holy Spirit: "At first, we were but washed from our sins . . . but here, from a baptized sinner, to an adopted son, is a great ascent. . . . This [is] the very feast of adoption. A feast therefore, to be held in high account with us; as high as we hold this to be the adopted children of God."²

God had once utilized a common practice in the ancient world, Circumcision, for receiving members into His new family. So in the New Covenant, God once again pulled over a common practice, an extra Biblical rite exercised by the Jews, and transformed it for His purposes: entrance into the true holy family and nation, the Church. This is regeneration, covenantal adoption to be God's child. This is more than simply being a member of the body of Christ; it is being a child of our Heavenly Father.

The Organic Aspect of Regeneration

Second, in an organic sense based on the horticultural language of Scripture used to explain a rebirth, *regenera-*

² *Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology*, vol. 3, pp. 258-259.

tion means “engrafting,” what can best be explained as covenantal grafting that is institutional and personal. The Articles of Religion speak of regeneration in Article 27: “They that receive Baptism rightly are *grafted* into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed.” This grafting is into the Church, but it is more dynamic than simply an institutional connection. The language is based directly on Jesus’ words in the parable of the vinedresser describing a grafted union with Him, one of a branch united with a vine, the True Vine (John 15). This union is real, living and mystical. The best word to describe it is organic; it is not simply juridical or static. For example, even though branches are grafted onto Jesus, not all live. Some receive the new life of a graft, but they die. Nevertheless, what Jesus describes as a graft, St. Paul refers to as regeneration (Titus 3:5). It is the only New Testament word that could explain the phenomenon of a graft. Thus, the Spirit begins covenantal new life at Baptism through this grafting. For Richard Hooker, the great sixteenth-century defender of the Reformed Anglican view of the Sacraments, “Baptism . . . giveth to the powers of the soul their first disposition towards future newness of life.”³ It is a grafting into the presence of Christ, even though it might not be the complete final renovation of the person, what the Apostle calls the “renewing of the Spirit” (Titus 3:5). The organic language of salvation in Scripture explains this non-mechanical view of grace as a living relation with Christ to be cultivated and nurtured.

The best way to describe this organic, dynamic grafting is by another metaphor in the Scriptures, the planting of a seed. At Baptism, Christ is planted like a seed

³ *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V 60.2.

through the work of the Spirit. Consider the parable of the soils (Luke 8:4-15). Salvation is presented as the Word being sown, which is analogous to a branch being grafted. The Word is like a seed sown in different types of soil, presumably imaging different people responding to Jesus. Whether the Word is Christ Himself or His Word spoken—there is good case for both by putting the parallel accounts together—the Word is pictured as a seed being planted. Significantly, it is sown on all kinds of soil. On one it stays on the top, only superficial. On two others, it penetrates and briefly takes root, even giving evidence that the sowing will become productive. In this sense, it has a relation to all four; it falls on all of them. Only in the final soil does it have an abiding relation. It goes into the good soil, the soul, takes root, grows and bears fruit.

With an organic model of salvation, regeneration can be understood as the planting of a seed. Perhaps for this reason Baptism could be described as the planting of the seed of regeneration. As a new born child of God, the first life of grace begins, what the Articles of Religion call an "engrafting." This explains the need for nurture, cultivating to the point where a complete renovation of the person would be brought to fullness. Salvation is not mechanical. It comes through the development of a living relation with the Living Christ. This relation can be established instantaneously, whether before, during or after Baptism, but it never comes in finality all at once. It by analogy tracks the cycles of human growth because it is a living relation. The language of Scripture speaks in such a way as to indicate that the *normal* place for salvation to begin is by faith at Baptism, where a person becomes a regenerate, newborn child of God, grafted organically into the presence of Christ.

This legal and organic interpretation was the common view of the English Reformers and classical Anglican scholars until the eighteenth century. It explains why

they could speak of regeneration as occurring at Baptism and at the same time press for evangelical commitments from people. They understood regeneration as a new birth consisting of adoption into the family of God and grafting in some mystical sense into the presence of Christ such that the Seed of the word is planted. They also believed that the renewing of the Holy Spirit normally took place with regeneration at Baptism but often at a later time.

Biblical and Theological Implications

The full passage of St. Paul (Titus 3:5ff.) indicates that regeneration and renewal are not necessarily the same thing, and can occur at different times, but their close proximity indicates that they most often happen along with the other events in the sequence. The full passage reads, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7). The Apostle speaks of this passage as a series of actions, not a scheme as the Puritans preferred. The aspects of this passage can happen progressively or at once. Someone could be regenerated at Baptism but not know conversion until later in life. In the words of Jeremy Taylor, late seventeenth-century Anglican Bishop: "The Spirit, which descends upon the waters of baptism, does not instantly produce its effects in the soul of the baptized . . . The Church gives the sacrament, God gives the grace of the sacrament."⁴ This is not the same as saying that the individual aspects of the Titus

⁴ *The Whole Works of the Rt Revd Jeremy Taylor*, ed. Reginald Heber (London: Rivingtons, 1828), vol. III, Discourse VI.II. 1-11.

passage are progressive. For example, justification is not progressive even though it may be part of God's saving a person over a period of time, beginning with regeneration at Baptism.

The events in St. Paul's text may happen at once, or they may occur at different times. Regardless of whether renewal occurs at the same time or a different time from regeneration, one Anglican scholar has expressed well the need not to confuse the two: "Even if we extend that ecclesiastical idea [Baptism as entrance into the Church], by supposing that the formal introduction into this new condition is attended by the implantation of a seed or a germ of spiritual life in answer to faith and prayer, yet that additional feature does not bring regeneration up to the idea of that full development and maturity of life which more properly should be termed Conversion."⁵ The distinction being made may explain why the prayer book service of Baptism offers prayer before the actual Baptism for the "spiritual regeneration" of the child baptized. Yet the historic prayer after baptism thanks God for the "regeneration" of the child, omitting the qualifier "spiritual." The word refers to the Holy Spirit, not "spiritual" in the sense of anti-physical. The Spirit is not contrary to the physical. Indeed, the Spirit joins the physical in some mysterious way (the Incarnation, the Sacraments and so forth) to bring forth life. Nevertheless, could the lack of reference to the "spiritual" in the prayer book point to a distinction between regeneration and renewal? This seems to be a possible explanation for the different wording before and after the Baptism. Some Anglican scholars (Waterland and so forth) tend to view regeneration in more of a legal sense, which would leave the work of the Spirit in renewal for the completion of the regeneration,

⁵ Boyd, *Baptism and Baptismal Regeneration*, pp. 62-63.

the "spiritual regeneration." Other Anglican thinkers would not want a complete reduction of regeneration to the forensic; they would maintain that the regeneration always involves the work of the Spirit. After all, the full renewal of the person is prayed for before the Baptism. Furthermore, regeneration is associated with the Spirit in some sense even though it might not be the complete renewal of the person.

These two views of baptismal regeneration are and have been acceptable in the history of Reformed Anglicanism. They fit within an Articles of Religion framework but are not sacerdotal or Roman Catholic. They can be summarized as first a forensic view of regeneration, in which regeneration is simply a legal transfer from outside the Church to inside the kingdom of God, what is called adoption. Second, there is a combination of the legal and the organic, the first work of the Holy Spirit but not necessarily the complete conversion of the person (the view of this study). Both positions can be found among Anglican scholars since the Reformation. At times, the tendencies of interpretation have tended toward one approach over the other.

Whatever the case, Reformed Anglicanism did not attempt to sever regeneration from Baptism, while at the same time carefully maintaining a Biblical definition of regeneration. It is the only view that holds several important Biblical realities together, even if they appear to be in tension, without separating what Scripture does not separate. By recognizing certain points in relation to the Sacrament of Baptism, Reformed Anglicanism stays closer to Holy Scripture than other Protestant or Roman views. The Biblical issues that stand together and should not be severed are: one Baptism, regeneration associated with washing (Baptism), justification by faith, and progressive salvation. For example, some Protestant groups completely detach regeneration from Baptism by propos-

ing two baptisms, one called "physical" Baptism and the other "spiritual" Baptism. The problem is that the Holy Scriptures specifically denounce such a view, speaking of only one Baptism. The spiritual and the physical are not in conflict with one another. Just as the Spirit worked to produce the Incarnation, so the Holy Spirit comes at Holy Baptism as demonstrated at Pentecost and other Baptisms in the New Testament.

On the other hand, whereas non-Anglican Protestant groups separate what Scripture does not, the Roman view of salvation and the Sacraments fails to distinguish justification from sanctification. It does not acknowledge the proper forensic nature of justification, which damages the clear Scriptural emphasis on justification by faith. There is not the ability to distinguish formal justification from informal and personal faith. Only a forensic model can make for such an allowance and explain how baptized people can come to real, converting faith later in life. Ultimately the effective spread of a clear Gospel is at stake. Only Reformed Anglicanism and its historic interpretation of Baptismal regeneration satisfies all of the above points without rejecting any one of the important salvation truths of Scripture and their clear Biblical relation to the Sacraments.

Not all Anglican scholars accept the above explanation. Their concern would be that Scripture speaks of the proximity between regeneration and renewal because these two normally occur together. Until demonstrated otherwise, the two should be presumed to have happened at once. Besides (as I have argued in the previous chapter, as well as this one) Baptism unites to the Spirit to form an adoption and an engrafting such that the Word is planted.

Justification and Baptism

There is also the issue of the relationship between justification and Baptism. The Scriptures and the Articles of Religion categorically speak of the great Reformation emphasis of justification by faith alone. Indeed, the "just shall live by faith" according to the Apostle Paul. Also, the Apostle Peter speaks of being baptized "for the remission of sins," clearly justification language (cf. Romans 3:21-26). Justification results in true and final forgiveness. Which is it? Does the Sacrament or the personal faith justify? We should remember that in the New Testament faith was not to be severed from the Sacrament. Yet, we also know that sometimes in the Church people do not personally truly believe at Baptism, even in the case of some adults (Acts 8:13ff.). For this reason, Anglican scholars have spoken of Baptism as the formal place of justification. It can be said that a person is officially and covenantally declared justified at baptism. In this sense Baptism is for the remission of sins. Faith, however, is still required in infant and adult Baptism. Time tells in each case as to whether true faith was present at Baptism.

The Reformation emphasis of justification by faith is still rightfully protected by the recognition of the need for *informal justification* if personal faith were not present at Baptism. For this reason, some scholars have also recognized the distinction of justification *informally* occurring in the life of a person who truly comes to faith after Baptism. In this case, what is signified and sealed in Baptism is realized at the time of personal faith. In this sense, a person could say that he *informally* came to an awareness of justification when he actually believed. Again, the great doctrine of justification by faith alone is upheld. Baptism symbolizes and seals the forgiveness of justification at the point of true faith. Certainly as a legal declara-

tion of God, justification could be said to occur formally at Baptism, even though it might actually take place informally at a later moment. A person is truly, eternally justified before God's tribunal of perfect justice when he receives the payment of sin, Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross. This reception takes place through personal, individual saving faith. Then what was formally presented at Holy Baptism becomes informally realized.

Justification and Confirmation

Justification could also be formalized through another ceremony practiced by the Church called Confirmation. Biblically, there are examples of believers being confirmed subsequent to their Baptism by the laying on of hands of the Lord's representatives, the Apostles (Acts 8:15-17). The Church understood this rite as the completion of Baptism. Hands were laid on to call for the anointing of the Holy Spirit and seal what was initiated at Baptism. The presumption is that the person has matured in his knowledge of the Lord through catechism (training and instruction). He has reached the point in life where he wants to renew the commitment made for him at Baptism by his parents. When he does, *he personally receives* Christ as Lord and Savior and is justified by faith. This justification is informal but it will be a completed formalization at his public confirmation. The rite of Confirmation is the place where public profession is made before the successor of the Apostles, a Bishop in the Church of God. What was informal, personal saving faith, is made formal again, which is actually the completion of what began at Baptism. This distinction between formal and informal justification upholds the statements in Scripture about justification and the forgiveness associated with faith and Baptism.

Nevertheless, the fact that justification along with the renewal of the Spirit may occur at another time provides helpful insight into the wide range of pastoral responses to Baptism. Indeed, it allows for the Church to work patiently with those who have been baptized (regenerated) but who might not be renewed or even justified until later when true, personal faith is exercised. The great nineteenth-century evangelical Anglican Bishop J. C. Ryle saw not only the Biblical basis but the pastoral advantage of baptismal regeneration. He believed in what he called "charitable supposition" when dealing with God's people.⁶ After they are baptized, they should be treated as and counted as believers. After all, they have the very sign and seal given by God to seal and mark them out as Christians. It may take time, even a lifetime, for their baptismal regeneration to work out. A faithful pastor does not give up, because he knows that a relationship with God is organic. Many times the seed of Christ planted in Baptism will lie dormant, just as real seed does. Maybe the seed will not spring forth until much later in life; maybe it will come forth earlier. Whatever the case, Bishop Ryle's phrase is helpful. On the basis of Biblical language, we ought to be charitably presumptive when dealing with our fellow Christians.

⁶ J. C. Ryle, *The Upper Room* (London: Banner of Truth [1888] 1970), p. 353. As perhaps the most famous evangelical and reformed Anglican of the nineteenth century, Bishop Ryle had a slightly different view from the one presented in this study. He believed that *regeneration* "is that complete change of heart and character which the Holy Spirit works in a person when he becomes a real Christian" (p. 350), yet he wanted to retain the language of *baptismal regeneration* on the basis of "charitable supposition." Since Scripture ties this language to Baptism, the Church should presume the reality unless shown otherwise, but knowing full well that it is the complete change of inward character brought about by the Holy Spirit that completes regeneration. In other words, he did not make the distinction between regeneration and renewal as the English Reformers and those Anglican Divines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The Born Again Experience

A similar issue to the relation between justification and Baptism arises over the language of new birth. Evangelicals often speak of being born again at the point of faith. Scripturally, this book has reemphasized Jesus' connection between new birth and Baptism. After all, He tells Nicodemus that he must be born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). Technically the new birth (properly defined) occurs at Baptism. Even so, Jesus' language does not negate the fact that new birth can be fully realized later in the life of a baptized person who truly believes in Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins for the first time. In this situation, the person was covenantally born again at Baptism, meaning an official transfer from outside to inside the kingdom had occurred. Yet, he had not been renewed or converted, and in this sense he had not come to an experience of what the new birth had introduced. The seed of Christ was dormant in his life. Later in life, however, when the Spirit of God renewed him he experienced afresh what his Baptism had signed and sealed. He came to know a new birth informally. We might say that he had come personally to experience the new birth of his baptism.

This explanation does not mean Baptism is insignificant. Scriptures speak of the Sacrament as the beginning of the work of the Spirit in a person's life, indeed, the first planting of the seed of the Word in the case of an infant. Who knows how God uses this spiritual cultivation in the life of a baptized person? Many times the dramatic nature of a late conversion will compel a baptized person to underestimate the importance of his own Baptism. He has experienced so strongly what his Baptism began that he will unfortunately, especially with insufficient Scriptural instruction, discount the work of the Lord early in his life. Instead, a baptized person should understand that God

worked in his life long before he was truly converted. The hand of the Lord was placed on him at his Baptism. The Scriptures wonderfully explain this phenomenon if regeneration is distinguished from renewal. On the other hand, others who come to saving faith later in life bear witness to the fact that they had always known God was working in their life from the moment of their Baptism. As a child they sensed that God was near to them. Then they finally believed. Once again it is the case of one who does not trust Christ until after Baptism, and who comes to a full realization of the work of God in his life when saving faith is exercised. He too has experienced the new birth for the first time.

Similarly, if someone comes to saving faith in Christ prior to Baptism, he can speak of experiencing being born again by the Spirit. Using the analogy of birth, in this situation a person is fully cognizant of the first conception of new spiritual life. When he is baptized and placed in the Church, his new birth is completed with his being born of water and the Spirit. It seems, therefore, that there is a sense in which one can be described as experiencing new birth prior to Baptism and at the point of saving faith should the latter occur after Baptism. The problems only arise when faith is separated from the Sacrament. The strength of Evangelicalism has been its recognition of the need for and reality of saving faith. Its weakness has been its tendency to make a rule out of what Scripture considers abnormal—the separation of faith and the Sacrament—thereby creating the very problem decried, the dividing of the Sacrament from faith. Biblically speaking, although they may be separated, neither Baptism nor faith should be severed from one another.

Thus we learn from Scripture itself that the seal of the Spirit in Baptism is regeneration. This baptismal regeneration is adoption as a child of God and engrafting, the beginning of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a

person. Regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit are not necessarily simultaneous. The renewal of the Spirit might take place after Baptism, or even before. In the case of a foetus in the womb, certainly there are two strong Biblical examples of the Spirit working in the life of unborn infants. John the Baptist leaped in his mother's womb when she encountered Mary who was pregnant with Jesus. Then of course there was Jesus who was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit can work before baptism to renew a child, or an adult for that matter. The point is that there is a distinction between, though not always separation from, regeneration occurring at Baptism and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

The important Biblical definition of regeneration as a change of state tied to Baptism points to the progressive side of salvation. Salvation is not static; it is progressively worked out in the life of a person. In a day when salvation has been cheapened by sudden and shallow conversions, which are presented as instantaneous, many evangelicals may not realize that a huge segment of the Reformation, particularly the English and Lutherans, took a different view. Granted, they rejected the Medieval idea of progressive justification, but they saw salvation as a whole being progressively worked out, beginning with regeneration at Baptism. They believed in baptismal regeneration as well as the need for evangelical faith to be manifested in the life a person. This demonstration of evangelical faith was put in the context of a life lived sacramentally and faithfully before God. This made for truer and deeper believers.

Conclusion

Certainly there can be a danger toward spiritual laxity if the wrong view of the sacramental new birth is taught, or if catechizing and educating are neglected. This does not

have to be. If the new birth of Jesus is seen as the union with the Church, adoption as a child of God through the Holy Spirit, and the planting of the seed of the Word, faith is grounded in commitment and responsibility. Faith is also required of the person baptized and set in a pastoral context for optimum growth. Salvation has a definitive beginning, but it is progressive in its outworking. The soil of the soul, especially the good soil, requires time for the cultivation of mature, deep Christians. This seems to be the need today. We suffer from the shallowness of an over emphasis on the instantaneous view conversion. We need the balance of an organic model. We should not deny the punctiliar nature of justification to achieve the balance. Rather, we should seek to bring back an emphasis on the progressive nature of salvation, which puts the great doctrine of justification into the larger, fuller context of the progress of salvation from regeneration to the complete renovation of the soul in glory. For this reason, the Church would be well advised to return to the more classical, English Reformation language and theology of the Articles of Religion and the Prayer Book. These are days when the Sacraments and the Church, commitment and responsibility, need to be linked with dynamic evangelical faith. Then born again Christians might truly make a difference in their culture.

Perhaps the greatest concern regarding the concept of baptismal regeneration as the seal of the Spirit in Baptism is raised over the status of children. What about infants who receive Baptism under the view of baptismal regeneration? Are they automatically saved? What about all of those who are baptized but who never walk with the Lord? Are they saved? How can they fall away if grace has begun to work in their lives? These questions take us to the subject of the next chapter, *Infant Baptism*.

7

Suffering Infants to Come unto Jesus

Baptizing Babies

One day Jesus' disciples did the unthinkable. They prevented a little infant from being brought to Jesus. Our Lord rebuked His future foundational leaders with those immortal words, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:16). What were they thinking? How could they do such a thing to a helpless child? Was it as simple as trying to remove the distraction of those unavoidable childlike noises at the most inopportune moments of devotion? Or was it more theological? Did they understand Jesus' teachings to be for adults only?

Regardless of the reason for resisting the little person, somehow those closest to Jesus had gotten it all backwards. They thought, for whatever reason, that an infant had no place in Jesus' midst. The adults belong, but not their progeny. How wrong they were. Not only did Christ tell them to let the infant be brought, He informed his clumsy followers that "of such is the kingdom of God."

Babies belong in the kingdom of God. Moreover, "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it" (Luke 18:17). Little children have the most preferred place near to Christ because they are the model.

Infant Baptism, therefore, touches a subject close to the heart of Jesus Christ, infants. In His kingdom, childlikeness is at the door and children are at the center; they are right next to Him. Yet, not just disciples in Jesus' day have objected to infants in Jesus' presence. The subject of infant Baptism became quite controversial after the Reformation. Today there are many Protestant churches that do not practice infant Baptism. They seem to fall into the same category as Jesus' disciples who did not want to let an infant be brought to Jesus. For some reason, they, like those earlier disciples, rule out *a priori* the possibility of an infant's coming to Christ. The first disciples should have known better, as our Lord's response indicates. Jesus saw His disciples as acting inconsistent with previous Biblical principles and practices. What were they?

The Family as the Basic Unit of the Church

The basic social unit of Scripture is the family, not the individual. From the beginning to end in Scripture, God reaches out to and through the family. The movement of the Bible is not from the family in the Old Testament to the individual in the New Testament. This is not how the two testaments differ. God did not operate in terms of one social unit in the Old Testament and another in the New Testament. God works in and through households from start to finish in revealed revelation.

The pages of Holy Scripture reveal that "The grand peculiarity of humanity is that while each individual is a

free responsible moral agent, yet we constitute a race, reproduced under the law of generation, and each newborn agent is educated and his character formed under social conditions."¹ The family shapes the individual and is therefore the basic unit within every sphere of society (State, Church and so forth). In Scripture, the individual is important but not primary. The individual or the State as ultimate are pagan concepts originating outside of God's redemptive purposes. It is the formational character of the family that makes it primary to every social unit: "The freewill of the parent becomes the destiny of the child."² Individuals are not simply individuals; they reflect an entire family unit: "Hence the representative character of progenitors, and inherited character and destiny of all races, nations, and families."³ First and foremost, for better or for worse, the primary mold for an individual is the family.

Scripture is absolutely clear about the foundational nature of the family in all of God's redemptive purposes: Old as well as New Testament. The family is the model for the Church in both testaments. Again, the actions of the parent for good and bad translated to the family. In other words, parental actions were not simply individual acts; they were family actions having ramifications for generations to come.

Adam's fall resulted in the fall of his seed (Romans 5:12). St. Paul attributes the sin of the entire human race to one man. Death spread from this one man to everyone, including his family. The family fell out of covenant with God as a result of the original sin of the first parents.

¹ A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan [1860], 1972), p. 616.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

Thanks be to God, the Lord did not turn His back on the family.

After the Fall, God redeems the family. He does so by bringing the family back into covenant relation with Him. When He claims an individual, the family of that individual is included, even if the person is single at the time. This process of pulling the family into the covenant begins after the fall. God promises a seed to the man and woman (Genesis 3:15). When God deals with them He reaches through the first family to redeem mankind. This establishes an important principle of redemption to and through the family, making the family the basic unit of the kingdom of God. Notice the pattern in the rest of the Bible.

God's covenant with Noah extended to his family, "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you" (Genesis 9:9). The Abrahamic covenant, as we have already seen in earlier chapters, involved the children of Abraham (Genesis 17:7 cf. Galatians 3:8). Even after the nation was formed, the Abrahamic covenant was applied to the whole nation, again making the family the basic unit.

All of you stand today before the Lord your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones and your wives — also the stranger who is in your camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water — that you may enter into covenant with the Lord your God, and into His oath, which the Lord your God makes with you today, that He may establish you to day as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deuteronomy 29:10-13).

The Abrahamic covenant language surfaces in this statement. Also it should not be missed that Moses goes out of his way to describe who is present for the ceremony. The description is in terms of the family unit, not individuals.

When we come to the New Testament, we find the same language. The family is still the basic spiritual as well as social unit of the covenant. On the day people gather around Peter for his sermon at Pentecost, he tells them that the promise of the Father to Abraham pulls forward through Christ to their families, "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). This family orientation of evangelism continues; therefore entire households are baptized (Acts 10:47-48; 11:14; 16:15; 16:31-33; 1 Corinthians 1:16).

The family is the basic unit of society, especially in the kingdom of God. It is not as though the individual is insignificant. He is important. God reaches individuals but not to the neglect of the family of the individual. God wants the individual because He wants more; He wants the entire family of the individual. Redemption is coextensive with the fall. Just as the family of Adam fell with him, so the family is healed at the Cross. Returning to a comment above, the progenitors in the family have a representative character. The family is the representative unit of the people of God, called the Church in both testaments of the Bible.

The Continuity of the Church

In approaching the subject of Infant Baptism, we should also understand the continuity of the spiritual unit of the Bible, the Church. In the Scriptures, there is one people of God of which infants and children are a part. This one people of God—the Church—has continuity from Old Tes-

tament to New Testament. This means the Church did not start at Pentecost; rather, at Pentecost it was extended to the Gentiles by the Resurrected, Ascended Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Granted it was reconstituted by the Incarnation, which we will consider, but the Church was not novel with the Apostles. How do we know?

First, the Church in the Old and New Testament has the same covenantal make up.⁴ As we have noted in an earlier chapter, the Old Testament Church was formed by the Abrahamic Covenant. Entrance was by faith, which means it “rested on the gospel offer of salvation by faith.”⁵ The Apostle Paul makes this connection in his Epistle to the Romans (Romans 4). In addition, the entire purpose of what has been described as the “hall of faith” in the great faith chapter of the Bible, Hebrews 11, was to show that all of the saints of God are saved by faith (compare Galatians 3:8 with Hebrews 11). They are part of the same Church.

The design of this Abrahamic covenant was the same in both testaments: “To prepare a spiritual seed for the Lord.” The “foundation was the same—the sacrifice and mediation of Christ.” Israelites were considered believers, and believers in the New Testament are called the “Israel of God,” the true Israel (Galatians 6:16). “Its sacraments symbolized and sealed the same grace as those of the New Testament church. Thus the Passover, as the Lord’s Supper, represented the sacrifice of Christ—1 Corinthians 5:7. Circumcision as did baptism, represented ‘the putting off the body of sins of the flesh,’ and baptism is called by Paul ‘the circumcision of Christ’—Colossians

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 619-621. The points in this section are largely based on a similar section in A. A. Hodge’s, *Outline of Theology*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 619.

2:11-12."⁶ The parallels are striking, ones which the Apostles go out of the way to draw.

Second, the people of God are called the Church in both Testaments. A particular phrase, the "church of the Lord," is "an exact rendering in the Greek of the Hebrew . . . translated in our version the 'congregation of the Lord.'"⁷ The Psalmist speaks of the Old Covenant people, "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise you" (Psalm 22:22). In Hebrews, the same description is used of the "sons of glory" who are one Church. The passage then quotes the reference in Psalm 22:22, forming continuity with the people of God in the Old Testament and the people of God in the New Testament. For this reason, Stephen spoke of the Israelites in the wilderness as the "church" (Acts 7:38).

Third, the Church is not introduced in the New Testament as a completely new organization. It could be considered new in some senses, but not novel as a whole. The Apostles do not speak of the abolishment of the old in contrast to the new. In fact, "the pre-existence of such a visible society is everywhere taken for granted."⁸ Even Jesus freely refers to the Church as victorious over the gates of hell, as though the Church were a familiar concept to the disciples (Matthew 16:18). Then at Pentecost, the new converts are said to be added as though the Church already existed (Acts 2:47); indeed it did. No additional explanation is provided; the continuity is assumed. The Old Testament did not speak of the coming of a totally new organization. It described how the old would be transformed by the addition of Gentiles. The words of the great Prophet Isaiah point to the day of the Gentiles:

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 619.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 619.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 619.

The children you will have after you have lost the others, will say again in your ears, "The place is too small for me; given me a place where I may dwell." Then you will say in your heart, "Who has begotten these for me, since I have lost my children and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? There I was, left alone; but these, where were they?" Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, and set up My standard for the peoples; they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders; kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers; they shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord, for they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me" (Isaiah 49:20-23).

The Prophet Isaiah spoke of the Israel of old as losing its children and having new children given to it. Who would those children be? They are the Gentiles. Yet, he did not speak of Israel as passing away but as becoming predominantly Gentile. The Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled when the nations come into union with God through the continuous people of God. Hence on the Day of Pentecost, "The Abrahamic covenant, instead of having been superseded by the Gospel, only now begins to have its just accomplishment."⁹

St. Paul develops the same view of the continuity of the people of God. Referring to the prophecies of the Old Testament, he declares that the Jewish church was not abrogated but that the unbelieving Jews were cut off from their own olive-tree, and the Gentile branches grafted in their place; and he foretells the time when God will graft

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 620.

the Jews back into their own stock and not into another (Romans 11:18-26). Instead of two houses, he speaks of one household of God, where a dividing wall between Jew and Gentile is broken down (Ephesians 2:11-22). This language of removing the dividing wall, as opposed to tearing down the house, implies renovation of a common structure. Therefore, the Church in the New Testament is not a new organization. It is the old one transfigured by the presence of the Living Christ and open to all the peoples of the world. It is not an altogether new home but a larger, renovated, pre-existing home for the people of God, called the Church in both testaments.

Do these important points of continuity mean there are no differences between the Church of the Old Covenant and the Church of the New Covenant? Not at all, there are important differences. The Incarnation transforms the Church into the Body of Christ, which enables the kingdom to be international and not confined to one nation. It is not tied to one society or one place. As the Body of Christ, the Church loses the necessity for a militaristic conquest. The dynamic presence of Christ conquers by the power of the Holy Spirit and moral persuasion. In the Book of Acts the cities of the world are conquered by the fire of the Holy Spirit, not the fire of the fury of war. Furthermore, the Church becomes an ambassador in the midst of all nations throughout the world, moving away from a theocracy ruled by an earthly Jerusalem, to a holy commonwealth in the New Testament covering the entire world (Philippians 3:21) and governed by Mount Zion in heaven (Hebrews 12:18-29). Its role is no longer to defend one border but to reconcile God and man by traversing all borders with the love of Christ. Even though there are significant differences between the covenants, however, all that the New Covenant Church became was anticipated in the Old Covenant Church pre-

cisely because the people of God have an essential unity in the covenant.

Having considered the basic unit of Scripture as the family and examined the continuity of the people of God, we can now return to our Lord's concerns when the disciples would not let an infant be brought to Him. They had fundamentally misunderstood how He had consistently included little children in the covenant all through redemptive history. Infants belonged in the kingdom because the Abrahamic covenant of old had always included them. The essence of the organization had not changed in terms of the age for entrance. The difference was in the predominant ethnicity: the Church went from primarily Jewish to Gentile, yet including all races (especially the Jewish people) without a loss of ethnic distinctiveness. The Incarnation made the Gentile inclusion possible, reconstituting the old so that it could embrace the new people, especially their children.

Household Baptism

Children appear as part of the New Covenant. Christ tells the disciples that the kingdom consists of children (Matthew 19:14; Luke 18:16). John speaks of lambs as well as sheep in the fold of the Good Shepherd (John 21:15-17). Children are acknowledged as part of the churches of the New Testament (Ephesians 6:1-3). The question now is, "How did children become part of God's kingdom?"

Since the New Covenant was the continuation of the old through the transfiguring presence of the Incarnate, Living Christ, children are admitted by the Sacrament of Baptism, just as they were admitted by the Sacrament of Circumcision under the Old Covenant. How else would they be brought to Jesus? As a matter of fact, the household references to Baptism confirm that Baptism was the way to bring an infant to Jesus.

Consider all of the references to Baptism in the New Testament. There are ten specific instances cited. Two of those have to do with individuals, such as the conversion of Paul (Acts 9:18) and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:38). In these references, "there are no families to be baptized."¹⁰

Three other references to Baptisms have to do with the Baptism of crowds. The first is at Pentecost, where the injunctions imply infant Baptism. Peter speaks of their need to repent and be baptized in Abrahamic covenant language, "Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, . . . for the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off" (Acts 2:38-39). The Apostle calls for "everyone of you" to be baptized. He then uses language with which they would have been familiar and they would have assumed meant inclusion of the children in the rite.

The remaining crowd references to Baptism do not mention the families. In Samaria, a revival broke out through Philip's preaching (Acts 8). The emphasis of the passage is not so much on who received Baptism but the great number. Also, Luke draws special attention to the situation with Simon the Magician, who apostatized and abandoned the faith.

The final crowd reference has to do with the Baptism of John's disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19). Again, the emphasis is slightly different. The point of the passage is to show the need for Christian Baptism. John's disciples had received Jewish Baptism. Jesus spoke of the need to have His Baptism in contrast to John's (Acts 1:5). Luke is careful to record an instance where the Apostles showed obedience to Christ. They baptized John's disciples with

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 622. Hodge has an excellent section summarizing the Baptisms in the New Testament.

Jesus' Baptism, which was in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Jesus-only Baptism is Trinitarian Baptism, not Baptism in the singular name of Jesus as some modern sects have supposed. Therefore, no mention of the families is made in this passage, which does not imply anything regarding the recipients given the purposes of the passage.

This leaves five remaining passages in Acts and the Epistles that speak of Baptism. All of them reference directly or indirectly the families as being baptized. It is expressly said that they were baptized in four of these passages. The households of Lydia of Thyatira, the jailer of Philippi, Stephanas and Crispus, are all referred to as baptized (Acts 16:15, 32, 33; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:16). The final household is that of Cornelius (Acts 10), of which "the record implies that the family was also baptized."¹¹

Thus, the practice of New Testament household Baptism is consistent with the historic practice of the Old Testament Church. The pattern of the apostles is unmistakable, who "in every case, without a single recorded exception, baptized believers on the spot, and whenever they had families, they also baptized their households."¹² This explains why infant Baptism has been such an historic practice.

From the earliest days of Christianity, children were baptized along with their adult, believing parents. Irenaeus, born about A. D. 130, refers to the Baptism of infants: "He came to save through means of Himself all who through Him are born again unto God, infants and little children, and boys, and youths and old men."¹³ Since

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, II, 22.4.

the early Church equated regeneration and Baptism, as was mentioned earlier, this is clearly a reference to infant Baptism from a Church father who was probably directly influenced by the Apostles.

Another early Church author, Tertullian, confirms the practice of infant Baptism in the latter part of second century in a negative way. He demonstrates the practice of infant Baptism by calling for delayed Baptism. He preferred to baptize later in life regardless of the age.¹⁴ Nevertheless, his objection to early Baptism, especially infants, proves the practice existed very early in the Church.

The early Church commentator, Origen, provides a statement that links infant Baptism to the Apostles: "For this also it was, that the Church from the Apostles had a tradition to give baptism even to infants."¹⁵ He argued for Apostolic precedent because they were careful in the early Church not to do anything contrary to the Apostles. Indeed, this was the test. Anything outside of Apostolic practice was therefore not Biblical.

Finally, by the Council of Carthage (A.D. 253), infant Baptism is assumed. The only concern is when to baptize the infant. The final decision was that it should take place before the eighth day.

From the third century forward, infant Baptism has been universally practiced. It became an issue with Pelagius, the British monk in the fourth century, who was opposed by St. Augustine. Pelagius traveled the known Christian world, undermining the practice of infant Baptism because of his rejection of the doctrine of original sin. He thought every person was born in the pre-fall condition of Adam, morally good. A person became sinful be-

¹⁴ Tertullian, *On Baptism*, XVIII.

¹⁵ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Book V.

cause he committed sin. In other words, humans are not born in sin as the Psalmist says (Psalm 51); therefore there is no need for the Baptism of infants. Eventually, the third ecumenical council sided with Augustine, upholding his teachings, especially original sin, which necessitates infant Baptism. The teachings of Pelagius were rejected. Unfortunately, Pelagius was taken into the Eastern Church, which probably explains the historic problems (even to the present) of the Eastern Orthodox Church in accepting the Biblical and ecumenical doctrine of original sin. Nevertheless, the Church universal (Catholic), East and West, was bound by the great ecumenical councils, meaning infant Baptism has been one of the universal practices of the Church from the Apostles to the Reformation.

When we come to the Reformers, we discover that the Protestantism of the Reformation almost unanimously upheld the practice of infant Baptism. There were variations on the reasons for the practice, but the main, first generation of Reformers (Luther, Cranmer, Ridley, Bucer, Zwingli and so forth) and second generation of Reformers (Calvin, Bullinger and so forth) all believed in infant Baptism. Therefore, based on Scripture and its historic understanding by the early Church and the Church of the Reformation, infant Baptism is a Biblical practice.

Conclusion

Returning to the scene where the disciples kept an infant from being brought to the Lord (Luke 18:9ff.), we should therefore conclude that infant Baptism is the way an infant would be brought to Jesus in the New Covenant. Infants are to be baptized into the kingdom of God. They are to come to Jesus. However, the issue of whether and how infants should be brought to Jesus is only one part of Je-

Jesus' conflict with the disciples' views about babies. Jesus told them more, which takes us to additional questions, "How are baptized infants to be viewed?" Should they be treated as and counted as unbelievers, maybe believers, or believers? Three major views of baptized infants emerge from the Reformation for further consideration.

8

Baptized Infants

Unbelievers, Maybe Believers, or Baby Believers

Infant Baptism is one of those “rubber meets the road” points in a study of the Sacraments. It provokes all of the difficult questions about the Sacraments. Perhaps this is why Jesus took such issue with His disciples when they kept back an infant from Him (Luke 18:9-17). In the last chapter, this scene became the context for discussing infant Baptism. It was established that Infant Baptism became the New Covenant way of bringing an infant to Jesus.

This chapter presses the second half of the scene over an infant’s not being brought to Jesus. It is the part where Jesus reminds the disciples “of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Luke 18:16). Moreover, Jesus teaches them that a child is the model for the adult: “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it” (v. 17). Now we should allow our Lord to instruct us with these poignant words, for they touch on the status of a baptized infant. Specifically, how should a baptized infant be viewed? Groups surfacing from the Reformation such as Zwinglians, the continental Reformed and Puritans, and the Anglicans and Lutherans argued strongly for infant Baptism, but they did not all agree as to the exact state of the baptized infant. These views generally fell

into three categories: (1) those who understood baptized infants as baptized but unbelievers, still in need of the actual work of grace; (2) those who considered baptized infants as maybe believers if they were of the elect; (3) and those who supposed baptized infants to be baby believers taking their first steps in the life of grace.

Baptized But Not a Baby Believer

The Reformation attempted to rescue the late Medieval Church from a mechanical approach to grace, one that had destroyed the need for faith. The pre-Reformation Church had come to believe that Baptism was simply a matter of the infusion of the habit of grace irrespective of faith. This infusion was to be brought to perfection by the more important Sacrament, the Eucharist, where one was supposed to receive the real physical body and blood of Christ. Even with the second Sacrament faith was not an issue; the transubstantiation of the elements creating real, physical presence was the primary concern. As such, Baptism was not so important by the time of the Reformation. The correction to these erroneous views was supplied by the Reformation with its Biblical emphasis on justification by faith. At the same time, the Reformers wanted to restore a Biblical view of the Sacraments, especially Baptism. A disproportionate emphasis had been placed on the Eucharist and how real presence was to be understood. The combination of the important Reformation ideas of justification by faith, and an attempt to re-establish the proper significance of Baptism, affected how a baptized infant was perceived.

First, Zwingli and his followers (a theology popularized today in some reformed circles) continued the practice of infant Baptism, but believed the Sacrament to be only a sign; it was not understood to be a seal of one's relationship with Christ. An infant is placed in the covenant,

but not to be considered a believer because the infant cannot exercise personal faith. In one sense, this protected personal faith. Under such a view, people are called to believe in Christ with their heart to be justified as they approach adulthood, sometime in late adolescence. It becomes a matter not of the just shall live by faith, but the adult just shall live by faith. Consequently, the child of the covenant is not considered a believer until faith is expressly confessed like an adult. The little ones are pressed to come to faith, but their faith is distrusted until adulthood is reached, even though they have been baptized.

Biblical/Theological Problems

There are two problems with Zwingli's approach, which was expanded beyond his own convictions by his followers. Biblically, there is the issue Jesus faced with His disciples the day they would not allow an infant to be brought to Him. Jesus definitively commands the infant to be allowed entrance into His presence. Zwinglian theology satisfies this part of Jesus' statements. Jesus said more by making the infant as a model. He pointed out, "of such is the kingdom," meaning infants are not simply brought for Baptism but they are to be viewed as a premier example of faith, which supposedly they cannot have according to the Zwinglian position. Their dependence is the very type of dependence that an adult is to have. The Church is not to wait until children are mature enough to exercise faith. They are to promote faith from the moment of life. Moreover, they are to emulate the faith of a child. Adult people of God are to become so childlike in their faith, that it is inconceivable not to understand the baptized little ones as believers according to Jesus' standard.

Practical Problems

Then there is a very real practical problem. Children of believers normally begin to express faith the moment they become cognizant. Ask a little child of a believer if he or she loves Jesus. Or, probe as to his or her interest in Bible stories. Little ones have no guile. They are transparently honest if they do not understand. They will ask the most astute, deep, probing theological questions. They will and can believe as deeply as any adult. Should the Church be distrustful or skeptical about a child's faith? If so, would not this cynicism tend to undermine the very faith that Jesus lifts up as a model? It seems that it would. Therefore the practical reality, as well as the theological difficulty, demonstrates how a Zwinglian approach can overturn Jesus' model.

In the final analysis, the Zwinglian view took too much away from the doctrine of Baptism. It is a seal as well as a sign. To deny the Sacrament of Baptism to little ones, who love so intensely the things of God, is horribly incongruous with the teaching of the Bible and the real faith of little children. Ultimately, Zwinglian theology also took too much from children. This is evidenced by the fact that a movement arose in Zwingli's midst that he had not anticipated, the Anabaptists. These original followers of Zwingli took him a step beyond which he wanted to go. He denied that Baptism is a seal. They rejected infant Baptism altogether. They argued for a second, true, adult Baptism on the basis of perceived faith.

Anabaptism resulted in a strange kind of tyranny. Who would be the final determiner of whether a person had true faith, if perceived personal faith is the basis of Baptism? All kinds of standards were proposed. As a result, one who could articulate faith was allowed to be baptized. Some learned to say the right things, to articulate better than others. The contradiction is that someone who

might have sincere, deep faith, but who is not articulate, might be viewed as an unbeliever. The tyranny of subjectivism is unending.

Perhaps the most negative aspect of the kind of subjectivism that developed was true church theology and practice. According to this view, only those who are subjectively assessed as truly believing are considered truly the Church. This sounds well and good, but how is this "true belief" determined? Once there was a church named, *True Vine Church*. One could become a member of that church only if he could recount a conversion experience the way the members understood a true conversion experience. This meant being able to state categorically when salvation occurred in one's own life. If the date, place and circumstances could not be given, then a person could not be a member of True Vine Church. Genuine believers left this church because they did not know when they became Christians. This is Zwinglian theology to the extreme, but it is the path that follows a denial of the sealing aspect of the Sacrament; indeed it is a course that denies the Sacrament altogether. In fairness to the devout and learned Zwingli, perhaps he himself would not have been favorable to the direction his own theology went, but it was inevitable when the Sacrament ceased being a seal and was defined as only a symbol.

So if in one respect Zwingli started out to protect faith, in another he virtually sowed the seeds for the undoing of faith. It all started with his doubting that an infant could be viewed as a true believer. Is this not the essence of Jesus' concerns with His own disciples? It seems that it was, which is why He held up the infant as a model of how to be allowed to come to Him. Even more, the infant and the little child are a model of how to live in Christ, resting in His compassionate arms.

Baptized But Maybe a Baby Believer

After the Reformation in Europe, a second view of baptized infants appeared by way of the continental Reformed. These devout believers generally laid claim to the teachings of John Calvin, renowned theologian of enormous influence, although the Swiss Reformer had a profound impact on many involved in the English Reformation. He was a marvelous Biblical scholar, who also wrote probably one of the most important commentaries on the Apostles' Creed, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, since the early Church. He is generally recognized for his teachings on predestination, even though this was not a dominant theme in his writings. His Biblical commentaries and his amazing abilities to defend Trinitarian theology, the latter even recognized by the Roman Church at the time, are his truly great, lasting contributions. In post-Reformation years, however, his European followers especially tended to extend¹ his seminal ideas about the doctrine of the Church in a direction that resulted in an ambiguous view of the children of believers.

The issue concerned teachings on the invisible church. The Genevan Reformer advocated a nascent concept called the invisible Church. Yet Calvin should not be blamed for all of the later uses (and abuses) of his ecclesiastical concept of the invisible church that was primarily addressing the difficult situation in the late Medieval Church. Calvin, when speaking to the Anabaptists regarding Baptism, comes remarkably close to the type of baptismal regeneration found in the Anglican formularies (Articles of Religion, Book of Common Prayer and so forth). Nevertheless, later English and continental reformed thinkers such as John Owen and Francis

¹ *Institutes*, Book IV, Chapters XV and XVI.

Turretin, themselves remarkable theologians, applied the invisible Church doctrine of elect, true believers more broadly than Calvin.²

Calvin had intended the distinction to address the apostate condition of the late Medieval Church. His invisible/visible Church theology actually explained the mixed multitude in the Church, a very Augustinian concept. Calvin was right; there are unbelievers in the Church. Contrary to the extreme followers of Zwingli, there is no such thing as a true Church with all believers. There is a true Church with believers and unbelievers. Based on Jesus' own teachings, the presence of unbelievers does not destroy the reality of the Church. He told His disciples on the night of the Last Supper an important parable. He is the vine and the members are the branches (John 15). There are living branches as well as dead ones. The dead ones are cut off and thrown into the fire. The living ones bear fruit. For Calvin, all of the branches are visible, the believers and unbelievers. The invisible branches, those alive, are the true believers infallibly known only by God.

After Calvin, the post-Reformation continental Reformed began to address the matter of apostasy within Protestant churches. They applied invisible church doctrine to the children of believers. In fairness to Calvin, this was not his concern. His writings indicate that this was a non-issue for him. Among the post-Reformation continental Reformed, however, it was extended to the covenant family. Specifically, the Sacrament of Baptism was reduced to only a sign in the case of the non-elect. Stated another way, the Sacrament sealed only in the

² Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1997), Vol. 3, pp. 32-41. On the whole, Turretin's theology is excellent. His greatest deficiencies appear in some of his treatment of the Church and the Sacraments. See also John Owen, *Works* (London: Banner of Truth Trust [1965] 1972).

case of a believer.³ With the elect, Baptism was a sign and seal. With the non-elect, it was only a sign. In the latter case, it did not actually seal because according to this view of grace the seal could not be reversed. It was so absolute that falling away was not possible. A baptized infant was perceived as maybe, or maybe not of the elect. In general, this theology seemed to move in a direction of "a wait and see" attitude concerning whether a child of a believer were himself a believer. The child's faith could not be trusted as he grew into adulthood. If he believed when he became an adult, then he could truly be considered one of God's elect. In all practicality, it was a case of maybe or maybe not.

Biblical/Theological Problems

Some seventeenth-century English and continental Reformed theology on this subject suffers from a number of theological and pastoral errors. At a theological level, Holy Scripture does not actually teach an invisible Church doctrine. There is no such thing. All of the Churches in the Bible and all of the members are visible; so are the so-called invisible, true believers. There is no such thing as an invisible believer, nor is there anyone who can infallibly determine the so called invisible but true believers.

The Bible speaks of the people of God only in a sacramental and covenantal sense. It is true that from the point of view of eternity, before the foundation of the world, God predestinates His elect unto life. Scripture refers to this fact about God's Decree (Ephesians 1:3-14), without explaining how this can be. Mankind remains a free, moral agent with free will in this sense. Yet God has His elect. The truth of the sovereignty of God and the free-

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 363-364.

dom of mankind is a great, unresolved mystery. Both are taught in Scripture. The reality of both, like the oneness and the manyness of the Trinity, are simultaneously affirmed without excluding one or the other and without having full understanding of how these together are reconciled. Nevertheless, from the perspective of God's Decree, the number of the elect cannot increase nor decrease. Unfortunately Christians cannot pierce God's eternal Decree and infallibly know apart from the Sacraments and the covenant who the elect are and are not. This is the whole point of the Sacraments. They are provided as signs and seals of the covenant. Apart from the visible covenant, the Church, there is no relationship with God.

Nowhere does the New Testament speak exactly the way many post-Reformation English and continental thought does regarding the application of the visible/invisible distinction to the children of believers. Moreover, the Apostles do not call the Church to view some members as invisible and elect, while perceiving others as visible but maybe not elect. Rather, the Scriptures speak of salvation in a slightly modified way from a seventeenth-century theological system on this subject.

Salvation is historical and eschatological. The parable of the soils is the model (Matthew 13). The people of God enter by faith into a relation with the Lord in history. They are called to persevere. Yet it is possible to be in God's covenant in history but not in His covenant in eternity, eschatologically. In Jesus' parable, some soils receive the word but only temporarily. There are examples like Simon the Magician (Acts 8). Some respond to the Lord, are baptized, enter His covenant and then turn away, as indicated by two of the four soils in Jesus parable. Those who fall away are considered apostate. They are not believers. On the other hand, those who walk with

God in history and continue in the faith will be with God in eternity.

The post-Reformation reformed conception of grace and the invisible Church departed significantly from Augustine's views, which the English Reformation Church (sixteenth century) kept. Augustine distinguished between *predestination to grace* and *predestination to perseverance*.⁴ Based on the language of the New Testament, Augustine spoke of all who are baptized as having predestination to grace but not necessarily predestination to perseverance. For Augustine, everyone receives grace at Baptism. It is grace in an incipient, organic sense, but not in a final completed sense. Augustine based his view of grace on the very language of the New Testament. Grace could be received in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1), and one could even fall from grace (Galatians 5:4). Grace is not static, it is dynamic.

The scholastic Reformed of the seventeenth century saw more finality in the concept of grace. Once a person was in grace or grace was in the person, it could not be lost. It is virtually metaphysical, like a kind of ethereal vapor that comes on a person but cannot leave. This created a major difficulty in dealing with the issue of apostasy, and the real possibility of apostasy for all believers. For the later continental Reformed the issue became one of election. There is really no possibility of apostasy among the elect. Yet Scripture speaks of making one's call and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). How could election be made sure if it were a static condition? The best explanation is found in a covenantal, sacramental view of election, where perseverance is required and apostasy remains possible. For that matter, the New Testament

⁴Browne, *Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, pp. 650-654. Browne has a full discussion of Augustine's views of grace in contrast to Calvin's, providing many references to Augustine.

uses quite strong language in describing the possibility of falling away. The Apostle Paul warns about "receiving the grace of God in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1). This language does not sound like the later continental Reformed at all. And it is doubtful that Calvin would have agreed with the more seventeenth-century continental reformed. St. Paul says that it is possible to receive the grace of God in vain. He describes grace as being revoked and resisted. He even refers to falling away from grace (Galatians 5:4). For the Apostle there is no distinction between visible and invisible. Rather, he advocates a relation with Christ as historical and eschatological. He encourages the Church to continue in the grace of God they have already received, calling for them to make eternal (eschatological) what they have received in history. He also warns of losing the grace of God they have already received.

In the Book of Hebrews, the possibility of falling away leaves no doubt as to the historical and eschatological character of grace as opposed to the visible and invisible way of distinguishing the Church. St. Paul talks of how "it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6). The passage does not speak in terms of the elect and non-elect. It describes covenantally those who have received the grace of God and have turned away from this grace. In this case, the passage explains that some can so reject the good things of God that they cannot return because they will not return. This is final apostasy. It is real; it is not hypothetical. It was real in the early Church; it is real today, even in whole denominations.

The difficulty with much of the seventeenth-century English and continental reformed view of grace arises because it is often referred to in terms of the eternal decree of God, which is unknown to mankind. However, Scripture describes grace in terms of the covenant, of what can be known. It is true that from the point of view of the eternal decree, the grace of eternal election cannot be added by Baptism if it were not already there. Reformed Anglicanism agrees with continental reformed thought (especially Calvin) on this point.⁵ The grace that precedes salvation is often called *prevenient* grace, the word *prevenient* meaning literally "to go before." There is no disagreement with this concept in the current study. Yet this is a theological as opposed to a Biblical and covenantal way of speaking of grace. To neglect this distinction causes many theological and pastoral difficulties. It is this very distinction that the later continental reformed failed to make.

Thus, it is not a matter of visible/invisible but of historical/eschatological. The post-Reformation progressively shifted away from the notion that the Sacrament is a sign and seal for all in the Church, of all baptized, not simply a sign for the non-elect. There is no suggestion in Scripture that the Sacrament is a sign for some, the non-elect, and a sign and a seal for others, the elect. The Sacrament is a sign and seal for all who receive it.

As such, election is covenantally and sacramentally qualified in Scripture. This is the whole point of God's sacramental definition, to provide visible signs and seals of the elect. The elect are to be considered as those who come under the Sacrament and who walk faithfully in the covenant. Unless they turn away from the covenant relation with God and His people, they are to be viewed as and

⁵ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book V, LX.3.

treated as the elect. As long as they remain in the covenant, meaning under the signs and seals of the covenant in good standing, they should be treated as and counted as believers. This is the best that a mortal can do. Certainly God knows, but humans do not have the ability to see the eschatological outcome of all of those in the covenant. Humans must live by faith day by day, finding assurance in the Sacraments themselves. Luther would grab his baptized forehead in times of doubt and exclaim, "I am baptized, I am baptized." In good Pauline fashion — "as you have been baptized in Christ so walk in Him" (Romans 6) — Luther bases his walk with God in his Baptism. The sacramental foundation, which includes faith, forms the grounds for believing that if a person perseveres by the grace of God he will be saved, and at the same time, being warned that if he falls away then he will not be saved.

The post-Reformation theological developments, what has been referred to as a kind of "scholastic Calvinism," allowed for a mechanical approach to God. Grace became automatic for the elect. Perseverance was unavoidable in the elect, but then who are the elect? The shift to a quest for ruminating on election to know if automatic grace was present became the problem. Was this mechanistic tendency in Calvin? Hardly. The texture of his writings and commentaries is significantly different from the much later continental Reformed, who sowed the seeds of a mechanistic approach to salvation. In the final analysis, regeneration, salvation and the success of the Sacraments were reduced to whether one was the elect. Grace is automatic for some. If not the elect, then all would be lost. From the point of view of the eternal decree of God, these statements are true. The Church, however, is given only to know election in terms of the Sacraments, faith and obedience. The precise language of Biblical predestination is Christologically and covenantally qualified

in Scripture. Predestination is always referred to in relation to Christ, the great "in Him" passage of Ephesians one being the classic location of this language. Moreover, it means that election is supposed to be in terms of the visible covenant, not some kind of invisible, subjective, secret perception.

The doctrine of predestination among some seventeenth-century English and continental Reformed was taken to a somewhat Gnostic level. If election is the basis of the walk with God, then the challenge became to determine if one were of the elect apart from the Sacraments. There were intellectual as well as experiential suggestions for ascertaining election. In the final analysis, salvation became a quest for assurance of election.

Pastoral Problems

Determining assurance of election is not the teaching of the New Testament. Granted, this may be the result of walking with God. On the one hand, Scripture wants a person to know he is saved, but on the other hand it does not want a person to become so overconfident that he loses sight of the need to persevere constantly. Holy Scripture speaks of salvation in more of an organic sense. Consider the image of the vine. Jesus calls for His disciples to abide in Him, which means to remain in union. He does not suggest intellectual and experiential ways of knowing whether one is the elect. He simply calls for an abiding relationship with the Living God. Salvation has a forensic beginning, justification declared at Baptism, but it results in and is extended through a dynamic, organic relation with God. In contrast, later Calvinism tended to ossify into intellectualism or pietism, creating the problems of the pure church.

The practical problem of visible/invisible Church theology is what became pure Church theology. Those who

were convinced that they were the true, invisible Church understood themselves as the pure Church. A group arose in the English Church, the Puritans, who characterized themselves this way. Initially these stalwart believers made many good contributions. They sought for a purified Church of the elect. For them, discipline was the way to arrive at this pure Church, as though all of the weeds could be removed. The insurmountable Biblical difficulty, however, is that the Lord offers a parable in complete contrast to pure Church theology, ironically one that Calvin himself was at his best when interpreting. It is the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-43). Jesus told His disciples that tares would always grow among the wheat until the final day. In other words, the Church would always be a mixed body. Importantly, He did not refer to this phenomenon as visible/invisible. As a matter of fact, the Greek word for *tare* referred to a kind of plant that looks just like wheat until the plant comes to maturity. In other words, Jesus spoke of the Church in historic and eschatological terms, not as visible and invisible. As such, He rendered the pure Church approach impossible. Nevertheless, in the name of election and the pure, invisible Church, the people of God have been fragmented.

Pure Church theology has been infamously summarized in the words of the New England seventeenth-century Baptist, Roger Williams. After leaving the Puritans in Massachusetts because they would not separate from the Anglican Church, and thereby sever themselves from the group with which he had separated, he informed his wife, "It is me and thee and I'm not sure about thee." Just as we discovered with Zwinglianism and true church theology, pure Church theology results in its own kind of subjective tyranny. It begins by shifting away from a covenantal and sacramental approach to election.

Therefore, the distinction of the invisible/visible Church in one sense protected justification by faith. Bap-

tized children could be called to faith on the basis of their possibly being the elect. It was a maybe, maybe not type of evangelism for the children of believers. In another sense, however, invisible Church theology produced a kind of skepticism toward the children of believers among the later generations of the English and continental Reformed. It also sent the children searching to determine if they were elect, instead of developing an abiding relation with Christ. In other words, it tended to undermine the faith of children in the final analysis.

As for the Sacraments, they too were mitigated. In the final analysis, the Sacrament of Baptism really did not seal in the case of a non-elect infant. In fact, the Scriptures do not speak this way. They categorically define a Sacrament as a sign and seal, inescapably so. We are left with one final view of the baptized infant.

Baptized and a Baby Believer

How do we protect the integrity of the requirement of faith and the efficacy of the Sacrament at one and the same time? As we have seen, other groups during the Reformation were not able to guard one without compromising the other. Faith was upheld at the expense of the Sacrament in the Protestant Church, whereas the Sacrament had been maintained at the expense of faith in the Roman Church. Both views had negative ramifications on the life of faith among children. This brings us to another alternative for understanding the status of a baptized infant. It is found among the Lutherans and the Anglicans.

A baptized infant should be viewed as and treated as a believer because infants can have some kind of faith. The Psalmist clearly teaches that infants can trust in God, "But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from birth; from My mother's womb You have

been My God" (Psalm 22:9-10). Based on this verse, Martin Luther when confronting an Anabaptist leader argued, "Elect infants have the same faith in Christ as elect adults — when they [the adults] are asleep." George Herbert, the seventeenth-century Anglican poet and vicar, penned these wonderful lines in his *The Temple*.

Since, Lord, to thee
 A narrow way and little gate
 Is all the passage, on my infancie
 Thou didst lay hold, and antedate
 My faith in me.

Clearly, baptized infants can have some kind of faith. They may not be conscious of the faith, but then this has nothing to do with the existence of the reality of faith. In the natural world, humans normally cannot remember life in the womb or even so traumatic an event as birth, but the birth process is real. Self-consciousness about certain activities and being able to recount them does not negate reality, not even the reality of infant faith.

The important question raised to such a statement is, "But how can a baby be treated as a true believer when it cannot exercise *adult* faith?" The answer in the Catechism of the Anglican Church is telling, "Because, *by the faith of their Sponsors*, infants are received into Christ's Church, become the recipients of grace, and are trained in the household of faith." Sponsors and parents represent the child with their faith.

With this view, faith is professed at the Baptism of an infant. It is the profession of the sponsors and the parents. How can this be? In the Gospels there is a specific case of a man who was brought to Christ. He was paralyzed. He was also like an infant in that he was somewhat passive. When his friends tried to take him into Jesus' home, it was too crowded. They had to cut a hole in the roof and lower him. The texts records, "When Jesus saw

their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5). It was *their* faith that resulted in the forgiveness of the man's sins. No doubt the paralytic was included in the "their faith," but this is an important covenantal principle. The corporate faith, including his, was taken into consideration in the application of the healing. The principle is that the Church should bring those who are not able to come to the Lord on their own, like infants, children of believers. In this case, the Church, or sponsors, stand on behalf of the infant and confess faith. They covenantally join with and on behalf of the infant to make a confession. On the basis of their confession of faith, which includes the infants, sins are declared forgiven just as they were with the paralytic.

After the Reformation, Andrew Melville, a Scottish Reformer, wrote in 1607 a vicious attack against Prayer Book worship. Although he did not object to infant Baptism *per se*, he opposed some practices. He particularly reacted to the notion of sponsors speaking on behalf of infants. The famous Anglican poet, George Herbert, wrote two Latin poems defending the Prayer Book Office of Baptism. In the following, he addresses the antagonism to sponsors with perceptive insight:

When the tender infant is brought to the sacred waters
 Do you find the words unholy because the child does not understand them?
 Do we not buy fields so? And to fields the Redeemer
 Himself compared the heavenly regions of God everlasting,
 That is to say, if circumstances or too cramping age hold back
 the buyer
 A friend stands in to supply the mandates of the law,
 Perhaps you will also stop the infant from being carried to the
 waters
 And want him by his own efforts to approach the temple's
 threshold:

But if, Melville, the child may ask for the feet of others
 Why should another's voice meet with your displeasure?
 Rightly you would supply to harmless unweaned children ev-
 erything
 Which reason, if grown up, knows on its own account.
 What is to stop someone responding to the cries of a child
 When it cannot itself utter distinct prayers?
 You are savage, tearing the promises of heaven from the little
 ones;
 And may it be that no-one stand surety for you when you ask
 for help.⁶

Contrary to later detractors such as the one answered by Herbert, the model of the paralytic provides a way to protect faith and the Sacrament in the Baptism of an infant. Personal faith is exercised by the sponsors on behalf of the child. The important doctrine of justification by faith is not abandoned. The little child is treated as a believer and even held up as a model of faith and salvation, consistent with Jesus' teachings to the disciples. As the child grows, he is expected to own the faith pronounced in his name.

Confession of faith and the Sacrament are not compromised. The Biblical claims about all that is attendant to the Sacrament can be embraced. The Sacrament is a sign and seal of the covenant, as Scripture explicitly says, meaning the child is regenerated and the grace of God begins to work in the life of the infant. The child is treated as and counted as a believer without negating faith or the Sacrament.

Finally, the baptized, believing child is to be trained. The relation with God so evident in the young is to be cul-

⁶ For the translation of the poem see Kenneth Stevenson, *The Mystery of Baptism*, p. 82.

tivated. The little one is to be brought up in the Lord, not outside of Him, as Paul instructs (Ephesians 6:1-3). The organic union established at Baptism is to be perpetuated through catechizing and an ongoing walk with God. If someone baptized does not believe later in the life, they are considered as having fallen away (Hebrews 6:1-9; 10:29). The Bible speaks about the possibility of falling from grace (Galatians 5:4), which means grace is to be understood in the context of an organic, living relationship with Christ. Grace is a relation, not a substance. It is the gift of Christ Himself. It is not an impersonal static presence. Because grace is the formation of a relation, it is defectable. Just as a relation can be nurtured or negated by lack of attention, so a relation with God comes under the same possibilities. A relation with God can be cultivated and expanded, or it can be rejected and killed. In other words, the Scriptures call for persevering faith, the kind that builds on a previously existing relation begun at Baptism. This is why the Sacrament of Baptism is not mechanical. Faith is required. The baby believer is called into an ongoing life of faith. If he does not persevere, he may prove to be like one of the temporary soils in the Parable of the Soils. This is the precise language of Scripture. None of the other views adequately addresses the organic nature of grace, meaning it can be expanded or lost. For this reason, they err in their view of baptized babies.

The covenantal and organic position is different from the Arminian understanding of being able to fall from grace. Arminius himself believed in the decree of God and election. However, he did not move in the direction of the Sacraments to qualify election in a covenantal sense. He, and his followers especially, interiorized the walk with Christ. They took a subjective approach. They held to an individualistic view of salvation, resulting in a brutal kind of introspection and doubt, or, other followers moved in a libertine direction. Consequently, Arminians took an

individualistic position on salvation and the Sacraments. The Sacraments were not understood as the Sovereign, objective work of God but as a witness to personal faith. The view presented in this book defends the sovereignty of God as expressed in the Articles of Religion. It also presents election as decretal (established in eternity), corporate or covenantal marked by the sacramental signs and seals, and eschatological. This is far from Arminianism. As a matter of fact, a covenantal and sacramental view of salvation, the Church and the Sacraments, would have prevented the extremes of Arminianism. It is precisely because salvation is objective, originating from God and not from the individual as Arminianism teaches, that an objective approach to the Sacraments opposes Arminian views.

This sovereign grace perspective on the Sacrament of Baptism will be discussed in the next chapter in relation to the meaning of the pouring mode of Baptism. For now it should be noted that an important Reformed Anglican explanation of predestination is found in Peter White's book.⁷ The Reformed Church of England held to the doctrine of predestination in keeping with Augustine and for the most part with Aquinas, as evidenced in Article 17 of the Articles of Religion. It probably advocated a single predestination doctrine, as opposed to double predestination, teaching an additional reprobation of some to hell. It did not reject a doctrine of free will (in the sense that one always remains a free moral agent and un-coerced), and it left the resolution of this paradox in the realm of mystery. Furthermore, it did not embrace fully a Synod of Dort interpretation of Calvin's system.⁸ Of course, the Anglican Articles of Religion were written nearly seventy years

⁷Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 175-202.

prior to the Synod of Dort where the Calvinistic and Arminian systems were articulated and debated. Hence, Anglicanism is neither Calvinistic nor Arminian according to the famous Arminian *Remonstrances* of Arminius, or according to the Calvinist "Five Points" (Tulip). Anglican soteriology resists these reductionisms that have all but become *passé*.⁹

Baby believers, regenerated at Baptism, are to grow into the faith manifested at their Baptism. Eventually, they are called to own the faith themselves by renewing their baptismal vows at confirmation. Even so, they are to be treated as believers from the moment of Baptism. After all, they are the model of faith to be emulated by the Church. Is this not what Jesus said? The Church should be careful not to explain away the model of the faith of infants, lest it find itself opposing Christ's teachings. Certainly, there should be "charitable supposition," as Bishop Ryle suggests, but this supposition should be based on solid Biblical fact. The statements of Scripture state that Jesus includes infants in the kingdom and presents their faith as the model for Christians. No doubt the sponsors believe for them at Baptism. As children of the covenant, however, they soon manifest the childlike faith to which Jesus calls the Church.

At a point later in life, these baby believers should renew their baptismal vows made for them by their sponsors in a public venue called Confirmation. After standing before the Bishop and answering the baptismal questions for themselves, they should receive the laying on of hands, confirming the faith once delivered to them. The result: mature, strong Christians grow up in the Church.

⁹See Robert W. Pritchard, *The Nature of Salvation: Theological Consensus in the Episcopal Church, 1801-73* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

Conclusion

This chapter began with the scene in the Gospel where Jesus' disciples kept an infant from Him. Why this was so heinous has been explained. The family is the basic unit of the Scriptures and life. God has therefore always dealt with the family and not individuals only. In the Old Covenant, the family was brought up into the covenant by Circumcision. In the New Covenant, the family is restored through Baptism. This means infants are baptized, as is implied in the many household Baptisms in Scripture. Children of believers then become believers by means of the grace of God working through the faith of the sponsors. Children of believers are to be treated as and counted as believers, baby believers.

9

The Meaning of Mode, a Manner of Spirituality

The mode of Baptism has to do with the precise way in which Christians are to be baptized. Yet it should be more than simply mechanics, including a manner of spirituality. The correct meaning of mode implies a way of living a life in union with Jesus Christ. Historic Christianity has understood this important concern. Unfortunately it has been lost over intramural squabbling among Christians. Today, most of those who practice sprinkling or immersion do not connect the Biblical model of spirituality with the historic meaning of mode. This cannot be comprehended until we grasp how the early Church saw the relationship between mode and spirituality.

There have generally been two methods of baptizing advocated in the history of the Church, sprinkling or pouring, and immersion.¹ Both are supported historically.

¹John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970). Murray refers to three modes of Baptism, distinguishing sprinkling from pouring, and of course there is immersion. There is value in considering the mode of sprinkling, which will be done in this chapter. However, I combine sprinkling and pouring and speak of two modes.

There is a tradition of immersion from A.D. 150. In some sense, our Baptist brothers and sisters in Christ are not completely without precedent in their concern for immersion. On the other hand, some of the earliest Christian art on catacomb walls portrays people being baptized by standing in water and water being poured over them. Our brethren committed to sprinkling also have a point to make.

Most important is the fact that the issue was not made in the ancient Church. Although there were two traditions they originally both meant essentially the same thing. Furthermore, the methods were usually combined. A person might stand in a pool of water, even go down under the water, but the waters would still have been poured (or sprinkled) over him. This was the mode of the *mikvah* baptism, which was the animal purification baptism before a sacrifice was offered by an individual.² Whether the method was pouring, sprinkling or immersion, the methods of the early Church were viewed as implying each other, even though a little or a lot of water was applied. For example, if a person was too sick to stand in a pool of water, then sprinkling was allowed. It was the same as if the person had stood in a pool of water and been immersed and poured. The smaller amount of water meant the same. On this basis, ancient Church bodies, especially those in the Anglican tradition, have allowed both modes of Baptism, as long as they were applied in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Spirit.

The same pattern appears during the early centuries of the Christianity in Britain and Ireland and into the early Middle Ages. Baptism would more than likely have been performed by pouring or sprinkling a person in a

²J. Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* (London: Oxford, 1970).

pool of water. Immersion would probably also have accompanied the rite. From the early Medieval period to the time of the Reformation, these practices continued to be part of Baptism. Gradually fonts were added because pouring was necessitated by the harsher, northern European climates. Nevertheless, these fonts were quite large, some even substantial enough in size to immerse or at least dip. They were not little bowls or basins, which were only used in emergency situations. Basins became popular among some of the Puritans as they reacted to the huge fonts at the doors of the Church, symbolizing entrance into the Church, and they substituted little basins on stands at other places in the Church. Consequently, only sprinkling could be performed and the Biblical symbolism, theology and even rubrical preference of dipping in the *Book of Common Prayer* were lost.

Until the Puritan age in England, however, there was a long history of immersion, or dipping, where the circumstances permitted it. After all, one of the great baptismal hymns of the Church was written by a missionary from the Anglo-Saxon area of the British Isle, Patrick, who evangelized Ireland. The hymn is named after a piece of a Roman soldier's armor, the breastplate, which is called *The Lorica*. The hymn speaks of binding oneself to this armor, symbolizing Christ who is called the "breastplate of righteousness" in the New Testament (Ephesians 6:14). The sixth stanza of this hymn implies immersion. It speaks of being surrounded by Christ as the baptismal waters enclosed the one baptized:

Christ be with me, Christ with-in me, Christ behind
me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win
me, Christ to comfort and restore me;

Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet,
Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

Baptism is viewed as surrounding the one baptized not only with the presence of Christ but with new friends, the Church, even with a whole new world. With this ancient background and context, we come to the mode in the rubrics of the *Book of Common Prayer*. The rubrics clearly prefer dipping, instructing the minister, "he shall [not may] dip, or pour," which means pouring is allowed.³ The original 1549 version of the *Book of Common Prayer* even called for a thrice dipping, once on the right side of the head, once on the left and once face downward. The Anglican scholar, Archibald Boyd, states that the basic method of Baptism in the Church of England is actually immersion, "the permitted and exceptional mode being that of aspersion [sprinkling]."⁴ To be precise, the method preferred in the rubrics is "dipping," implying immersion, and allowing for sprinkling or pouring when climate, health or some other reason does not permit dipping.

Dipping is prescribed in the *Book of Common Prayer* because it involved both modes. Normally the person's head would be dipped, while the minister would also pour or sprinkle water on the head at the same time. The full rubric actually reads, "And then naming the child after them, he [the minister] shall dip him in the water discreetly, or shall pour water upon him." Although technically either one could be done, both were usually mixed. Boyd notes that the words for Baptism do not inherently mean immersion, but that the Scriptural method was probably a combination of both by "standing in the water, which was poured upon their heads."⁵ Hence, the tradi-

³In the case of an infant, it means slightly dipping the back of the head in the water. Of course, the word *dipping* can also mean to place the head and/or the body completely under the water. The Eastern Orthodox churches still immerse infants.

⁴Boyd, *Baptism and Baptismal Regeneration*, pp. 198-200.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 197.

tion of mode in the Anglican Church goes back to the earlier history, even the Scriptural emphases of a combined mode. Unfortunately, Boyd does not elaborate on this important point, which means he misses the symbolism of the effusive or sprinkling aspect of the mode. Nevertheless, this discussion is altogether different from today's crisis over mode.

The Contemporary Crisis Over Mode

Today the ancient, unified understanding of Baptism, whether by sprinkling or immersion, has been lost except among the historic churches (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox). Then, only those in the Anglican tradition (and to a certain extent the Lutherans) have retained the fullness of the baptismal theology of Biblical and early Christianity. Aspects of ancient baptismal theology were restored at the time of the Reformation. The Orthodox churches did not engage the Reformation except in rare instances. The Roman Catholic Church did institute reforms by way of the Counter Reformation, even though they did not incorporate the heart of the theology of the Reformation. Hence, both bodies remained overwhelmed by Pelagian theology, the Orthodox since the fifth century and the Roman Church since the twelfth century. They needed Reformation because Pelagianism had eroded not only baptismal theology, but it had substantially damaged all of their theology. Today all churches are essentially in the same condition.

The Protestant churches on the other hand initially regained what the Reformation emphasized. In some cases they also often tragically gave up other Biblical aspects in the process of reclaiming what was lost. Except for Anglicanism and certain Lutheran bodies, they abandoned the episcopacy and other vital aspects of the Doctrine of the Church. Regarding Baptism, some became

involved in reacting to each other over the mechanics of mode. They even ignored ancient spirituality associated with the meaning of mode, a situation which still persists to this day. Many Protestant groups often argue vehemently for a particular mode of Baptism, which usually means immersion (placing the person completely under the water). Some of these groups lead other Christians to think that their Baptism is not valid unless they are immersed. It is assumed that Jesus, Paul and all of the other early Christians were immersed. So should everyone else. This is a different mindset from the ancient Church.

The shift in meaning originated shortly after the time of the Reformation, when the definition of Baptism was altered by a group named the Anabaptists. They called for rebaptism of those who had been baptized as infants, hence the meaning of the name, "again [*ana*] Baptists." They also took an exclusive view toward the mode of immersion, meaning other modes were not acceptable. They wanted only to baptize those who could make their own profession. This reduced the meaning of Baptism to identification with Christ, presuming that Christ had been immersed and Baptism by the same method would associate the person with Christ. The Church had always related this aspect to Baptism, but the Anabaptists adopted this point as the exclusive meaning.

To offset the Anabaptists, the Reformed groups became concerned that Anabaptism was shifting the meaning of the Sacraments to what man does, and away from what God does. Although they allowed immersion, they emphasized pouring or sprinkling because they stressed that Baptism is a picture of the manner by which God saves a person: pouring or sprinkling on the head points to salvation from above, from the Lord. They also taught that Baptism is entrance into the covenant and not simply a profession of faith. Nevertheless, as important as this theistic emphasis is, the whole issue of spirituality

even among those who advocate sprinkling has been lost for the most part. Only the Anglican tradition retained the full meaning of mode as a means of grace to a particular spirituality.

The Correction to the Confusion

The history of a shift away from the critical issues of mode offers a number of reasons for discussing the topic, suggesting an important corrective. Mode has become divisive. Instead, the debate over mode should be an incidental concern. The amount of water used in Baptism, whether by immersion or sprinkling, will not impact the eternal state of a person. Yet, both modes have important emphases that appear in Scripture and the traditions of the Church. The two methods are actually two aspects of one action. An obvious corrective to the division over mode is to return to the older meaning that ties the two traditions together, what the prayer book calls "dipping."

The real difficulty has arisen because mode has been used to make Christians doubt salvation. The process of doubt begins by making faithful people wonder if they are truly baptized. This leads to the question of whether a legitimate profession of faith has been made. The person is often led to think that he is truly not "saved." The mode of Baptism then ceases to be incidental at the point when Christians doubt their own salvation over the mode of their Baptism. The non-essential has spilled over into an essential issue. The corrective seems to be to understand the full meaning of the mode of Baptism so as to move beyond a reduction of mode to one or the other.

The best corrective, therefore, is always to return to the primary issues of the meaning of mode in the Scriptures. In this chapter the last aspect of what it means to be baptized into the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is examined. It is the issue of mode and its mean-

ing. The mode uniquely relates to the work of the Holy Spirit. To summarize the ultimate corrective to the confusion over current differences, the texts, contexts and theology of the Scripture indicate a single mode with a double action. First, the Baptismal water being placed on the head of a person, *effusion*, symbolizes and conveys the Holy Spirit coming from above. The sprinkling aspect of pouring, which should be understood as included in the pouring, emphasizes cleansing.⁶

Second, the descending water poured over a person, enveloping by perhaps meeting water below in a pool, symbolizes the Spirit surrounding the baptized with the presence of the Lord. The person is inserted into the waters, explaining the New Testament references that speak of being baptized "in" or "into Christ." Putting it another way, as the Spirit comes from above and encompasses like a cloud, so the waters of Baptism fall over the candidate in a similar fashion to the work of the Holy Spirit. The person baptized is to be understood as incorporated into Christ and into the presence of God by means of the Spirit. Most often this was done symbolically by placing a small amount of water on the head of the candidate. Often, especially in the early Church and in the primitive Anglo-Saxon or Celtic Church, a person stood in a pool of water wherein water was poured over the head. Whether pouring or immersing, however, one implied the other.

Both aspects are involved in the correct meaning of the word *baptize*. In time, however, the different phases were emphasized perhaps to the exclusion of the other. Eventually, the Anabaptists redefined Baptism altogether to mean something entirely different from the Scriptures and the historic Church. Unfortunately, the

⁶This was performed in Old Testament ritual baptisms with hyssop (used to make soap for bathing). For example, the High Priest on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, cleansed anew the whole nation by sprinkling with hyssop.

matter of spirituality has almost been lost, which is the point of the New Testament writers in the Epistles. For example, the Apostle Paul argues that Christians should walk in Christ as they have been baptized in Him (Romans 6). Baptism as a means of grace through the work of the Holy Spirit in some sense inserts the person into vital union with Christ. The early Church Fathers emphasized this point with the great water passages of the Bible: the Flood, the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan River. For them, the symbolism powerfully indicated a passage from sin and death to newness of life in another kingdom. Therefore, the correct understanding of mode is the only one that fits with the Baptismal spirituality of the New Testament. But first things first. It is essential first of all to understand mode, correctly sorting out the various false approaches to come to the proper one.

Approaches to Defining Mode

The word is *Baptism*, *baptizo* (verb) or *baptisma* (noun) in Greek. Many approaches have been taken to unravel the meaning of the word itself. Usually, the method is try to find implicit meaning in the word and import it into the text. This approach has been found to be faulty exegetical technique. It is so common in popular literature on the subject, however, that these approaches should be dispensed before considering a sound method to defining the word.

First, there have been those groups who base the meaning of the word on Scriptural language and imagery that indicates immersion. Naaman the Syrian General was told by the prophet Elijah to be cleansed from his leprosy by dipping and immersing in the Jordan (2 Kings 5:1-27). Then, since Baptism is described as a death and burial (Romans 6:5), death imagery seems to be captured

best by some concept of dipping, or being placed in the water to symbolize judgment. Finally, these same groups would also point to secular usage for support. In secular Greek, the word often means, "immerse," "plunge," or "dip." Those seeking to find a rationale for immerse point out that secular Greek uses the word more often to mean immerse. For them, the question is settled on the predominant secular usage. Others who oppose immersion, however, are quick to note that the word is not always used to mean immerse. Although seldom used differently, nevertheless it sometimes means to wash or even to sprinkle.⁷ The immersionists appeal to one set of uses and those advocating sprinkling turn to another set. The problem with using the secular usage of the term to prove anything is that the Scriptures may apply the word in both senses, or even in a completely different sense. For example, the word for "elder" is applied quite differently in the New Testament from the secular parlance. There are many New Testament words as a matter of fact that take on a different meaning in the contexts of the Word of God.

Jewish proselyte baptisms practiced by the first Jewish converts to Christianity support immersion. This is slightly different from a so called "secular" approach. As has already been discussed, pre-first-century Judaism developed a way of initiating Gentile converts into Judaism. Most often it involved the immersion of the entire person. Immersionists appeal to it as conclusive evidence that Christian Baptism was taken over from this practice. In opposition, some, who advocate sprinkling, deny proselyte baptism as a model for Christian Baptism on the basis of lack of historical evidence. Nevertheless, since the mid-twentieth century, significant historical documentation has come forth. Most New Testament scholars now

⁷ Dabney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, pp. 765-767.

acknowledge the practice of proselyte baptism. The problem seems to be in clearly substantiating that the early Christians actually used the proselyte model.

Second, other groups reach a different conclusion about mode by founding their conclusions largely on Old Testament precedent. It is noted that the Old Testament and the New Testament, referring back to the Old Testament (Hebrews 6:1ff.), speak of ritual washing procedures in the Old Testament system. These are clearly called baptisms. Almost in every case they refer to some kind of washing or sprinkling, *effusion*. Significantly the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, uses the Greek word *bapto*, which normally means immerse in secular Greek but obviously applies to ritual sprinklings in the Old Testament. The priests were sprinkled before they were anointed. Objects were ceremonially sprinkled to be pronounced clean again, after they had been declared unclean (Numbers 19).

The advocates of sprinkling appeal to these references as a basis for understanding the nature of New Testament Baptism. Immersionists usually object because Old Testament practice includes examples of complete immersion (2 Kings 5: Naaman and so forth). Besides, the Old Testament rituals do not necessarily prescribe New Testament practice. As a matter of fact, the New Testament differences would indicate that Christian Baptism is significantly different from Old Testament Baptism. Furthermore, there are many examples of where Old Testament practice does not necessarily carry over into the New Testament. Given the explicit statements about changes in the Old Testament system of ritual, the likelihood of change regarding a similar New Testament practice is high. Therefore, just because a baptism was performed a certain way in the Old Testament does not necessarily imply it will mean the same in the New Testament. The burden of proof, however, is on demonstrating

that New Testament practices altered the Old Testament ritual of baptism. Hence, the proponents of sprinkling would seem to have aspects of merit to their hermeneutic.

Third, the final group seeks to build a meaning of the word based on a threefold approach. For one, Biblical usage should be held primary by looking for concrete contextual guidelines that explain the presence of both modes in the Old and New Testaments. For another, the historic Church's understanding should guide any final conclusions about the meaning of the word. Finally, the meaning of the word should match the theology of its usage, spirituality, taking into consideration how Christian Baptism is shaped by, yet differs from, Jewish baptism. This threefold approach seems to be the best.

Jesus' Baptism

When we examine the use of the word *Baptism* in the New Testament, one passage in particular provides the necessary contextual guidelines to gain a concrete understanding of meaning, the Baptisms at Pentecost. Jesus Himself sets up the model when He tells His disciples, "John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5). As mentioned earlier, the baptism of John the Baptist, Jewish baptism, is water baptism only. The Baptism of Jesus, Christian Baptism, is the Baptism of the Spirit by means of water. Nevertheless, John's baptisms, especially Jesus' own baptism, anticipate Jesus' Spirit Baptism at Pentecost. In both we discover a twofold movement of the Spirit, effusing and enveloping, symbolized by the application of the baptismal waters. The people probably stood in water and received water poured over them. It also clarifies how the two traditions of sprinkling and immersion developed. First, let us consider Jesus' own Baptism

by John the Baptist to see the pattern of effusion and envelopment.

John the Baptist was setting apart the nation for the Messiah by ritual cleansing. In one instance, he baptized at the famous Aenon Springs because "there was much water there" (John 3:23). The "much water" is actually "many waters," referring to springs, not streams, in the area. These springs were shallow enough to stand in and provided an abundance of water, surely to pour or sprinkle, in a desert region.

John baptized consistently with Old Testament ritual baptism. John was an Old Testament priest. He was not necessarily practicing proselyte baptism. He was carrying out Biblical practices. Proselyte baptism was extra-Biblical, meaning there was no Scriptural provision for this practice; it simply developed out of necessity. John was using established, Biblical methods because his ministry was fulfilling what had been revealed before. A different method would have violated the important fulfillment role of his ministry. Indeed, this is what is discovered in the passages relating to John the Baptist's method, at least in the case of Jesus' Baptism.

John clearly combined the Old Testament ritual with the Jordan River, explaining why his subjects, especially Jesus, were probably standing in the water. Why did John do this? He did so because the Old Testament sprinklings implied the work of the Spirit that had two aspects, descending and enveloping. The sprinkling alone indicated the other, but when Jesus was baptized, both aspects occur.

In Jesus' case, two things were happening that indicate both modes. For one, Jesus' Baptism introduced His journey to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Significantly, immediately after John the Baptist called Jesus the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world"

(John 1), he baptized his Lord. Preeminently, therefore, Jesus was the sacrificial lamb. Yet John's insight was tied directly to baptism. In the Old Testament, sacrifices were prepared for sacrifice with ritual washings that included sprinkling and pouring, effusion. Every sacrifice had to be prepared for the actual offering. John recognized that Jesus, as the final sacrifice of all sacrifices, would need to be initiated as a sacrifice with ritual washing consistent with all sacrificial preparations. Indeed, baptism was the demonstration of John's conviction. Moreover, the washing initiated Christ to His sacrificial mission, uniting Him to the ultimate Baptism, the Cross. Lancelot Andrewes interprets Baptism as the beginning of the life of sacrifice pointing to the Cross with his words, "There [the Cross] met the two streams of water and blood, the true Jordan, the bath of laver wherein we are purged from all our sins . . . And therefore are we baptized into it; not into his water-baptism, but into his cross baptism."⁸ Just as Christ's Baptism united Him to His mission, Christian Baptism incorporates one into Christ's finished work on the Cross. Baptism as a cleansing to prepare for sacrifice, therefore, is the primary explanation for Jesus' own Baptism.⁹

⁸ Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, Vol. 3, p. 247.

⁹ Also, it is worth mentioning that some have offered the view that John the Baptist's baptism of Jesus was a consecration for His priestly office, which involved a baptism ritual. The problem with this interpretation is that Jesus was not an Aaronic Priest; He was of the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7). This was not an Aaronic ordination. Rather, it was a general setting apart for the priestly service in the order of Melchizedek. Nevertheless, the washings prior to ordination also pointed to the sacrificial role that was to be assumed. The cleansing for priesthood was sacrificial in orientation. As such, John would have applied the method of baptism prescribed by the Old Testament for preparing priests for their sacred mission. This method was ritual sprinkling. The sprinkling emphasized the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father above.

This is further supported by Thomas Cranmer's opening prayer in the Baptismal office, "And by the Baptism of thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ, in the river Jordan, *didst sanctify Water to the mystical washing away of sin.*" Jesus was not baptized for Himself but to set apart the waters of the world for a sacred purpose. In the words of Lancelot Andrewes, "Jordan had no more need to come to him, than he to Jordan, to be cleansed . . . he received no cleanness, no virtue; but virtue he gave, to Jordan, to the waters, to the sacrament itself."¹⁰ He also adds elsewhere "that in his baptism he puts us on; as we put him on, in ours."¹¹ Thus, Christ's presence "sanctified" His own baptismal water to become a means for the Holy Spirit. His Baptism pointed to the Cross, the Baptism (Mark 10:38) that accomplished what other consecrated waters by His presence would convey in Christian Baptism.

Second, Jesus' Baptism opened heaven, enabling it to break forth and surround Him with the Glory of God. The Gospel texts call attention to remarkable phenomena associated with His Baptism. As Jesus stood in the waters, prayed and received Baptism, the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and the Father spoke. St. Luke adds, "The heaven opened" (Luke 3:21). The unique actions pierced the veil between heaven and earth, implying that Jesus was surrounded by the presence of heaven itself. This could only mean one thing: Jesus' Baptism opened heaven's gate such that heaven burst forth and enveloped Him. Lancelot Andrewes poignantly comments, "Always, the opening of heaven, opens unto us, that no baptism without heaven . . . doth ever open at baptism."¹² Baptism initiates entrance into the heavenly realm. Historically,

¹⁰ Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, Vol. 3, p. 246.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹² Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, Vol. 3, p. 250.

the mode of dipping or immersion best captures this Biblical reality of being taken into another realm, or crossing the threshold of heaven and earth. Just as sprinkling applies cleansing to become a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2), the method of immersion reminds of being enveloped by the presence of the Living God.

Effusionists and immersionists generally neglect one of the above aspects to the exclusion of the other. Those who emphasize the sprinkling mode normally do not discuss the importance of Jesus' standing in the water. Water below and above indicates being surrounded, what is described in Jesus' Baptism as the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is this sense of presence that is not emphasized by effusionists, leading to the second and leading reason why Jesus was baptized.

Immersionists also usually miss completely the purpose for which Jesus was baptized. They never get to the "why," because they want to establish an alleged rationale for immersion. Their focus is a basis for imitating, identifying with the method, which they believe is associated with Christ's burial. Going under the water is believed to convey Jesus' burial. Yet Jesus was not buried under the ground. He was placed in a tomb. He was inserted into a rock. Being placed under water, therefore, is not a one-to-one correspondence. The imagery that best parallels Jesus' burial into stone is clearly the same movement of the glory cloud that comes from above at His Baptism and encompasses Him. It is called, as we shall see, the glory cloud, the one that His Baptism opened. In this sense—being immersed in the clouds of heaven—there is an element of truth in the immersionist emphasis.

Granted, it is important to identify with the mode of Jesus' own Baptism, but immersion does more than simply identify. There is a much fuller imagery of water and the Spirit, indicated by Jesus' apparently standing in the

water, perhaps even being immersed. Immersionists often argue on the basis of the language in the King James Version of the Bible, "coming up straightway from the water" (Matthew 3:10), that Jesus was immersed. This is not a strong argument. The Greek of the parallel passages does not confirm this translation. In Mark's Gospel (1:10), another Greek word is used that means "away from," indicating that the text could be simply describing Jesus' movement away from the waters after His Baptism. Of course the same word can also mean "out of," which could point to immersion.

Regardless of the various ways the language of Jesus' Baptism could be used to explain a given mode, it is important to understand the intent of the King James Version translators. They strongly believed that Scripture supported the rubrics of the *Book of Common Prayer*, which called for dipping and allowed pouring. These men were scholars par excellence, beginning with Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, who oversaw the entire translation project of the original King James Translation. Not only was he fluent in fifteen languages, he was an outstanding theologian in the reformed catholic tradition. He argued for a translation based on solid, critical scholarship as reflected in his Anglican theology.

Also, we should not forget that the translators were Anglican scholars. They were committed to Biblical, theological and historical principles that in every way upheld the original languages as well as the ancient Church. It is highly unlikely therefore that these "Anglican Divines" intended John's Baptism of Jesus to be understood exclusively as an immersion. Nor does it mean that they wanted to avoid the immersion aspect either. They probably wanted to allow for the dual emphasis of the Holy Spirit. Hence, dipping prescribed by the rubrics of these interpreters' prayer book was their view. It conveys both aspects of effusing and enveloping. Any interpretation

that excludes one feature or the other misses the historic context of precisely who the King James' translators were. Furthermore, they were trying to keep the Church of England unified, a Church that contained an ever-growing number of those influenced by the Anabaptists. Thus, the King James' Version of the Bible interprets the words for baptize, and the passages in which those words occur, in such a way as to include both meanings, especially Jesus' own Baptism.

The dual emphasis aids our understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' Baptism. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove onto Jesus. He was also surrounded by the Spirit, as implied by His standing in the water. Perhaps He was dipped as well like Naaman the Syrian in the Old Testament. This did not mean that Jesus became Deity at this point, as later heretics would argue. The Spirit had impregnated Mary, making Him the God/Man from the moment of conception. At His Baptism the Spirit is revealed to proceed to and from Him. Therefore, with a twofold movement of effusion and enveloping, Jesus' Baptism presents the reality of what Old Testament ritual had only symbolized. The Holy Spirit was really poured out as the water was effused on Jesus, and the water in which He was standing formed an envelopment of water from above and below. This twofold movement of waters above to waters below is exactly what comes to all mankind at Pentecost.

Water and Spirit at Pentecost

Based on how the Holy Spirit came at Jesus' Baptism and at Pentecost, the word is used to mean some kind of pouring that comes from above and envelops the person. Water parallels the work of the Spirit. This work is described at Pentecost:

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:2-4).

The Pentecost model of Baptism reveals the same pattern as Jesus' Baptism. Notice the movement of the Holy Spirit. He comes as a mighty, rushing wind. He comes upon each of the Apostles. Then He fills them. The movement is from heaven, to them, and then in them. This is clearly an effusive pattern directly connected to water Baptism.

The work of the Holy Spirit related to water is a familiar pattern in the Scriptures, the glory cloud. From the beginning of the world, the Holy Spirit creates sacred space around the throne of God called the *glory cloud*. The Spirit "broods" over the face of the original waters (Genesis 1:2). The Spirit comes with mighty rushing wind into the garden after Adam and Eve sin. The King James Version reads, "And they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8). The word translated "cool" is actually the word for "wind" or "spirit." Apparently, God came into the garden in the midst of His glory cloud.

Throughout Holy Scripture, the glory cloud phenomenon appears as the creation of the Holy Spirit, conveying the presence of the Lord God Almighty in its midst. It is this glory cloud that preceded the people of God in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21). In the Book of Ezekiel (Chapter 1), we are provided a description of this glory cloud created by the Spirit. From the outside, it looks like a great tornado, a storm with thunder, lightning and rain. On the inside, there are the cherubim with four faces around the

throne of God. There is a sea of glass around the throne. In the Book of Revelation (Chapters 4-5), this glory cloud is entered by means of the Incarnation. It is filled with Christ on the throne and departed saints, people of God bowing and worshipping God as the Triune Lord of all. This explains why the New Testament writers speak of this same cloud as engulfing the saints on earth when they worship, literally "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1-2).¹³

In addition, water is associated with the glory cloud. The glory cloud of God effuses and sprinkles the world with the presence of God and His blessing, represented by the water sent from above. The prophets speak of a day when the glory cloud would sprinkle all the nations. Isaiah refers to it (Isaiah 52:15) just before his great chapter on the Suffering Servant to come who would atone for the sins of the world.¹⁴ Ezekiel refers to the coming of the glory cloud of the Holy Spirit to sprinkle the nations when he defines the New Covenant (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

The glory cloud is the work of the Holy Spirit that simultaneously extends the presence of God through the water that comes from it, enveloping and filling those who are gathered in by it. It is analogous to a cloud surrounding a mountain with climbers on it. Anyone who has ever been inside a mountain cloud knows that water in the form of rain or mist and lightning often accompanies this phenomenon. This is an appropriate picture of the work of the Holy Spirit in the form of the glory cloud. Indeed, a

¹³This Biblical concept and imagery explains the history of stained glass windows portraying departed saints. It also describes one of the historic rationales for the use of incense in worship. The incense is to remind the people of God of the reality of the cloud of God's presence when they worship.

¹⁴This is the very passage that an Ethiopian Eunuch was reading when he was convicted of his need to receive Jesus Christ by Holy Baptism, the effusion of the water and the Spirit.

cloud is the image of the Spirit in the Bible. Significantly, it is the same glory cloud that obviously came at Pentecost. The description cannot be mistaken. A mighty rushing wind and tongues of fire descending on, effusing on the Apostles, are revealed to be the glory presence of the Spirit of God. Indeed, it is the Spirit of God coming in the form of the glory cloud. Moreover, this glory presence is extended through Holy Baptism.

The same glory cloud of the Spirit comes on the people of God by means of Holy Baptism. Shortly after the Holy Spirit comes on the Apostles, Peter preaches his great Pentecost sermon. When finished, he bids his hearers, "Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and *you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). The same Holy Spirit who was effused on the Apostles in the coming of the glory cloud before the sermon is promised in connection with water Baptism after the sermon. Christian Baptism parallels Christ's own Baptism in that the Holy Spirit is poured out. The stark repetition of pattern establishes a context that guides us to the meaning of the word. Christian Baptism is associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit, descending on Christ at His Baptism, the Apostles at Pentecost, and all who receive Holy Baptism.

Water and Spirit in the Rest of the New Testament

The glory cloud and baptism are brought together in an important New Testament passage:

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-2).

Notice the exact language, "All were baptized into Moses in the cloud." What cloud? This is the glory cloud of God's presence that led them by day and as fire by night. In a sense they were sprinkled and immersed. They were sprinkled by the mist from the cloud and they were swallowed by the cloud. Moreover, they were baptized into Moses in the cloud, meaning they were brought into union with Moses in a special way by the baptism of the cloud. Also, the passage says that they were "in the sea." Yet we know from the Biblical account that they passed over on dry land. They were not literally in the sea. They were not immersed by the waters. They were effused by the water of the glory cloud. Only the Egyptians were literally immersed. Moreover, only unbelievers are ever literally immersed by water in Scripture (the Flood, the Red Sea etc.). Immersion is implied by the passage through the Red Sea. While the glory cloud effuses literally, the people of God passed through the waters on dry ground. This is the point for historically allowing both modes. Pouring always implies immersion, while immersion would of necessity involve pouring.

The imagery of the crossing of the Red Sea is pregnant with meaning. The early Church Fathers loved this passage of Scripture as a model for Baptism.¹⁵ After all, the Apostle uses baptismal language. The people of God were translated from the world of bondage and death, Egypt, into a new kingdom, the Promised Land. This imagery the early Fathers understood as literally fulfilled in Christ and applied to the Church at Holy Baptism. The first Sacrament became the Red Sea through which a person passed to enter the true and final Promised Land, Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. As Israel was united to Moses by Baptism, gaining access to the new land, so a

¹⁵Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1956), pp. 35-113.

person was united to Christ by passing through the Red Sea of Baptism into the final kingdom, the Church. The people of God at Baptism were effused into God's glory cloud presence, while those who rejected the Lord God Almighty were drowned, immersed. Therefore, the other Baptisms in the New Testament theologically, and practically for that matter, only make sense if they are understood as taking place by sprinkling or pouring in water.

First, there are the Baptisms at Pentecost. We have already considered the literal Biblical language describing the coming of the glory cloud and its association with the Spirit's Baptism by water. We should not overlook that Pentecost was the reversal of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). It was on the plains of Shinar that the world tried to unite for the wrong purpose. They sought to build a tower to God and reach Him by human machination. They invented their own way to worship. God was so displeased that He crashed the tower and judged the world by confusing its language. He then chose one people, Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12), by which to reach the nations with His presence. Pentecost was the turning point for the nations, explaining why it was so important that the Holy Spirit enable the Apostles to reveal God's Truth in Gentile languages. It was the evidence that the glory cloud of the Spirit had indeed begun to return to the Gentiles. It is this glory cloud presence that comes at Holy Baptism. For this reason, Peter specifies that the Holy Spirit descends at Baptism. Hence, the rest of the Book of Acts describes how Gentile peoples all over the world are brought into the glory cloud presence of God through faith in Christ and Holy Baptism.

There were thousands of people baptized on the occasion of Pentecost, three thousand to be exact. Shortly thereafter, there were thousands more baptized. From a practical point of view, where did the Apostles find the water to perform these Baptisms? The Jordan River was

too far. It seems most likely that the Apostles took water from the giant cleansing pots in the Temple itself. Importantly, there would not have been enough water to immerse all of those people in the Temple or near Jerusalem. Besides, the immersion practice would not have emphasized the *coming upon* of the Holy Spirit.

Second, the Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8) explains how the presence of the Lord is extended south. As the Church expanded, it came to Samaria through the preaching of Philip, one of the first Deacons. After he preached a great revival, the angel of the Lord instructed him to head south into the desert (Acts 8:26). On his way, he overtook an Ethiopian in his chariot reading from the Prophet Isaiah, specifically the fifty-third chapter (53:7-8). He asked for help to understand. Philip did aid him by preaching Christ. As a result, the Ethiopian Eunuch asked to be baptized when they came near to a body of water.

How would the Ethiopian Eunuch have been baptized? He probably would have been poured while standing in the water. Biblically, it should not be overlooked that the Ethiopian Eunuch was reading from the very context of Isaiah that referred to the "sprinkling of the nations" (Isaiah 52:14), the text immediately preceding the Suffering Servant passage. He saw what was happening as the fulfillment of the return of the Gentiles to the presence of the Lord. This was the coming of the Spirit on and including (enveloping) all nations, another step in the unfolding story in Acts of the reversal of the Tower of Babel. For another reason, it would have been practically impossible to immerse someone in the desert. There is no record of enough water being in that location to immerse a person. Nevertheless, the symbolism of immersion or enveloping could be and was conveyed by sprinkling. The inclusion of an Ethiopian into God's presence, His glory cloud, was theologically apparent. In other words, the

Ethiopian is revealed in the Book of Acts to be the continuation of what began at Pentecost. If they were taken into the glory cloud, so is he through Baptism. He too received the gift of the Spirit through Baptism.

Third, the Baptisms of Lydia and her family, and the Philippian jailer and his family (Acts 16), describe the expansion of the glory presence of the Spirit of God north and west. The circumstances described in the text also indicate that immersion would have been highly unlikely. Their households were most likely sprinkled or poured. Both occasions stress immediacy. In the case of the Philippian jailer, it was the middle of the night, when Divine Providence struck his jail. An earthquake broke open the cells so that the prisoners escaped. Paul and Silas remained. Falling down before them, the jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" They told him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. His first response was to wash their stripes, probably because he had been the one who had beaten them. Then all the text records is, "Immediately he and all his family were baptized" (Acts 16:33). Where would the baptismal water have been found "immediately" as the text states? Presumably, the very water used to clean the Apostle's wounds was set apart for the even holier service of Holy Baptism. The language does not sound like an immersion. The jailer was almost definitely sprinkled. Again, the complete work of the Holy Spirit, descending and surrounding, could be and was conveyed by sprinkling in a situation where standing in a body of water was probably not possible.

Fourth, there is the Apostle Paul's own Baptism. Considerable detail is provided; after all, an apostle's Baptism is delineated. Paul met the Living Christ. The first chapter of Revelation tells the location of Christ after His Ascension. He went to the throne of God in the glory cloud that is described in vivid detail consistent with the same glory cloud in Ezekiel (cf. Revelation 4-5 with

Ezekiel 1). The Apostle was taken into the glory cloud and blinded by the light of Christ's presence because he was in sin. The instructions given to him at the point of Baptism, however, are quite telling. Paul had been blinded by Jesus and instructed to go to the house of Ananias. This servant was instructed to tell the former murderer, "Stand up and be baptized" (Acts 22:12-16). The other reference simply records, "Standing up, he was baptized" (Acts 9:17-18). How could he have stood up and been baptized? The only way possible would have been if he were sprinkled or poured.

We should therefore conclude that the pattern of Baptism matches the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit creates the glory presence of the Lord in the form of a cloud. Sometimes the cloud can be seen; most of the time it cannot. What can be seen, however, is the sign and seal of the glory presence of God, Holy Baptism. Baptism is the water of the cloud of God's presence descending on a person and enveloping him near to the Almighty.

The Spirituality of Baptism

Based on the fullness of the twofold meaning of the mode of Baptism, we can now comprehend the rich theological and practical application. It is found most clearly in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans where he makes an important connection between Holy Baptism and the Christian life:

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with,

that we should no longer be slaves of sin (Romans 6:4-6).

The Apostle Paul writes of "baptism into death" and being raised "in the likeness of His resurrection" that "we should walk in newness of life." The reference to Baptism is unmistakable, but some have objected to the notion that the passage speaks of water Baptism, committing the fallacy of advocating two baptisms in the New Testament.¹⁶ They suggest that Paul speaks of Baptism of the Spirit, not water. Yet the New Testament explicitly states that the Spirit works by means of water Baptism, explaining why the work of the Spirit is distinguished from the water but not separated from it.

The effusing, enveloping Baptism of the Spirit by means of water is the *one Baptism* of the New Testament. To be precise, it is the *one Baptism* for the remission of sins (Ephesians 4:5). The Holy Spirit works directly with the Sacrament while not to be confused with the water; the Spirit is not trapped in the water. Nevertheless, the Scriptures describe a direct relation between water and the Spirit. For example, Peter clearly speaks of the "gift of the Holy Spirit" being received as a result of Baptism (Acts 2:38). The Apostle Paul is told to be baptized and wash away his sin (Acts 22:16). In the New Testament we find that the Spirit always either operates directly with

¹⁶ Jay E. Adams, *Meaning and Mode of Baptism* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1976), pp. 27-38. Dr. Adams' book for the most part is very helpful. I have benefited immensely from his study. However, I must disagree with his chapter on "Baptism into Christ." He takes an approach to Romans 6 that departs from the historical interpretations of the Reformation, mainly Calvin, who definitely saw Romans 6 as a reference to water Baptism. But then, Calvin did not draw a separation between Baptism and the work of the Spirit the way later Reformed theologians would. Case in point, Dr. Adams argues that Romans 6 does not speak of water Baptism as though the Sacrament has nothing to do with the Spirit. Scripture clearly indicates otherwise, for Peter promises the gift of the Holy Spirit with Baptism (Acts 2:38).

the Sacraments, or through some kind of sacramental action (Confirmation, ordination, marriage and so forth); He never works contrary to the Sacraments.

Furthermore, the historic Church confirms that there is one Baptism for the remission of sins and that this is water Baptism. All Christian churches practice water Baptism. They also confess the ancient creeds, the Apostles' and Nicene, if they are orthodox. If their Baptisms are not associated with the remission of sins, then the creeds they affirm are denied. The creeds of Christianity bind the Church to believe that water Baptism is somehow connected to the remission of sins. There cannot be two baptisms, one of water and one of the Spirit. Instead, from the earliest days of the Church the work of the Holy Spirit was associated with the Sacrament, especially Baptism. Both of the catholic creeds, the Apostles' and Nicene, bear profound witness to this Baptism. They speak of "one Baptism for the remission of sins" in the section of the creed having to do with the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Baptism of Romans 6 is water Baptism, the one Baptism for the remission of sins. Paul speaks of how this Baptism unites a person to Christ, bringing about a death to sin and a resurrection unto life. Since there can only be one Baptism by definition, Romans 6 has to be water Baptism associated with the work of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul applies the one Baptism to the Christian walk. He develops a spirituality associated with Christian Baptism. If we keep in mind what has been said about the correct mode, effusion and envelopment, we can make several observations about the Apostle's rich baptismal spirituality.

Baptism as a Work of the Sovereignty of God

First, the Apostle implies that God does the baptizing because of the association with Christ's own death: "We

were buried with Him through baptism into death" (Romans 6:4). How were we buried with Him except by the sovereign act of God Almighty? This is the point, which only, truly fits with the sprinkling aspect of Baptism. This is why pouring was always done in the ancient Church even if a person were immersed in water. Holy Baptism is the enveloping work of the Holy Spirit sovereignly coming from above, swallowing a person into God's glorious, majestic presence. Baptism is the work of God, so it should reflect a theistic (God-centered), as opposed to anthropocentric (man-centered), theology from beginning to end.

Sprinkling or pouring is the only action that can truly portray that salvation comes from above, the Sovereign God who created the world and redeemed it at the Cross. When Jesus told Nicodemus to be born *again* the Greek word actually means "from above" (John 3:3). Immersion, only, violates the imagery of the Sovereign work of God in salvation. As a matter of fact, without an act of pouring accompanying it, it conveys the opposite imagery. Losing the "from above" dimension, it can be reduced to only the inclusion into Christ without understanding the origin of this incorporation. It can become the Pelagianism of the Eastern Orthodox churches, or the Protestant Baptist theology of identification with Christ's death only. Certainly Baptism accomplishes identification but it is not the single purpose of the imagery. What man does is not the point at all. Rather, Baptism portrays what God does. As water is taken and placed on the person, the picture is one of God's sending His only Son to come from above and cleanse us from our sin.

Baptism as Incorporation

Second, the enveloping action of the coming of the Holy Spirit explains the *incorporation* language associated

with Baptism as indicated by the preposition "into." The New Testament, especially in Romans 6, teaches Baptism "into" Christ. Notice the emphasis in the Roman's passage on the "glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4). The "glory of the Father" raised the Son from the dead. It was this same glory cloud presence that came at Pentecost and is promised by means of Baptism. The Holy Spirit unites or incorporates a person into Christ by means of the Sacrament.

From the earliest days of the Church, this enveloping, incorporating presence of Christ is emphasized. It is wonderfully conveyed in the theology of one of the greatest baptismal hymns in the history of the Church, *The Lorica*, written by St. Patrick the famous missionary to Ireland.

I bind this day to me forever the strong name of the
Trinity by invocation of the same the Three in One
and One in three.

I bind this day to me forever by power of faith,
Christ's Incarnation; His baptism in the Jordan river;
His death on cross for my salvation; His bursting
from the spiced tomb; His riding up the heav'nly
way; His coming at the day of doom; I bind unto my-
self today.

I bind unto myself the power of the great love of cher-
ubim; the sweet "well done" in judgment hour; the
service of the seraphim; Confessors' faith, apostles'
word, the patriarchs' prayers, the prophets' scrolls;
All good deeds done unto the Lord, and purity of vir-
gin souls.

I bind unto myself today the virtues of the starlit
heav'n, the glorious sun's life-giving ray, the white-
ness of the moon at even, the flashing of the lightning
free, the whirling wind's tempestuous shocks, the

stable earth, the deep salt sea, around the old undying eternal rocks.

I bind unto myself today the power of God to hold and lead, His eye to watch, his might to stay, His ear to hearken to my need; the wisdom of my God to teach, His hand to guide, his shield to ward; the word of God to give me speech, His heav'nly host to be my guard.

Christ be with me, Christ with-in me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me; Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

I bind unto myself the Name, the strong Name of the Trinity; by invocation of the same, the Three in One, and One in Three. Of whom all nature hath creation; Eternal Father, Spirit, Word: Praise to the Lord of my salvation, Salvation is of Christ the Lord.

The hymn is titled, *The Lorica*. The "lorica" was a piece of a Roman soldier's armor, the breastplate. It symbolizes Christ, who is described in the New Testament as the "breastplate of righteousness" (Ephesians 6:14). Strongly Trinitarian, emphasizing One and Three, each member of the Godhead is eternal. Moreover, each stanza begins with "I bind," indicating that the person bound himself to Christ and all of Christ's redemptive work and work at Baptism. This is a fully developed view of union with Christ, incorporation into Christ.

The sixth stanza of the hymn advances the theology of incorporation by speaking of being completely surrounded by Christ, meaning His presence. The emphasis is the Pauline concept of being inserted spiritually into Christ at Baptism. Granted, it does reflect that through-

out the early history of the Church, immersion was mixed with pouring and sprinkling. Nevertheless, the point was not simply identification but incorporation into Christ. This is altogether different from Baptist theology stressing identification with Christ's burial. In some sense the Baptists have the immersion aspect correct but they miss the correct meaning of this immersion. The hymn speaks of Christ's being present at the Baptism of the person through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The deep and important Baptismal theology of St. Paul and the early Church appeared again at the Reformation. This is the theology of incorporation. John Calvin picks up on this New Testament emphasis in his *Commentary on Romans*.¹⁷ He even makes union with Christ the centerpiece of his theology.¹⁸ Anglicanism does the same. Thomas Cranmer strongly emphasizes union with Christ in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Furthermore, Richard Hooker develops this aspect of New Testament theology quite extensively.

The point of the early Church and English Reformation commentators is that the theology of presence undergirds the entire Christian life. Christians are to walk in and by God's presence. Indeed, there can be no Christian walk or obedience without the presence of the resurrected, Living Christ. This is the thrust of the Apostle's argument. He wants the Roman Christians to know the reality of being united with Christ's death and resurrection by the power of the Holy Spirit through their Baptism. They have died to sin. They have been empowered from above. Therefore there is no reason why sin should dominate their lives.

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, Chapter 6.

¹⁸ Lucian J. Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), pp. 97-135.

Baptism to Include Filling

Third, the Apostle Paul indicates that they who have been baptized into union with Christ would be filled with the Spirit (Romans 7-8). The union, baptism into, of Romans six is followed by two important chapters on the work of the Spirit. Granted, the filling, what was referred to in an earlier chapter as the "renewing of the Holy Spirit," may not take place at Baptism. Normally it does and always should be presumed to be the case. Nevertheless, movement of the Spirit is from above, to all around, to within the person, and from the person to the world. Sprinkling or pouring combined with dipping is a mode that conveys this whole process, showing how the glory cloud of God's presence comes as the Holy Spirit envelops a person at Baptism, descending on him in a special way to bring the Lord near, and through this all-encompassing Baptism to be extended to the world, taking the cleansing of Christ as salt and light everywhere.

Baptism to Lead to Communion

Fourth, the Apostle Paul indicates that baptismal union with Christ leads to communion with Him by way of presenting oneself to God as a living sacrifice. As he speaks of Baptism as incorporation, communion is explained as real participation in Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). It is union and communion by means of the two Sacraments. It is at the Holy Communion that a reckoning occurs through presentation of oneself as a living sacrifice.

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from

the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:12-13).

Later in the Epistle, the Apostle gives us some sense of how and where this reckoning and presentation would occur, when he again appeals to the concept of presenting the person to God. He uses very precise liturgical language, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). The words "reasonable service" translate a Greek phrase that implies some kind of liturgical action. They are literally translated, "which is your rational [or reasonable/logical, by extension, 'well-considered'] act of public worship/liturgical worship." Carefully considered, it is not hard to see why the Church has tied this action to the Eucharist, Holy Communion.

Putting the above passages together, the Apostle calls his people to present their bodies as a living sacrifice through the once for all sacrifice of Christ's death into which they were baptized. The once for all sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is celebrated at Holy Communion. This is where the Church's sacrifice should be offered. Apart from Christ all sacrifice is worthless. In the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, heed the language of one of the classic post-communion prayers (pre communion in the 1928 BCP).

And we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness, mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant that, by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we, and all thy whole Church, may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion. *And here we*

offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee, that we, and all others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion, may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him. And although we are unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice; yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. Amen.

The parallel between this prayer and its theology and the passages of Paul in Romans 6 and 12 is unmistakable. Therefore, the Church has understood this presentation through Christ as the best way to avoid any notion of a human being able to earn his way to God by his own efforts, what is called Pelagianism in the Articles of Religion (Article 9). It is by viewing the presentation as being preeminently accomplished through the Eucharistic celebration of the once for all sacrifice of Christ. Union with Christ in Holy Baptism is fed through communion at the Holy Eucharist.

Baptism Should Result in Obedience

The final aspect of this baptismal spirituality is found in the last verse of the sixth chapter of Romans, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under

law but under grace" (Romans 6:14). The result of union and communion with the Sovereign God should be obedience. Sin should not reign. Yet, the Apostle clearly states that this is not done under a regime of law but grace. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit, received by means of Baptism and fortified in Holy Communion, that the believer walks in the light of Christ's presence. The presence received in the Sacraments enables obedience in the walk. What surrounds at Baptism and is ingested by faith at Holy Communion invades the world as the believer takes the presence of Christ to dark places. This is life under grace, the presence of the Living, Resurrected Christ.

Conclusion

One mode with two aspects, pouring and enveloping, properly conveys the imagery of Holy Baptism. In the history of the Church, baptismal fonts and pools have been used. The most common have been constructed with eight sides, octagonal. Why eight sides? Jesus was resurrected on the eighth day, Sunday, the day after the seventh day. The font is a means of grace to the Resurrected Christ. Through faith at Baptism, a person is swallowed into the Resurrected life of Christ. So by means of the Spirit, the baptismal font or pool becomes a direct means of grace, connecting the person baptized to the Living Lord of grace. It is a sacramental link with God!

This has been the purpose of the present, concluding chapter. It brings us to the importance of a proper understanding of Holy Baptism, union with Christ. Once the larger, historic work of the Holy Spirit is understood as the glory cloud of God, sending forth cleansing-water on all nations and enveloping them, the rationale appears for dipping or pouring prescribed in the *Book of Common Prayer*. It conveys the sense of being inserted into Christ, surrounded by His love and presence.

This final chapter also leads us to the conclusion of our study. Baptism in the New Testament moves toward a certain understanding of union with Christ for the purpose of obedience to Him. The Christian walk is rooted in the reality of what Baptism accomplishes by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, as we have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, let us walk in Him. Then Baptism will be truly signed, sealed and delivered.

Appendix One

A Commentary on the Baptismal Office of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*

Used for the first time in 1549 by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) in the Anglican (English) tradition reflects Biblical worship as understood by the ancients and the reformers of the English Reformation, who sought to return to a purer and more catholic liturgy. It is a commentary, theology and most of all, the liturgy of Divine worship.

For the baptismal office, Cranmer relied on the Sarum Office, the ancient liturgy associated with Salisbury, and kept much of what had become common practice in the medieval baptismal service. He recognized, however, the need for further revision of the 1549 version, especially for a baptismal office that returned to the simplicity of the Scriptures and the early Church. He also wanted a revision that served larger, Reformational purposes, one that would unite the Reformation in his own land and possibly the continent. He turned to the Continental German Reformer, Martin Bucer, for the 1552 revision, in which the baptismal office of the Middle Ages was Reformed. Martin Bucer brought into his revision of the BCP much of a baptismal office that he had written for the Archbishop Hermann of Cologne in the *Consultation*, relying primarily on Luther's baptismal office, *An Order of Baptism*, 1526. As such the baptismal office in the *Book of Common Prayer* is truly remarkable as a sac-

ramental summation of all that had gone before, as well as the fusion of the best of the reformers within the corrective framework of the English Reformation. Thus, it is important to understand the baptismal office itself by way of a detailed commentary.

The following commentary will keep the order in the 1662 version of the BCP. It is the high water mark of Thomas Cranmer's liturgy. The 1662 version weaves together the initial 1549 version and its first revision of 1552, after a century of prayerful, theological, and sometimes controversial and painful reflection on Cranmer's revised liturgical masterpiece. Finally a balance was struck that answered the Biblical, historical and pastoral concerns of the Anglican Church. The 1662 version has stood the test of time and been instituted in virtually every culture east and west. It is still the official prayer book of the Anglican Communion, as well as the standard for revision in the Reformed Episcopal Church. Other sections and comments at appropriate places will be added where later versions, such as the 1928 American version, added to and altered the 1662 version.

The Historic Context

Arguably one of Thomas Cranmer's greatest insights about the Divine Liturgy was his understanding of its unity. He perceived that in the Scripture various liturgical functions were united around the Holy Communion. For example, after the first converts are baptized at Pentecost, they proceed to Holy Communion. The pattern seems to continue such that the liturgy of the early Church, although having many parts, was seamless. Even when the service for the catechumenate was developed in times of intense persecution there was a continu-

ity in the liturgy that was later broken.¹ Therefore, more than any other liturgy since the early Church, the *Book of Common Prayer* unites various services that had been separated from each other in the Middle Ages.

A unity is preserved in another way with Cranmer's liturgy. Cranmer did not allow any one aspect of the liturgy to dominate. In the late Medieval Church, the crass views of transubstantiation made consecration of the Eucharist an obsessive focal point, removing participation by the people and reducing their participation to beholding the elevated Host. In the various branches of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the liturgy had been shifted in focus by reducing it to the icon. Iconography became the center of the great Eastern liturgies to the point where the Eucharist was neglected. In Cranmer's liturgy, however, an important unity was struck between the polarity of the Word and the Sacrament. Both were unified in his divine liturgy.

Perhaps the clearest example of the unity achieved in Cranmer's liturgy is the capacity for the reunification of the Baptismal Office and Holy Communion. Because the Bishop had normally baptized as well as confirmed in the early Church, the Baptismal Office was separated from Holy Communion as the Church grew into Europe, Africa and other parts of the world. Often people had to travel great distances to take their children to the Bishop for Baptism and Confirmation. Eventually, the priests took on baptismal responsibilities, but separate baptismal liturgies developed as a result. The baptismal office became more elaborate, becoming a kind of stand-alone service, separate from the Eucharist.

¹ The catechumenate service was originally the ante-communion of the service of Holy Communion, sometimes called the service of the Word: collect for purity, law or summary, prayers, Scripture, creed, and sermon.

Elaboration is not inherently wrong. Rich symbols were added in time to the baptismal liturgy, such as the placement of salt in the mouth of the child and a candle in its hand, stating that the person baptized was becoming salt and light. While not without some conceptual, Biblical precedent, these aspects lacked the concrete Biblical pattern that was one of Cranmer's chief concerns. The concepts of light and salt are there in Scripture, and such practices might modestly be included,² but for the most part they are not as explicit as other liturgical elements of the Divine Liturgy. We do not find the elaborate baptismal rituals of the Middle Ages in the baptisms of the New Testament, nor can we explicitly observe such practices in the full liturgy of heaven described in Revelation 4-5. Where the liturgy of heaven was more explicit, however, liturgical practices were retained. For example, in the 1549 version, Cranmer made provision for the white garment at baptism, based on the observation that the heavenly saints are dressed in white. This specific provision was later removed, but Cranmer's original intent demonstrates his commitment to the liturgy of heaven as a model for earth.

In making the observations about Cranmer's tendency to strike a balance between the minimal and the maximal, we should not forget that Cranmer was returning to the liturgical essentials of the Bible and the early Church. In so doing, he conveyed his conviction of a sense of the now and the not yet. Clearly he relied on the basic Biblical patterns endorsed by the ancient Church. He also included those patterns of the heavenly, the eschatologi-

²For example, I have seen some ministers at the end of the baptismal office give the parents a baptismal candle and a small vial of salt, simply stating that their child is now to be salt and light. This does not take any more time, nor disrupt the flow of the service. Yet it retains some of the rich Biblical symbolism of the early Middle Ages.

cal model of heaven (the *Sursum Corda*, the *Sanctus* etc.). Since the Lord's Prayer makes heaven our model — thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth *as it is in heaven* — heaven is also the standard of life and the liturgy. Nevertheless, while Heaven is the goal, the Church lives on earth in this mortal life. So there is a sense in which we enter heaven in the Divine Liturgy, but there is also a sense in which we are still on earth and in this mortal life. There is the reality that we do not enter heaven as we shall fully experience it in the life of the world to come. After all, there is a life in the world to come in which we shall physically behold the Incarnate Christ. So there is a “nowness” and a “not-yetness” retained in the Cranmer liturgy. In no other liturgy is this important Biblical balance so well retained.

Cranmer also believed that alien theology was best dispensed with by a return to a more definitive Biblical model. For him, Scripture was the pre-eminent (though not exclusive) guide to the proper liturgical model. The simpler approach to liturgy, without being simplistic, also addressed one of Cranmer's greatest concerns, the unification of Baptism and Holy Communion. Compared to other liturgies, putting the two back together became much more possible and practical with the BCP. This brings us to the opening rubrics.³

The Initial Rubrics

Due notice, normally of at least a week, shall be given before a Child is brought to the church to be baptized.

For every child to be baptized there shall be not fewer than three godparents, of whom at least two shall be of the same sex as the child and of whom at least one shall be of the opposite sex; save

³Rubric is from the Latin for *red* because such instructions were customarily written in red. Many of the altar editions still have the rubrics in red.

that, when three cannot conveniently be had, one godfather and one godmother shall suffice. Parents may be godparents for their own children provided that the child shall have at least one other godparent. The godparents shall be persons who have been baptized and confirmed and will faithfully fulfil their responsibilities both by their care for the child committed to their charge and by the example of their own godly living. Nevertheless the Minister shall have power to dispense with the requirement of confirmation in any case in which in his judgement need so requires.

The Minister shall instruct the parents or guardians of an infant to be admitted to Holy Baptism that the same responsibilities rest on them as are in the service of Holy Baptism required of the godparents.

No Minister shall refuse or, save for the purpose of preparing or instructing the parents or guardians or godparents, delay to baptize any infant within his cure that is brought to the church to be baptized, provided that due notice has been given and the provisions relating to godparents are observed. If the Minister shall refuse or unduly delay to baptize any such infant, the parents or guardians may apply to the Bishop of the diocese who shall, after consultation with the Minister, give such directions as he thinks fit.

The Minister, before proceeding to the Baptism, shall have satisfied himself that the child presented to him has not already been baptized.

At the time appointed the godfathers and godmothers and the Parents or guardians with the child must be ready at the Font, and the Priest coming to the Font (which is then to be filled with pure Water) and standing there, shall proceed as follows.

The first rubric emphasizes not delaying Baptism. Yet it also encourages Baptism at times of regular worship services, Sundays and other Holy Days. Cranmer was trying to minimize private baptisms without doing away with them altogether. Nevertheless, he was attempting to enhance the unity of Baptism and the Holy

Communion. The Eucharist was normally observed on Sundays and other Holy Days, so this rubric placed Baptism in conjunction with Holy Communion.

The second rubric calls for sponsors, special representatives of the family who speak on behalf of infants. The ancient practice of sponsors, dating from the beginning of the third century, is based on the Biblical use of witnesses at the establishment or ratification of new covenant relations (Deuteronomy 27 & 28). In one sense, the entire congregation is the witness of the covenant. St. Augustine observed, "The presentation of the little ones to receive the spiritual grace is the act not so much of those by whose hands they are born up . . . as of the whole society of saints and believers. For it is proper to regard the infants as presented by all who take pleasure in their baptism, and through whose holy and perfectly-united love they are assisted in receiving the communion of the Holy Spirit."⁴ For this reason, adults need no other witnesses than the congregation itself.

In another sense, however, the sponsors stand and speak on behalf of infants who are unable to answer for themselves. As mentioned earlier, the wisdom of the Church bases this practice on the example of the paralytic in Scripture who was brought to Jesus. Our Lord recognized the faith of those who brought the passive man (Mark 2:5). The *Book of Common Prayer* also acknowledges the need for special support necessary for Christian children to grow into mature Christians. These people are called *godparents*, literally, "God's parents." These people are to be viewed as God's special, spiritual provision to help parents raise godly children in this difficult world. Moreover, this is an absolutely critical balance to the

⁴ *Epistle*, 98, 5.

practice of infant Baptism, as aptly expressed by Archibald Boyd in the following:

Nor let it be forgotten, that until the sponsors of our baptized little ones rise to a sense of their responsibility, and a faithful discharge of their duties, we can hardly expect that our children shall grow up a God-fearing and a Gospel-honoring generation. Our system must be taken as a whole; and pledges made, duties required, and promises fulfilled, are parts of it. All that the Church can do, she does; prays, trusts, hopes, surrounds her little ones with guardian care, and instructs these guardians in their duty.⁵

The provision for sponsors is in no way designed to supplant the parents. Rather it is for their support in the awesome challenge of raising godly seed. The wisdom of the Scriptures as understood by the Church anticipated the difficulties of rearing virtuous children. Historically this has been of inestimable value to parents and children of the covenant. However, it should not be overlooked that the American prayer book makes provision for the parents to be the sponsors if there are no godparents available. Massey Shepherd explains in his commentary on the prayer book:

The American Book has never made the presence of Sponsors an absolute rule (notice the clause, "when they can be had"), and it has always allowed parents to assume this responsibility. This relaxation of the traditional rules has been a response to the necessities of a "frontier" society, where suitable Sponsors have often been lacking, and also a realistic acceptance of the mobility of our society, which all too frequently makes it impossible for Sponsors other than parents

⁵ Boyd, *Baptism and Baptismal Regeneration*, p. 201.

to keep a close personal association with their godchildren.⁶

Even so, neither should it be ignored that the above provision is made only because of the dire, estranged conditions of the frontier of early America. The Prayer Book was not commending a "go-it-alone" approach to the Church. It was not advocating a "home-church" mentality that has become a denial of the Church in the modern period, a kind of rabid individualism essentially denying the need for the Church altogether. Rather, the wisdom of the witness concept is that it takes more than a parent to raise a child *spiritually* speaking. At a physical level, only the family is needed. At the spiritual level, a parent is not enough. It takes the Church because there was a fall. If there had been no fall of Adam and Eve, the Church would not have been necessary. Only the family could have raised the child spiritually. Therefore, any elevation of the family over the Church in the spiritual realm is a failure to grasp the way of salvation as being through Christ and His Church. As the Fathers and the Reformers were fond of saying, "You cannot have God as your Father if you do not have the Church as your mother."

The number of sponsors required has varied from one in the early Church and Middle Ages, to two in the *Sarum Manual*. The emphasis of the rubric, therefore, seems to be for parents to seek out Sponsors where it is possible, only omitting godparents where they absolutely could not be found.

The third rubric of the BCP suggests the placement of Baptism after the second lesson of Morning or Evening Prayer. However, it should be remembered that Cranmer's intent was for Holy Communion to follow the

⁶Massey Shepherd, *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 273.

daily office. This way Baptism would be united with the Holy Communion. The 1928 BCP and the Reformed Episcopal BCP make provision for the Baptismal Office to be inserted at "other times as the Minister shall appoint," giving greater flexibility but still the opportunity for unifying the Divine Liturgy.

The final rubric specifies that the Baptism should be at the font. Historically, the font is placed at the door, because in the Scriptures Baptism is admission into the Church. Hence, the best place to administer Baptism is where the people enter. For this reason, the font might be in various locations where entries to the Church are found (Transepts, vestibules etc.). Of course, the font may be placed at other points in the Church but none has as powerful a Biblical and theological rationale as the doorway of the Church. Significantly, the Puritans called for fonts to be moved from private baptisteries where the entire congregation could see the Baptism. Some of them went so far as to request at the Savoy Conference in 1651 that the fonts be moved from the entrances of the Church even if in plain view. The Bishops of the seventeenth century responded in the negative with the following explanation, "The font usually stands, as it did in primitive times, at or near the Church door, to signify that Baptism was the entrance into the Church mystical." Massey Shepherd adds, "There is no warrant in our Church's tradition for the font to be hidden in a small chapel or recess out of sight of the congregation as a whole."⁷

The rubrics of the Prayer Book are extremely important. As we have seen they contain an entire theological viewpoint. As such, they are quite instructive and informative correctly understood. After the rubrics the Baptismal Office begins.

⁷*Ibid*, pp. 273-274.

The Introduction

The Preliminary Question

Hath this child been already baptized, or no?

The service begins with a question to prevent multiple baptisms. It should be understood that the historic Church has believed strongly in one Baptism, based on the apostolic injunction, "One Lord, one faith, one Baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). To guard this belief, the Church placed in the service a solemn declaration that the person to be baptized had never before received Christian Baptism.

The Exhortation

DEARLY beloved, forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin, and that our Saviour Christ saith, none can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerate and born anew of Water and of the Holy Ghost: I beseech you to call upon God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that of his bounteous mercy he will grant to *this Child* that thing which by nature he cannot have; that he may be baptized with Water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's holy Church, and be made a *lively member* of the same.

The exhortation begins in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer with a clear statement of why Baptism is necessary, "All men are conceived and born in sin." The service acknowledges what theologians call "original sin," or what is described in the Articles of Religion as "birth-sin." Original sin is the sin committed by humanity's first parents, Adam and Eve. Because they represented and contained in their loins the progeny of the world, every human fell with Adam and Eve. Mankind is born sinful

not because of actual transgression, but all are “of the lineage of Rebel.”⁸ This original sin involves culpability and guilt, described effectively by Archibald Boyd:

Corruption has descended to us, like a taint and tendency in the blood, from those who allowed evil to enter into their constitutions; and in virtue of their own depraved or vitiated nature, a proclivity to evil has become the moral misfortune of their descendants. All this is “birth-sin,” or inherent depravity. But, over and beyond this, there is another evil under which we labour—the guilt of the sin committed by our first parents. Just as a deed of attainder struck against a disloyal ancestor clings to his descendants, be they never so loyal themselves, stripping him and them of estates and honours; so does Adam’s treason, not constitutionally only, but criminally also attach to his offspring.⁹

It is important to note that even the usually fine 1928 version of the BCP dropped out this statement about original sin. Massey Shepherd rejects any indication that the intent was to soften or deny original sin. However, it is not coincidental that the 1928 version of the BCP conveniently expunges emphases of sin and judgment in the lectionary readings. One should not miss the peculiar omissions and abrupt endings that can only be explained by the fact that as early as 1928, the corrosion of theology so prevalent in the modern era had already begun. However, the 1928 version of the exhortation still retained the language, “that which by nature he cannot have,” implying that the person to be baptized has a nature alien to righteousness. Original sin is left implicit, whereas it is explicit in the original Cranmerian prayer books. Indeed,

⁸ Boyd, *Baptism and Baptismal Regeneration*, p. 159.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

this was a main issue in the Reformation. The Reformers almost to the man were concerned that the ancient heresy of Pelagianism was behind all of the problems in the Medieval Church. Hence, there was a return to the teachings of St. Augustine, the great opponent of Pelagius. Martin Luther wrote the classic defense of original sin, *The Bondage of the Will*, against the humanist Erasmus who found it difficult to accept a full doctrine of depravity.

Secondly, because of original sin, the exhortation calls for the need to be "regenerate and born anew of water and the spirit." If a person is conceived and born in sin as the Psalmist writes (Psalm 51), immediate cleansing by Baptism is necessary. A new life is also required as indicated by the word *regenerate*. As was stated in Chapter Five, *regeneration* evolved in its meaning, due to the influence of the seventeenth-century Puritans, into a very different understanding from its Biblical definition found in the original liturgy of Cranmer. Initially, the word referred to adoption and engrafting, the implanting of the seed, the Word, based on the parable of the soils. This meant that the seed could spring forth instantly at Baptism, or lie dormant as many seeds often do until a later time in life. To the disappointment of the more classical Anglican viewpoint, however, "In modern times the word 'regeneration' has been loosely employed to denote conversion or renovation. In the Prayer Book, and in all the ancient writers, it denotes the new birth."¹⁰ Regeneration was not necessarily that inner renovation brought about by the Holy Spirit. Putting this together with the previous statement about sin, "The nature which we inherit from our earthly parents is like their own, sinful; the nature which we derive from above, i.e. from the Holy Spirit, is like the Spirit, holy. It is a sanctifying principle given us

¹⁰ Evan Daniel, *The Prayer-Book: Its History, Language, and Contents* (London: Wells Gardiner, Darton & Co., 1894), pp. 342-343.

to counteract that infection of nature which remains even in the regenerate."¹¹ Notice that this quote simply ties the word *regenerate* to a meaning of "sanctify" (to set apart). Baptismal regeneration is therefore the first "setting apart" for God, a sanctifying claim by the Almighty on the one baptized.

A concern is expressed, as indicated by so many Biblical Anglicans in the nineteenth century, that a new definition of regeneration has confused its meaning. Thus it seems plausible that one could reject the modern view of regeneration as conversion, aptly expressed in the statement denouncing that "regeneration is inseparably connected with Baptism,"¹² and at the same time embrace the classical Anglican position that uses the word *regeneration* in the Baptismal Office. Because too much explicit Biblical language is sacrificed by not associating the Scriptural understanding of regeneration to Baptism (Titus 3:5 etc.), the retention of the word, and its re-insertion in the case of the Reformed Episcopal prayer book, should at this present time be supported in the Baptismal Service. Given the horrible state of the modern Evangelical Movement, deviating from its reformed and classical evangelical predecessors into all manner of apostate beliefs and practices, the present situation calls for a hearty return to the commitments of the English Reformation, including its view of baptismal regeneration (See Chapters Four, Five and Six of this book).

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 343.

¹² A direct quotation from the important *Declaration of Principles* (IV.5) of the Reformed Episcopal Church was intended to correct medieval sacerdotalism. It is important to state also that these principles are to be understood in the context of the controlling, authoritative documents mentioned in the first declaration of principles, the Holy Scriptures, the Creeds, and the Articles of Religion, the latter of which explicitly endorses baptismal regeneration understood in the more Biblical, Reformed and classical sense.

The First Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, who of thy great mercy didst save Noah and his family in the ark from perishing by water; and also didst safely lead the children of Israel thy people through the Red Sea, figuring thereby holy Baptism; and by the Baptism of thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ, in the river Jordan, didst sanctify the element of Water to the mystical washing away of sin; We beseech thee, for thine infinite mercies, that thou wilt mercifully look upon these thy servants; wash them and sanctify them with the Holy Ghost, that they, being delivered from thy wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ's Church; and being stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally they may come to the land of everlasting life, there to reign with thee world without end; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

If there is one prayer that embodies all baptismal prayers, this is it. Cranmer certainly gave it primacy of place. Taken directly from Hermann's *Consultation* by Martin Bucer, Cranmer hardly modified it. This is perhaps the most significant baptismal prayer ever composed. It pulls together the great Biblical imagery of water into an ancient Church and Reformational understanding. It is a hermeneutic as well as a baptismal theology.

A hermeneutical masterpiece, the prayer indicates a whole-Bible approach to interpreting the Scriptures. It is Christ-centered while including the Church. The prayer reflects a view of Scripture whereby the Old Testament is interpreted as a "figuring," or typifying. The images of the Old Testament are understood to be fulfilled in Christ and the Church. In reference to Holy Baptism, the water

passages of Noah's Flood and the Red Sea were not simply about the deliverance of the peoples of those ancient times, but they pointed to Jesus and His kingdom. Specifically, in Noah's Flood, Noah is analogous to Christ and the Ark is the Church. In the Exodus, Moses is a symbol of Christ. Passage through the Red Sea not only takes the people of God to the other side, it points to a future, an eschatology of passage to the final land, the ultimate, eternal realm of milk and honey. Thus, the water in both historic events represents the cleansing of Baptism, a deliverance from the judgment uniquely embodied in Noah's Flood and the destruction of the Egyptians.

The prayer is also hermeneutically important because it indicates a reliance on a patristic approach to interpreting Scripture and the Sacraments. The Early Church was fond of understanding these great water passages as baptismal images. Moreover, the prayer of Bucer revives an important perspective on Jesus' own Baptism. His baptism "in the river Jordan didst sanctify the element of Water to the mystical washing away of sin." In other words, Christ's baptism by John the Baptist began the return of the earth's elements to their original sacramental purpose. He set the waters of the earth apart to be used for their primary purpose, to function as a means of grace (See Chapter Two). In other words, Jesus "re-sacralized" the waters of the world. As such, His baptism was not for Himself directly, rather it was that He might convey something to the world through Himself. Hence, we understand why Baptism is associated by Him with the Cross (Mark 10). The same dynamic occurs at the Cross. He was crucified not because of any need for cleansing in Him but in the world.

The prayer also presents a sacramental theology. As a sacramental theology, it should not be overlooked that the baptismal service begins with prayer. Baptism is not viewed as some mechanical rite. On the other hand, it is

not an empty rite. The prayer anticipates that God will perform something through the Baptism, not magically by the water in and of itself, but by the power of the Holy Spirit implementing water for God's purposes as the symbolism of the Flood and the Red Sea convey. Baptism is understood as a Sacrament, a means of grace.

The prayer asks God to accomplish four things through Baptism, indicating a conviction about the nature of Baptism. First, Baptism is a "washing," a cleansing from sin. Secondly, it is a "sanctifying by the Holy Ghost," which indicates the nature of regeneration. If sanctification is simply a *setting apart*, then regeneration is the first act of sanctification. Third, Baptism is admission into the Church. Fourth, if life after Baptism is kept consistent with the Sacrament, it ushers into the "final land of everlasting life."

Second Prayer

ALMIGHTY and immortal God, the aid of all that need, the helper of all that flee to thee for succour, the life of them that believe, and the resurrection of the dead: We call upon thee for *this Infant*, that *he*, coming to thy holy Baptism, may receive remission of *his* sins by spiritual regeneration. Receive *him*, O Lord, as thou hast promised by thy well-beloved Son, saying, Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: So give now unto us that ask; let us that seek find; open the gate unto us that knock; that *this Infant* may enjoy the everlasting benediction of thy heavenly washing, and may come to the eternal kingdom which thou hast promised by Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The second prayer is from the *Sarum Manual*. It too summarizes all that Baptism prayerfully accomplishes.

Whereas the first prayer relies on Biblical theology, the second echoes Biblical phrases with precise application.

First, the prayer connects Baptism to the Resurrection in a similar manner to the Apostle Paul's statements to the Romans (Romans 6). Yet God is viewed as the source of life through the Resurrection of Christ. Belief in the Living Christ transforms the Sacrament into a means of grace.

Secondly, the prayer requests "remission of sin by spiritual regeneration." Daniel explains, "The grace of Baptism includes the remission of original sin and the admission into that state of salvation, in which, if we faithfully continue in it, our actual sins are also remitted."¹³ Again, the theme of regeneration is emphasized. It should not be forgotten that it was Bucer, who brought this language into the English liturgy in the exhortation and first prayer. It parallels the second prayer from the *Sarum Manual*, demonstrating a continuity with Scripture, as well as the ancient and Reformed Church.

The Gospel

Hear the words of the Gospel, written by Saint Mark in the tenth chapter at the thirteenth verse.

THEY brought young children to Christ, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took

¹³ Daniel, *The Prayer-Book*, p. 345.

them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

The Gospel lesson is from Mark 10:13-16. Appropriately the Gospel lesson has to do with the acceptance of children into the kingdom by Jesus. The language of the prayer speaks of how the lesson "exhorteth all men to follow their [the infants] innocency." Babies are conceived and born in sin but they have not committed actual sin, meaning there is an innocency about them that is to be modeled in the walk of a disciple. Moreover, the passage in the Gospel is tied directly to Holy Baptism. In other words, Baptism is the precise way to bring an infant to Jesus, which is what the disciples originally failed to do. The Prayer Book teaches that the Baptism of babies is infant evangelism! Granted, this is not the end of the spiritual journey. As indicated by the following prayers and exhortations, it is the beginning. Nevertheless, it is viewed as a real beginning. Babies are dedicated by Baptism, but there is more to the Baptism than merely dedication. There is reception by Jesus into His kingdom, as the Gospel language explicitly explains as the model of children.

The Explanation and Thanksgiving Prayer of the People

BELOVED, ye hear in this Gospel the words of our Saviour Christ, that he commanded the children to be brought unto him; how he blamed those that would have kept them from him; how he exhorteth all men to follow their innocency. Ye perceive how by his outward gesture and deed he declared his good will toward them; for he embraced them in his arms, he laid his hands upon them, and blessed them. Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that he will likewise favourably receive *this present Infant*; that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy; that he

will give unto *him* the blessing of eternal life, and make *him* partaker of his everlasting kingdom. Wherefore we being thus persuaded of the good will of our heavenly Father towards *this Infant*, declared by his Son Jesus Christ; and nothing doubting but that he favourably alloweth this charitable work of ours in bringing *this Infant* to his holy Baptism; let us faithfully and devoutly give thanks unto him, and say,

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, heavenly Father, we give thee humble thanks that thou hast vouchsafed to call us to the knowledge of thy grace and faith in thee: Increase this knowledge, and confirm this faith in us evermore. Give thy Holy Spirit to *this Infant*, that *he* may be born again, and be made *an heir* of everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The prayer thanks God for what He has promised to the children of believers. It asks God to give what He has said He would through Baptism. In other words, the prayer anticipates that the Baptism is a means of grace, a Sacrament. It prays conceptually for what has been stated explicitly, spiritual regeneration and salvation. All of the prayer books have retained this prayer, and all contain the notion of a belief in regeneration even if the word has been explicitly removed.

The Baptismal Covenant

The baptismal covenant is a personal but not an individual covenant. Rather, it is acceptance of the covenant made with Christ at the Cross. For this reason, the sponsors as corporate representatives obligate the person whom they represent. This covenant of Christ accepted at

Baptism also applies to the future children. Thus the covenant is not individualistic; it is corporate with personal application. The distinction between individualistic and personal is critical.

Address to the Sponsors

DEARLY beloved, ye have brought *this Child* here to be baptized; ye have prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would vouchsafe to receive *him*, to release *him* of *his* sins, to sanctify him with the Holy Ghost, to give *him* the kingdom of heaven and everlasting life. Ye have heard also that our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised in his Gospel, to grant all these things that ye have prayed for: which promise he, for his part, will most surely keep and perform. Wherefore, after this promise made by Christ, *this Infant* must also faithfully, for *his* part, promise by you that are *his* sureties, (until *he* come of age to take it upon *himself*.) that *he* will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy Word, and obediently keep his commandments.

One cannot help but be taken by the enormous emphasis on exhortation to the godparents in Cranmer's original service of Baptism. The role was not sentimental or casual. It was profoundly active, spiritual leadership. The godparent was to disciple the child. Every care was to be taken to ensure that the child would be nurtured in Christ. The point here is that a parent may raise a child physically, but it takes more than a parent to raise a child spiritually.

It takes the Church, specifically representatives from the Church. Baptism is viewed as the first step in raising a child "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1-3). The New Testament encourages parents to raise their children in Christ, not outside Him, and later

to bring them to Him. The Prayer Book again assumes that the way to carry out this admonition in the Lord is to start with Baptism, a Sacrament that inserts the person into Christ and His body, the Church.

The Vows

DOST thou, in the name of this Child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow nor be led by them?

Answer. I renounce them all.

Minister.

Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth?

And in Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son our Lord? And that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; that he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; that he went down into hell, and also did rise again the third day; that he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; and from thence shall come again at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead?

And dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholick Church; the Communion of Saints; the Remission of sins; the Resurrection of the flesh; and everlasting life after death?

Answer. All this I stedfastly believe.

Minister.

WILT thou be baptized in this faith?

Answer. That is my desire.

Minister.

WILT thou then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?

Answer. I will.

These vows originally appeared as part of the catechetical process of the Early Church. They clearly state how the historic Church understood a true profession or confession of faith. Their importance lies in the way salvation is understood. It is not perceived as simply waving a hand, walking an aisle, or just saying "yes" to Jesus. It is a deep faith involving an abiding commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord.

The first vow is a renunciation of Satan. Baptism was originally understood by the ancient Church as simultaneously an exorcism and confession unto salvation. The notion of being delivered from Satan has been lost by modern, trivial views of salvation.

The second vow is a statement of belief. Notice that belief in Jesus involves confessing Him as the Trinitarian Lord. A confession of faith is defined by the creeds, the "Articles of the Christian Faith as contained in the Apostles' Creed." The New Testament teaches confessing Christ, but this confession is not to be understood in some minimalist sense that would grant salvation to anyone who believes in heterodoxy. There is a precise understanding attached to simple faith in Jesus. It is a confession of the Articles of the Christian Faith. In other words, belief in Jesus is the simple acknowledgment of His Lordship over all, understood by the Church Biblically to be confession of and belief in the Apostles' Creed.

The third vow is a pledge of obedience. Salvation is not understood as a faith that is alone. The New Testament does not teach salvation by faith to the exclusion of

works. According to James, salvation by faith alone is a faith that is not alone; it is a faith that works.

In the 1928 and other American versions there are other vows included, mainly having to do with the details of obedience. These are explained as catechism and confirmation. They call for the sponsors to make certain that the child has the opportunity to confess Christ on his own before God and His people in front of the Bishop, to be followed by public reception into the larger Church by the Lord's under shepherd.

The Petitions

O MERCIFUL God, grant that the old Adam in *this Child* may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in *him*. *Amen*.

Grant that all carnal affections may die in *him*, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in *him*. *Amen*.

Grant that *he* may have power and strength, to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh. *Amen*.

Grant that whosoever is here dedicated to thee by our office and ministry may also be endued with heavenly virtues, and everlastingly rewarded, through thy mercy, O blessed Lord God, who dost live, and govern all things, world without end. *Amen*.

These four petitions may be looked upon as prayers for grace, to enable the child to carry into effect the baptismal vows by which he has just been bound. They are again a complete summary of the need for salvation and a comprehensive request for salvation understood as taking place at the point of Baptism. The tendency to evil is described as the "old Adam." The prayers ask for Baptism to become a clothing, a putting on of a new man. Prayer is

offered for “carnal affections” to be subdued and for the person to be dedicated to serving as Christ’s soldier, triumphing over the world, the flesh and the Devil. Finally, the prayers not only ask for vices to be avoided but for virtues to be added and eventually rewarded.

ALMIGHTY everliving God, whose most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of our sins, did shed out of his most precious side both water and blood; and gave commandment to his disciples, that they should go teach all nations, and baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Regard, we beseech thee, the supplications of thy congregation; sanctify this Water to the mystical washing away of sin; and grant that this Child now to be baptized therein, may receive the fulness of thy grace, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Next a summary prayer includes the “sanctification of the waters.” The waters of Baptism are analogous to the water that flowed from Christ’s pierced side, meaning the blood and water pointed to the two Sacraments. In the 1928 version, the sanctification of the water is performed similar to the consecration of the bread and the wine in Holy Communion. A direct parallel is drawn between the way the two Sacraments are set apart. The specific wording used is the *sursum corda*, “Lift up your hearts,” and the preface. This prayer is for the waters to be “sanctified,” that is, set apart. In no way does this imply a magical power added to the waters. Rather, it sets them apart for a holy use by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, there is an important statement about the way election is understood. It implies a covenantal or sacramental view of election. Baptism is interpreted to mean an acknowledgment of a person as among the elect. In a

visible sense, Baptism and election are one; in an eternal sense they may not be the same. However, the prayer is for the person to remain among the elect. This is a prayer in the words of St. Augustine for "predestination unto perseverance" (as distinguished from predestination to grace). It also reflects that as long as one faithfully lives under the sign and seal of the covenant, Baptism, he should be treated as and counted as one of God's elect.

The Rite

The Naming of the Child

Then the Priest shall take the Child into his hands, and shall say to the Godfathers and Godmothers, Name this Child. And then naming it after them (if they shall certify him that the Child may well endure it) he shall dip it in the Water discreetly and warily, saying,

The rite itself involves the *naming* of the child. The association between Christian name and Baptism goes back to the understanding of the rite as an adoption into the kingdom of God. An adopted person receives a new name. Literally, a baptized person is named a "Christian." Historically, people usually only had one name, and it was tied to their occupation. They lacked identity beyond their worldly occupation or avocation. Christianity introduced identity beyond the world, vocation or calling, as indicated by a Christian name. The Christian name was placed before, not after, the birth name, meaning God and His Church have prior, spiritual claim on the one baptized. Thus, the tradition arose of the distinction between the Christian name and last name, or two names.

The Baptism

N. I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

But if they certify that the Child is weak, it shall suffice to pour Water upon it, saying the foresaid words,

N. I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Baptism is by the Church. The minister says, "I baptize thee." The minister does not operate on his own recognizance. He is under the authority of the Church just as he places the person baptized in the Church's care. Yet the Baptism is into more than the Church. It is Baptism into the Name of the Triune God. It forms a union with each member of the Godhead. What this entails was the subject of Chapters Four through Eight.

Notice that the child is taken from the arms of the sponsors into the arms of the minister. Originally, this was the point at which the baptismal garment was placed on the child. The movement from parent to sponsor, however, is significant. The parents give the child to God through the Church. The Church receives the child, baptizes it, and then gives it back to the sponsors who in turn return it to the parents. A spiritual stewardship is formed. The parents for the first time release their child. They begin a process that should continue all through life. However, the release is not simply into the world. They turn over their child to the world through God and the Church. The difference is critical. To relinquish a child to the world is frightening to the parent. To do so in Christ is reassuring. The hope of the parent is in the Lord, just as the true desires of the child can only be fulfilled through the bond to God and His Church formed at Baptism.

The Reception

* Here the Priest shall make a Cross upon the Child's forehead.

WE receive this Child into the Congregation of Christ's flock, *and do sign *him* with the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto *his* life's end. Amen.

The reception is a special acknowledgment that Baptism is the means for receiving a person into Christ's flock. Furthermore, the reception seals the Baptism with the sign of the cross. This can be done with water or with oil, representing Baptism is in some sense completed even though confirmation is expected to follow. The use of the sign of the cross goes back to the practice of confirmation by the Bishop at the Baptism. Eventually, confirmation and Baptism were separated, the priest being able to baptize but only the Bishop being able to confirm. However, the fact that the Anglican service included an aspect of confirmation indicates that confirmation at least begins at Baptism with the completion anticipated at an actual service of confirmation later.

As for the sign of the cross, it is the most basic Trinitarian symbol of the Christian faith. The cross itself is the flag of the Christian nation, the Church. The sign of the cross is a salute of reverence and loyalty to what and to Whom the cross represents. It is not worship of metal, wood or stone.

The practice of the sign of the cross has a rich Biblical connection to the Tree of Life in the garden, since the New Testament Greek word for cross literally means, "tree." As such, the cross became the dominant symbol of the

Christian faith going back to the earliest days of the Church. Tertullian as early as the second century referred to the use of the cross: "In all travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, in putting on our shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our candles, in lying down, in sitting down, whatever employment occupies us, we mark our forehead with the sign of the cross."¹⁴ About a century later, Athanasius, who so gallantly defended the doctrine of the Deity of Christ against Arius, wrote of the cross, "By the sign of the cross . . . all magic is stayed, all sorcery confounded, all the idols are abandoned and deserted, and all senseless pleasure ceases, as the eye of faith looks up to heaven from earth."¹⁵ In no way was the sign of the cross to be viewed as a magical incantation. The famous preacher and Bishop of Constantinople, Chrysostom, wrote in the fourth century, "Our proper attitude is, above all, an essential element in the use of the sign of the cross. The above usages are the appropriate ones, but treating this symbol as magic or as a means of gaining standing or merit before God is totally inappropriate. May we ever use and teach the sign of the cross aright, and avoid all abuse of this God-given symbol."¹⁶

The use of the cross was part of the godly piety of Christians even during the Reformation. The Reformers *per se* did not condemn a modest use of the signing of the cross on oneself. Martin Luther, for example, commended making the sign on oneself, tying it directly to the cross placed on the forehead at baptism: "In the morning, when you rise, make the sign of the cross and say, 'In the name

¹⁴ Tertullian, *On the Soldier's Crown*.

¹⁵ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, IV. 31.

¹⁶ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Matthew*, Homily 54.

of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."¹⁷ The sign of the cross was a way of renewing those baptismal vows made initially when the Triune name of God was first received. It is really that simple.

In 1603, however, the Puritans in England objected strongly to the use of the sign of the cross. They wrongly understood it as connected to Roman Catholicism. From the quotes above, it is obvious that the practice existed long before there was the concept of a Roman Catholic Church. The practice belongs to the undivided, Catholic (universal) Church, which is not entirely the same as the Roman Catholic Church. The Puritans were initially insistent with the Bishops of the Church of England that the practice be abolished.

In 1604 the Church of England responded with Canon 30, explaining the basis for and positive benefit of the use of the sign of the cross at Baptism. So satisfactory was the explanation to Dr. Reynolds, the current leader of the Puritan Party, "that he declared that he would never oppose the ceremony any more."¹⁸ Evan Daniel explains the content of this important Canon in the following:

It (the sign of the cross) reminds us (1) that the primitive Christians rejoiced in the cross, in spite of the ignominy which attached to it in the eyes of unbelievers, and that the Holy Scriptures include under it, "not only Christ crucified, but the force, effects, and merits of His death and passion, with all the comforts, fruits, and promises which we receive or expect thereby;" (2) that the honour and dignity of the cross itself begat, even in Apostolic times, a reverent estimation of the cross, which Christians soon came to use in all their actions, as a sign that they

¹⁷ Martin Luther, *Small Catechism*, VII.1

¹⁸ Daniel, *The Prayer-Book*, p. 352.

were not ashamed of Him who died for them on the cross; that they signed their children with the sign of the cross in baptism; and that this was done both in the Greek and Latin Church; (3) that, although the Church of Rome had abused the sign of the cross, *the abuse of a thing doth not take away the lawful use of it*; and (4) that the Church of England, in retaining the cross in Baptism, had simply recurred to primitive usage, guarding, at the same time, against future superstitions and error. In proof of this last point it urges that the Church of England teaches, firstly, that "the sign of the cross is not part of the substance of the sacrament;" secondly, that "the infant baptized is, by virtue of baptism, *before* it be signed with the sign of the cross, received into the congregation of Christ's people, as a perfect member thereof. And not by any power ascribed unto the sign of the cross;" thirdly, that the cross is retained "for the very [i.e., true] remembrance of the cross, which is very precious to all them that rightly believe in Jesus Christ," and "as a lawful outward ceremony and badge, whereby the infant is dedicated to the service of Him who died upon the cross."¹⁹

The sign of the cross at Baptism, therefore, has important Biblical and historical significance to all Christians. It is not inherently idolatrous nor contrary to any doctrine in Christianity. The modest use of it to renew a commitment, and a restoration of a fond affection for the One who died for us, is highly commended by the Prayer Book.

The Conclusion

Then shall the Priest say,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 352-353.

SEEING now, dearly beloved brethren, that *this Child* is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits, and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that *this Child* may lead the rest of *his* life according to this beginning.

Then shall be said, all kneeling,

OUR Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.

Then shall the Priest say,

WE yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate *this Infant* with thy Holy Spirit, to receive *him* for thine own *Child* by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church. And humbly we beseech thee to grant that *he* being dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness, and being buried with Christ in his death, may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin; and that, as *he is* made *partaker* of the death of thy Son, *he* may also *be partaker* of his resurrection; so that finally, with the residue of thy holy Church, *he* may be *an inheritor* of thine everlasting kingdom; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Then, all standing up, the Priest shall say to the Godfathers and Godmothers this exhortation following.

FORASMUCH as *this Child* hath promised by you *his* sureties to renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve him: Ye must remember that it is your parts and duties to see that *this Infant* be

taught, so soon as *he* shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise and profession *he hath* here made by you. And that *he* may know these things the better, ye shall call upon *him* to hear sermons; and chiefly ye shall provide that *he* may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health; and that *this Child* may be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life; remembering always, that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that as he died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.

Then shall he add and say,

YE are to take care that *this Child* be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, so soon as *he* can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue, and be further instructed in the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose.

The service concludes with the Lord's Prayer, thanksgiving for regeneration (See full discussion defending this language in Chapter Five), and final exhortation to the godparents and parents. The prayers thank God for all that has been stated and requested, what the Lord promises will happen by the Sacrament. In the 1662 version, the service concludes with the exhortation. The 1928 version includes a final benediction.

It should also be mentioned that final rubrics were added. The first rubric assures that "it is certain, by God's word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved." If there is any

doubt as to the efficacy of the Sacrament, it is clarified by this statement.

Final Rubrics

It is certain by God's Word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved.

To take away all scruple concerning the use of the sign of the Cross in Baptism; the true explication thereof, and the just reasons for the retaining of it, may be seen in the xxxth Canon, first published in the year MDCIV.

Finally, two rubrics are stated. One reassures parents of the eternal salvation of an infant who dies in infancy.

The last rubric was added in 1661, "to remove scruples concerning the sign of the cross," by reference to the thirtieth canon mentioned above. The American Prayer Book has historically allowed for the sign of the cross and the accompanying words to be omitted, which tradition has been retained in the Reformed Episcopal Prayer Book. However, it should be remembered that the permission of omission occurred in a very different context from the present. During the centuries after the Protestant Reformation, there continued to be strong differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church.

While such scruples were and still are important, it is time for Protestants to stop acting on the basis of a reaction to the Roman Catholic Church. Granted, there are still significant theological differences between Rome and Protestantism, ones not to be taken lightly or without resolution before a true union could occur between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Yet, we also live today at a

moment in history when the Roman Church has moved ever so slightly in a Protestant direction with Vatican II. The Pope is not the Anti-Christ, and there are many believing Christians in the Roman Church, just as there are among Evangelical Protestants. Moreover, our societies have become part of what is now called a post-Christian world. It is time for Christians to stop attacking one another and to unite where they can against the real foes: the world, the flesh and the Devil. As a return to the ancient Church, the great Baptismal Office of the historic Cranmerian prayer books is a powerfully Biblical expression of the one, holy, catholic and undivided Church.

Appendix Two

A History of Baptism in One Easy Lesson

Holy Baptism has been integral to the Church's life and mission from the beginning. It is part of Jesus' final instructions for the Church. Shortly before He ascended, He uttered words that are called the Great Commission:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20).

By this statement, Jesus makes Baptism an essential element of what He wants the Church to do and to be. What He wants the Church to do is spread the Good News of His Death and Resurrection to the whole world by baptizing and teaching. What He wants the Church to be is as pure and chaste as the water of Baptism symbolizes. Baptism is bound up in the Great Commission. The significant relation of one to the other explains why the Church has so concerned itself at historical moments with controversies swirling around this ancient rite. Baptism has preoccupied, and rightfully so, much of the Church's time. Indeed, William Perkins the sixteenth-century, post-Reformation Anglican theologian observed, "If a man would be a student of divinity let him learn and prac-

tise his baptism.”¹

The effort to “learn and practise” began early in the Church’s history with the struggle over the question of when exactly to baptize a person: sooner rather than later, or later rather than sooner. After Pentecost, the first Christians were baptized immediately after the offer of the Gospel was made. Gradually the time of Baptism was pushed later and later to avoid baptizing someone who might not continue in the faith. Then, the waves of persecution did not make the timing of Baptism any easier for many Christians. Some professing Christians even apostatized (abandoned the faith) under pressure. Because Baptism meant so much to the early Church, apostasy presented an embarrassing situation. To avoid the difficulties of explaining how a baptized person could leave the faith, some of the major leaders in the Church (Tertullian etc.) suggested waiting until later in a person’s life for Baptism. The famous Constantine, the first professing Christian Emperor of the Roman Empire who legalized Christianity, was baptized at the end of his life perhaps for this reason.

Eventually another controversy arose over Baptism. A group in the Church called Donatists proposed re-baptizing professing, baptized Christians. How did this situation arise? The cause was the intense persecution in the early Church. During one wave of persecution, some laity and clergy had surrendered their copies of the Scriptures to the authorities. One who allegedly committed this offense was a Bishop Felix. The problem became readmission of these “surrendering Christians,” as they were called, back into the Church. The Donatists argued that the wavering believers had denied their faith. The

¹ Ian Breward, ed., *The Work of William Perkins*, Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics 3 (Abingdon: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970), pp. 171-180. Please note that all quotes will follow their original spelling.

solution was rebaptism for laity and clergy.

Regarding the clergy, there was another sacramental issue. The Donatists challenged the validity of the sacramental functions of surrendering ministers. Clerical orders were viewed as undone; vacillating clergy were seen as essentially "un-ordained." The result of such a position not only divided the Church in North Africa where this situation developed, but it led to staggering sacramental ramifications having to do with how the efficacy of the Sacraments is to be understood.

The Donatists' slogan was "on account of the work of one who works" (*ex opere operantis*). The statement means that the "efficacy of the Sacrament is believed to be dependent on the qualities of the minister."² Somehow the subjective quality (character) of the minister could be transferred to the Sacrament, disqualifying legitimacy and efficacy. The unity of the Church was threatened because some churches thought that a surrendering clergyman's orders and sacramental acts remained valid. Others did not. A chaotic situation developed where the validity of the Sacrament was left up to those who asserted themselves as judge, jury and executioner on the integrity of the clergy. If some believed the minister to lack personal integrity, his sacramental functions were judged to be invalid. In the final analysis, the Donatists, those who wanted the restoration of waning clergy by rebaptism, advocated that something subjective in the minister could override Jesus' own words of institution administered by a duly ordained clergyman.

The Donatists were opposed by the great Bishop and one of the four historical Doctors of the Church, Augus-

²Alister MacGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 433. See also, J. Stevenson, *Creeeds, Councils and Controversies* (London: SPCK, 1989), pp. 218-228.

tine of Hippo (Tripoli on the coast of Northern Africa). The Bishop objected to any notion of rebaptism, believing essentially that it violated the Apostolic statement about "One Lord, one faith, one Baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). Furthermore, he maintained that the validity of a Sacrament is not based on the quality or character of the minister. Certainly character is required and important, but a minister can never cease being ordained even if he becomes inactive, or even demits active ministry. Even in the case of an unfaithful minister, there remained objectivity to the Sacrament. By objectivity I mean the elements (water, bread and wine) of the Sacrament can still be sanctified and become means of grace apart from the ethical quality of a clergyman: "the efficacy of a sacrament rests, not upon the merits of the individual administering it, but upon the merits of the one who instituted them in the first place—Jesus Christ."³ Playing off the Donatists' statement, "On account of the work of the one who works" (*ex opere operantis*), Augustine responded with his own slogan, "on account of the work which is worked" (*ex opere operato*). "Here the efficacy of the sacrament is to be understood to be dependent upon the grace of Christ, which the sacraments represent and convey."⁴ Augustine's statement seemed to express a view of the grace of God consistent with his other theology on God's sovereignty in salvation. The Sacraments work because of God not man. Consequently, Augustine's slogan became a standard way of describing the efficacy of the Sacraments throughout the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, his statement would be misapplied to the point that grace would be viewed as contained in the elements of the Sacraments, resulting in a magical view. Of course this was not the point of Augustine's original slogan.

³ MacGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, p. 432.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 432.

However, the Reformation needed to make a correction opposite of the problem Augustine faced with Donatism. Whereas the latter had made the subject, the minister himself, the basis of efficacy, by the time of the mid-to-late Medieval era the elements were believed to be so infused with grace that they were understood mechanically as dispensers of grace. Yes, the Sacraments are effectual irrespective of the subjective quality of the minister. However, their efficacy is not regardless of faith on the part of recipients. Belief is required for the Sacraments to become a means of grace. Orthodoxy therefore had to sort out the relation between the objective (external) origin of grace apart from man, and the subjective (internal) reception by faith within man. It would take the Protestant Reformation centuries later.

For the time, however, Augustine's criticism of Donatism won the day against the threat to the unity of the Church. Any notion of rebaptism was considered to be heterodox, and the Donatists were finally marginalized with their fringe theology. In partial response, a catechetical model was adopted whereby Baptism occurred as soon as possible. Sometimes it was delayed (in the case of adults) until a certain amount of catechizing had been carried out. Full communion was withheld until one had been baptized, catechized and confirmed. This approach seemed to answer the difficulties of the early, persecuted Church. Nevertheless, other problems soon emerged over the same critical issue that led to the debate between Augustine and Pelagius and Augustine and the Donatists, which was the relation between the important words *objective* and *subjective* and their concepts.

The Middle Ages

The Middle Ages present a massive expansion of Christianity, not coincidentally, at the time shortly after major

theological disputes are resolved (Pelagianism, Donatism, Nestorianism etc.). The theological stage was set for growth. Whole nations converted to Christianity, albeit sometimes under unfortunate coercive techniques.⁵ Nevertheless, even though there were some abuses, the benefits of an emergent Christendom far outweighed any of the negatives. Consequently, the Church reached a pinnacle of influence on the life and culture of the Medieval Era unsurpassed before or since. It was a time when Civilization blossomed out of Christendom.

Halfway through the Middle Ages, an old theological nemesis resurfaced that had confronted Augustine. It was the central problem between Augustine and Pelagius as well as the Donatists, namely the tension between an objective versus a subjective approach to theology and the Sacraments. Pelagius was the British monk who taught that each person is born morally good and becomes bad by committing sin. Augustine used the teachings of the Apostle Paul to offer a correction, the doctrine of original sin: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). He taught in opposition to Pelagius that a person is conceived and born in sin apart from any human effort. In other words, one is

⁵ As the Church expanded across Europe, many were baptized under less than desirable circumstances. Some people were forced to be baptized, upon the threat of death, under the powerful leader Clovis. This king relied on certain views of *The Parable of the Great Supper* (Luke 14:15-24), ones that spoke about compelling people to come into the Kingdom of God. The great Augustine did not initially take this compelling in the sense of force; rather he saw the compelling as moral persuasion. Eventually, however, he altered his view, taking a more literal interpretation of compel. Based on Augustine's teachings, the powerful leader, Clovis, adopted his view, as did many other Christian monarchs, some to a greater and lesser (Charlemagne) degree, and forced people to be baptized at sword point. The result was a nationalized, even politicized, kind of Christianity very different from the early days of the Church. Significantly, one had to be baptized at birth to become a citizen, not only of the kingdom of God, but of the nation.

objectively (outside of the person) sinful based on what Adam and Eve did in the garden. Those first parents of the human race were covenantal representatives who contained the entire race in them. One is not only sinful because of his own personal, subjective (in the person) sin, he is sinful before he is ever born because of his first parents' sin. It was a case therefore of an objective approach to theology versus the subjectivism of Pelagius.

In a similar way, Augustine had to deal with the subjectivism of the Donatists with his invaluable slogan, "from a work working" (*ex opere operato*). As was just mentioned, the Donatists wanted to base the effectiveness of the Sacrament on the subjective quality of the minister. The Sacrament became valid "on account of the one who works" (*ex opere operantis*). Again Augustine overcame a subjectivist approach to theology.

By the time of the centuries immediately preceding the Reformation, the middle of the Middle Ages, subjectivist theology appeared in the sacramental theology of the period. Regarding Baptism, it was understood as the *infusion of the habit of grace*. While in principle post-Reformation Anglican scholars such as Richard Hooker would not entirely object to the concept, the problem concerned a subjective view of grace because the habit of grace was perceived as a personal trait rather than Christ through the Spirit sown into the life of the baptized. In other words, the Sacrament was defined in terms of an internal characteristic, "transferring the center or focus of interest and operation from the work done by Christ on behalf of the baptized to the work done in the baptized themselves."⁶ Baptism was not so much a Sacrament of the substitutionary work of Christ as it was of the

⁶Geoffrey Bromiley, *Sacramental Teaching & Practice in the Reformation Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 44-45.

infusion of a habit. The habit (capacity) of grace transferred in the elements was to be filled by the real grace of the second Sacrament, the Eucharist, when the elements were understood as turning into the physical body and blood of Christ (Transubstantiation). This was another version of subjectivism. Grace was somehow infused into the elements in the case of the bread and the wine, changing them to body and blood. Rather than being means used by God to bring about a mystical union, grace was localized physically in the elements. There was need for Reformation.

The Reformation

It is no surprise that the teachings of the Apostle Paul and St. Augustine became so popular during the late Middle Ages. The budding, astute theologians such as Luther, Calvin, Bucer, Ridley and Thomas Cranmer recognized that they were dealing with a variation of a central theological struggle that had existed since the early Church. Geoffrey Bromiley puts it well:

Now the Reformers do not dispute the main presuppositions of this error [the Medieval view of infused grace at Baptism], that baptism must be related to the work of Christ, that its operation is by the Holy Spirit, and that we can count upon what God does on our behalf. Nor do they reject the view that baptism is a means of grace, and that God makes use of it as such. But with their renewed understanding of justification, and therefore their return to a serious doctrine of substitution, they cut right across the subjectivizing, which perverts the medieval view. The true work of baptism is the work which is done for us, not in us. It is not we who literally die and rise again, but Jesus Christ, the One for the many, and we by faith in Him. It is not we who are righteous, but we are counted

righteous in Jesus Christ, being righteous only because the life which we now live by faith of Christ, and faith in Him, is our reality before God and therefore in truth. Once this is grasped, then the whole emphasis on a subjective work is seen to be false, and the notion of a causal operation [from the baptismal water itself] drops away of itself, being replaced by that of grace, and the word of grace, and the grateful response of penitence and faith.⁷

So the Reformers returned to an ancient Biblical emphasis by teaching on the objective character of the Sacraments. Granted, they called for a renewed understanding of the need for faith, but the Sacrament itself was not understood as infused and physically changed. Grace was not perceived as inside the elements. Rather, grace came from the Sovereign God by means of the Sacraments. In particular, Baptism was once again interpreted to be a means of uniting one with the objective work of Christ, the Sacrament of Christ.

At the time of the Reformation, however, a subjective approach to Baptism again became a source of controversy. At this point in history it was among the followers of the Reformers. A group arose shortly after the Reformation, the Anabaptists, who completely denied the practice of infant Baptism. They called for Christians to be baptized "again" as adults (explaining the name Ana [i.e. Again] Baptists). These same people even demanded that Christians be baptized a certain way, by immersion, or their Baptism would be considered invalid. The first generation of reformation Christianity rejected such proposals. The Anabaptists, however, were reintroducing the same theological virus of subjectivism that had caused so many problems for the Church, indeed ones that had pro-

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46. The brackets are mine.

voked the very Reformation from which they had benefited. Their subjectivism was in many ways more insidious than late-Medieval views of infusionary grace. They taught salvation through Christ alone, indeed all of the banners of the Reformation (By Faith alone, by Scripture alone etc.). They also objected to the deviant sacramental views of the late Middle Ages. Nevertheless, they brought in a completely subjective approach to theology and the Gospel by their extreme emphasis on personal repentance and faith virtually to the exclusion of the work of Christ. Not surprisingly, it appears perhaps most in their doctrine of Baptism. Once again some words of Dr. Bromiley are of great value:

Its [the Anabaptist] error is to find the true work of baptism, not in the reconciling work of Christ, but in our own movement of repentance and faith. In this way it subjectivizes the sacrament no less than the medieval doctrine. To be sure, there is no actual making righteous. But there is a movement of repentance and faith which is the real dying and rising again of baptism. It is to this that the sacrament bears witness. It is this which it summons us to work out. It is this which occupies the center of the stage when the sacrament is administered. It is this which cannot be seen or attested in infants, so that they are naturally disqualified as recipients. That we are dead and risen again in Christ is only a background truth, as in the Middle Ages. What counts is that we ourselves die and rise again, that we repent and believe, or at least profess to do so.⁸

So Anabaptism shifted the focus of theology to the subjective. It is no surprise that it ended up in Pelagianism. The work of the Triune God in electing,

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

sending His Son to die as a substitute, and applying the atonement by the work of the Holy Spirit was pushed to the background. Into the foreground was brought the decision to believe. So "the fact remained that this last step of acceptance, of decision, of personal faith, was the real step to salvation. . . . something which only he [the individual] could do, so that in the whole presentation of the Gospel, as in the administration of the sacrament, there was a Pelagian stress."⁹ This totally altered the Reformation thrust.

Of the horrid eventualities of Anabaptist subjectivist theology were those that became the opening to pietism and liberalism. On the one hand, the Anabaptists rationalized faith in a peculiar sort of way. "As they saw it, faith is possible only where there is self-awareness."¹⁰ Then, "once . . . faith migrates into the individual choice of the believer, the sacraments become visual aids and little more."¹¹ Infants were excluded from the Sacrament of Baptism on this basis.

But Pandora's intellectual box was opened by this rationalizing of faith. The way was paved for reason to dominate an understanding of faith itself. Granted, understanding had always been viewed as part of simple trust, as Augustine had emphasized. With the Anabaptists faith became "self awareness." This went to seed in the Enlightenment and modern liberalism's interiorization of faith in terms of the self and the subjective. A philosopher named Immanuel Kant even defined reality as perception, what is inside the mind not what is outside in the objective world.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹¹ Kenneth Stevenson, *The Mystery of Baptism in the Anglican Tradition* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1998), p. 36.

On the other hand, faith as “self awareness” of faith placed the reality of Christianity on the inner, spiritual realm, apart from the physical. In this sense, the Anabaptist subjective emphasis is “linked with a desire to ‘spiritualize’ Christianity, to make it a religion of pure inwardness, to loosen its contacts with the material reality, in a word, to contest the incarnational duality of the means and work of grace, and ultimately therefore to deny that the Word really took human flesh of the Virgin.”¹² Of course, this was precisely what happened in the various pietistic movements in Germany, the Netherlands and among the seventeenth-century Puritans in England and America. Not all went so far, but they tended in their pietistic emphases to define the reality of the faith and the Sacraments, what they called *ordinances*, in terms of the inward, not the objective work of Christ on the Cross. There is an inner work of the Holy Spirit, sanctifying the believer in Christ. However, the inner work is the result of the objective reality of salvation and the Sacraments of the work of Christ.

As a result of the Anabaptist twisting of Biblical and ancient theology to the subjective, almost reversing the work of the Reformation, we find tragic developments. At one basic level, entire denominations define themselves in terms of differences about the doctrine of Holy Baptism. Some have excluded their fellow Christians from Holy Communion because they believe only a certain way of being baptized is acceptable. In reaction, other Christians have dealt with this exclusive approach to the Lord’s Supper by de-emphasizing the importance of Baptism with a careless kind of inclusiveness. In fact, it is not uncommon today to find some attempting to come to Holy Communion who have not even been baptized. In some

¹²Geoffrey Bromiley, *Sacramental Teaching & Practice in the Reformation Churches*, p. 54.

ways they see the need more for Holy Communion than they do Holy Baptism. Such is the sacramental confusion of the modern Church.

The Present

Today at another level we find other more serious developments of a subjective definition of theology and the Sacrament of Baptism. Liberalism has penetrated some of Modern Evangelicalism by way of a common subjectivism, where "a study of much modern evangelicalism, piety and hymnology reveals how serious the influence upon Evangelicalism has been of the combined forces of Pietism, Schleiermacher [Father of subjective philosophy], Kant, e.g., in the emphasis upon the centrality of decision, upon the believer and his emotional state, and even upon psychological procedures."¹³ There is a place for psychology in counseling, but it is not to be confused with theology. This is the point. An ancient theological struggle has once again entered the house of God. It has appeared in the way the Sacraments are misunderstood in the modern and post-modern period.

At present there is a range of deviations from the teachings of Scripture on the subject of Baptism. For many groups, Baptism receives excessive attention, becoming almost too much of a theological focal point. They strongly emphasize that baptism was theirs alone, meaning a person has to be baptized in a specific local church in a certain way. As a result, God's people end up being required to be re-baptized. This is a reoccurrence of the Donatist controversy, which Augustine has already addressed. There is but one Baptism (Ephesians 4:5). This was discussed in Chapter Eight.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 55.

Post-Modern Views of Baptism

Some present-day denominations have blurred the distinctions between Baptism and ordination. Unfortunately, some of these same groups have reduced the criteria for Baptism and ordination to be the same. This has had ramifications for the Sacrament of Baptism as well as ordination. The argument has gone something like, "If all are baptized in Christ, male and female, then all, male and female, may qualify for ordination." Or, "If there is no male nor female in Christ, then male and female can and should be ordained." In part, this line of thinking for some grows out of a legitimate concern to find the proper Biblical role of women for important and necessary service in the Lord's Church. However, it has moved beyond the Scriptural and historic understanding. Based on the Holy Scriptures, as they have been historically interpreted for nearly two thousand years, the criteria for Baptism and ordination are not the same yet they are not contradictory. The position of different criteria for two different practices does not inherently imply contradiction. To argue this way is a Biblical, historical and logical fallacy.

Logically, for example, the criteria for being a child is not the same for being a husband. Yet, because not every child (females) may be a husband does not mean that there is an inherent contradiction or bias between the criteria for being a child and being a husband. The categories are different but not contradictory.

Biblically, the criteria for Baptism are faith and repentance. The qualifications for ordination are much more extensive, rightfully so, because the issue is headship not conversion. Yes, all Christians are called to manifest many of the qualities of the officers of the Church. However, they are not expected to do so prior to Baptism. What disqualifies for being an officer in the Church does

not necessarily remove the privilege of Baptism. Presbyters and Bishops should not be "given to much wine" (1 Timothy 3:8). But alcoholism is not placed as a restriction on Baptism. There are some qualifications that are particularly expected of Presbyters and Bishops that are not specifically cited as required before Baptism.

Another requirement for a Bishop or Presbyter calls for him to be "the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). Obviously the spirit and letter of this language indicates that the Apostle had only males in mind for ordination to this office. He never raises the possibility of "the wife of one husband," because female clergy were never intended by Jesus and the Apostolic Church. Yet the New Testament makes it perfectly clear that all who have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and who come to Jesus Christ, including those who have even been involved in serial marriages concurrently (divorces) or concomitantly (polygamy), may be baptized upon repentance and confession of faith. The woman at the well (St. John 4) and the woman caught in adultery (St. John 8) are two striking examples of women not being a wife of one husband. Both were eligible for Holy Baptism. Neither would have become candidates for ordination in the historic Church under any circumstances. In the history of missions, the Church has even baptized those involved in polygamous relationships as long as they agreed not to add more wives. Multiple wives were not put away prior to Baptism. Therefore, the modern approach of arguing for the ordination of women based on Baptism is not the rationale of Scripture, and historically unprecedented prior to the end of the twentieth century.

Post-Modern Evangelical Views of Baptism

Finally, the great initiatory rite of Baptism has been minimized, even trivialized by some who present the Gospel without any mention of Baptism. The Sacrament is an unnecessary appendage. Furthermore, it is viewed only as a symbol. In contrast, take a look at the revivals in the Book of Acts. Have you ever thought about the fact that the "altar calls" to receive Christ were always calls to be baptized? There was no walking the aisle or the signing of decision scrolls. There were not simply "Four Spiritual Laws;" there were "Five Spiritual Laws," to use the language of a popular evangelistic tract for illustrative purposes. By this I mean that Baptism was always involved with a presentation of the Gospel. To use my "four spiritual laws" analogy, Baptism would be the fifth spiritual law in the Scriptures. Furthermore, it may be at the end, or it may even be expressed up front as a requirement in the actual Gospel presentation.

For example, sometimes Baptism is attached to the end of the Gospel presentation as part of the appropriate response to the Gospel. Lydia and her household were baptized immediately after "the Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14-15). Moreover, sometimes Baptism is called for earlier in the Gospel exhortation, as in the case of Peter's famous sermon at Pentecost. When he was finished preaching, he told them, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Then even more significant, in the case of St. Paul's own conversion, he was simply commanded to be baptized (Acts 22:16), placing Baptism up front in the Gospel invitation to him. Why? Baptism was obviously the Biblical way of "walking the aisle," "raising the hand," or "signing a decision card," in making a commitment to Christ.

Clearly the New Testament does not teach that Baptism alone saves a person. The Bible never even hints that there is magical power in the waters of baptism to remove sin. The Scriptures call for faith, as indicated by the passages in Acts that point people to belief in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. St. Paul told the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). As was discussed at great length in Chapter Two, faith is the instrument of salvation. Yet faith and Baptism are so inextricably tied in the New Testament that only someone neglecting the obvious could miss this point. It simply never occurred to the Apostles to allow salvation without commitment to the Church. Although Baptism is more than joining the Church, it certainly involves this institutional aspect.

Study Guide

Questions

The Introduction

What was the advice Martin Luther gave to his students? What does this have to do with Baptism? (pp. 13-15)

What does George Barna describe as one of the critical problems confronting the modern Church? How does the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20 answer this concern? (p. 15-16)

What does Matthew 28:20 require of the Church? (p. 18)

What is the canon of persuasion? (p. 21)

What are the principles for understanding the canon of Holy Scripture? (p. 21)

How does St. Paul explain the relationship between Truth and the Church? See 1 Timothy 3:15-17 (p. 23)

What was Calvin's view of the doctrine of the Church as it related to understanding the Holy Scriptures? To what Scripture does he turn for his position? (p. 24)

What is the place of reason in understanding the Scriptures? (p. 25)

Explain Richard Hooker's "three-legged stool". What is the correct view of the "three-legged" stool? (p. 26)

What do canon and canons of persuasion have to do with a study of Holy Baptism? (pp. 21-26)

Chapter One

What is a Sacrament? (p. 30)

What is a self-maledictory oath? Give Biblical examples. (p. 30)

What is the sacramental nature of the original creation? Support your answer from Scripture. (pp. 33-37)

What is the sacramental nature of the redeemed world? Support your answer from Scripture. (pp. 37-40)

What are the special Biblical Sacraments? (pp. 40ff.)

What is meant by outward and visible sign? Where is this found in Scripture? (pp. 43-45)

What is meant by inward and spiritual grace? Where is this found in Scripture? (pp. 45-48)

What constitutes a valid Sacrament? (pp. 45-54)

Is it possible for God to convey grace apart from the Sacraments? Explain. (pp. 54-56)

When might God apply grace without the Sacrament? (pp. 54-55)

Chapter Two

What New Testament passage makes a connection between the meaning of Circumcision and Baptism? (p. 57)

According to Genesis 17:1-14, how was a person brought into covenant with God? (p. 58)

What made Israel unique among the nations? (pp. 57-58)

What is a Biblical covenant? How does the Abrahamic covenant involve the Holy Trinity? Support your answers with Scriptural references. (pp. 58-63)

What according to the text of Scripture is the role of God the Father in the Abrahamic covenant? Give Old and New Testament Scripture references (pp. pp. 63-67)

What does the Word of God written give as the role of God the Son in the Abrahamic covenant? (pp. 67-68)

What in the text of Genesis 17 is indicated as the role of God the Holy Spirit in the Abrahamic covenant? (pp. 68-69.)

In Genesis 15:6, how was Abraham accounted righteous? (p. 69-72)

According to Genesis 17:1, to what kind of life did God's covenant obligate Abraham? (pp. 69-72)

How was the sign of Circumcision both a sign and a seal according to Genesis 17? (pp. 72-73)

Why were children of believers made a part of the Old Covenant? (pp. 74-77)

What was the relationship between personal faith and the Sacrament of Circumcision in the Old Covenant? (pp. 75-76)

Chapter Three

According to Galatians 3:27ff., how do we put on Christ and become a child of Abraham? (p. 79)

What does the author mean by the statement, "The Name of God implies a reality"? (pp. 79-80)

The New Testament speaks of being "baptized into" Christ. Why does the Old Testament never use this kind of language? (pp. 80-81)

According to the *Book of Common Prayer* Baptismal Office, how is a person received into the congregation of Christ's flock? (p. 81)

What does it mean to be baptized into the Name of the Triune God? (pp. 81-82)

How does Scripture explain being baptized into the Father? See 2:38-39 (pp. 83-86)

Explain from Scripture what does it mean to be baptized into the Son. (pp. 86-88)

What Scripture connects being baptized with water and being baptized into the Holy Spirit? Explain your answer. (pp. 88-90)

How is Baptism a sign of the Holy Spirit (pp. 90-92)

What Article in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion indicates that Baptism is more than a sign? How? (pp. 92-93)

Chapter Four

What does God seal by Baptism into the Holy Spirit? Give a reference from Scripture. (pp. 96-97)

What did the early Church mean by Baptismal regeneration? (p. 98)

What was the Middle Age definition of Baptismal regeneration? (pp. 99-100)

What was the English Reformation definition of Baptismal regeneration? (pp. 100-102)

What is the seventeenth-century Puritan definition of Baptismal regeneration? (pp. 102-104)

Why is there much controversy over the phrase "Baptismal regeneration"? (pp. 104-105)

Analyze the approach of Wesley and Whitefield and how they perpetuated the redefinition of regeneration? (pp. 105-108)

What were the arguments put forward for a classic understanding of Baptismal regeneration by Daniel Waterland? (p. 108-110)

How did the nineteenth century continue to use the seventeenth-century definition? (pp. 110-113)

What are some of the problems with the mechanical aspects of nineteenth-century and twentieth-century evangelicalism? (pp. 110-113)

In the Prayer Book, note the language of the collect for Christmas Day. Discuss its understanding of the term "regeneration" and how this is distinguished from the "renewing of the Holy Spirit." (pp. 113ff)

Chapter Five

What five things has a redefinition of regeneration damaged? (pp. 119-125)

What are the three ways that St. Paul's statement, "Through [by] the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5), may be understood? Explain. (pp. 127-129)

Describe the meaning of word "loutron" in Titus 3:5. (p. 129)

What is the Biblical meaning of word regeneration? (pp. 131-134)

What is the meaning of the word "renewing"? (pp. 134-137)

What is the relationship between the "washing" and the "renewing" in Titus 3:5. (p. 135)

Explain the concept in Titus 3:5 that one's Baptism effects regeneration but not necessarily conversion. (pp. 139-140)

What other Scripture parallels Titus 3:5? (pp. 138-140)

How is the word regeneration used by our Lord in Matthew 19:28? (pp. 131-132)

Chapter Six

Explain the legal and organic aspects of regeneration. (pp. 143-148)

According to St. Paul, may renewal and regeneration occur at the same time? Over time? At a later time? Explain. (pp. 148-151)

Explain the two views of Baptismal regeneration held since the English Reformation. (pp. 148-151)

Why did the Reformers place such emphasis on justification by faith? (p. 152-154)

What is meant by "charitable presumption" when dealing with God's people? (p. 154)

Describe "new birth" according to the proper Biblical understanding of regeneration. (pp. 155-157)

What do some Evangelicals mean by being born again and how does this differ from the Biblical meaning? How can the "born again" experience be related to the proper Biblical view of regeneration? (pp. 155-157)

Explain the progressive aspect of salvation. (p. 158)

Chapter Seven

What do Jesus' comments to His disciples in Luke 18:16 indicate about how children in the covenant community should be viewed? What do His statements imply about the doctrine of Holy Baptism? (pp. 159-160)

In what way is the family the basic unit of the Church? (pp. 160-163)

What Scripture indicates that the Church existed in the Old Testament? How is the Church of the Old Covenant similar to the Church of the New Covenant? How is it different? (pp. 163-168)

What passages of New Testament Scripture point to the inclusion of children in the covenant? (pp. 168ff)

What is the purpose of the "crowd references" to Baptism? Why are children not necessarily mentioned? (pp. 169-170)

What five New Testament passages specifically indicate that children of believers were baptized? (p. 170)

Name some early Church authors who refer to the Baptism of infants. What does the practice of the early Church indicate about their view of the Baptism of infants? (pp. 170-172)

What early Church author confirms the practice of infant Baptism in a negative way? (p. 171)

What did St. Augustine's view of original sin have to do with the matter of the Baptism of infants? (pp. 171-172)

What first and second generation Protestant Reformers believed in infant Baptism? (p. 172)

Chapter Eight

What is the implication of the second half of Luke 18:16? (pp. 175-176)

How did the followers of Zwingli view a baptized infant? (pp. 176-177)

What are the Biblical/theological problems with Zwingli's view of infant Baptism? (p. 177)

What are the practical problems with Zwingli's view of infant Baptism? (178-179)

What is the difference between Calvin's use of his invisible Church doctrine and how some of the post-reformation English and continental reformed uses? (pp. 180ff)

What are some of the Biblical/theological problems with the seventeenth-century reformed view of baptized infants? (pp. 182-188)

What are some of the pastoral problems with some of the post-reformation reformed views of infant Baptism? (pp. 188-190)

On what Scriptural basis may the baptized children of believers be counted as and treated as believers? (pp. 190ff)

Cite and explain a Scriptural situation in which the *corporate* aspect of faith was recognized by Jesus? How might this situation apply to sponsors who speak on behalf of the baptized infant? (pp. 191-192)

What is the Church's responsibility to baptized infants? (pp. 193-194)

Is it possible for a baptized person to fall away or apostatize? Explain Biblically and theologically? (pp. 194ff)

When should baptized infants renew their baptismal covenant? (p. 196)

Chapter Nine

What have been the three basic modes of Baptism? (pp. 199-200)

How could the early Church practice all kinds of Baptism: immersion, pouring and sprinkling? (p. 200)

What is the historical and liturgical background to the "dipping" requirement in the Baptismal Office of Book of Common Prayer. (202-203)

What is the contemporary crisis over mode? (pp. 203-205)

What is the author's suggested correction to the confusion? (pp. 205-207)

What are the various approaches to defining the mode? Explain and comment. (pp. 207-210)

What is the meaning and significance of Jesus' Baptism? (pp. 210-216)

How was the Baptism of water and the Spirit manifested at the Baptisms of Pentecost? (pp. 216-219)

What is the pattern and mode of Baptism in the Baptisms of the rest of the New Testament? (pp. 219-224)

What is the spirituality of Baptism? (p. 224-226)

How is the Sovereignty of God revealed at Baptism? (p. 227)

What is the meaning and spiritual significance of the "incorporation" associated with Baptism? (pp. 227-230)

What is the relationship of Baptism and Holy Communion? (pp. 231-233)

What Scripture indicates that Baptism should result in obedience? (pp. 233-234)

Appendix One

Why did Cranmer encourage Baptism to be performed during regular times of worship? (pp. 242-243)

What is the Biblical foundation for having sponsors at a Baptism? (p. 243-246)

Why is the font historically placed near the door of the Church? (p. 246)

How does the Baptismal Office reinforce the necessary teaching about original sin? (pp. 247-248)

What was the intended meaning of the word regeneration? The word regeneration has evolved in modern times to mean what? The Prayer Book means what by the use of the term? (pp. 249-250)

What prayer articulates baptismal theology and how are we hermeneutically to approach Baptism? (pp. 251-253)

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The second prayer applies Baptism in what two ways? (pp. 253-254)

Why is the Gospel reading taken from St. Mark 10:13? (p. 255)

What does the prayer of thanksgiving by the people accomplish? (pp. 255-256)

The baptismal covenant is personal but not individual. How is this demonstrated liturgically? (pp. 256-257)

What is the role of God Parents? (pp. 257-258)

What is the early origin of the vows in the Baptismal Office? (pp. 258-260)

For what do the "petitions" ask? (pp. 260-262)

The waters of Baptism are analogous to what? (p. 261)

How is election to be understood? (pp. 261-262)

Why is the child or person named? (p. 262)

When the child is baptized it is taken from the arms of the sponsor and placed in the arms of the minister. Why? (p. 263)

Why is the child signed with the sign of the cross? (pp. 264-267)

What prayer emphasizes that Baptism incorporates the person into the Body of Christ's Church? (p. 268)

What are the covenantal duties and responsibilities of the sponsors? (pp. 268-269)

Appendix Two

How soon after receiving and believing the Gospel were the first Christians baptized? (pp. 273-274)

Why was the time of Baptism moved to a later point in life? (p. 274)

Who were the Donatists and was their rationale for rebaptism? (pp. 274-277)

What great Church leader opposed the Donatists and why? (pp. 275-276)

During the Middle Ages a tension arose between an objective and subjective approach to theology and the Sacraments. How was this tension resolved? (pp. 277-280)

How was the Parable of the Great Supper understood in the Middle Ages? What are the failings of a nationalistic approach to Baptism? (p. 278 n. 5)

What is the principle of the infusion of the habit of grace and how as such a view problematic? (pp. 279-280)

How did the Reformers overcome the error of the Medieval view of infused grace at Baptism? (p. 281)

What is the meaning of the term Anabaptist? What were the demands of the Anabaptists? What was the shift in their focus? (pp. 281-285)

How do we respond to those who argue that ordination is founded in Baptism? (pp. 286-287)

In this chapter we are asked the question, "Have you ever thought about the fact that the Altar calls to receive Christ were always calls to be baptized?" Find examples of this in the Book of Acts. (pp. 288-289)

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BAPTISM: Signed, Sealed and Delivered

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