

BAPTISM

**and its Influence on
Christian Devotion**

A.E. Wilder-Smith

BAPTISM
AND ITS INFLUENCE ON
CHRISTIAN DEVOTION

BY A. E. WILDER-SMITH

The WORD For Today
Santa Ana, CA 92704

Published by The Word For Today
P.O. Box 8000 Costa Mesa CA 92628
ISBN 0-936728-23-X

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the express written consent of The Word For Today Publishers.

Table of Contents

Foreward	1
Some Principles Governing Devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.....	5
The New Testament Practice of Baptism	14
The Symbolism of New Testament Baptism	22
Some Critical Considerations	35
The Dangers of Infant Baptism	65
Addendum: a Refutation of the Doctrine of "Baptising for the Dead"	70

Foreword

Conditions in Europe in the Christian world are vastly different to those obtaining in the United States, both socially and Church-wise. Since the times of the reformers the Christian world in Europe has been to a large extent determined by the ruling state Church. On the European Continent it is the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans largely who have determined the general background of the Christian faith in Europe. The so-called Free churches are to a great degree a relatively modern phenomenon. The separation of Church and state has never been effectively carried through on the European continent. The result is that the schools and universities are much more influenced by State religion than is the case in the United States. Happily the state churches show a small proportion of godly men and pastors who work within their confines of finances and doctrine.

Baptism

But in England the situation is a sort of half way house compared with the situation on the European continent. England and the United States both experienced evangelical revivals under John Wesley and George Whitfield, phenomena which Europe has never experienced on such a grand scale as England and the United States did. The State Church in England boycotted Wesley, although he remained a faithful member right until his death. But the influence of Napoleon in Europe has been greater even to today than in England or the United States. One sees this baneful influence of Napoleon throughout the social structure of Europe wherever one goes. Even in freedom loving Switzerland the introduction of the system of checks and balances such as is perfectly normal in America was never introduced. Even today in Switzerland there is no separation of police force and the justice department as is the case in anglo-saxon countries. The lack of a perfectly independent judiciary opens the door wide to police ruling, because there is no active check on them.

Wesley, although a member of the ruling state Church of England, never preached the doctrine of that Church, namely salvation by

“christening” or the sprinkling of children with water, which they are happy to call “baptism”. He taught Salvation by active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and not by predestination - such as the Calvinists taught - and still teach on the European continent and elsewhere.

The Pilgrim fathers who left Europe to make their own society in the new continent, took care to apply the Christian doctrine of the desperate wickedness of man – left to his own devices and introduced the system of checks and balances to combat and contain this tendency in unredeemed man.

The consequence of all this is that the European system of schools and universities are largely unevangelized in a way that totally differs to the conditions obtaining in anglo-saxon communities. It is a comparative rarity to find a professor in Europe who is actively evangelical in his teaching job. In New Zealand our youngest son found as many as 6 or 7 professors in medicine openly and actively Christian and working to bring the students to Christ. In Europe such activities are almost universally frowned upon. The State churches in Europe carry out little effective evangelism, especially towards the

Baptism

student. For the state Church has control of the theological professorial chairs in the universities. Thus the pastors here in Europe are almost universally liberal in their views. To be a Christian here is almost synonymous with being at least slightly mentally retarded.

As a result of this situation, the meaning of the doctrine of baptism is much less well understood than in England or in the United States. The present booklet "On Baptism: Its Influence on Christian Devotion" after being available for 20 years in the German edition, is now offered to English readers in the hope that it may help them to develop and rekindle their devotion to their Lord and help them to understand the mentality of their European brethren and to help one another mutually by widening mutual understanding.

It is very difficult indeed to find Christian translators capable of translating the German idiom correctly into the English one. On looking through the translation again, I am confident that our son, Clive Wilder-Smith MD. has done an excellent job in rendering the German idiom pleasantly in the modern English idiom.

Chapter 1

Some Principles Governing Devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The question of baptism is not only a question of biblical teaching and it's interpretation. Regrettably, it has also become a cause of quarrels and even bitterness among Christians. Some believe they should baptize their children, as the Roman Catholics, the Reformers, and the later Church fathers did before them. The doctrine of infant baptism is in fact held so strongly by some even today, that if a Bible believing minister active in some churches does not practice it, he may expect to lose his pulpit, no matter how sound his other teaching may be. Others baptize only the professedly converted adults and only these are received into their fellowship.

This doctrine of believer's baptism is also often very dogmatically held too. Some declare that the baptism of believers by

Baptism

immersion is unimportant and therefore they often do not even mention baptism of any kind in their ministry. They are convinced that only baptism, “in the Holy Spirit,” occurring during or after conversion is of any relevance. England’s famous Christian minister, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones believed so, and bricked up his baptistery. Which doctrines should we adhere to? Is the question of baptism indeed of any importance at all? Would it not be better to abandon this bitter strife over an apparently outward ceremony, and to turn to more spiritual matters?

In the midst of all the quibbles and squabbles over baptism, I personally have come to at least one perfectly certain conclusion. The battling parties often possess only a very superficial and often rudimentary knowledge of the biblical facts and New Testament practices behind water baptism and frequently attempt to justify their practices with respect to baptism by philosophic and historical expediency, rather than by biblical practice and teaching alone. It is easy to be mistaken when one is governed by lack of biblical knowledge backed up only by tradition (cf. Mat 22:29). However the Bible is surely the only sound basis for a solution

Some Principles Governing Devotion

according to God's will as revealed in the New Testament. The word of God alone should influence Christians and determine all their belief and therefore their practice with respect to baptism. But what does the New Testament actually teach them about baptism? Here Church doctrine and practice should line up perfectly with biblical teaching and practice.

For this reason alone we risk raising once more the question of baptism (the practice of the Bible, that is of the revealed will of God and it's practice today) to determine what our practice should be as Christians. Under no circumstances would we ever wish to provoke more unprofitable controversy. However the study and practice of baptism will, like all other Biblical teaching, become a blessing. The question of baptism has for me become a source of great personal blessing and has certainly lead to deeper personal fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It has given us greater spiritual insight too. For these reasons alone have we risked writing anything further on this much vexed question of Christian and Biblical water baptism by immersion.

As we have already seen, opinions on baptism diverge considerably. Personal Bible

Baptism

study followed by willingness to act on the clear teaching of Scripture are the deciding factors — i.e. understanding, followed by obedience to understanding. Should all Christians be of the same opinion in these doctrinal matters? Why not allow Christians to believe and act as they think best with respect to baptismal or other Christian doctrine? It has been claimed that the Bible does not afford plain, incontrovertible teaching on this question of baptism. It is certainly possible to possess eternal life despite holding divergent doctrines on baptism, provided faith in the Lord Jesus Christ come as God in the flesh to become sin for us is present. Why then must we raise this question again? Simply because it is of vital importance for our growth in faith and love towards Jesus the Christ. Very many young Christians and even older theologians are today seeking for new clarity not only on this issue, but also on the issue of how to promote increased devotion to their Lord.

Not long ago, I read a booklet (originally written in English but translated into German) which stated that understanding of doctrine led to conceit and that Christians today possess far too much of such a commodity!

Some Principles Governing Devotion

The result allegedly was an overbearing and conceited spirit, one prone to condemning others. In this booklet, the word “Knowledge” had been incorrectly translated from the German as “Understanding”. Real understanding *never* leads to conceit, whereas mere knowledge often does (1 Cor. 8:1). The booklet then continued to state that “knowledge” played no part in the development of devotion and love towards the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God and Jesus Christ were emphasized to be of prime importance in the Christian life, whereas their dependence on personal obedience was not so much as mentioned. Everything else was portrayed as being of lesser importance. Devotion was the important factor, but the question of how devotion was to be promoted was never even raised!

We are aware of the fact that all understanding and all faith would be futile without love (1 Cor. 13). Love is essential for our relationship with the God of love. The really relevant question is how this love can be catalyzed, stimulated, promoted and nurtured. Many Christians, both young and old, earnestly desire to learn how to love the Lord more fervently and to serve Him more

Baptism

zealously. It must frustrate many of them to be repeatedly exhorted to love Him, without being instructed on *how* to kindle this love.

How then is devotion to Jesus Christ to be kindled? Understanding and obedience play an important role here because they are the fuel for the fire of devotion. It is impossible to love someone who is entirely strange and unknown. Love arises as a personal relationship between individuals who have come to know each other. An initial meeting is required as *sine qua non* for the development of love. This love, having once been aroused, must then be nurtured and cared for. The better the two become acquainted, and the more they discover that their wills are congruent, the deeper and stronger their bond of love will become (provided they are upright characters). The more an intimate knowledge of one another grows, the greater the love and on a deeper level. This “becoming acquainted” is in reality an increased understanding of each other.

Mutual understanding followed, of course, by obedience to, and respect for one another obviously plays an important role in the kindling and unfolding of devotion to one

Some Principles Governing Devotion

another. Great understanding alone does not necessarily imply great love. However, superficiality of understanding, one often discovers, may be coincident with superficial love. Deeper love is made possible by intimate understanding and obedience. When two noble characters meet and become friendly, they will endeavor to develop a more intimate relationship and to increase their mutual understanding. The more they know each other, the greater the possibility of a high level of devotion becomes. Understanding is, therefore, a basis of all profound devotion. It is the fuel for a continuously growing devotional fire. Love that is based on insufficient understanding often results in a “flash-in-the-pan” phenomenon, a quickly fading enthusiasm. Conversely, love nourished by growing mutual understanding can progress to an ever more stable devotion between two persons, even though one person is human and the other person is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus Christ is a living person and consequently our relationship with Christ is also strictly a personal one.

As mentioned above, every personal relationship is necessarily founded on mutual personal understanding. We can become

Baptism

superficially acquainted with Christ but still show a minimal interest in His lifestyle. This type of understanding of Christ is of the “flash-in-the-pan” variety. A deeper understanding of His unblemished character and His perfect and clearly expressed will in the Bible leads, by obedience to His will, to an ever deepening love and devotion to Him. For this reason the Apostle Paul writes, “And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge...” (Phil. 1:9). Similarly the Apostle John said, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” (1 John 5:3).

An understanding of Christ’s commandments followed by their execution in our lives enables a steadily deepening love to develop. Thus devotion increases. “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.” (John 15:10). Biblical understanding offers us the possibility of a deeper love for Christ, being the basis and fuel for all devotion. Consequently all growth in understanding is important, including the understanding of New Testament baptism. For here God’s loving and Holy will is revealed to our *understanding*. Even in man’s personal relationships, the sharing of intimate secrets

Some Principles Governing Devotion

evokes love. In the Holy Scriptures God discloses His innermost self— His Holy will— to us. Can we refuse our love, devotion and obedience after such a revelation?

Chapter 2

The New Testament Practice Of Baptism

The New testament frequently refers to the practice of baptism, and always without exception *after* conversion. It must therefore be important for our understanding, for love and understanding are strongly interrelated. This order can influence our devotion to Him. We risk writing on this touchy subject only because it affects our real understanding of the Lord and of His will on baptism, thus affecting our love and devotion to Him.

There will be no danger of strife over the question of baptism, provided we approach the subject with the sincere desire to increase our understanding, obedience and love towards Him and thereby our fellowship with the Lord. However, to reap the blessing of any matter concerning the Scripture, the study must be done with an obedient heart

The New Testament Practice of Baptism

accompanied by a strong desire to *obey* any new understanding. Every biblical theme is fruitful if this prerequisite is fulfilled.

In the Acts of the Apostles we discover that the Apostles, as well as other disciples of the Lord, regularly baptized all new believers by immersion. Let us first consider several examples and then approach the doctrinal aspect.

1) When Peter gave his famous Pentecostal sermon, he challenged his audience to repent and to be then baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2:38).

2) After Philip's sermon many believed and were then baptized, men and women (children are not mentioned) (Acts 8:12). After the baptism by immersion in water the Holy Spirit was received, in this case through the laying on of the Apostles' hands. They had thus far only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 8:16). Here as elsewhere in the Bible, there is a clear temporal distinction between baptism by the Holy Spirit, baptism by water and the prior process of conversion.

3) The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized immediately after his conversion (Acts 8:38).

Baptism

This example illustrates immersion as the practical New Testament method of baptism. Both men entered into the water together, one was then immersed by the other, and then both emerged again out of the water. It is generally acknowledged, even in theological circles, that the original Greek text denotes precisely this procedure: the term translated as “baptism” accurately means “immersion”. This is a completely different procedure to that of sprinkling the infant with water such as is practiced today in so called infant baptism. These practical examples will suffice to guide those who believe in the full inspiration of the Bible in their own practice of baptism.

4) Paul was baptized i.e. immersed after the confrontation with Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:19).

5) Cornelius was baptized with the Holy Spirit *after* his confession of faith. In this instance Peter had inquired, “Could we refuse water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as we also did?” (Acts 10:47). Baptism is regarded as a privilege, only for those who already believe and have received the Holy Spirit, not as a burden, which baptism today is often

The New Testament Practice of Baptism

portrayed to be. Once again, a clear distinction between water baptism and baptism by the Holy Spirit is emphasized.

6) Lydia was baptized *after* her conversion (Acts 16:15).

7) The prison jailer at Philippi desired the baptism of his whole house in the same night after they had all believed (Acts 16:33).

8) Many Corinthians listened, believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8).

9) Appolos, a disciple of Jesus, knew only of John's baptism, although he conscientiously proclaimed and taught the doctrines concerning Jesus (Acts 18:25). Consequently it is possible to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and a conscientious proponent of His ways, despite having a defective and incomplete understanding of the doctrine of New Testament baptism. It is therefore apparent that New Testament baptism is not essential for salvation. It is plainly a matter of growing discipleship. Redemption is *not* gained by baptism— whether infant or any other form. Redemption is a matter of faith in Christ.

Appolos was a disciple of Jesus and well

Baptism

versed in Scripture, yet he had not been baptized in the New Testament sense. John's was the only baptism he knew of. However we dare not attempt to justify his lack of understanding, for the other disciples did not. It is insufficient to claim that because Apollos did not understand the practice of baptism and yet was not baptized, we too need not preoccupy ourselves with it either. When Paul came to Ephesus he found many brothers in a state similar to that of Apollos. They were believers, disciples of the Lord, but had never heard of the Holy Spirit, nor had they received New Testament water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 19). They had probably been converted by the witness of Apollos and consequently shared his incomplete understanding of water baptism. We cannot convey to new believers more than we actually know and practice ourselves.

We must remember that all of these occurrences we have cited took place long after the Holy Spirit had descended on the disciples at Pentecost. Individuals converted to Christ after Pentecost were therefore not *automatically* baptized with the Holy Spirit or with water in the New Testament sense. The particular evangelist's experience and

The New Testament Practice of Baptism

understanding who had been the means of their conversion, significantly affected the understanding of the new converts. He (the evangelist) thus bears a great responsibility, for his new converts will reflect the evangelist's own understanding of the Scriptures.

However, under Paul's instruction, understanding coupled with obedience resulted in new insight and new action in his becoming baptized. For example, Paul taught the Ephesians that John the Baptist had indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, but he had also stated that they should believe on the one who would follow him—Jesus Christ. Jesus however, indicated that they should repent first, then be baptized with water in His name. When the Ephesians heard this, they were baptized in water in the name of Jesus. Just as Paul had laid his hands on them, they received *in addition* the Holy Spirit, as in the beginning (Acts 19).

It is important to remark that the twelve Ephesians were already believers and had also received John's water baptism by immersion to repentance for the forgiveness of sin. But being obedient to Paul's word, they were thereupon baptized with water by *immersion*

Baptism

again. Paul was, therefore, the first Anabaptist. He baptized certain people twice, *if* their first baptism was defective. He obviously laid great emphasis on baptism by water following conversion. One therefore ought never to maintain, that a second baptism by immersion after conversion is unbiblical. For if the initial baptism did not correspond to a New Testament baptism then a biblical form of baptism should be practiced for the second time. However the baptism by immersion in the name of the Trinity as describe by the New Testament, was never performed twice for any person described in the New Testament.

The last Biblical text we wish to quote here is found in Acts 22;16. In his defense before the Jews, Paul referred to the baptism he had received after his conversion. The apostle's practice of baptism clearly followed the line displayed throughout the New Testament—that every new convert was baptized by immersion in water. In so acting, the apostles were merely obeying the command that Jesus Christ had given them before His ascension. They never performed baptism in the reverse order i.e. by baptizing first, christening or sprinkling and then hoping for the salvation of

The New Testament Practice of Baptism

the baptized afterwards at a later date. If this charitable yet thoroughly unbiblical hope were justified almost the whole of Europe would be Christian today. For most Europeans, including Adolph Hitler himself were christened as infants in one way or another. Has God truly accepted everyone? If so, one must ask oneself where the practical results of efficacy are to be seen. The tree is recognized by its fruit. Europe should be practically entirely Christian by now if infant baptism is the true means by which one becomes a Christian.

The Apostles' practice of baptism is probably best expressed in the terms of practical obedience to the words of Jesus Christ: "Go therefore and make *disciples* of all nations and *baptize them*" (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16). The Lord could hardly have asked them to baptize the nations with the Holy Ghost - it must have been baptism in water - just as the apostles did in fact practice.

Chapter 3

The Symbolism of New Testament Baptism

We have just considered the mode of baptism as it was practiced at the time of the early Christian Church. But what was the *meaning* behind this practice? If baptism with water had no significance, why were so many people who had become Christians baptized? Baptism was certainly not the preparation for conversion for *only after conversion was New Testament baptism considered*. This sequence of events is well documented in the New Testament. But if baptism with water were mandatory for salvation the dying thief on the cross could never have been saved. For he was not baptized before his death. What then is the purpose of New Testament baptism if it did not save the dying thief. In what way would simply imitating the apostles' practice of baptism without grasping its essence be

The Symbolism of New Testament Baptism

helpful to us? God does not seem to appreciate blind imitation for he desires us to grow *in understanding* not in blind imitation.

Our next question must therefore be: Does New Testament baptism symbolize anything? What did the apostles and those baptized wish to symbolize or to teach with the help of the act and witness of baptism? The Ephesians practiced, at their second baptism (Acts 19) by no less a person than the apostle Paul himself, a symbolic conversion. The first baptism of John was probably outwardly similar to the second baptism in that it was by public immersion in water. The meaning, that is the symbolism, behind this act determined the message the apostle wished to convey by it. The message behind the second immersion's essential role in the decision to be re-baptized, a message which was not mediated by the baptism of John, although the outward act was in both cases - immersion in water. This repetition of an outwardly identical act would otherwise have been futile. The hidden meaning of the two identical outward acts was very divergent.

a) Three allegories:

1) We find the answer to our riddle in

Baptism

chapters 6 and 7 of Paul's letter to the Romans. Here we encounter three allegories illustrating the one very important doctrine of New Testament baptism, and then work backwards. For the sake of simplicity we shall begin with the third allegory. In Romans 7:1-6 we find the following parable. "The married woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives; but when he dies she is free to marry another. But if she marries another while her first husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress." This means that the bond of marriage is dissolved only after one partner's death which frees the surviving partner to remarry. Only death dissolved the law governing marriage.

The apostle applies this allegory to our relationship with sin. We all are married to the law of sin, he says. This bond with the law of sin is as close as the bond of marriage. A strong inclination or bondage to sin is inherent in every human being. This is compared to the strong bond of marriage. A release from the bond such as in marriage is dependent however, on the death of either one or the other partner. As Apostle Paul declares one partner in the sinner's marriage to sin has already died - not the bond of sin, but the

The Symbolism of New Testament Baptism

sinner himself.

“My brethren, ye also have been made dead to the law of sin by the body of Christ, to be another’s who has been raised up from among the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.” (Rom. 7:4). The death of Jesus does not only accomplish the forgiveness of sins. The complete release and divorce from our partner, the law of sin, has also been effected. For when Jesus died on the cross for us, we also died in his Body. We were joined with him in death and, consequently the “bond of marriage” to sin was dissolved. Therefore we are now free to choose another partner, Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead in the place of our marriage to sin. Therefore, as believers we are married to Jesus Christ, being freed from our ex-partner, the law of sin. We can rejoice with Zinsendorf in declaring that we no longer must sin. This is the first allegory on the meaning of New Testament baptism.

2) The second allegory is found in Romans 6. Here the apostle claims that we were sold to sin and could not free ourselves from it by our own efforts, not even if we tried with all our strength. Jesus Christ himself said: “He who commits sin is a slave of sin.” (John

Baptism

8:34). To free a slave we must raise and pay a ransom. Our ransom is the blood of Jesus, that frees us from slavery. We need no longer serve sin. We are free from that slavery by His blood shed for us.

There was once upon a time an old black slave in a southern state of the United States of America, who had served her master all her life. She was chained to her place of duty - the stove - both by night and by day. It was customary in those days to chain slaves to hinder them from fleeing. One day, after the proclamation of freedom for all slaves, she was visited by a freed slave. This freed slave was astonished to see her fellow slave cowering beside the stove in chains. She said, "But you are free! Why are you still here? The old slave replied sarcastically:" "It certainly looks like it, doesn't it? Our master won't free any of us and how can I rid myself of these chains?" The freed slave responded. "No problem. The president's decree will release you. He has guaranteed your freedom. Your master must free you, otherwise the president's soldiers will set you free by force." But the poor slave so feared her master that she did not claim her freedom. She subsequently died many years later still in

The Symbolism of New Testament Baptism

her chains.

Christ has guaranteed freedom to us slaves to sin and ransomed us from the chains of the law of sin. We must, however, personally lay claim to this guarantee of freedom when temptation comes, otherwise we remain “chained.” The enemy never releases us willingly and pretends to be our master still. This trick of the enemy is, however, pure bluff.

If we take Jesus Christ’s offer seriously and claim it for ourselves the enemy is forced to free us. But if we decide to disregard the guarantee of freedom purchased by Christ, we remain in fetters. We can never discard the chains of sin and bondage through our own power. That was our second illustration of the symbolism of New Testament baptism.

3) The third allegory is also in Romans 6. It deals with the symbol of baptism too as we shall see and is closely related to the first two pictures. In Romans 6 the apostle teaches us that we need no longer remain captive to sin for we have died to sin. The first allegory clearly stated this fact too. However, to illustrate he actual dying to sin further, Paul applies the symbol of baptism, describing

Baptism

how we were baptized into the Lord's death. But what is the actual significance of being "baptized into his death"? At this point the striking symbolism of baptism becomes apparent, for it is the symbolical burial of a deceased person. When a man dies he discards his earthly body, which is then buried in the earth. Similarly, the old Christ-less self is "buried" in water by immersion. He abandons his sinful life without Christ and thus dies to a life without Christ. The symbolism of the baptistry is that of an open grave in which the baptismal candidate testifies to the burial of his old self without Christ. He is accordingly symbolically buried in water. The water covers him just as the earth covers the dead discarded body. "Therefore we have been buried with him in baptism unto death." (Romans 6:4) This is reminiscent of the first allegory in Romans 7, where the release from marriage and the law of sin are discussed. A biblical conversion is portrayed as the radical event of dying to the rule of sin and is symbolized in baptismal death - the symbolic burial of a former Christless self in the baptismal waters. The grave is the end of earthly life, but it is also the beginning of the new afterlife in

The Symbolism of New Testament Baptism

resurrection power. When Jesus Christ was laid to rest in the grave the end of his earthly life was sealed. But He was resurrected through his Father and the end became a magnificent beginning, surpassing all former events.

“Even as Christ has been raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also.” Our conversion to Jesus Christ ended our past life devoid of Him and simultaneously initiated the new life in Him. “We walk in newness of life.” “ So if anyone be in Christ, there is a new creation, the old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.” (2 Cor 5:17).

Life after conversion is “life beyond the grave”, spiritual death has been overcome in this life. The wonderful new life in Christ, the resurrection-life, begun in this earthly life and is symbolized by the appearance of the baptismal candidate from the “baptismal grave” out of the water. New life was generated in Christ through the “glory of the Father” (he was raised by the glory of the Father) and this same power also acts in us. Our old self is crucified and dead with Jesus. Consequently, it is dead and we no longer need serve the discarded flesh in sin. But

Baptism

resurrection can only take place after death. Likewise, a victorious resurrection-life is only possible after dying to sin in Jesus. "So also ye reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11). "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above." (Col. 3:1).

The complete symbolism of New Testament baptism is roughly outlined in the three preceding allegories. The burial in baptismal water illustrates symbolically the dying of self in Christ. The emergence from the water-grave illustrates symbolically the resurrection and the beginning of the resurrection life here on earth in liberation from the slavery of sin, in this life, on this earth. (Incidentally, the freedom referred to is the freedom from the law of sin, i.e. the compulsion to sin and not sin itself. There is no perfection in this terrestrial life. However, we are released from the slavery to the law of sin and *must* sin no more. We do stumble and trip up but we need no longer prostrate ourselves permanently on the floor in sin. Using the forceful symbolism of their own baptism, the apostles and disciples emphasize thereby that they have died to sin in the body of Christ and have been buried in the grave of

The Symbolism of New Testament Baptism

water baptism. After this symbolic death they have been raised to newness of life from the symbolic baptismal grave. "For ye have died and your life is hid with the Christ in God." (Co. 3:3)

The Apostles chose the allegory of baptism to proclaim this teaching symbolically to the nations of the world. This type of allegory was more emphatic than mere words. The Oriental nations appear to have understood this kind of picture better than we do in the West. However not only Christians and Jews practiced water baptism by immersion. Several gentile religions required an initial water baptism to symbolize the death of the old religious ties and the cleansing or washing away of old guilt for the new commitment. In the name of Jesus this message was then an easily understood symbolic allegory.

Obviously, the entire significance of this baptismal message is lost if: 1) small children are "baptized by sprinkling". For they are never buried, but only sprinkled with water. Infants are not yet believers and have therefore not yet died to the law of sin and thus cannot begin a new life in Jesus. Infant baptism must, therefore, have a fundamentally different meaning to that of New Testament

Baptism

baptism by immersion. The symbol is distorted in infant sprinkling, if not entirely lost. Furthermore, the substituted role of Godparents for the child at infant baptism is irreconcilable with the New Testament symbol. The motive behind godparents is purely harmless, but it has the great disadvantage of not being biblical. Unfortunately, the godparents' noble aspirations are often illusory. This becomes apparent when we consider that very many baptized infants never receive Jesus in their later lives. They think they did when they were sprinkled which is surely a total illusion.

It is often maintained that God gave His acceptance of the child at its sprinkling. This concept is itself as devoid of biblical basis as the doctrine of infant baptism, and would seem to be a form of universalism. Many believe that through this sprinkling the child really becomes in some way a Christian and consequently different to ordinary Gentiles. Such children are deemed to only require encouragement to develop into true Christians! 2) Infants are in fact received into the "Church" through this act of sprinkling. Acceptance into a New Testament Church is not primarily determined by baptism, but by

The Symbolism of New Testament Baptism

repentance and conversion to Christ. Infants cannot fulfill these requirements. 3) Adults are often accepted into a Christian fellowship by baptism, but this is not the purpose of baptism in the New Testament. The apostles baptized the already converted to symbolize the meaning of the conversion which had already taken place in the heart and not to illustrate their acceptance into the Church. Baptism itself does not represent the transition from the world to the "Church", as some Baptist and other circles maintain.

Ideally, baptism immediately follows conversion. If it was thus soon mistaken as the actual turning point, the conversion by those who did not understand the New Testament significance of baptism. If baptism itself had been the actual turning point, a Christian brother, like Apollos, who was ignorant of New Testament baptism, would have been an unsaved person. The only baptism Apollos knew of was that of John and of the Old Testament. It was John the Baptist's baptism and not Christ's baptism which Apollos had experienced earlier. For the law and the prophets were until John (Luke 16:16). Apollos and his disciples then needed (and both he and his disciples experienced) a

Baptism

Christian baptism after they had experienced John's baptism. 4) Entire families are randomly "baptized" (= "christened") without first ensuring that the outward act reflects the inner state *in all members*. In the instances where entire families were baptized, as was the case with the jailer of Philippi, it must be emphasized, that ALL members of the family had personally considered and accepted God's word: "And they spoke to him the word of the Lord with all that were in his house... and were baptized; he and all his house straightway. And having brought them into his house he laid the table and rejoiced *with all his house*, having believed in God." (Acts 16:32-34). Infants could not have fulfilled these criteria. They could never consciously have considered God's word, accepted it and then rejoiced over having received Him as Savior. All those who were baptized rejoiced at having accepted God into their lives. Could infants do this? To insist that they could is to misunderstand the whole doctrine of New Testament baptism.

Chapter 4

Some Critical Considerations

1) Numerous serious Christian believers maintain that baptism by water is unimportant. What truly matters is a true conversion and a righteous life. This is, of course, partly correct. However, the Bible teaches us something more. Ephesians 4:5 states “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” We conclude, that in the widest sense New Testament baptism is classified on a par with our Lord and our faith itself. If our Lord and our faith are of importance to us, so should the question of our baptism be too.

Hebrews 6 teaches that the pillars of Christian faith consist of six major issues or doctrinal pillars: repentance, belief in God, the doctrine of baptisms, the imposition of hands, resurrection from the dead and judgment to come. The doctrine of the different kinds of baptism is here regarded as

Baptism

one of the basic teachings of Christianity. *They must all be understood and therefore practiced by any Christian desiring full Christian growth.* If the word of God is to effectively guide our life and our understanding, it is important not to think superficially on these matters. The New Testament repeatedly and earnestly refers to them all. One only has to consider the central place occupied by the doctrine of salvation from sin's oppression, the beginning of a radically new walk in freedom with Christ, the beginning of a radically new walk in the freedom which Christ's death and resurrection gives, and how this is essentially portrayed in New Testament baptism. The whole theology of conversion is reflected in this teaching. Infant baptism misses entirely this essential teaching of Christian conversion.

We now begin to understand why baptism was included in Christ's *last instructions* to His disciples, and also why the enemy of man's welfare struggles to efface and distort just this particular doctrine which results in caricatures like "christening" and in effect replaces the true doctrine of New Testament baptism.

2) Others again argue that the doctrine of

Some Critical Considerations

baptism cannot be so important, because Paul wrote that he was thankful to God that he had only baptized Crispus and Gaius and a few others (1 Cor. 1:14-17). But they often forget to finish the quotation: "...that no one may say I have baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the house of Stephanus, for the rest I know not if I have baptized any other." This shows at least that Paul was not averse to baptism itself (he himself had been baptized immediately after conversion), but rather to the accusation of unspiritual Christians, who declared that if Paul had personally baptized, he would surely have baptized everyone in his own name. To avoid this accusation Paul *taught* the doctrine of baptism, but left the practical act of baptism to other believing brothers. The few exceptions further underscore Paul's belief in the importance of baptism.

If baptism were a trivial matter, Paul would never have baptized at all or taught it. He never preoccupied himself with trivial matters. Furthermore, his first act as a believer was certainly that of being baptized (Acts 9:18). But it should be remembered that Christ did not send him out to perform the act of baptism, but to spread the gospel. The

Baptism

gospel he taught obviously included baptism by water, because those converted under his teaching immediately desired baptism (e.g. the Philippian Jailer).

Other disciples engaged in the spreading of the gospel produced similar results. When Philip revealed Jesus to the Ethiopian Eunuch, the latter requested baptism without delay. *We must therefore conclude that the proclamation of the Lord Jesus, if performed thoroughly, will include the New Testament baptism of faith.* Paul was not sent to personally baptize i.e. to perform the act of baptism. However this by no means indicates a disregard for baptism, *it demonstrates merely a division of labor in the work of God.* Paul's task was the preaching and not the immersion by baptizing. This was the duty of others, to confirm the result of Paul's exposition. Baptism is and will remain a basic principle of the New Testament, and its current abuse or neglect cannot be condoned under any circumstances.

3) Others will say it is sufficient for them to have been "baptized" as children by their Christian (or not so Christian) parents. A baptism with water by immersion would thus not be necessary. Let us see if the word of

Some Critical Considerations

God sheds light on this particular matter. Is there an example of *repeated* baptism in the Bible? If there is, we must ask ourselves whether the practice of the Bible is to be the standard of our lives too.

Once again as we have already seen, Acts 19 provides us with an helpful example. The Ephesian disciples— about 12 of them— had received the Old Testament baptism by immersion in water (John’s baptism) for the forgiveness of sins, *and were avowedly believers in Christ*. They were therefore both open believers and had been baptized by immersion in water. However, their baptism did not illustrate the New Testament symbolism of baptism. It merely depicted repentance, the washing away of sins, and forgiveness but *not* the contents of Romans 6 (death in Christ and newness of resurrection life in Him). Upon becoming aware of this grave deficiency, they were immediately baptized with the New Testament baptism, despite their previous water baptism by immersion. God responded to this act of obedience (followed by the laying on of hands) with baptism in the Holy Spirit.

If your own “baptism” as a child did not symbolize what the New Testament means by

Baptism

baptism *after* your conversion, *the deficiency should be corrected by a repeated act of baptism by immersion in water in accordance with the doctrine and practice of the New Testament.* However once a baptism in the New Testament manner has taken place, that New Testament baptism is never repeated. One cannot die twice and then be resurrected twice! Of course if you have never been baptized at all and are a child of God, then you ought to be baptized in the New Testament manner without delay.

4) It is maintained that because an infant was baptized in the name of the Trinity, then that baptism must have been according to the New Testament. It is evident from the above mentioned facts however, that the symbolism of an infant's baptism, even in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is completely alien to the doctrine taught in Acts, the Roman epistle, and in the remaining New Testament. This kind of infant sprinkling must be considered deficient, just as John's baptism was deficient (Acts 19). This deficiency is only to be remedied when as in Acts 19 the believer is baptized by immersion in water immediately after he has gained the New Testament understanding of conversion and

Some Critical Considerations

baptism. This act of obedience should not stem from a legalistic attitude, but from a loving respect of God's word and Jesus Christ's command. "Those who love Me," said Jesus, "will keep my word."

5) Other believers perceive infant baptism as an offering of the child back to its Creator and not as a true New Testament baptism. They realize that infants were not baptized in the New Testament sense of the word, but have the wish to present the child to God. This desire is understandable and commendable. *However this presentation of the infant to God is not a New Testament baptism.* If it is used to *replace* baptism it will have dangers of its own. When the Christian who uses presentation of the infant to replace baptism analyses his convictions on the subject, he will soon recognize the inaccuracy and inadequacy of his professed belief.

It is obvious that if infant baptism is considered as a presentation to the Lord, it should not replace a later baptism. In practice however, the proponents of the "presentation doctrine" deny their own standpoint by allowing their "presentation" to *replace* a subsequent baptism of faith in most cases. They believe infant baptism (presentation)

Baptism

makes the baptism of faith redundant, demonstrating in essence that infant baptism is considered to be in fact a true New Testament baptism. Otherwise, if such believers were consistent in their belief, they would desire their children to later undergo the baptism of faith. This topic is beset with much confusion, and if "...the trumpet gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for the battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8)

6) Another group believes that baptism is superfluous, because people like the sinner on the cross were saved without being baptized.

It is perfectly clear that faith in Christ as Savior alone saves and not baptism. Baptism is not required for salvation, but it is an outward confession of obedience, and also a public testimony to the world as well as to the Christian community. Jesus Christ emphasized this in His last words (Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19) and this is confirmed throughout the New Testament. Should this not be sufficient to arouse our loving obedience to God and to His word concerning water baptism? Whoever thinks that obedience to God's word ends with conversion is gravely mistaken. Such is not the nature of conversion and our Christian

Some Critical Considerations

walk. Public baptism by immersion is Biblical, both in doctrine and in practice. For precisely this reason baptism in faith should be undertaken as soon as possible after conversion and the necessary understanding has been gained. It is a beautiful and transparent act of obedience to the written word especially in the case of someone previously “baptized” as an infant. *It is a privilege (Acts 10:47) and an ideal situation to publicly obey God in love, and should be eagerly sought after.* It is pleasing to God and testifies to men of the nature of Christian conversion. *“Christening” only serves to obscure the meaning of believer’s baptism.* If we love the word of God, we will hasten to show our loving obedience, not only in baptism, but in all other scriptural matters. *We cannot partake of the blessings of obedience if we have motivations other than those of love towards God’s word and towards the Savior personally revealed in the word.* Psalm 119:112 summarizes this well: “I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes for ever, unto the end.”

7) Another faction amongst Christians claims that if baptism is to be taken literally, then all the other commandments must be

Baptism

obeyed literally as well. We no longer wash each others feet (although the Adventists happily still do) therefore baptism must no longer be actually performed.

The importance of the foot washing ceremony should not be diminished, but to compare it with baptism is inappropriate. It is not recorded that the disciples washed each other's feet after conversion, but that they were baptized. It is not said, "One Lord, one faith, one foot-washing"! The important doctrines of Romans 6 and 7 as well as Christ's last words, do not elaborate on foot-washings but on the death and new life symbolized in baptism. Believers should truly be prepared to wash each others' feet, at least in the metaphorical sense or, if they desire, literally too. It was a special gesture to wash a tired pilgrim's dusty feet in those hot countries. In more temperate climates there are numerous other ways of honoring others and humbling oneself. To effectively wash another Christian's feet without being hypocritical, we must be determined to support him and make his life easier.

8) Infant baptism is often compared to the Old Testament circumcision. As circumcision was the prerequisite for acceptance into the

Some Critical Considerations

Jewish community, the argument runs that children should be baptized to be received into the Church fellowship. If this comparison is to be upheld, three things must be considered:

a) The Jews only circumcised male children (some pagan religions insist on a mutilating female circumcision). If this argument is correct we ought to baptize only boys and not girls.

b) New Testament baptism does indeed have several points in common with the Old Testament circumcision. Colossians 2:11-13 for example, teaches the discarding of the foreskin in circumcision as comparable to the discarding of the earthly body in the symbolical burial and resurrection of baptism. Baptism is therefore known as the "circumcision of Christ". But baptism today is motivated "by faith in God's mighty love" (v12). Consequently, any comparison between circumcision and baptism must pertain to the baptism of faith *after* conversion, and not of infant baptism. No infant can show much faith, except perhaps to it's mother and father.

c) Romans 4:11-12 teaches that the original significance of circumcision was

Baptism

demonstrated by Abraham's action. He received circumcision as a seal of an already existing righteousness, through faith. In these points baptism and circumcision can be compared. Believers baptism is also an act of the public sealing of an already established faith. Infant baptism has no such meaning and hence cannot be rigorously compared to circumcision.

9) We are aware of the widespread practice of baptizing a child to illustrate God's proffering of grace to the child, although such a worthy thought is nowhere mentioned in the New Testament.

10) There is a strong tendency amongst Christians who profess acceptance of the entire Bible as the sole basis for their Christian life, to neglect baptism by water completely. It is maintained that only the bestowal of the Holy Spirit is important. Allegedly baptism by water is now superfluous, as it supposedly belonged to an intermediate phase of Christian history, falling between the death and resurrection of Christ and the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. But all of the epistles and gospels were written precisely in this so-called phase, in which baptism was actively propagated by

Some Critical Considerations

the Apostles. Furthermore it is claimed that since Jesus fulfilled all our obligations, baptism by water is now redundant. This viewpoint, held by many eminent men of God, is untenable because the Apostles actively taught and practiced, throughout all their known lives, New Testament baptism. It constitutes either the deliberate or else unintentional propagation of some of Bullinger's doctrines.

The full consequences of this viewpoint must be considered: If one admits baptism by water and other related practices in Acts and the New Testament, then many of the events recorded in the Acts are no longer relevant for us, and could be struck out of these Scriptures. The Apostles and the early Church practiced baptism by water after conversion, baptism by the Holy Spirit with the gift of tongues and of healing etc. These all were realities in the actual era of the Apostles.

But the proponents of the above doctrine seldom practice what they preach. Their claim is that all the biblical letters pertaining to the doctrine of baptism are no longer applicable to present day Gentile Christians. Thus entire sections of the New Testament are suddenly invalidated for the present day Church. This

Baptism

principle seems to me to be highly questionable. Even the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer fall victim to the same procedure with the advocates of this theory.

The concepts behind such theories as mentioned above are often curiously illogical when more closely scrutinized. Firstly, they postulate that the whole practical aspect of Church teaching and growth became totally different after the Jews rejected Paul's gospel and Paul turned to the Gentiles. According to this way of thought, the preceding instructions, addressed also to the Jewish believers and laid down in the Gospels and the Acts, had become obsolete. Subsequently, the supposed truly spiritual era began without any remnant of outward Christian rituals.

Anyone with any experience of the development of a Church will acknowledge how vital the fundamentals described in the Acts are. The growth of a Church becomes questionable without the application of these principles.

Secondly when examining the above reasoning, one pushes aside one or more very fundamental facts. Because baptism and other outward rituals and the like are not much

Some Critical Considerations

treated in the later epistles, it is alleged that these aspects of Christian doctrine are unimportant! Christianity allegedly evolved in the course of time! In this evolution some less important aspects of Christian teaching were left behind, but the veritably spiritual essence laid bare! But is it not in reality basically unreasonable to expect a constant repetition of the same basic issues? The Apostles assumed Christians knew, practiced and loved the basic primeval doctrines. They go on to learn of the deeper and hitherto untouched doctrines. Once an issue had been treated, the apostles left it in peace, and passed on to the more urgent current matters. Hebrews 6 mentions the basics and includes the manner of baptism as basic.

When I write my wife a letter on a topic, I do not return to the same topic in every subsequent letter. If she once has understood my viewpoint, there is no need to return to it. But because I do not continually refer to that point by no means proves that I no longer regard it as important. We thus go on to something new. It would be a grave mistake to conclude that the subject of my initial letter was unimportant because I did not repeat it in every succeeding letter. The same thought

Baptism

applies to all the New Testament letters. Baptism is not mentioned in every letter, once previous letters have made its cardinal importance clear.

When an Apostle writes about the heavenly calling of the Christian, we cannot expect him to drag into this discussion the primeval and basic doctrine of baptism. Hebrews chapter 6 teaches us precisely this. The basic elements of Christian life must be known and implemented (i.e. repentance, faith in God, the doctrine of baptisms, the laying on of hands, resurrection and eternal judgment) before we proceed— if God permits it— to advance to full growth as Christians. The foundations of a house must be laid before construction above ground begins. Once, however, the foundations have been laid there is no need to do so again in every letter and every epistle. They are tacitly built upon, but are still vital even if no longer dealt with in every letter. The Apostles demonstrate this in their later epistles of the New Testament where the fundamental doctrines are no longer explicitly discussed but are used to build upon. The foundation is already laid once and for all.

To judge by the Word of God, it is

Some Critical Considerations

impossible to develop a genuine stable life of sanctification and to advance to full growth without the practical foundation of Hebrews 6 (which presupposes believer's baptism). *If the foundations are not sound, God will not permit further personal development or growth.* This same truth is taught throughout the whole Bible. "Every Scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16). Hence, every word of the Bible is irreplaceable in perfectly modeling a man of God after God's heart. Naturally, only words that are put into practice can take effect and thus not remain a mere theoretical concept.

We prefer to accept the complete New Testament as valid for all born-again Christians. These are the Lord's words after his resurrection: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever I have enjoined you*" (Matt. 28:19-20). *The Gentiles* are to be taught *all* that Jesus taught. It is evident that Jesus Himself made no distinction between

Baptism

His teachings for the Jewish Apostles and those for the “nations” or the Gentiles. His disciples were instructed merely to teach the nations *everything* they themselves had been taught by Him.

But we must consider a further implication too. To discern the meaning of the baptism of believers in the New Testament and yet not respond to it in practice, makes one an effective follower of Bullinger’s type of theology. He rejects whole portions of the New Testament for his own practice. There must be exceedingly good reasoning if one wishes to risk this. Such reasoning, however, does not and will never survive in the face of Matt. 28: 19-20 (...“teaching them to observe *all* things whatsoever I have enjoined you”).

11) In the ecclesiastical interpretation of Titus 3:5 “...not on the principle of works which we have done in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...” and Ephesians 5:26 “...purifying it by the washing of water by the Word...” the “sacrament of baptism” is repeatedly referred to. According to Luther’s interpretation the washing (Luther’s rendering for this action is “bath”) represents rebirth of

Some Critical Considerations

the child in infant baptism. God is thought to have accepted the child at it's sprinkling, with the result that the child is accepted into the fellowship of the Church and has therefore become by sprinkling a child of God. But does the phrase, "washing of regeneration" refer to New Testament water baptism? That is the grand question!

Jesus often emphasized the necessity of rebirth, without which the kingdom of God cannot even be seen. The new birth, or conversion, is therefore indispensable for salvation. Who would dare claim this of baptism with water in view of the declarations of the New Testament in this regard? The two terms "washing of regeneration" and "baptism by immersion in water" cannot be synonymous, for both the thief on the cross and Apollos were redeemed without the New Testament baptism with water. It is therefore incorrect to put the "bath of regeneration" on a par with "baptism with water", as regeneration is crucial for salvation, but water baptism is a matter of the obedience of the believer and of his understanding of God's word and is not a prerequisite for salvation. The bath of new birth seems rather to be a metaphor for the cleansing action of water.

Baptism

Just as a man's body is cleansed by water, so the bath of new birth cleanses us spiritually. One should not assume that water in the New Testament necessarily implies water baptism in every instance.

The apostle speaks of the cleansing action of water through the word as a method of purifying the Christian to present him to Christ cleansed, "without spot or wrinkle". The theme here is the cleansing and purifying of the Church and not a rebirth of unsaved individuals by baptism. The entire section of Ephesians 5 addresses manifest believers and is by no means to be considered strictly evangelistic. Baptism is mostly associated with the purely evangelistic portion of the New Testament, and is therefore not considered here, where the edification of believers is under discussion. The Church came into existence by members being born again. It is not feasible to repeat this step. The further cleansing or purification of the Christian by the absorption of God's Word, and not by baptismal water is now required. It is the Word applied to the Christian that removes the filth of sin, by freeing him from sin. Ephesians 5:26 has nothing directly to do with New Testament baptism.

Some Critical Considerations

12) The Church has often interpreted “the sacrament of baptism” in 1 Peter 3:20-21 to be a prerequisite for salvation. To substantiate this the following passage is quoted: “...which figure also now saves you, baptism, (not putting away of the filth of flesh, but the demand as before God of a good conscience) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...”. At first sight this looks as if “the figure, the baptism” saves. Consequently, “baptized” infants were declared saved.

We must therefore now look a little closer at the Apostle Peter’s statement. Which redeeming baptism is he alluding to? The comparison with Noah’s ark and the flood clearly indicates a baptism with water. As Noah in the ark was saved through the water, so also the baptized are saved through the water. It supposedly follows, that a person after having gone through baptism with water is saved and this is the root of the “redeeming sacrament of baptism”.

Let us examine the apostle’s statement more closely still. Excluding the outward symbolic shell, which baptism is he describing? The baptism of “not putting away of the filth of flesh, but the demand to have a good conscience before God through the

Baptism

resurrection of Jesus Christ.” When someone desires a clean conscience through Jesus Christ’s resurrection and is then baptized into Jesus’s death, he will be saved according to Peter. *That* is the type of baptism described here. The type of baptism one desires, if one intends to have a good conscience before God through Jesus Christ. Only this baptism saves.

The “saving baptism” of infants by sprinkling practiced today fundamentally differs from this. For an infant could never desire a clean conscience before God and, correspondingly, this baptism could never save it. Only an individual adult person overwhelmed by his accusing conscience and guilt of sin can consider the “saving baptism” of 1 Peter 3:20. He longs for a clean conscience before God that is not attained by any merely outward act of baptism, but through faith in the resurrection of Christ. *This* figure or type of baptism saves. It does not symbolize a single, separate, outward action, or a sheer magical ritual. The baptism Peter describes consists of many links in a single chain, many actions of which the external act of baptism is only an individual link. The longing for a clean conscience before God, the satisfaction of this desire

Some Critical Considerations

through Christ's resurrection, the external act of baptism with water are all separate links in this chain. No link in a chain must ever be broken if its function is ever to be fulfilled. One individual link, baptism by immersion in water can only save, provided the whole chain remains intact. This type of baptism disqualifies any act of baptism where the active will of the baptismal candidate is lacking.

13) It is often objected that when one accepts the biblical position on baptism by water and follows through with personal obedience, one's service in the state Church and certain other fellowships becomes impossible. The state Church will often not accept a baptized believer in it's ministry. Unfortunately, this fear is often well founded.

However, if we approach the issues of the Holy Scriptures in this kind of spirit, we shall never be able to penetrate very far into the realm of God's wisdom and guidance. If human considerations decide our obedience, we shall not get far in the counsels of God. It is wrong to first inquire into the possible benefit of obeying and of prevailing opinion in a matter and then ask for God's advice! God's will must be discovered at the outset,

Baptism

without any human prejudice at all. Only after having gained a full understanding of God's desire can the problematic human aspects be considered. The full authority of the Holy Spirit will never be experienced in any issue if we consent to compromise ourselves in any way. We cannot render any real service to God if we are prepared to deny God's own counsel in performing it. But if "we adorn the doctrine" even of baptism by consideration and friendliness, one can penetrate many barriers. I have ministered in many state church pulpits with no difficulties myself. One must, however, not be quarrelsome or strive unnecessarily.

A certain evangelist was once offered a tempting mission. A denomination representing many nations invited him to work amongst their individual congregations under the condition, however that he never celebrated the Holy Communion or collaborated with any other denominations. For the sake of a broad ministry, that is, he was to abandon the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Had he accepted the offer, he would have compromised his own conscience and thus grieved the Holy Spirit.

Some Critical Considerations

If we grieve the empowering Spirit, who then will strengthen us for any mission? It is detrimental to our faith to accept any mission if we trouble our conscience or grieve the Spirit thereby. The Holy Spirit who enables *any service to Christ*, is thereby inactivated. But the person who loves God's word above everything else is given strength and wisdom by God to overcome all obstacles in the Church or elsewhere in love and humility. Such a man is being prepared for much greater missions than those which any organization can offer him and which he rejected in obedience to his biblical conviction and understanding.

If one is prepared to believe uncompromisingly in such a manner, even in questions of conscience and understanding, God will reward this by revealing Himself in power and might. The unfailing law, "According to our faith, so be it to us", remains valid forever.

14) God has used in His service very well known men who never took baptism seriously. In some instances He has used such men more than others, who perhaps practiced baptism. It must be emphasized that God uses men, who are willing to accord to Him and to

Baptism

His word their loving obedience and first priority— i.e. to seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness – regardless of any differing scriptural understanding, to the best of their knowledge.

But God has little use for men who gain great knowledge, but do not act upon what they believe to be right. If there is a genuine lack of understanding and all decisions are conscientiously made according to our present knowledge using the Word as the only standard, God will bless. I personally know of no man of God, who, after considering questions that were important to him, acted contrary to his conscience and was nonetheless blessed with the authority of God's power. Such who do not act according to their innermost convictions are always unconvincing and powerless in influencing others.

15) Some even earnest Christians assert that the question of baptism is simply irrelevant to them and they just neglect it accordingly. We refer such people to the numerous passages of scripture quoted in the foregoing chapters. After having considered the great number of references to baptism, it should become clear to such children of God

Some Critical Considerations

(if the entire word of God is important to them) that judging from the New Testament, this matter is of very considerable importance indeed, even as a subtle testimony to the nature of the new birth. If they should persist in their opinion that baptism is unimportant, one must ask why it is important in the Bible, but not to them? Could it possibly be that God cannot reveal certain doctrines of the Bible to us because we approach them with the preconceived prejudice that they are unimportant? God wishes us to receive His entire word earnestly, but we have regarded—perhaps unconsciously—the holy as if it were unholy. God does not throw pearls, or even pearls of doctrine at men, who do not know how to appreciate them.

I once spoke about these matters with a very kind over 70 year old lady, who had remained spiritually dynamic and was interested in all things concerning God's commandments. As she came from state Church circles, she knew little of the baptism of believers, but was prepared to accept (theoretically at least) everything that the Bible taught. At the end of a thoroughly enjoyable hour, she said she believed the doctrine of baptism with water to be

Baptism

thoroughly biblical, but maintained Christ was much greater than the act of baptism itself. Was it really necessary to practice baptism despite this? I then had to point out to her how dangerous it can be to love an “imaginary Jesus”, a Jesus who is not in the Word of God, but stems from our own imagination of “greatness”. How can Jesus, the Savior, be greater than his own Word in the Holy Scripture? Jesus still proclaims: “He who loves me will keep my Word.” The greater the Savior in our life, the more we will love him by honoring, obeying and fulfilling His every word. The whole Bible, Old and New Testament, and not only the apostles’ writings, are Jesus’ word to us. Did He Himself not say while He was still on earth, that He had much more to teach the disciples, but only after he had gone to be with His Father? At that time they were not ready for the deeper doctrines. “I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. But when He is come, the Spirit of truth, He shall guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). When Jesus ascended into heaven, the entire truth God had wished to convey to us was not yet available to us because we were not yet ready for it. Only after Jesus had returned to

Some Critical Considerations

His Father, was this revelation complete through the action of the Holy Spirit in the Acts, the epistles and John's revelation. The Holy Scriptures represent a perfect unity which we should accept and use as such, if we are to reach full spiritual growth. It is untenable to reason our Lord is greater than the doctrine of His own word. This is relevant and applies to the baptism of believers too.

16) There is no need to discuss here the well-known "proof" for the validity of infant baptism (Matt 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 13:16). The invitation: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me..." is not a statement concerning baptism, but generally confirms that children can also be saved and come to Jesus, and then receive His baptismal blessing.

17) In the course of a conversation about New Testament baptism, a kind elderly lady once told me she accepted all the Bible said on this question, but that she would never be baptized herself. She did not believe God required this action of her, as she had grown up in her conviction about infant baptism and did not consider it necessary to change it now.

This attitude is often adopted because God

Baptism

is seen as a tyrant, who makes extortionate demands, and not as the One waiting to bless us by obedience. People who think thus, have forgotten to consider our human nature. God is not like humans or human systems, who demand a standardized response before accepting someone as a member. He does not demand subservience. Instead He woos us in order to win our loving obedience. We will never answer as this good lady did, if our true love binds us to Him. Genuine love never asks “how much must I do to appease him? What is the bare minimum?” It inquires, “How much may I do to show him my love?”

Chapter 5

The Dangers of Infant Baptism

Summary

A) The entire symbolism of the New Testament baptism of faith is distorted through the sprinkling of infants, and the most powerful symbolism of the nature of New Testament conversion and the victorious life in the strength of the resurrection is lost.

B) Infant baptism as a dedication of babes to God presents a problem if a parent looks upon the dedication as a form of baptism and thus replaces any subsequent need for the baptism of believers. The Christian, who theoretically believes in dedication of this sort treats it as a water baptism, if he does not later baptize the converted, or get baptized himself. Infant baptism or dedication does not guarantee salvation.

C) Christians owe the world a clear and

Baptism

lucid testimony of what it means to be a Christian. The doctrine of believers baptism in the Bible is so lucid that it offers us a powerful opportunity to proclaim the whole gospel: Forgiveness of sins, death to the old natural man, and a victorious and fulfilled life in Christ. This doctrine must not be watered down. Unfortunately, it often appears that the people who claim that the doctrine of baptism is of minor importance are often the same people who will take special care to ensure their own infants are “baptized”.

To close, we will quote Acts 2:41: “Those then, who had accepted His word (i.e. accepted it as true in it’s entirety) were baptized (immersed).” The consequences will soon be drawn by those receiving the word with an open mind and an obedient will: They will be baptized as believers. Whoever acknowledges and accepts the word of God as wholly true will be baptized. The question every child of God must answer before God is, “Do I believe in the practice of the entire word of God, or only chosen segments which happen to suit me?”

Following an evangelization campaign, an elderly lady approached me for counseling. She complained that her heart had become

The Dangers of Infant Baptism

empty and cold. She wished to love the Lord Jesus Christ more fervently, but in spite of all her endeavors He remained so distant and unreal to her perception. I then inquired of her which of Jesus' commandments she had kept that very day, whereupon she looked very surprised indeed. "What has that got to do with the destitution of my soul?" "A great deal" was my answer. "Jesus said the same. 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.' (John 15:10) Which commandment have you observed today, so as to abide in the abundance of His love?" I then said to her, "Perhaps the obedience of believer's baptism might meet the bill?"

She responded that she lived alone and therefore could not keep any commandments. I was not satisfied with this, and so asked her whom she had met that day. She had only talked with the baker and his wife while shopping. This at least presented one opportunity for obeying one of Gods commandments to share the gospel, in actions as well as words, and to show them the love of Jesus. She left me after this.

I think she understood. The warmth of love for Jesus, the abiding in His love, is only to be ensured if His commandments are constantly

Baptism

kept as an absolute standard for all activities in one's life. *The heights and depths of God's love are only experienced by the Christian who reads God's word with the intention of firstly discovering God's counsels, and secondly of putting them into practice.* This is valid, be it concerning the question of baptism or of any other biblical doctrine.

It is because the understanding of baptism offers a basis for obedience to God's commands and at the same time a chance to respond through obedience to His love, we have dared to engage in this controversy. *How to abide in His love is the underlying theme and purpose of this booklet.* The doctrine of baptism provides us with an exemplary illustration useful to this end, and hence we decided to publish a treatise on this complex issue, although I am not a theologian, nor even a Baptist for that matter!

Every step of faith often involves great levels of discipline, and matters of doctrine are no exception. But our loving Father rejoices over every venture of faith, be it in matters of baptism or of any other scriptural doctrine. He rewards every such step in one way or another. The Father's loving heart devises a recompense to every child

The Dangers of Infant Baptism

individually for every act of obedience. Steps of faith offer Him possibilities of demonstrating to us His special love for us.

Chapter 6

Addendum

In the treatment of the biblical texts concerning believer's baptism there is one outstanding text which was not treated in the original book which was published in German 20 years ago. That text is 1 Corinthians 15:29, which in the English Revised Version reads, "Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? Why am I in peril every hour? I protest brethren, by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised 'let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.'" The Mormons use I Cor 15:29 to justify their practice of being baptised by proxy to save their dead relatives who died without having received the Mormon baptism before their death. If some Mormon is baptised for them, they can allegedly get out of the "spirit prison" into heaven. The error is

that the work of a Mormon in proxy baptism can save the dead— a doctrine unknown to all the rest of the New Testament.

The baptism of which Paul speaks here has therefore to do with Paul's way of life, being in peril every day. The naive "straightforward" interpretation of this Corinthian text is that the believers at that time were having themselves baptized in water for brethren who had already died — and that vicariously, as it were, by deputizing for them by being baptized in water for them after they had died. An act of this kind of deputation is, however, not to be found elsewhere in the whole of the New Testament. For baptism was always in the New Testament a perfectly straightforward act of personal obedience on behalf of the baptismal candidate himself. The whole idea of baptism by proxy is theologically inconceivable, but especially if it were a proxy act involving a person already in eternity. How could a person who is already dead testify by baptism that he now lives in "newness of life" as the New Testament uniformly teaches?

What then is the meaning of the words, "being baptized on behalf of the dead?" (1 Cor. 15:29), and, "Why am I in peril (of dying) every hour... I die daily."? In the rest of the Holy Scripture one finds no mention of

Baptism

any believer being baptized in water by proxy for another believer who has already passed on into eternity. To build up a practice of doing so would be to build up a major new doctrine on one text which can be interpreted in a different manner. It would bring with it a teaching that a rite performed on earth for a person already in eternity could profit him there beyond the grave, which would indeed have sweeping consequences. It would in fact serve as fuel for the Roman Catholic doctrine which led to the sale of indulgences before the reformation. The Mormons have fallen back into this pre-reformation error of the sale of indulgences, a doctrine which was scandalously abused in that era of church history. There is, as far as I am aware, no other text in the Scripture that suggests that the rite of baptism on earth could ever be applied by proxy, either for the living or the dead, so we shall have to investigate for further possibilities of interpretation. The text was certainly written for our profit today, so we ought to be able to understand it.

As far as I can see, the baptism referred to cannot apply to the usual New Testament baptism by immersion in water – such as we have already discussed. It seems *superficially* to have been a general practice in Corinth for members to have been “baptized” for other members who had already passed away. But

surely it does not seem possible that such baptisms were carried out for departed spirits, who would have something to gain from an ordinary baptism. We read nothing of possible lacks the thief on the cross might have suffered in paradise because he failed to experience baptism before he died. On the contrary, he experienced the supreme joy of being with his Master Christ in paradise. What more could he wish for? This joy came about because of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and had nothing to do whatsoever with any form of baptism, by proxy or otherwise.

It should be noted at this point that this state of affairs gives the lie to the Roman Catholic doctrine of baptism, which demands among other things, the emergency baptism even of infants who cannot be born without their dying. The doctor or priest is required to “baptize” the dying infant before it actually expires, to make it “safe” for eternity. The Bible mentions nothing of any such doctrine concerning baptism, neither does it inform us that anyone had to be so baptized, for the thief on the cross never had the opportunity in order to ensure his salvation. The words of Jesus were perfectly sufficient: “Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise!” By this word the poor man entered into paradise – and by nothing else.

Baptism

In Summary

1 Cor. 15 speaks almost exclusively of dying as the route of entry into resurrection life. The Apostle Paul cites in this chapter 15 the witnesses of the resurrection of the Savior who thus died. All relevant information on this supreme event is cited. The Lord came into this mortal life with the purpose of dying here for it. He gave His life as a ransom for many. Now there are two sorts of death which are possible for us:

1) One can die a natural death by illness, aging, accidents etc. If the candidate for death had given over his life to the Lord Jesus Christ before he died, then he will enter the resurrection life.

2) One can, if one is a believer, perfectly voluntarily lay down one's life and sacrifice it for Him in His service in the "small daily acts of life", thereby dying to oneself by denying oneself daily in His service. As Paul said, "I die daily." Was it with respect to this "baptism for the dead"?

Accordingly we can endeavor to keep our bodies healthy and strong as long as possible, to gain the maximum service for Christ out of it, before it succumbs to the second law of thermodynamics and dies. The second possibility is to knowingly move up to the front line in the mortal fight against Satan. In

this exposed position, Satan may, - with the Lord's express permission - take our life earlier than otherwise normal.

1) The Christian may aim, like Abraham, to die full of days and satisfied with abundance of life. Abraham was some 175 years old when he died (1 Moses 25:28), and was then called home. 2) Or the Christian may see a special purpose in life which can only be fulfilled in giving his life before the normal time has come and may offer his young life early on the altar of martyrdom. (The Muslim believers have developed this doctrine to an unhealthy degree and *seek martyrdom* in war, because of the desirability of the heavenly reward, as they think).

The Lord Jesus chose this second option even before he was born here on earth. Right at the height of His strength at just over about 30 years old, He went up to Jerusalem to consciously lay down His life for the sins of the world. No ordinary mortal could do this – and should not attempt to do so, because no mortal human can offer to God a sinless life, such as Jesus, the Son of God could, and did. (See Luke 9:31, Luke 9:51-53, Luke 13:33-34, Luke 18:31, Luke 19:11 etc.). Abraham chose option 1. Both ways can represent the perfect will of God. But direct martyrdom is seldom an option in the normal sense of the

Baptism

word, for no man has in himself the possibility of offering his life as a perfect, well pleasing sacrifice to God in the same way that the son of God did.

But every Christian is encouraged to deny himself and follow Christ in this attitude of self-denial, thus “dying to himself daily”. This can be interpreted as included in option 2. It is necessary to elaborate on both options a little, as much of present day preaching, even by men of God, avoids the subject. We live in a society bent on enjoying itself to the “full”. Anything less than that is not “in” today.

The Apostle Paul chose perfectly consciously option 2. He was as one condemned to death and says so: “ For I think that God has exhibited us Apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death: because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ’s, sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless and we labor working, with our own hands. When reviled, we bless. When persecuted, we endure. When slandered we try to conciliate. We have become and are now as the refuse of the world, the off

scouring of all things. I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children... I urge you then, be imitators of me.”

We must add here another word as to option 2. The Lord Jesus Christ named His freely opted way of life leading to and culminating in His death on the cross, a baptism. “Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” They said to Him, “We are able.” Mark 10:39 adds these significant words: “The cup that I drink, you will drink: and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized: but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

A freely chosen way of life is in this view a baptism. It consists of acts of obedience just as water baptism is an act of obedience. The drinking of the bitter cup of suffering for Christ’s sake is characterized as an immersion and is thus a baptism in the scriptural sense of the word.

Hebrews chapter 6 describes such baptism as the foundational element of Christian doctrine - the various types of baptism are cited in Hebrews 6 specifically.

It should be mentioned that option No. 1 - to live as long a life as possible in the service

Baptism

of Christ will probably lead to Option No. 2 as 2 Tim. 3:12 points out very clearly. "Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." That is, we may affirm that options 1 & 2 will both lead to a baptism of suffering in some measure or another sooner or later. But then the message of 2 Tim. 2 :12 must be fulfilled: "If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him, if we endure, we shall also reign with Him." Paul writes to the Colossian believers with respect to the problem of suffering a quite remarkable piece of information. "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake and in my flesh *I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the Church.*" Colossians 1:24. That is, Paul sets out to heap up the weight of sufferings in his own body, which then are accounted to the balance of suffering which the body of the Church is appointed to bear. That is, all Christian suffering for Christ is weighed up in the account of the sufferings of the whole body of Christ, and the measure of suffering, if it is too light concerning the whole body of Christ, Paul could contribute to the weight of suffering for the whole Church, the Body of Christ. For it must be remembered that it was the weight of suffering in Christ's body which contributed to redeeming us from the weight of sin. There

is a unity in the Body of Christ, the Church, and this unity is increased by suffering in the Gospel. When its measure of suffering as a whole unit is full, then it will have “ceased from sin” and be much more powerful than at present.

It is good to ponder the meaning of the well known words of the Apostle who said, that he who had suffered in the flesh for Christ’s sake, had done with sin. “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin (- has done with sin). 1 Pet. 4:1. Suffering for Christ’s sake in a world ruled by Satan, is here seen as a cure for wayward sinfulness in the Church, as well as a means of filling up the measure of suffering which the whole body of the Church must bear during its time-trial and purification on earth. This is part of the reason why the pleasures of this life do make war on the Christian soul. 1 Peter 2:11 confirms this fact - that the avoidance of suffering and other inconveniences prevents the work of suffering even in the Christian soul. For suffering for Christ’s sake helps us in the process of sin clean-up in the believer.

This baptism of suffering is in addition, a teaching aid for angels, to show them how

Baptism

God works in the human condition to bring them (the humans) to perfection as taught in Heb. 12:7. "It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons: for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?... If you are left without discipline in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Even God's Son Jesus learned obedience through the things that He suffered." (Heb. 5:8), Should his sons or His disciples learn differently than He Himself learned? Ephesians 3:10 teaches that God instructs even angels by His dealings with the Church through suffering. "...through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places."

There is, therefore a baptism in water, a baptism in the Holy Spirit, a baptism of suffering, and a baptism in fire. However, because, "Obedience is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22) Christ was willing to show perfect obedience right up to the cross, and therefore God has raised Him up to the highest office in heaven and on earth to the right hand of the majesty on high. *The baptism of suffering was the cup which the Lord Jesus Christ had to drink to the dregs as a qualification for the highest office in the universe.*

The Apostle Paul informs us that this “baptism of suffering” not only won us our free salvation for eternity, but that the Lord Himself “profited” from this baptism, for He Himself learned obedience thereby (Heb. 5:8). It was because Christ the Lord combined this kind of obedience to the Word and counsels of God and the corresponding personal sacrifice, that is, He humbled Himself and His Will to these two attributes of character, *this qualified Him for the highest ruling position or office in heaven and on earth*. Any person qualified by such suffering is better capable of ruling the Universe ably and justly. Therefore, “...every knee in heaven, on earth and under the earth shall confess Him as Lord...” (Phil. 2:8-9).

The cup of suffering which the Lord Jesus Christ drank to the dregs, this baptism of suffering brought us salvation, but in addition to our salvation it brought to the Lord Himself the “power of attorney” (in the German the *pro cura*, “die uneingeschränkte Vollmacht!”, the unlimited power of attorney, just as a regent rules as a king. But Jesus the Lord won the actual throne of Heaven and Earth by this baptism).

We must now return to the original problem, that of “being baptized for the dead” (1 Cor. 15:29). Paul understood perfectly the spiritual principles which were hidden behind

Baptism

the baptism of suffering which the Lord freely took onto Himself... and also the supreme results of taking this baptism on to Himself. This is the deeper meaning behind 2 Tim. 2:12. "If we suffer with Him then we shall also reign with Him" The passage in Philippians 3:8 brings us the same message: "Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse in order that I might gain Christ..." That is, in order to gain Christ's confidence, Paul was ready to suffer the loss of all things - even his life, just as Jesus the Lord did for him. Paul was willing to take on himself the baptism of suffering just as the Lord himself did so that he might gain the out-resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:11), that is the *first resurrection which ushers in Christ's kingdom on the renewed earth*. To suffer with Christ means that just as Christ gained the throne by suffering, so His children will gain the throne the same way. Salvation is free, but ruling with Him is conditioned by the same rules He adhered to.

Hebrews 11:35 brings us precisely the same message: "The martyrs accepted no relief from their martyrdom, in order to gain a better resurrection." Their Lord was made perfect by suffering even unto death and thus

gained the throne (=“power of attorney”) of heaven and earth, for thus He showed Himself worthy of the crown of glory. One who out of love for us drank the bitter cup to the dregs, will rule justly. If only our politicians justified their rights to rule over us on the same basis, one would then have a little more confidence in them than one has at the moment!

The fire mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:12 burns away the wood, hay and stubble of unworthy works practiced even by Christians, purifying the Christian from his evil ways and producing the “heat and light” of his Christian testimony in so doing.

There exists among Christians a corporate attitude of mind which turns back at nothing when it comes to serving the Lord of glory. Such Christians do not shrink back from even death when it comes to the test and are already dead to themselves. They bow to the will of God, Christ’s yoke upon them, and earn the same wages (= the power of attorney) for their attitude of mind that Christ earned on the cross.

Is it necessary to apply these teachings to our text in 1 Corinthians 15:29? We believe that it is necessary! There are at least small groups of Christians in the West who stop at nothing when it comes to serving the Lord. Think of the thousands of women in the

Baptism

formerly Communist countries who willingly permitted their husbands to defy the atheistic Communist regimes, who sent them to concentration camps for this defiance. They often could have secured their pardon, had they recanted on their faith. The wives of these men often brought up their children by themselves while their husbands languished in prison. John Bunyan could have avoided the 13 or so years in Bedford prison, had he but promised the bishop he would preach no more. But he accepted the suffering and imprisonment rather than deny his Lord. Until one night the bishop heard there was an unknown man preaching every night to huge crowds in London. Bunyan's jailer had become a Christian under Bunyan's testimony in the years he spent in jail, and left the key to the prison in Bunyan's keeping every night! After the jailer's conversion, he (the jailer) decided he ought not to prevent the preaching of God's word, and left the key to the prison key within reach of John Bunyan, so that he let himself out most nights, traveled to London and there preached the gospel. Bunyan's blind little daughter brought her father his daily food to the jail, although the whole family was on the brink of starvation.

I believe there is a class of Christians even in this day and age, who consciously, according to the calling and will of God, take

unto themselves this baptism of suffering. Not everyone is so called to this kind of baptism, but only those whom God has appointed, for there are various callings in the Church. In the former Soviet Russia, anyone who openly confessed Christ, especially in public water baptism, was a marked man, and this included his whole family. His children would certainly be excluded from studying in the universities, so he and all of his family were condemned to menial employment for life.

The converted Christian was therefore condemned at his water baptism to a life of suffering and persecution often ending in death in one concentration camp or another. The Christian who understands this aspect of suffering and takes it upon himself personally, contributes something to the total measure of suffering which is appointed the Church as a whole to bear. Thus the man who did so was being, as it were, "baptized" for the "corporation" of all Christians living or departed and gone to be with the Lord, by bearing a portion of the suffering appointed the Church according to the will of God. Therefore it could be said of such men that they were baptized for the dead, believers who are now with the Lord, helping to fill up the appointed cup of suffering for the whole body of believers, the whole Church of God.

Baptism

Of course, this does not mean that Christians should be masochistic (taking pleasure in suffering for suffering's sake,) like the monks of the middle ages who inflicted bodily harm on themselves because they thought that suffering was pleasing to God and therefore ought to be sought. The Bible teaches us to keep our bodies fit for the service of the Lord as much as we possibly can, but also to "keep the body under" (1 Cor. 9:27), that is to prevent our bodily appetites from gaining sway over us. But if our service to the Lord demands it, nothing should hold us back from suffering for His names sake. It is a matter of our understanding – as far as mortal men can – and our attitude of mind toward the sufferings of Christ and the fruit it bears.

The whole Church is one body. 1 Corinthians teaches very clearly, "If one member suffers, then all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together." Surely then, if one member voluntarily goes in for the baptism of suffering, because the Lord so appointed his way for him, then all members of Christ will partake of *this* baptism, even though they are in Christ's presence, death having taken them.

We should not be intolerant to Biblical ways of thought, even those that may be new to us,

but we should ascertain whether or not the Lord of the Church is assaying to increase our devotion to Him. But certainly such views should never lead us to unhealthy masochism, but to aspiration to serve Him maximally – just as He served us on the Cross.

Books by Dr. A.E. Wilder-Smith

TWFT Publishers
P.O. Box 8000
Costa Mesa, Ca. 92628
1 (800) 272-WORD

AIDS: Fact without Fiction **Item# AW001**

A comprehensive, up-to-date presentation of the facts about this new plague. Discusses its discovery, its spreading about the world, its medical effects and the efforts to overcome the disease as well as the politics involved.

Why Does God Allow It? **Item# AW002**

If there is a God — why does He permit all the violence and suffering in the world? Sensible answers to questions that have plagued people since the beginning of time.

He Who Thinks Has To Believe **Item# AW003**

A hypothetical story about a society of "Primitive" Neanderthal people discovered by a modern rescue team. The rescuers are amazed to find that the natives have quite reasonably come to the conclusion that there is a Creator God.

The Natural Sciences Know

Nothing of Evolution **Item# AW004**

The Natural Sciences themselves are contrary to the theory of Evolution as is demonstrated in detail in this challenging thesis.

The Scientific Alternative to Neo-Darwinian

Evolutionary Theory **Item# AW005**

Modern Darwinism is in a constant state of flux. New theories are developed almost daily to try to explain away the obvious difficulties presented by advancing science, often casting off reason and experimental verification in preference to

postulating the existence of a Creator. Here we present the scientific alternative to Neo-Darwinism.

The Creation of Life

Item# AW006

A classic, exposing scientific materialism and concluding that to have an efficient design you must have an efficient designer.

Is This a God of Love?

Item# AW007

Many today stumble at the seeming conflict between the truth that God is Love, and the obvious suffering we see in the world around us. This book is primarily written to the unbeliever who wants to believe, but lacks a good perspective of the world in which we live.

Man's Origin, Man's Destiny

Item# AW008

In recent history mankind has undergone a complete reversal of perspective on the origins of the human race from one of belief in the supernatural to another which proposes a purely naturalistic explanation. The inevitable result is that men no longer have a clear sense of purpose; of the meaning and sanctity of life. Only by understanding the origin of all things can we hope to regain our focus on who we are now and what is our eternal destiny.

**Baptism and its Influence on
Christian Devotion**

Item# AW009

Opinions on the importance of Baptism today range from indifference to vital for salvation. This balanced approach dispels some of the misconceptions and discusses the importance of obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus to, "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.

The Day Nazi Germany Died

Item# BW001

An autobiography by Beate Wilder-Smith, Dr. Wilder-Smith's wife. An eyewitness account of life in Nazi Germany and the Russian and Allied invasion.



Dr. A.E. Wilder-Smith

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A. E. Wilder-Smith studied natural sciences at Oxford, England. He received his first doctorate in Physical Organic Chemistry at Reading University, England, in 1941. During World War II, he joined the Research department of ICI in England. After the war, he became Countess of Lisburne Memorial Fellow at the University of London. Subsequently, Dr. Wilder-Smith was appointed Director of Research for a Swiss pharmaceutical company. Later he was elected to teach Chemotherapy and Pharmacology at the Medical School of the University of Geneva for which position he received his 'habilitation' (the senior examination required for professorial appointments to European continental universities). At Geneva, he earned his second doctorate, followed by a third doctorate from the ETH (a senior university in Switzerland) in Zuerich.

In 1957 - 1958 Wilder-Smith was Visiting Assistant Professor at the Medical Centre of the University of Illinois, 1959 - 1961 Visiting Full Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Bergen Medical School in Norway. After a further two years at the University in Geneva, he was appointed Full Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Illinois Medical Centre. Here he received - in three succeeding years - three 'Golden Apple' awards for the best course of lectures, together with four senior lecturer awards for the best series of senior year lectures.

Wilder-Smith is also a well known speaker on many other topics. He is Author and Co-Author of over seventy scientific publications and more than thirty books which have been published in some seventeen languages. His 'Man's Origin, Man's Destiny' and 'The Creation Of Life' are Christian classics. Other books authored by him include 'AIDS: Fact Without Fiction', 'He Who Thinks Has To Believe', 'Is This A God Of Love?', and 'The Natural Sciences Know Nothing of Evolution.'

The film series 'Origins', which enjoys great popularity in many countries was produced by Dr. Wilder-Smith. He has also produced two new films in the 'Origins' series - one on Thermodynamics, and another on Information Theory.

Dr. Wilder-Smith's last Golden Apple award was inscribed, 'He made us not only better scientists, but also better men.'

**THE WORD
FOR TODAY**

Box 8000 Costa Mesa CA 92628 (714) 979-0706