

THERE IS ONE BAPTISM

An examination of the occurrence, usage, types and reality indicated by the word 'Baptism', with particular reference to
`The Unity of the Spirit'
(Eph. 4:1-6)

'Do you believe in baptism?'. This question comes up occasionally as the implications of dispensational truth become evident, and it is sometimes answered erroneously by simply saying 'No, we do not believe in baptism'. In the heavenly Jerusalem there will be 'no need of the sun', but it would be a gross error to say 'they have no need of LIGHT there', because 'The Lamb is the light thereof.

Whenever we have been asked the question 'Do you believe in baptism?', we have not turned aside to discuss infant sprinkling as over against adult believer's immersion (that would be like leaving the essence 'light' to wrangle over the merits of 'sun' or 'candle'). Our first response is 'Which baptism do you refer to, for there are many?'. As believers in the high calling of the dispensation of the Mystery we *must* 'believe in baptism', for it is written 'buried with Him in baptism' (Col. 2:12), and in Ephesians 4:5, 'one baptism' is one of the seven elements in 'The Unity of the Spirit' which we are enjoined to keep.

When, therefore, we consider the subject of baptism, we must remember that it is by no means limited to the New Testament, as we shall show presently, and that the New Testament speaks of the baptism of John, the personal baptism of Christ, the baptism preached by Peter and by Paul, and that each of these differs one from another. However, before we commence any discussion on the *mode* of baptizing in water, or the *consequences* of being baptized by the Holy Ghost, we must settle the question as to what the *intention* of baptism is in each of its varied contexts. Then, and then only, when we are assured as to our 'calling', does the mode or the nature of baptism arise.

Baptizo in the Septuagint

The Greek version of the Old Testament was in use some three hundred years before Christ, which means that no Jew at the time of John the Baptist needed to be told what the term meant. This is often forgotten, and many seem to start with the idea that when baptism occurs in the New Testament, whether in the Gospels or the Acts, whether used by Peter or by Paul, whether found in Paul's early epistles or in the epistles of the

Mystery, 'the church' is always in view, and that by 'the church' it means the church which began at Pentecost.

The Greek word *baptizo* is found twice in the Septuagint (the LXX for short), as follows:

'Then went he (Naaman the Syrian, who was a leper) down, and *dipped* himself seven times in Jordan' (2 Kings 5:14 A.V., 4 Kings LXX).

'My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me' (Isa. 21:4),

which the LXX translates:

'My heart wanders, and transgression *baptizes* (overwhelms) me',

a rendering we shall have to keep in mind when the Saviour's words concerning His baptism are under consideration (Matt. 20:22,23). The servant's comment to Naaman, 'when he saith to thee, *Wash*, and be clean?' (2 Kings 5:13 A.V.), shows that baptism was considered as a form of cleansing, whereas in Isaiah 21:4 it is an 'overwhelming', an anticipation of the day when the Saviour could have said, 'All Thy waves and billows are gone over Me' (Psa. 42:7).

Bapto, from which *baptizo* derives, occurs some eighteen times in the LXX, and in most passages the translation is 'to dip'. We give the complete concordance so that nothing shall be left to mere speculation or human opinion:

Exod. 12:22;

Lev. 4:6,17; 9:9; 11:32;

Lev. 14:6,16,51;

Num. 19:18;

Deut. 33:24;

Josh. 3:15;

Ruth 2:14;

1 Sam. (1 Kings in LXX) 14:27

2 Kings (4 Kings in LXX) 8:15

Job 9:31 (plunge);

Psa. 67:23 (A.V. 68:23)

Dan. 4:30 (A.V. 33)

Dan. 5:21 (bathed).

Here we have dipping in water, in oil, in blood and in honey.

Baptos or *parabaptos* occurs once only, in Ezekiel 23:15, where it occurs in the phrase 'dyed attire'. There can be no possible doubt that every one in the days of Christ, by the continued acquaintance with the LXX, would have understood

baptism to mean dipping. When we consult the usage of the word in the New Testament, we shall however be obliged to include 'washing' and possibly, at times, 'sprinkling'. We find that *baptizo* occurs 79 times in the New Testament and is translated 'baptize' 74 times, 'Baptist' once, 'be baptized' twice, and 'wash' twice.

Baptisma, occurs 22 times, and is always translated 'baptism'. *Baptismos*, occurs 4 times, once 'baptism', 3 times 'washing'. *Bapto*, occurs 3 times, translated 'dip'. Let us look at the exceptional translations, 'wash' and 'washing':

Mark 7:4. 'Except they wash, they eat not'.

Luke 11:38. 'the Pharisee ... marvelled that He had not first washed'.

These two references use *baptizo*.

Baptismos is found in Mark 7:4 and 8 (in the Received Text), 'the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels and of beds'. In Hebrews 9:9,10, where speaking of the tabernacle, the apostle says:

'Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation'.

In the context is a reference to 'the ashes of an heifer *sprinkling* the unclean', a reference back to Numbers 19:17,18.

There are several separate baptisms recorded in the New Testament, each of which has its own peculiar context and belongs to its own peculiar calling, which cannot be transferred to any other calling without damage to the cause of truth. Let us examine these references separately, carefully noting the exact wording of each administration, and being prepared to 'try the things that differ' as we proceed.

The baptism of John

The only one who is called 'The Baptist' in the New Testament is John, the son of Zacharias a priest and Elizabeth his wife. This title occurs fourteen times and is found only in Matthew, Mark and Luke. The baptism of John is recorded at some length in John's Gospel, but with some important differences. Matthew introduces John in chapter 3, saying:

'In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea', and Mark practically opens his Gospel with the work of John as the forerunner:

'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee' (Mark 1:1,2).

Luke manifests the Gentile bearing of his Gospel by giving a most elaborate method of dating the advent of John the Baptist:

'Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesars, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iurraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John ...' (Luke 3:1,2).

Here are seven items of history, and the idea that such a number could converge and be right by accident is absurd. Here is indubitable evidence of fact, more definitely indicated than 1066 A.D. William the Conqueror, and many a more recent historical event. This introduces us to John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord, as foretold by Isaiah 40:3,4. The amount of space devoted to the birth of John the Baptist by Luke is about the same as is devoted by Matthew to the birth of Christ. There are also some intended parallels. The angel said of both John the Baptist and of the Saviour, 'He shall be great' (Luke 1:15 and 32), and of both John and the Saviour, Luke wrote, 'And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit' (Luke 1:80 and 2:40), which only the more magnifies the Son of God when we read that John the Baptist nevertheless said of Him:

'One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose' (Luke 3:16).

The ministry of John the Baptist was that of forerunner, but with several subdivided portions that must be kept in mind as we attempt to see it in all its implications.

Firstly, his name: 'Thou shalt call his name John' (Luke 1:13). Here is another echo of the words that are used at the birth of Christ:

'Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins' (Matt. 1:21).

So we read of John the Baptist:

'Thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John' (Luke 1:13).

This, we remember, was disputed on the eighth day of John's birth (Luke 1:59-63). We are told the reason for the name Jesus, but not for the name John. We know, however, that 'John' is from the Hebrew *Yohanan*, 'the gift of Jehovah', as in 2 Kings 25:23; 1 Chronicles 3:15 etc. Not God's 'unspeakable gift' but very closely allied.

Secondly, we read of John the Baptist that:

‘He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb’ (Luke 1:15).

Thirdly, his mission:

‘Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord’ (Luke 1:16,17).

Fourthly, when asked by the deputation sent from Jerusalem, ‘Who art thou’ he replied:

‘I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias’ (John 1:23).

‘In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ (Matt. 3:1,2).

Luke omits the reference to the kingdom of heaven, consistently with his emphasis upon Adam (Luke 3:38), a Saviour not a king (Luke 2:11), ‘all people’ (Luke 2:10), and ‘all flesh’ and ‘salvation’ (Luke 3:6), words omitted by the Gospel of the kingdom — Matthew.

It is evident by the question of the Pharisees, that baptism was nothing new to them for they said:

‘Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth One among you, Whom ye know not; He it is, Who coming after me is preferred before me, Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose’ (John 1:25-27).

To these words Luke adds:

‘He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable’ (Luke 3:16,17).

We hear an echo and an expansion of these words in the parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30 and 36-43). Matthew further elucidates the essential difference between these two classes saying:

‘O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’ (Matt. 3:7),

which indicates that the two seeds, first appearing in Genesis 3:15, are here in view.

Fifthly, in answering the question ‘why baptizest thou?’, John replied:

‘Therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him

not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God' (John 1:31-34).

Matthew adds to the descent of the Spirit like a dove, the 'voice from heaven' (Matt. 3:17), and to this, John refers in the fifth chapter:

'Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. ... Ye have neither heard His *voice* at any time, nor seen His *shape*' (John 5:33,37),

which is not referring to the fact that God is invisible, but to the evidence given to John the Baptist.

The dispute that arose between some of John's disciples and the Jews about 'purifying' (John 3:25), uses the same word that is found in John 2:6, where we read of the waterpots of stone 'after the manner of the purifying of the Jews', together with Peter's expression 'purged from his old sins' (2 Pet. 1:9); and the words of Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews, who called upon Paul, saying, 'be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord' (Acts 22:12-16), indicate that in their estimation baptism was a means of washing away sins, a cleansing and a purifying.

It does not follow that Paul agreed with Ananias, the words 'and was baptized' of Acts 9:18 being non-committal, while the words of Acts 22:12-16 'be baptized' are in the middle voice, and suggest that Paul, like Naaman the Syrian, baptized himself. Paul's attitude to baptism as expressed in 1 Corinthians 1:17 scarcely agrees with a notion of baptism that was either 'for the remission of sins' or which 'washed sin away'.

The Baptism of Christ

We leave the baptism of the forerunner, to consider that of Christ Himself, and this we find is two-fold.

- (1) The baptism in water in the river Jordan (Matt. 3:13-17).
- (2) The baptism of suffering announced in Matthew 20:22,23.

Then, in addition, the Lord was to baptize not only with water as did John, but with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Matt. 3:11, but see John 4:1,2: 'Though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples'). For a moment we look back over the ground already traversed to ask the question again,

'Do you believe in baptism?', for this makes the rejoinder 'which baptism?' vitally essential. We have already seen a variety of its applications that cannot be read into the church epistles.

John, after calling the Pharisees and Sadducees a 'generation of vipers' (Matt. 3:7), urged them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, for the axe was laid to the root of the trees, and unless that repentance and its fruit were forthcoming, a postponement of the kingdom following the rejection of the King, would issue in a severe and searching judgment. A sense of crisis is marked as John proclaimed:

'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire' (Matt. 3:11,12).

There is in this passage a reminiscence of Malachi, 'My Messenger', and Elijah is indicated in Malachi 4:5,6, of whom John the Baptist was an anticipation, going before the Lord 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' (Luke 1:17).

'Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me ... But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver' (Mal. 3:1-3).

Here the word 'purifier' in the LXX is the same that we found associated with baptism earlier. The baptism of repentance, preached by John the Baptist, envisages a response at long last to the call:

'Return unto Me, and I will return unto you' (Mal. 3:7).

The baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire appears to have been partly fulfilled at Pentecost, but will be fully fulfilled in 'the last days' with 'blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke' (Acts 2:16-21), when the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 will be fully realized. It is well to observe that the inspired writers of the Gospels felt no hesitation in saying that 'chaff' would be burned up 'with unquenchable fire'. The Greek word *asbestos* 'unquenchable', is used in Matthew 3:12 and in Luke 3:17 of the burning up of 'chaff, and by Mark in 9:43 and 45 of 'hell', but twice over Mark supplements his reference to a passage found in Isaiah 66:24:

'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched' (Mark 9:44,46),

a passage used by the advocates of eternal conscious suffering in hell fire as a proof text for their dreadful doctrine.

Unfortunately for them, but blessedly fortunate for those whose fate is here revealed, Isaiah 66:24 plainly speaks *not* of the 'never dying souls' of men, *but* of 'carcasses'. Now lest there should be any suspicion that 'carcasses' is not a good translation of the original, the word is found in the Authorized Version rendered 'carcass' 14 times, 'corpse' twice, and 'dead body' six times, and as a sample we give Isaiah 37:36 and Jeremiah 31:40.

The fan is used in the Old Testament in some passages for a searching judgment:

'Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away' (Isa. 41:16).

'I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth ... For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? ... Thou hast forsaken Me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out My hand against thee ... I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land ... for a fire is kindled in Mine anger, which shall burn upon you' (Jer. 15:4-14).

This same word 'fan' (Heb. *zarah*) is translated 'scatter' in Leviticus 26:33, a chapter of awful judgment, and 'disperse' in Ezekiel 12:15. The LXX uses the Greek word *diaspeiro* here, which was adopted by James and Peter when they addressed their epistles to the twelve tribes, and to the strangers 'scattered abroad'.

Again we ask, what has this baptism to do with Ephesians 4:5?

The Twofold Baptism of Christ

Following this most searching picture of discriminating judgment comes the baptism of the Saviour Himself. This was twofold. First the baptism in Jordan itself was twofold: (1) a witness to John; (2) the initiation of Christ. John's Gospel, 1:31-34, tells us that the coming of the Spirit like a dove upon the Saviour would be the sign John the Baptist was awaiting, but that is not the burden of Matthew 3:13-17:

'Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?' (Matt. 3:13,14).

We can all enter into John's protest. John 'forbad' Him, or literally 'cut Him short', but, prompted as this attitude may have been by John's own recognition of the gulf that existed between himself and the Saviour, it was nevertheless wrong:

'And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him ...' (Matt. 3:15,16).

When later, the Saviour revealed the fact of His approaching death, Peter rebuked Him saying, 'Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee' (Matt. 16:22). This time the Lord turned and said unto Peter, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me'. Yet once again, when the Lord took a towel and began to wash the disciples' feet, it was Peter who questioned this service, saying, 'Lord, dolt Thou wash my feet?' (John 13:5,6). In each case we find ourselves sympathizing with the objection, but in each case it was wrong. The reason given by the Lord at the river Jordan was:

'Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness' (Matt. 3:15).

The Gospel of Matthew divides itself into two parts, which are marked by the repetition of two very distinctive statements.

Matt. 1 to 16

'This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased' (Matt. 3:17).

'From that time Jesus began to preach ...' (Matt. 4:17).

The King. *No reference to his cross or death.*

Matt. 16 to 28

'This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him' (Matt. 17:5).

'From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples ...' (Matt. 16:21).

The Priest. *Reference for the first time to his death at Jerusalem*

Immediately following the baptism in Jordan, comes the temptation in the wilderness, a threefold temptation of the King (Matt. 4:1-11). Toward the close of this Gospel we read of the threefold agony of the Lord in the garden, the trial of Christ as the Priest. We have therefore in succession:

(1) The baptism in Jordan.

- (2) The temptation in the wilderness (the kingdoms of the world).
- (3) The proclamation of the kingdom of heaven.

In Matthew 20, long after these experiences were past, the Lord announced a further baptism that awaited **Him**. In the nineteenth chapter, the Lord had said:

'Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel' (Matt. 19:28).

In chapter 20 we find the mother of Zebedee's children seeking a promise that her two sons should occupy an exalted position, sitting on either side of the Son of Man (Matt. 20:20-22). Just before this the Lord had revealed to His disciples what awaited Him at Jerusalem, before that day of thrones and honour:

'The Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him; and the third day He shall rise again' (Matt. 20:18,19).

Although the Saviour said 'The third day He shall rise again' (Matt. 20:19), and this was remembered by His enemies who said 'Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again' (Matt. 27:63), **yet those** who met the Lord on the way to Emmaus actually said:

'And beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done (Gk. *Agei aph'hou*: have gone by)' (Luke 24:21).

Replying to the request of the mother of Zebedee's children, the Saviour said:

'Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' (Matt. 20:22).

The baptism at Jordan was past; this baptism was future, and associated with the drinking of the cup, which was a well-known figure for the endurance of some form of suffering. This baptism of suffering is most clearly referred to prophetically in Psalm 69. *The Companion Bible* note here says:

'Psa. 22 is Christ as the sin-offering;

Psa. 40 as the whole burnt offering; and this, Psa. 69 as the trespass offering'

It will be remembered that with the trespass offering, the offerer 'shall add the fifth part thereto' (Lev. 5:16; cf. Lev. 6:5), words that are echoed in this Psalm, 'Then I restored that which I took not away' (Psalm 69:4). Christ quoted the words from this same Psalm, 'They that hate Me without a cause' as of Himself (John 15:25). The figure of baptism also is found in this Psalm, which opens with the cry:

'Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me' (Psa. 69:1,2)

Later in the Psalm, the figure is resumed:

'Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me' (Psa. 69:14,15).

The Saviour's sufferings are oft spoken of in the Psalms, and the use of baptism as in an overwhelming flood (see the LXX and Isa. 21:4), would be familiar to His disciples.

Psalm 69:9 is quoted of Christ in John 2:17, and in Romans 15:3:

'Reproach hath broken my heart' (Psa. 69:20).

'The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up' (John 2:17).

'The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on me' (Rom. 15:3).

'They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink' (Psa. 69:21).

He also was the 'smitten' and the 'wounded' one, that was persecuted (Psa. 69:20,26).

The baptism of Matthew 20:22 which lay ahead, was the baptism of suffering and death endured by the Saviour on the cross. It is this that will have to be considered when we come to the reference to baptism in the epistles of the Mystery. We must, however, take the subject in the order in which it occurs in the New Testament and proceed to a consideration of:

The Baptism of the Acts Period

This section must be subdivided, according as baptism is referred to in the Acts.

- (1) Of the day of Pentecost.

(2) Of the baptism of believers consequent upon Pentecost.

The baptism of John that is referred to several times.

The baptism as defined by Peter.

The baptism of several converts.

(3) The baptism as spoken of in the epistles written during the period of the Acts up to Acts 28:28.

The Baptism of Pentecost The promise of the Father

The apostles were commanded by the Lord not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me (Acts 1:4). This 'promise' is remembered after the Pentecostal baptism by Peter, who said:

'This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear' (Acts 2:32,33).

In Acts 1:5 the Lord had said:

'For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence'.

As soon as the number twelve had been made up to counter the defection of Judas, this promise was fulfilled, and those who teach that the appointment of Matthias was 'an apostolic mistake', involve 'the Spirit of Truth', for He made no exception, Matthias receiving the sign of the tongue of fire as did the eleven. (For fuller dealing with this see the book *From Pentecost to Prison*).

The reader will probably be acquainted with Dr. Bullinger's book, *The Giver and His Gifts*, which deals with the presence and absence of the article 'the' in the phrase found in the Authorized Version 'The Holy Ghost', which is given in outline form in Appendix 101 of *The Companion Bible*. We quote:

'No. 3: THE HOLY SPIRIT, generally with the Article, denoting the *Giver*, as distinct from His *gifts*.

No. 14, *Pneuma Hagion* = holy spirit. This usage (without Articles) occurs 52 times in the New Testament, and is always wrongly rendered 'the Holy Spirit' (with the definite Article and capital letters). Consequently there is no stronger rendering available when there are two Articles present in the Greek (*to pneuma to hagion*), which means "the Spirit the Holy (Spirit)". Hence, the English reader can never tell which of the two very different Greek expressions he is reading ... See Acts 2:4 (the first occurrence subsequent to Acts 1:4,5), where we read "they were all filled with *pneuma hagion*, and began to speak with other tongues, as THE Spirit gave". Here the *Giver* and His *gift* are strictly distinguished'.

Returning to Acts 2, we draw attention to a common misinterpretation. It is often taught that when the day of Pentecost came, there was a great assembly of both Jews and Gentiles, who were then and there 'baptized into one body', and that 'the church began at Pentecost'. The record of Acts 2 knows no such thing. *Twelve men only* received that Pentecostal outpouring, namely the twelve apostles; and the form this baptism took was the gift of tongues.

'There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with holy spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as THE SPIRIT gave them utterance' (Acts 2:3,4).

Devout Jews, men of Israel, men of Judaea, were reminded of Old Testament prophecies, but not a word is uttered even to suggest that 'the church began at Pentecost'. They were 'confounded' because that every man heard them speak in his own language, and they were all amazed (Acts 2:5-7). They were amazed, they heard, but they themselves did not receive this particular baptism. Peter, standing up with the eleven, reminded the assembled Jews that what had happened was a kind of firstfruits of 'that great and notable day of the Lord' spoken of by the prophet Joel. When the preaching of Peter caused these assembled Jews to cry 'Men and brethren what shall we do?' Peter said:

'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 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

... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized (Acts 2:38-41).

Moving on into the Book of the Acts, chapter 8:12-20, we note that baptism was accompanied by miracles and signs, so much so that Simon a sorcerer sought to purchase the gift of God with money. No such accompaniments are connected with the baptism which forms one of the seven items of the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:1-6). In the same chapter 8, the Ethiopian eunuch seemed to know, without any instruction from Philip, that baptism in water followed conversion (Acts 8:27-37). In chapter 10, Peter, who is supposed by many to have opened the door of the 'Church' on the day of Pentecost, nevertheless confessed himself still to be 'a man that is a Jew' (Acts 10:28) who had felt up to this point that it was unlawful to keep company, or to come unto one of another nation.

How Peter's attitude in Acts 10 can be reconciled with the idea that a single Gentile would have been tolerated 'in the apostles' fellowship' (Acts 2:42), is beyond the reach of ordinary every day common Sense. The 'apostles and brethren that were in Judea' held no such belief, for when they heard of the conversion and acceptance of Cornelius, they 'contended' with Peter, saying:

'Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them' (Acts 11:2,3).

The word translated 'contend' here is found in Acts 10:20 'doubting' nothing, and in Acts 11:12, 'The Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting'. In Romans 14:23, where the apostles were dealing with scruples about clean and unclean meats, Paul says 'he that doubteth is damned if he eat'.

Consequent upon the reception of the gift of holy spirit, Peter said 'can any man forbid water?' (Acts 10:47). Here the Greek word for forbid is *koluo* as it is in Acts 28:31, and in 1 Thessalonians 2:16. It is not possible with these facts before us, to endorse the traditional view of Pentecost without prostituting our very sense of right and wrong. There are quite a number of incidents that are recorded of Peter, that are doubled in the ministry of Paul, and we have filled three quarters of a page in the book *The Apostle of the Reconciliation* with examples. We give here just a few from some chapters in this Book of Acts:

Peter

Peter heals a lame man (3)

Peter strikes with death (5)

Peter raises Dorcas from the dead (9)

Peter condemns Simon Magus (8)

Paul

Paul heals a lame man (14)

Paul strikes with blindness (13)

Paul raises Eutychus from the dead (20)

Paul condemns Bar-Jesus (13)

When chapter 8 of the Acts records the witness given to the sorcerer Simon Magnus, baptism is prominent, but when Paul in Acts 13 deals with another sorcerer, named Bar-Jesus, even though the deputy Sergius Paulus believed, not a word is said about baptism. Yet, if Paul believed that by baptism sins could be 'washed away', shall we say that he, the apostle of the Gentiles, at the most critical moment in his ministry, was remiss? Or shall we recognize that the inspired record *purposely* omits any reference to baptism here, in the forefront of Paul's missionary career?

In Acts 16 we meet with household baptism, both in the case of Lydia (verses 14,15), and that of the converted Philippian jailor, who was 'baptized, he and all his' (verse 33). Baptism with all his house is written next of Crispus (Acts 18:8). It is usually assumed, when reading Acts 19:1-6, that 'when they heard this', namely what Paul had said concerning the baptism of John, these disciples were then 'baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus' *by Paul*. This is not necessarily the true interpretation. Paul tells these disciples that John not only baptized with the baptism of repentance, but told those who listened to him, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus, which they did.

Paul did not baptize these disciples in water, but he followed up by giving them 'holy spirit', even as he had raised the question in verse 2, saying:

'Have ye received holy spirit (the Holy Ghost, A.V.), since ye believed?'

The structure in *The Companion Bible* gives this clearly: 2. Spiritual gifts. Their ignorance of them.

3. What they had received. John's baptism.
- 4,5. What Paul said. Paul's description of John's action.
- 6- What Paul did. Luke's description of Paul's action. -6-. What they now received — spiritual gifts.
- 6. Spiritual gifts - Their use of them.

Baptism for the remission of sins

Those who were 'pricked to the heart' upon hearing the testimony of Peter, cried 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'. Then Peter said unto them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost' (Acts 2:37,38). This is not a new aspect of baptism being announced for the first time by Peter. Baptism for the remission of sins belongs to the baptism of John; and Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3 and Acts 2:38 use identical language. The difference is that John's baptism was limited to 'water', but he foresaw and announced that the Saviour would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, which He did at Pentecost.

Baptism and the Apostle Paul

We move from Pentecost and Peter, to the call and ministry of the apostle Paul, whose conversion is recorded in Acts 9. There we read that Ananias put his hands upon the converted Saul of Tarsus, so that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost:

'and immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized' (Acts 9:18).

In the twenty-second chapter, Paul recounts the visit of Ananias when speaking to the Jews from whom he had been rescued by the

Roman guard. He gained their attention by speaking in Hebrew, and when relating the visit of Ananias, he called him:

‘...a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there’ (Acts 22:12).

In addition to the Jewish complexion, Paul continued:

‘And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee ... arise, and be baptized, *and wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of the Lord’ (Acts 22:14-16).

Here the additional words are significant. If we look back to chapter 9, we shall see there that Ananias is reported as adding to the commission he received, but there the addition of the words 'brother Saul' is so in line with grace, that it could not have been other than well pleasing to the Lord. Here, in Acts 22 however, Ananias seems to have been influenced by his Jewish piety and by his adherence to the law, as to have added the words 'and wash away thy sins', which Paul quoted without comment.

The Greek word *apolouo* occurs but twice in the New Testament, once in Acts 22:16 and once in 1 Corinthians 6:11. There the apostle writes:

‘And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God’.

If Paul had believed that baptism could 'wash away' sins, how could he possibly write *in the same epistle*:

‘Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel’ (1 Cor. 1 : 17),

for if baptism did wash away sins, then Paul must have included baptism in his evangel. We believe Paul was baptized, and that he may have baptized himself, as did Naaman the Syrian, for the verb is in the middle voice. This association of 'washing' with 'baptism' we shall find associated with 'carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of restitution' (Heb. 9:10).

Baptism in the Epistles of Paul

We assume in this study that (1) Hebrews was written by the apostle Paul, and that (2) his epistles are divided into two groups, one group being those written during the Acts period, and the other group being written after the crisis of Acts 28:28. The evidence for these statements will be found in our published writings, and will not be discussed here.

Baptism in Hebrews

There are two references to baptism in the epistle to the Hebrews, namely in chapters 6:2 and 9:10. Let us consider these passages before turning to the epistles addressed to the churches of the Gentiles:

'Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit' (Heb. 6:1-3).

The apostle has commented sadly upon the fact that, when these Hebrews ought to have been teachers, they needed that someone should teach them 'Which be the first principles of the oracles of God' (5:12), *to stoicheia tes arches*, 'the rudiments of the beginning'. So in chapter 6:1 he resumes:

'Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ (*ton tes arches tou Christou logon*), let us go on unto perfection' (Author's translation).

Among these elementary first principles he places 'the doctrine of baptisms'. Baptisms, in the plural, are mentioned once more in Hebrews, namely chapter 9:10. The chapter opens with a description of the tabernacle and its furniture, distinguishing between the daily service of the priests and the annual ministry of the High Priest alone:

'The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: (which was a figure for the time then present) in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings (baptisms), and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation' (Heb. 9:8-10).

We are not under any great necessity to examine with care these items, for the simple reason that the Hebrews were exhorted to LEAVE them and to GO ON, added to which we learn these were 'carnal ordinances', and that they had been 'imposed' until a time of reformation. In both Hebrews 6 and 9 baptism had to be left if perfection was to be attained (Heb. 5:14 'full age' = perfection; and Heb. 6:1 and 9:9).

Leaving the epistle to the Hebrews, let us now turn to the remaining epistles of Paul, and seek to understand what place baptism held in his ministry, and what the term baptism, as used by him, involved.

Baptism in Galatians

We cannot discuss here the chronological order of this epistle to the Galatians, but in *The Apostle of the Reconciliation* we have given the evidences that lead us to place Galatians first of all among Paul's epistles.

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Gal. 3:27-29). First of all, notice that this passage does not conclude that 'all one in Christ' proves that such are members of the Church which is His Body, for that calling had not then been made known, but such were 'Abraham's seed'. It may not be generally known that in this passage (Gal. 3:28), there is a direct reference to and a reversal of a portion of the Synagogue service which is contained in the form of Daily Prayer used by the Jews to this day:

Neither Jew nor Gentile

'Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God: King of the Universe, Who hath not made me a *Gentile*' (Heb. *Goi*)'

Neither Jew nor Greek

'Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God: King of the Universe, Who hath not made me a *slave*' (Heb. *Ebed*)

Neither bond nor free

'Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God: King of the Universe, Who hath not made me a *woman*' (Heb, *isha*)

Neither male nor female

The Gospel of Christ has reversed all this, and believing Jews and believing Gentiles, under the terms of the gospel entrusted to Paul, became Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise. In all this there is not the remotest reference to the high calling of Ephesians, which goes back before either Abraham or Adam, and far above all things of earth or Paradise. Whether the expression 'baptized into Christ' means that these Galatians were baptized in water, whether they were dipped or sprinkled, or whether the external ceremony was already passing, need not detain us, for whatever the answer, it has no bearing upon the members of the Church called into being under the terms of the dispensation of the Mystery. With that church we are primarily concerned

during this parenthetical interval, occasioned by the defection of Israel at Acts 28:28.

Baptism in 1 Corinthians

The epistles that follow Galatians are chronologically the first and second to the Thessalonians, but neither of these epistles mention baptism. This brings us to the epistles to the Corinthians, and in the first epistle baptism is mentioned several times. Arising out of the divisions that were forming around ministering brethren as Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and even around the name of Christ, the apostle expostulates:

‘Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?’ (1 Cor. 1:13).

At this the apostle pauses, and enlarges upon the place of baptism in his estimation. First, he is thankful that he had baptized none of the Corinthian believers except Crispus and Gaius. Now Crispus was the chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth, who believed and was baptized (Acts 18:8), and Gaius was involved in the uprising in the temple of Diana (Acts 19:29). Being so intimately associated with Paul and his ministry and sharing his sufferings, it was natural that they would be baptized by Paul himself. He tells us that he refrained from baptizing others, however:

‘Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name’ (1 Cor. 1:15).

He then makes it evident that baptism did not occupy a very important place in his estimation, for he goes on to remember that after all he had baptized the household of Stephanus (who were ‘the firstfruits of Achaia’ 1 Cor. 16:15,17), which again was natural. ‘Besides’, he added, ‘I know not whether I baptized any other’. He now makes an extraordinary statement:

‘For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel’ (1: 17)

However we look at this statement, we can be sure that Paul would never trifle with any item of Christian service that in any way reduced the power of the Gospel. The so-called ‘great commission’ reads:

‘Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost’ (Matt. 28:19).

and no one who received that commission could say with truth ‘Christ sent me not to baptize’.

Mark's Gospel contains a somewhat different commission:

'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth *and is baptized* shall be saved ...' (Mark 16:15,16).

Again no one who received this commission could possibly say with Paul 'Christ sent me NOT to baptize' or 'I am not sure whether I baptized so-and-so'.

The subject of baptism does not come up again in 1 Corinthians until the apostle makes a reference to the crossing of the Red Sea by Moses and Israel:

'Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea' (1 Cor. 10:1,2).

Before examining this special type of baptism, it is well that we remember that most of the ceremonial element that obtained both in the law, in John's baptism, in the baptism of Christ, and in the baptism practised during the Acts period, was clearly allied with the tabernacle cleansings and lustrations. The 'one baptism' that characterizes the dispensation of the Mystery, does not find any reflection in the tabernacle ceremonial, but rather in this baptism in the Red Sea. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, the apostle is referring to Israel's experiences, differentiating between 'hope' and 'prize', and so here the lesson is that though 'all were baptized, and 'all' did eat, and 'all' did drink, yet with 'many' God was not well pleased, this being an expansion of the terms of 1 Corinthians 9:24:

'They which run in a race run *all*, but *one* receiveth the prize'.

The reference back to Exodus, however, is illuminating. This is a baptism of identification. They were 'baptized into or unto Moses'. Cleansing, or the remission of sins, or repentance has no place or meaning here. *Eis*, 'into or unto' is used with baptism in Romans 6, where we read:

'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into (*eis*) Jesus Christ were baptized into (*eis*) His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into (*eis*) death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6:3,4).

'Fuming now to the record of the Red Sea crossing, we note in Exodus 14:21 that:

'The LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea DRY LAND'.

After the forty years wandering, when the time came for Joshua to lead the Israelites into the land of promise, the Jordan was crossed, and it is written:

'All the Israelites passed over on DRY GROUND' (Josh. 3:17). So to return to the Exodus account we read:

'The children of Israel walked upon DRY LAND in the midst of the sea' (Exod. 14:29).

Psalm 66:6 reminds us of the phenomenon:

'He turned the sea into DRY LAND: they went through the flood on foot'.

Psalm 106:9 draws attention to the same feature:

'He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness'.

Isaiah, too, when recounting the days of old, includes this crossing of the Red Sea:

'That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness' (Isa. 63:13).

This repetition is of God, and is clamouring for attention. This first baptism that Israel experience was a baptism where WATER WAS EXCLUDED! The baptism that identifies us with Christ, or Israel with Moses, *is not a baptism in water.*

Baptism in Ephesians and Colossians

We now come to the prison epistles of Paul, Ephesians and Colossians, which administer the blessings, describe the calling, and name the peculiar dispensation that was revealed to Paul, when Israel were dismissed as recorded in Acts 28.

The reference to baptism comes in the practical section of Ephesians, which opens with the call to 'walk worthy' in Ephesians 4. Although baptism comes in the practical section, there is no command or exhortation to 'be baptized'. Baptism comes in the unity of the Spirit already made, and

not made by man. This worthy walk is closely associated with the sevenfold unity which we are enjoined to keep, and this is set out in a sevenfold form. This practical outworking is examined with some care in a separate booklet entitled *The Unity of the Spirit and of the Faith*.

In this present booklet we are considering the nature of baptism only. The Unity of the Spirit in Ephesians 4 is sevenfold, and its terms are already found in Ephesians 2 —'one new man', 'one body', 'one spirit', 'so making peace'.

The Sevenfold Unity

(4) ONE LORD

(3) ONE HOPE I - ONE FAITH (5)

(2) ONE SPIRIT - ONE BAPTISM (6)

(1) ONE BODY - ONE GOD AND FATHER (7)

The balance which is obvious, between the One hope and the One faith, places the One Spirit in correspondence with One Baptism. The whole emphasis upon baptism in this closing ministry of the apostle is in line with 'all spiritual blessings' and the complete setting aside of the 'shadow', because the body is of Christ, and there 'Christ is all'. There can be no more 'two baptisms' here, than 'two Spirits' or 'two faiths'. These references take us to Colossians 2 where we read:

'In Whom also ye are circumcised' (Col. 2:11). Buried with Him in Baptism' (Col. 2:12).

When it can be established that 'circumcision' here is the literal ordinance practised by Israel, it will be time to insist that the baptism that follows is baptism in water. This circumcision is said to be 'without hands' and is 'the putting off the body of the flesh' ('of the sins' is omitted in the critical texts), and this repudiation did not take place in any ceremony practised by the individual, but 'by the circumcision of Christ'. In like manner we are looked upon as having been buried with Him, and in this baptism we are also 'risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who bath raised Him from the dead' (Col. 2:12). Ordinances that were contrary to us, as well as such as meat, drink, new moons, or even the Sabbath days, are gone, they are but a shadow; the body is of Christ (see Col. 2:16,17).

We return to the opening line of this booklet,

'Do you believe in baptism?'

and the answer is, Yes most certainly, but a baptism that is a baptism of identification like that which took place at the Red Sea or the Jordan, when water is purposely excluded. The subsequent baptisms that were instituted by Moses for the ritual of the tabernacle, have their counterpart in the Gospels, the Acts, the epistles of the Acts period, and in the epistle to the Hebrews, but have no place in the dispensation of the Mystery.

We commend this study to the discriminating reader, who will, we trust, 'Try the things that differ', 'approve the things which are excellent' (Phil. 1:10), and confess that:

'We are the circumcision,
which worship God in the spirit, and
rejoice in Christ Jesus, and
have no confidence in the flesh' (Phil. 3:3).

Charles H. Welch