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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BAPTISM OF JOHN  
AND CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of New Testament Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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June 1955

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Even the casual reader of the New Testament cannot long escape the importance which the New Testament writers attach to the sacrament of baptism. Nor needs one to have studied theology very extensively to discover that the doctrine of baptism has long been the subject of theological debate, particularly since the time of the Reformation. Recent interest in the subject stems from what Oscar Cullman calls "the most serious challenge to infant baptism which has ever been offered."<sup>1</sup> He refers to Karl Barth's booklet on The Teaching of the Church concerning Baptism.

This thesis is not written in answer to any current controversy on the subject. It grew rather out of a personal interest in the subject of baptism. Increasing interest in the topic led inevitably to the question of the relationship between Christian baptism and its prototype in John's baptism. This thesis is a beginning in the direction of an answer to that question. The problem is, of course, not an original one, for it has been the subject of much previous exegetical investigation.

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Cullman, Baptism in the New Testament, translated by J. K. S. Reid (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1950), p. 8.



It is only a beginning, and that for two reasons. In the first place, the topic began to assume dimensions which were not originally foreseen. While, for the most part, the inquiry has been brought to a satisfactory conclusion, at the same time a host of subsidiary issues were encountered which, in justice to the subject, deserve a fuller treatment than they have been given. Secondly, this thesis uses only secondary sources, relying heavily on the comments and findings of other authors on this or related subjects.

In seeking to answer the problem this thesis limits itself to working within the Biblical framework. It completely ignores questions regarding the authenticity and historicity of certain passages; e.g., Mt. 28:19. This is not to say that such inquiries are not legitimate aspects of the exegetical discipline, but that such investigations lie outside the scope of this thesis. It furthermore confines itself to such evidence on the subject as, in the opinion of the writer, is furnished by a study of the Scriptures. Therefore, strictly extra-Biblical material is excluded such as, e.g., the studies which seek to find the origin of John's baptism in the purificatory rites of the mystery religions or in Jewish proselyte baptisms. Again, this is not to say that, from a purely human point of view, these may not have been instrumental in creating for John a rite appropriate to his purposes. Nor is this to say that they are not valid subjects of inquiry and cannot contribute much by way of



background material. However, the assumption of this thesis is that, whatever the human agent, ultimately John's baptism finds its source in God's initiative. Throughout this thesis is concerned primarily with the relationship of the theological content of the two baptisms.

This thesis does not claim to be an exhaustive treatment, either of John's baptism, or of Christian baptism; nor does it pretend to have spoken the last word on their relationship. It rather highlights what, to the mind of the writer, are the significant elements which must be taken into account in any treatment of the subject. This thesis finds in Christian baptism an outgrowth of John's baptism. It, therefore, examines the basic features of John's message and relates them to his baptism. It then examines these same features in the light of Christ as the Fulfiller and traces their relationship to Christian baptism. The conclusions are briefly stated in the last chapter. It will readily be seen that in this manner of investigation the theological content of John's baptism is somewhat determinative in the investigation of the theological content of Christian baptism. For this reason not all the New Testament passages which refer to Christian baptism have been examined, but principally those which address themselves more explicitly to this limitation.



## CHAPTER II

### JOHN'S BAPTISM: THE TOKEN OF A UNIQUE PROPHETIC OFFICE

For a correct interpretation of John's baptism, it is necessary to understand the person of the Baptist. And rightly to understand the Baptist, it is necessary to consider him in his mission as the last Old Testament prophet.

The events surrounding his birth already evidence a strong Old Testament flavor. His father was executing his function as an Old Testament priest (Lk. 1:8). The angel made his appearance in the Temple (Lk. 1:11). John was to go forth in the spirit and power of Elias (Lk. 1:15). The song of praise sung by Zecharias echoes Old Testament phraseology in blessing God for His promises spoken through the mouth of the prophets (Lk. 1:68-79).

In prophesying of this child his father explicitly calls him a prophet: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest" (Lk. 1:76). To this end he was filled with the Spirit in preparation for his prophetic office (Lk. 1:15), and was thus marked as God's own from his birth. His ministry was to be similar to that of Elias, both as to its source and its effect (Lk. 1:17). John's call into the prophetic office is described in terms reminiscent of the calls of the other Old Testament prophets (Lk. 3:2; 1 Sam. 15:10; Jer. 1:1). The fourth evangelist testifies that the



Baptist was sent by God (Jn. 1:6), a commission which characterized the Old Testament prophets (cf. Is. 6:8).

Other prophetic characteristics of John include his solitude, a feature which he shared with Jeremiah (Jer. 15:17). His camel's hair garment was the typical rough attire of the prophets (Zech. 13:4; 2 Ki. 1:8). He was certain that his was a divine mission, a circumstance which made him a fearless spokesman for the Lord.<sup>1</sup> But what stamped him decisively as an Old Testament prophet was his witness to the One who was yet to come (Mt. 11:3 ff.).

But John was not merely one in a succession of prophets. His was a unique prophetic office. His contemporaries already regarded him as a remarkable man (Jn. 1:19 ff.; Lk. 3:15; Ac. 13:25). Christ's judgment confirms their view. As the Way-preparer John was more than a prophet (Mt. 11:9). He was Elias who was to come (Mt. 11:14; 17:10-13), "God's fit man for God's apt deed."<sup>2</sup>

The current expectation of Elijah's return was based on the prophecy of Malachi (3:1,23). This expectation hoped that before the day of judgment the prophet Elijah would

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<sup>1</sup>Regarding John's question from prison, it can be said that this in no way reflected an uncertainty on the part of the Baptist with respect to his divine mission. His faith in the Coming One remained quite firm. At most it describes a doubt as to the identity of the Coming one.

<sup>2</sup>"Matthew and Mark," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), VII, 381.



come to set in order all that had occurred against God's command.<sup>3</sup> Elijah's return would mark the beginning of the end, the unfolding of the whole eschatological drama.<sup>4</sup>

Schniewind comments:

For if Elijah has come, then the end has begun. And more. It is Jesus who speaks of Elijah. If John is Elijah, who, then, is Jesus? He is none other than the Coming One (Mt. 11:3), the Mightier One (Mt. 3:11), the Son of Man, who comes from heaven.<sup>5</sup>

Therein lay the uniqueness of John's prophetic office. In him began the "eschatological fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies."<sup>6</sup> There were many prophets, but only one Forerunner of the Lord's Christ, and this was he. He had the mission "to restore all things that in Israel had been perverted through sin; that is, in order to prepare the Way for the Messiah."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>For a full discussion of contemporary Jewish expectations regarding Elijah's return, cf. Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, "Exkurse zu Einzelnen Stellen des Neuen Testaments," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament Aus Talmud und Midrasch (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928), IV, 764-798.

<sup>4</sup>The disparity between the Old Testament prophecies and contemporary notions may account for John's refusal to acknowledge this title (cf. Jn. 1:21). Or it may also be that he did not know himself to be Elijah Redivivus. He knew himself simply as the  $\rho\omega\nu\eta$  (Jn. 1:23).

<sup>5</sup>Julius Schniewind, "Das Evangelium nach Matthaeus," Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1950), II, 145. Translation my own.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>7</sup>Bernhard Weiss, A Commentary on the New Testament, translated from the German by G. H. Schodde and E. Wilson



John, the last Old Testament prophet, whose was a unique prophetic office, fulfilled his office with an equally unique emblem of office; namely, his baptism. The uniqueness of this token of his office is already seen in the fact that his surname-- βαπτιστής --is used of him alone. This name was especially constructed for him and exclusively applied to him.<sup>8</sup> There was nothing new about a rite of baptism. The Pharisees, the Essenes, the Hemero-Baptists, and others all practiced types of baptism.<sup>9</sup> But whereas such baptisms were all self-administered, John's baptism was unique in this respect, that the Word gave it its significant content.<sup>10</sup> For such a baptism a baptizer was indispensable, and hence the surname.<sup>11</sup>

John's baptism enjoyed a uniqueness not only among his contemporaries, but more important, in the prophetic host that had gone on before. Among the Old Testament prophets

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(New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1906), I, 146.

<sup>8</sup>A. Cepke, "βαπτιστής," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1933), I, 544.

<sup>9</sup>For a discussion of the prototypes of John's baptism, cf. Carl H. Kraeling, John the Baptist (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), pp. 95-122.

<sup>10</sup>The significance of John's message for the content of his baptism will form the burden of the next three chapters.

<sup>11</sup>Adolph Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthaeus (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1948), pp. 53 ff.



the symbolic deed was an important instrument for communication. But in a sense it also helped bring about what it was intended to express.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Wheeler Robinson arrives at the following conclusion:

The symbolic deed . . . forcibly expresses the divine purpose to others, since actions speak louder than words. But there is something more than this, something brought over from earlier phases of the imitative act. The prophetic act is itself a part of the will of Jahweh, to whose complete fulfillment it points; it brings that will nearer to its completion, not only as declaring it, but in some small degree as effecting it. It corresponds with the prophetic perfect of Hebrew syntax, by regarding the will of God as already fulfilled.<sup>13</sup>

If this be true of the symbolical action of previous Old Testament prophets, it is uniquely true of the last Old Testament prophet. John's symbolical act, his baptism, conveyed everything which his message proclaimed. As John proclaimed the nearness of the Kingdom of God, so his baptism opened the door of its threshold.<sup>14</sup> As John preached repentance, so his baptism effected repentance and conveyed forgiveness.<sup>15</sup> As John bore witness to a Mightier One who was yet to come, so also his baptism was to be superseded by a great-

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<sup>12</sup>Cf. Josh. 8:18,26; 1 Ki. 22:11; Jer. 27:1-7; 28:10-14.

<sup>13</sup>H. W. Robinson, Old Testament Essays, edited by D. C. Simpson, as quoted in W. F. Flemington, The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism (London: SPCK, 1953), p. 21.

<sup>14</sup>Infra, Chapter III.

<sup>15</sup>Infra, Chapter IV.



er baptism.<sup>16</sup>

In summary of this chapter we conclude that John, the last of the Old Testament prophets, as Elijah Redivivus who was to restore all things, enjoyed a unique prophetic mission. His unique name--βαπτιστής--already indicated that his baptism was a unique token of his prophetic office.

<sup>16</sup>Infra, Chapter V.



### CHAPTER III

#### JOHN'S BAPTISM: THE ENACTMENT OF HIS MESSAGE

##### "The Kingdom is at Hand!"

In the preceding chapter it was briefly pointed out that John's baptism stood as a unique prophetic symbol of a unique Old Testament prophetic office. In this and the succeeding two chapters it will be the burden of this thesis that John's baptism was an enactment of his characteristic Old Testament message. By this is meant that John's baptism effected what his message proclaimed. The problem in this chapter will be to demonstrate that John's baptism opened the door into the Kingdom, the same Kingdom which formed an essential feature of his preaching.

When John preached the Kingdom of the heavens, he again identified himself as an Old Testament prophet. For the Kingdom was a characteristic Old Testament term for the sphere of God's gracious activity.<sup>1</sup> While He is pictured as King over the universe which is His creation,<sup>2</sup> the idea of being King always implied contact with His people. Hence He is seen more specifically as King over His chosen people,

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<sup>1</sup>For the Old Testament background to John's understanding of the Kingdom, I am indebted to Professor M. H. Franzmann's unpublished lectures in New Testament Theology.

<sup>2</sup>E.g., Ps. 103:19-22; Jer. 10:6-10.



the people of Israel.<sup>3</sup> Yet for all His care over Israel, He is not a local, tribal deity. His universal Kingship is the background and presupposition of His national Kingship (Ex. 19:5). Even the human kings of Israel continually serve as a prophetic reminder that the throne of David is "the throne of the Kingdom of the Lord over Israel" (1 Chr. 28:5), and the kingship of his successors is "the kingdom of the Lord in the hands of the sons of David" (2 Chr. 13:8). But the Davidic kingship is not, and cannot be, the ultimate kingship of God in history. For the prophets continually point forward to a complete and ultimate realization of the which the Davidic kingship only partially expressed; namely, the reign of God on earth (Mic. 4:1-8; Is. 52:7-10; Zech. 14:9).

The significance of the Kingdom-concept for the proclamation of John is twofold. In the first place, the Kingdom-concept is heavily freighted with eschatological overtones. Its ultimate establishment is always viewed as a future event, "in the day" (Is. 11:10). It is viewed as the final victorious act of God on behalf of His people (2 Sam. 7:16), the goal of all history. Secondly, the Kingdom is God's own deed, where He alone is Ruler (Dan. 2:44).

The role which the Kingdom-concept occupied in the minds of John's contemporaries, and the different forms which it assumed, is well summarized by John Bright:

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<sup>3</sup>E.g., Is. 33:20-24; 43:14-15; Zeph. 3:14.



(The Old Testament) is, in all of its parts, suffused with the awareness of the rule of God over His people; it is upheld by the hope and the longing, expressed in a dozen divergent forms, for the coming establishment of the Kingdom of God. By the time of Christ this hope had, we might say, crystallized into certain major patterns. These patterns, it must be underscored, were by no means mutually exclusive or contradictory, but were expressions of the same longing and faith. There was the hope of political restoration, of independence from Rome through military action led by the Messiah. This hope we associate especially with that group known as the Zealots, the nationalist party within Judaism. There was also the ideal of the Holy Commonwealth, prevalent particularly among the Pharisees. These looked equally for the exaltation of God's people under the rule of his Messiah. But they expected this by God's action, not man's, and were consequently chary of following messianic pretenders in the struggle against Rome. They saw it as their duty to make actual the ideal of the Holy People of God through strict observance of the law, and if this were done, God would send and exalt his Messiah. Finally, there was the apocalyptic hope (such as that best expressed in Daniel and 1 Enoch) of the catastrophic intervention of God, and of the Son of Man in clouds and glory to receive an eternal Kingdom (cf. Dan. 7:13-14).<sup>4</sup>

Thus when John resumed the Old Testament prophetic utterances about the Kingdom, he was not speaking a new truth. He was rather presenting an old truth in a new perspective. His message about the Kingdom was: Ἰϋϋϰεϋ, it is here! The reign of God Incarnate had become a reality in the Coming One. God was even then speaking His last definite Word. The fulness of time had come. The End was hurtled into the present (1 Pet. 4:7). The age of Emanuel had dawned. God was present in the Word who dwelt among men (Jn. 1:14).

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<sup>4</sup>John Bright, The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c. 1953), p. 191.



John, then ushered in the new age with his startling message. Mark places his preparatory activity at "the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk. 1:1). In a very real sense, however, John never participated in the new age. During his final imprisonment he still thought in terms of the Coming One. And, indeed, not until after Easter and Pentecost could men speak with full conviction of the One to whom all the prophets testified. Yet this much is certain, that this Old Testament prophet pointed men to the Kingdom; that by virtue of his unique position on the threshold of the Kingdom of God, it was through his word and work and mission that the way into the Kingdom lay.

Jesus paid this high tribute to John in Mt. 21:23-32. The passage is an indictment on the part of Jesus of the Pharisees. However, not only the Pharisees themselves, but Jewish opinion generally, would have held that their prospects of entering the Kingdom were of the best, while those of the tax-gatherers and harlots were infinitesimal.<sup>5</sup> But the startling element in Jesus' pronouncement was the complete reversal of that judgment, based on their attitude toward John. Because the harlots and the publicans believed John, they went into the Kingdom of God. Conversely, the

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<sup>5</sup>Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p. 295.



Pharisees' refusal to believe John excluded them from the Kingdom. In Jesus' judgment it was impossible to by-pass the Baptist in their quest for the Kingdom. "Er hat die Herrschaft Gottes verkundet und die Tuer zu ihr aufgetan."<sup>6</sup>

The condition for entry into the Kingdom, then, lay in believing John. Believing John involved trusting and rendering obedience. This is the point of the passage. God Himself spoke through John. John's authority was the same as Christ's own. It was of heaven, an admission which the Pharisees were not willing to make. Hence to obey John was to obey God, to submit to the divine will, to repent. This was to go into the Kingdom of God.

Pertinent to this thesis, however, is the close connection between John's message of the Kingdom and his baptism. When Jesus declared that the way into the Kingdom lay in believing John, He at the same time made a similar claim for John's baptism. The baptism of John rested on his authority as a prophet, which had been received directly from heaven; that is, from God.<sup>7</sup> In the baptism of John God Himself acted.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Julius Schniewind, "Das Evangelium nach Matthaeus," Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1950), II, 217.

<sup>7</sup> "Matthew and Mark," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 509.

<sup>8</sup> Schniewind, loc. cit.



His authority to baptize was the same as his authority to preach. "John's baptism was the outward expression of his life's work, the call to repentance, so that to 'believe him' (vv. 25,32) and to 'be baptized by him' (Lk. 7:29 ff.) were one and the same thing."<sup>9</sup>

The parable of the two sons (vv. 28-29) emphasizes the same thought. It speaks of men's relationship to the Father. In applying the parable Jesus concentrates on His hearers' attitude toward John. McNeile sees a difficulty here. "The difficulty arises from the fact that while the parable speaks of relations with God, this verse (32) deals with attitudes towards the Baptist."<sup>10</sup> But this is precisely the point. God dealt with men in the message and baptism of John. Their relation to God was determined by their attitude toward John.

This is true also because John is described as coming in the way of righteousness. The close connection between the Kingdom and righteousness is seen in a passage like Mt. 6:33. The proclamation of the Kingdom involved pointing out the way of righteousness. The full significance for this thesis becomes more apparent in Mt. 3:15, where in submitting to John's baptism, Christ fulfilled all righteousness. The Kingdom, the way of righteousness, and John's baptism are

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<sup>9</sup>A. H. McNeile, The Gospel according to Saint Matthew (London: MacMillan and Company, Ltd., 1949), p. 304.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.



all closely related.

That there is more than a mere external relationship, however, is demonstrated in Lk. 7:29-30. To reject John's baptism was to reject God. To receive it was to justify God. In this passage a relationship to God was determined by a stand specifically to John's baptism. Those who heard John justified God by receiving also his baptism. To justify God is to "admit the righteousness of God, in making these claims upon them and granting them these opportunities by being baptized."<sup>11</sup> In commenting on this phrase Zahn says:

. . . den durch den Täufer verkündigten Willen Gottes, dass jedermann sich taufen lasse, um Vergebung der Sünden zu empfangen (3:3), als eine gerechte Forderung anerkannt, indem sie sich mit der Taufe des Johannes taufen lieszen.<sup>12</sup>

To justify God, then, is to acknowledge God's gracious rule, and denotes the human counterpart of the divine rulership expressed in the concept of the Kingdom. This occurred in John's baptism, which effected a real entrance into the Kingdom.

That John's baptism opened the door into the Kingdom is clear also in the negative reaction of the Pharisees and lawyers. "By declining baptism [they] put a divine opportunity

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<sup>11</sup> Alfred Plummer, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Luke," The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), xxviii, 206.

<sup>12</sup> Theodor Zahn, "Das Evangelium des Lucas," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1913), III, 315.



from them, and so frustrated the purposes of God."<sup>13</sup> There was no alternative. They had barred themselves from the gracious counsel of God by their refusal to be baptized by John.

In summary we conclude that when John resumed the Old Testament prophetic proclamation of the Kingdom, he added his own peculiar contribution:  $\eta\gamma\gamma\iota\kappa\epsilon\nu$ . In close connection with his proclamation of the Kingdom stood his baptism. The attitude of men toward him and his baptism determined their relationship to God. More specifically, his baptism effected entrance into that Kingdom.

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<sup>13</sup>William Manson, "The Gospel of Luke," The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.), p. 82.



## CHAPTER IV

### JOHN'S BAPTISM: THE ENACTMENT OF HIS MESSAGE

#### "Repent!"

In his cry for repentance John paralleled the Old Testament prophetic ideal of repentance.<sup>1</sup> In the Old Testament we meet a conception of repentance as a return to God. It is a personal repentance because sin is personal. There is always an "I-Thou" relationship between God and man in both sin and repentance. This personal relationship is brought to classical expression in Ps. 51:4: "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned." Sin is apostasy from God.<sup>2</sup> Repentance, therefore, is a radical reversal. The Hebrew term שׁוּב means to turn, to return, to turn about.<sup>3</sup> Repentance, then, is also personal, a return unto the Lord (Amos 4:6). It involves obedience to the will of the Lord (Jer. 34:15; 26:3-5). It means trust in the Lord, not in others (Hos. 14:3; Is. 30:15). It involves a turning away from all evil, a complete

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<sup>1</sup>For the Old Testament background of the concept of repentance I am indebted to Professor M. H. Franzmann's unpublished lectures in New Testament Theology.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. the analogy to the unfaithful wife in Hos. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup>Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures, translated from the Latin by S. P. Trugelles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 807.



break with evil (Ez. 33:11). Finally, and of great significance, this turning, this repentance is God's work (Ps. 51:10; Lam. 5:21; 1 Ki. 18:37).

Though later legalistic Judaism made of the  $\text{עָשָׂה וְשָׁב}$  a synergistic concept, John renewed the cry of the prophets in his demand for universal, radical repentance. This basic note of his preaching is already foreshadowed in the announcement of his birth to Zecharias (Lk. 1:16). There the verb  $\text{ἐπιστρέφει}$  is used to reproduce the idea implicit in  $\text{עָשָׂה וְשָׁב}$ . Mt. 3:2 indicates that  $\text{μετάνοια}$  is the fundamental item in John's preaching together with his announcement of the imminence of the Kingdom. This repentance was to be universal. Not only were the notorious sinners to repent (Lk. 3:12), not only the Gentile soldiers (Lk. 3:14), but particularly also the pious Jews, who thought they had no need (Mt. 3:7). John demanded a complete change, a totality which was to bring about a corresponding change in the manner of life (Mt. 3:8-10). This life was to be one of love and righteousness according to God's will (Lk. 3:10-14).

John's preaching of repentance received its urgency from the imminence of the in-breaking of the Kingdom. He knew himself to be living and preaching in eschatological times. The Kingdom of heaven was at hand; hence his call to repentance (Mt. 3:2). God's judgment was near; already the axe was laid to the root (Mt. 3:10). Repentance was the only flight



from the wrath to come (Mt. 3:7-8). Yet therein lay also the unstressed, but implicit promise of hope. God's gracious rule, His Kingdom came through such repentance.

With the preaching of repentance John connects the baptism of repentance. That they have a close connection is seen in Mt. 3:11, where John claims to baptize εἰς μετάνοιαν; and in Mk. 1:4 it is recorded that his was a βάπτισμα μετάνοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν. In both phrases the εἰς denotes the goal or purpose.<sup>4</sup> The end of John's baptism was both repentance and forgiveness.<sup>5</sup>

The final question, much debated, is whether John's baptism symbolized the repentance which he demanded, or whether it actually conferred repentance. Gould in The International Critical Commentary favors the symbolical view:

The genitive [in Mark 1,4: μετάνοίας] denotes the significance of the rite, the inward act of which it is the outward sign and pledge.<sup>6</sup>

Pieper, following in the tradition of the Lutheran dogmatists, asserts that John's baptism had full sacramental significance, with vis dativa and vis effectiva.<sup>7</sup> Schlatter

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<sup>4</sup>H. B. Swete, The Gospel according to Saint Mark (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1909), p. 4. So also Adolph Schlatter, Markus, der Evangelist fuer die Griechen (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1935), pp. 21-22.

<sup>5</sup>Ezra P. Gould, "The Gospel according to Saint Mark," The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), XXVII, 7.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Con-



includes both views, that repentance is the condition and the effect of baptism.<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to solve the problem on purely linguistic, syntactical, or historical grounds. The answer ultimately rests on theological grounds. This thesis concludes with Behm:

The complete change of human existence for the coming aeon is God's activity in baptism; God creates for Himself through the eschatological sacrament of John's baptism a congregation awaiting the coming salvation, a congregation of the repentant. *μετάνοια* is both: God's gift and man's responsibility. God bestows in baptism conversion [Umkehr]; man is directed in the call to repentance to allow himself to be thus gifted.<sup>9</sup>

In summary of this chapter we conclude that John renewed the prophetic cry for radical repentance, a return to God. This demand he connected with his baptism, which both presupposed and effected such repentance.

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cordia Publishing House, 1953), III, 280.

<sup>8</sup>Schlatter, loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup>Johannes Behm, "*μετάνοια*," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1942), IV, 996. Translation from the German my own.



## CHAPTER V

### JOHN'S BAPTISM: THE ENACTMENT OF HIS MESSAGE

#### "There Comes One after Me!"

The final, and for purposes of this thesis, decisive element of John's message, which finds an enacted counterpart in his baptism, are his words concerning the One who was to come after him (Jn. 1:27). This saying also finds its parallel in the Synoptics (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:7; Lk. 3:16). The important fact in all of these accounts is the humility with which John characterized his mission and message as a preparatory one. He disavowed any claim that his was the final word. Consequently his baptism, too, anticipated a greater one yet to come, which would at the same time be more complete. In this respect John again showed himself as the last Old Testament prophet.

The air was charged with Messianic expectancy. Long centuries had passed since a prophet had arisen. Expectations of pre-Messianic prophets were rife. In 2 Esdr. 2:17 we read of the hope for the return of Jeremiah and Isaiah. Jesus Himself was considered by many to have been either Jeremiah or another prophet returned (Mt. 16:14; Mk. 8:28). The deputation from Jerusalem inquired of John whether he were Elias or



that Prophet (Jn. 1:21).<sup>1</sup> The very fact that John baptized excited these hopes:

The rite of baptism had a Messianic significance, for it was expected that a general purification of the people would take place before the coming of the Messiah (Ez. 36:25; Zech. 13:1; Is. 52:15).<sup>2</sup>

But John took pains not to allow himself to be identified with any of these eschatological figures. He emphatically denied any claim to such names, perhaps because of the current misconceptions regarding the Messianic expectation.<sup>3</sup> The only title with which he designated himself was  $\varphi \omega \nu \eta$  (Jn. 1:23). This is a term of service, less colored with political over-tones. But at the same time it appropriately characterized his mission as the Way-preparer, as the one who

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<sup>1</sup>The identity of "that Prophet" in the thinking of the Jews is difficult to determine. In the context of Jn. 1:19-27 it is obvious that Jewish exegetes applied Deut. 18:15 to an eschatological figure separate from the Messiah and Elijah. Wikenhauser conjectures that they may even have expected a return of Moses himself. Alfred Wikenhauser, "Das Evangelium nach Johannes," Das Neue Testament (Regensburg: Verlag Friederich Pustet, 1948), IV, 51.

<sup>2</sup>G. H. C. MacGregor, "The Gospel of John," The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>We need find no difficulty in the fact that John consistently denied the titles which Jesus applied to him (Mt. 11:9, 14; 17:11ff.; Mk. 9:12-13; Lk. 7:26). Hoskyns comments: "There is, however, no real contradiction, for it is one thing to be named Elijah by the Christ, but quite another for a man, even for a prophet, to assert it of himself; just as it was one thing for Simon to be named by Jesus Peter, whereas it would have been quite another had he said of himself, 'I am the Rock.'" E. C. Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by F. N. Davey (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1950), p. 51.



called a nation back to repentance. For it harks back to the rich Messianic content of Is. 40:3. Strathmann makes this observation:

. . . der Täufer bezieht sich schliesslich auf das Busz- und Verheissungswort in Beginn des zweiten Jesaja (40:3), nach welchem eine Stimme auffordert, fuer die erloesende Rueckfuehrung des Volkes Israel aus der Verbannung den Weg des Herrn in der Wueste zu bahnen, und bezeichnet sich als diese anonyme Stimme.<sup>4</sup>

The climax of the Baptist's self-effacement in view of the Coming One is reached in his remark in Jn. 1:27, where he declared that he was not worthy even to loose His shoe latchet. The full significance of this humility can be seen from a saying of the third century Rabbi Joshua ben Levi: "Every service which a slave performs for his master a pupil will do for his teacher, except loosing his shoe."<sup>5</sup> John's view of himself is also entirely consistent with the judgment of the fourth evangelist, when in his prologue he characterizes the Baptist as a witness, who was himself not that Light (Jn. 1:6-8,15).

This opinion of himself and his mission John transfers also to his baptism. After his consistent refusal to be labelled as one of the eschatological figures, the Jerusalem

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<sup>4</sup>Hermann Strathmann, "Das Evangelium nach Johannes," Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1951), p. 45.

<sup>5</sup>Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922-1928), I, 121.



delegation demanded to know why John baptized. His reply indicates that he assigned a similar preparatory role to his baptism. "Nur mit Wasser tauft er; das ist kein Uebergriff in die Aufgabe des Messias."<sup>6</sup> That he was aware of the more complete nature of the coming baptism appears from Jn. 1:33. But his was not yet the baptism of the eschatological day of redemption.

It is thus sufficiently clear that John regarded his work as merely preparatory; that his mission and message were to be replaced by the Coming One; that his baptism, too, would be superseded by a greater one. It has been the burden of this thesis thus far to demonstrate that, though the Baptist's mission and message were merely preparatory and thus characteristically Old Testament in nature, nevertheless they effected through his baptism a real entrance into the Kingdom, and that by way of effecting a genuine repentance. It remains now to inquire in what way his message and baptism were transcended by the Coming One.

John's message concerning the Coming One was twofold. Mt. 3:12 records that John preached Him as the Executor of God's wrath. Herein lies the first aspect of the answer to our question. John preached the wrath of God (Mt. 3:7-10). But whereas he announced it, the Coming One, the Mightier

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<sup>6</sup>Theodor Zahn, "Das Evangelium des Johannes," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1908), pp. 114-115.



One executed and effected it. Similarly John bore witness to the Coming One as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). But again, whereas John pointed to Him as the One who would take away the sins of the world, the Coming One actually effected and imparted that forgiveness.

Although this may seem somewhat obvious, nevertheless it has a decisive bearing on the problem of the relationship between the two baptisms. John's message and baptism had validity and effected its divine purpose, not in its own right, but only in view of the Coming One. He expressed this significant difference with regard to his characteristic activity of baptizing in the words of Mt. 3:11: "I baptize with water; but He, with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

At this point an exegetical problem arises as to the meaning of  $\piνεῦμα$  and  $\piῦρ$ . Bruce in Expositor's Greek Testament feels that both are terms of judgment. " $\piνεῦμα$  ἅγιον is a stormy wind of judgment; holy, as sweeping away all that the wind leaves."<sup>7</sup> Schaeffer in the Lutheran Commentary sees in both terms a promise of grace. The fire is not the same as in verse 12, but rather a figure of the "effect or power (Acts 1:8) of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost."<sup>8</sup> The consensus

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<sup>7</sup>A. B. Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," The Expositor's Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.), I, p. 84.

<sup>8</sup>Charles E. Schaeffer, "Annotations on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew," The Lutheran Commentary, edited by H. E. Jacobs (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1895), p. 58.



of the majority of exegetes, however, apply these two terms to the twofold aspect of the work of the Coming One, which is one of judgment as well as grace.<sup>9</sup> If this latter interpretation be correct, then in the baptism of the Coming One both of these activities are effected. The implications of this baptism are reserved for a later chapter.<sup>10</sup>

But here it must be noted that with these words John again points to the transitory nature of his baptism, and that in view of the imminent new order, the age of the Spirit, the day of the new covenant which the prophet Jeremiah had foretold (Jer. 31:31). This new age was to have its own baptism, consistent with the new order which would replace the one in which he stood. Schniewind comments:

Das Alte wird begraben, damit ein Neues werde. Dies Neue, das kommen soll, wird hier als 'Taufe mit dem Heiligen Geist' bezeichnet. 'Heiliger Geist' war das Wort das die unmittelbare Gegenwart Gottes umschreibt, schon im Alten Testament. So war es gedacht, wenn der Messias selbst seit Jesaja 11,2 als der Traeger des Geistes Gottes beschrieben wird (Mt. 1:20; Mk. 1:10 ff.). Aber er gibt auch den Seinen den Geist, und das wird einer Taufe gleichen; der Geist Gottes wird 'ausgegossen,' so lautet die staendige Redeweise.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Thus, e.g., W. C. Allen, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew," The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), XXVI; Julius Schniewind, "Das Evangelium nach Matthaeus," Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1950), II; and Adolph Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthaeus (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1948); ad loc.

<sup>10</sup>Infra, Chapter VII.

<sup>11</sup>Schniewind, op. cit., pp. 24-25.



In summary of this chapter we conclude that John's consistent denial of any claims to the role of Messiah are reflected also in his statements concerning his baptism. As his mission was to point to One yet to come, so also his baptism, the token of a passing order, would be replaced by a greater one, consistent with the new age of the Spirit just dawning.

The key to the understanding of the origin event lies in the words of the *Logos* *John 1:14* "This is by beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (*Mt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22*).<sup>1</sup> These words are quite apparently a quotation from the *Shema-Yisrael* (*Is. 43:10*), a difficulty occurs in the translation of the Hebrew *שמע ישראל* with the Greek *ουκ εστι θεος εκτος του θεου* which has offered no difficulty, and in fact, used in *Mt. 23:17*, but *ουκ εστι θεος εκτος του θεου* is an unusual translation.<sup>2</sup> The rest of the quotation, however, is evidently a reference to *Is. 43:11*, *John*, then, is here designated as the suffering servant of God.

<sup>1</sup>The true purpose of it is of little significance whether these words were heard by Jesus only, or by Jesus and John alone, or by all.

<sup>2</sup>On the appropriateness of the Greek use of *ουκ εστι θεος εκτος του θεου* cf. *Septuagint*, *Septuagint in the New Testament*, translated by J. A. S. Reid (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1902), p. 17.



## CHAPTER VI

### CHRIST, THE FULFILLER: HIS BAPTISM BY JOHN

Thus far this thesis has concerned itself with the preliminary character of John's baptism, especially in view of the Coming One. This baptism reached a dramatic climax when that Coming One Himself appeared in order to be baptized by John. In that event baptism received a decisively new content, and thus provided the link between John's baptism and baptism as practiced later by the Christian Church.

The key to the understanding of the unique event lies in the words of the Bath Qol: "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased" (Mt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22).<sup>1</sup> These words are quite apparently a quotation from the Ebed-Jahweh song (Is. 42:1). A difficulty occurs in the translation of the Hebrew וְיִשׁוּעַ with the Greek υἱός . παῖς would have offered no difficulty, and is, in fact, used in Mt. 12:17. But υἱός is an unusual translation.<sup>2</sup> The rest of the quotation, however, is manifestly a reference to Is. 42:1. Jesus, then, is here designated as the Suffering Servant of God.

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<sup>1</sup>For our purposes it is of little significance whether these words were heard by Jesus only, or by Jesus and John alone, or by all.

<sup>2</sup>On the appropriateness of the Greek use of υἱός for the Hebrew וְיִשׁוּעַ, cf. Oscar Cullman, Baptism in the New Testament, translated by J. K. S. Reid (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1950), p. 17.



A variant reading in the Lucan text found in Manuscript D reads: "Thou art My Beloved Son; today have I begotten Thee." This would undoubtedly be a citation from Ps. 2:7, the Royal Psalm. This removes the difficulty attached to the word *υιός*, for it is the common translation of the Hebrew <sup>7</sup> יְהוָה, but the latter part of the passage does not agree with the parallel accounts in the other Synoptics. Nestle suggests both locations--Is. 42:1 and Ps. 2:7--as the source of the quotation.<sup>3</sup> This view would then see in the first half of the quotation a reference primarily to Ps. 2:7, while the latter half is taken from Is. 42:1.

Ps. 2:7 was applied later to Christ after His resurrection (Ac. 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5), when He is described as the glorified and victorious King of the Psalm. The idea of a victorious King was not a foreign one. In fact it formed a large part of Old Testament Messianic expectation.<sup>4</sup> But the important consideration here is that at His baptism Jesus was proclaimed to be the Son of God in a unique sense. The Son of God in a particular sense meant already in the Old Testament the Messiah, the divine King, who was to establish God's new order.<sup>5</sup> Jesus, then was declared to be that King,

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<sup>3</sup> Novum Testamentum Graece, edited by Eberhard Nestle (Nineteenth edition; Stuttgart: Priv. Wuertt. Bibelanstalt, 1949), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. supra, Chapter III.

<sup>5</sup> Julius Schniewind, "Das Evangelium nach Matthaeus,"



who as the Coming One to whom John and his baptism bore witness, fulfilled the Forerunner's cry: The Kingdom is at hand!

However, at the same time Jesus was identified as the Suffering Servant of God who had to suffer vicariously for His people. To Him was assigned the mission which the Old Testament prophetically ascribed to the Suffering Servant, that of suffering for all and taking the guilt of His people upon Himself in His suffering and death. "For he who is addressed in Is. 42:1 has certainly to fulfill the mission which is more closely described in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah."<sup>6</sup>

This was an arresting revelation. Both concepts, that of the victorious King and that of the Suffering Servant, were known to contemporary Judaism. But that the Messiah-King should at the same time be the Suffering Servant was an impossible conception for Judaism.<sup>7</sup> Both prophetic concepts found their fulfillment in Jesus. In God's divine plan of salvation only by being the Suffering Servant would the Messiah also be the victorious King.

The revelation of Jesus as the Suffering Servant removes a difficulty which seemed to have plagued the early Church. Why did the sinless Jesus submit to a baptism which John had

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Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1950), p. 27.

<sup>6</sup>Gullman, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 19.



declared to be for repentance and remission of sin? Was this a tacit admission of guilt on the part of Jesus? An early attempt to counter this difficulty is seen in a well-known passage quoted by Jerome from the Gospel according to the Hebrews:

Behold the Lord's mother and brethren said to him, John the Baptist is baptizing unto remission of sins: let us go and be baptized by him. Then he said to them, What sin have I done that I should go and be baptized by him?--unless perchance this very saying of mine is a sin of ignorance.

Some find in Mt. 3:14-15 an unhistorical interpolation endeavoring to meet the same objection.<sup>9</sup> But as the Suffering Servant Jesus was baptized, not for his own sins, but for the sins of others. Thus He united Himself in solidarity with His whole people.

For Jesus this acceptance of John's baptism need imply no consciousness of sin save in a corporate sense, but this identification of himself with the people of God was involved in the conception of Messiahship which we know our Lord found in Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>10</sup>

Thus in a very real sense Jesus' baptism was His inauguration to His life's work. It pointed forward to the end, to the Cross and Empty Tomb. It consecrated Him for the via crucis. But more, and this is highly significant for this

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<sup>8</sup>As quoted by W. F. Flemington, The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism (London: SPCK, 1953), p. 27.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 27.



thesis, Jesus' baptism joined inseparably the rite of baptism with His death and resurrection. Thus He gave to baptism a decisively new content. John had baptized with water unto repentance for the remission of sins. But henceforth such baptizing for the forgiveness of sins could be valid and effective only in view of Jesus' death and resurrection.

The connection between baptism and particularly Jesus' death is strengthened when we consider how Jesus Himself used the word βαπτισμο. "Can ye be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mk. 10:38). "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Lk. 12:50). On both occasions Jesus' use of the word βαπτισμο meant simply to die, and each time He referred to His own death.<sup>11</sup>

At His baptism the Spirit of God descended in the form of a dove and alighted on His head. This fact is entirely consistent with the revelation of Jesus as the Suffering Servant. According to the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah He was to be the Bearer of God's Spirit. "I have put my Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles" (Is. 42:1). Some commentators see a conflict between this narrative and the account of Jesus' birth. How is it that He who had

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<sup>11</sup>In developing this point Cullman sees here an explanation for the fact that Jesus did not Himself baptize. "For Him to 'be baptized' from now on meant to suffer, to die for His people." Cullman, op. cit., p. 19.



been conceived by the Holy Spirit needed at the occasion of His baptism another out-pouring of the Spirit? Schniewind<sup>12</sup> undertakes to answer this charge by demonstrating a threefold New Testament concept of Jesus as the Bearer of God's Spirit: a) as the triumphant, exalted One (Ac. 2:33); b) in His works on earth as being full of the Spirit (Mk. 3:29; Jn. 3:34); and c) that from the very beginning His life was determined by the Spirit as seen from the birth narratives. He concludes that there is no conflict, but rather a demonstration of the faith of the early Christians, who really saw the presence of God in Jesus' person and life, in His birth, His work, His death and resurrection.

But more important for this thesis is the fact that the descent of the Spirit occurred at the occasion of Jesus' baptism. Thus again baptism was given a decisive new content. The precise meaning of the Spirit in baptism must await a later chapter.<sup>13</sup> Suffice it to say at this point that the rite of baptism had undergone an inner transformation. John had heretofore baptized merely with water. Henceforth, as a direct result of the Spirit's descent at the baptism of Jesus, baptism was inseparably connected with the gift of the Holy Ghost.

These two new elements in connection with Jesus' own

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<sup>12</sup>Schniewind, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>13</sup>Infra, Chapter IX.



baptism--His death and resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit--also shed light on His statement previous to His baptism: "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt. 3:15). Through His death and resurrection "Jesus will effect a general forgiveness,"<sup>14</sup> which is conveyed by the Holy Spirit. Schlatter emphasizes that this fulfillment is, therefore, not only an act of obedience, but also one of love.<sup>15</sup> In this way also Jesus' baptism is the foundation for the baptism which He later authorizes the Church to perform.

The Church is constituted here as the locus of the Holy Spirit, as the Body of Christ crucified and risen. Thus the baptismal death of Christ completed once for all on the cross passes over into Church baptism.<sup>16</sup>

This baptism, which He authorized His Church to perform, is essentially the same as the baptism which He Himself experienced. Thus He manifested Himself as the One who was to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

That this event is the foundation for Christian baptism is finally and conclusively evidenced in its specifically Trinitarian character. The Father's commissioning and approving words in the Bath Qol were addressed to the Son, who was to execute His will, and was anointed to that task by the Holy

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<sup>14</sup>Cullman, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>15</sup>Adolph Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthaeus (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1948), pp. 89-90.

<sup>16</sup>Cullman, op. cit., p. 22.



**Spirit.** This Trinitarian revelation repeats itself anew with each baptism embodying in its formula the words of Christ's Commission to baptize in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (Mt. 28:19).

In summary of this chapter we conclude that Christ, as the Fulfiller of Old Testament Messianic prophecy, gave to baptism a decisively new content at the occasion of His own baptism. Thenceforth baptism was connected with His death and resurrection and with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus God's redemptive activity in baptism is cast into a specifically Trinitarian revelation of Himself.



## CHAPTER VII

### CHRISTIAN BAPTISM AS INCORPORATION INTO THE CHURCH

The last chapter pointed out that when Jesus was baptized, the rite of baptism received a decisive new content, different from the content it had held previously. The burden of the last three chapters will be to show that the effects of John's baptism carry over into Christian baptism, to which it reveals certain similarities. Yet, even these similarities bear the marks of the decisive new order which Christ ushered in and which are reflected in baptism's new content.

Chapter III discussed briefly John's concept of the Kingdom and the role which it occupied in his preaching. It furthermore sought to demonstrate that entrance into the Kingdom was via John's baptism. A similarity to Christian baptism immediately presents itself. For as John's baptism opened the door into the Kingdom, so also Christian baptism is the rite of initiation into the Church. But these two operations cannot be entirely identical, as is witnessed by Christian baptism's new content.

An important question arises at this point. What is the relationship between the Kingdom and the Church? A brief glance at a concordance will already indicate certain differ-



ent emphases.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the concept of the Kingdom as the sphere of God's gracious activity, characteristic of the Old Testament, carries over into a prominent position in the Gospels, it falls into a position of secondary emphasis in the Epistles. "The Kingdom" occurs about 120 times in the Gospels and eight times in Acts. In the rest of the books it is found only a total of twenty-four times. The predominant emphasis in later apostolic times is rather on the Church, evident from the fact that, while ἐκκλησία occurs only in Mt. 16:18 and 18:17 in the Gospels, it is found about 110 times in the epistles.

Scholars have given principally three answers to the question of the relationship between the concepts. Some hold the two to be identical. Others hold that the two are not the same. Then there is a mediating view which holds that, while they are not to be regarded as identical by the New Testament, they are nevertheless always found in essential relationship with each other. This latter view is championed by the Swedish theologians. Gösta Lindeskog in a comprehensive essay on the subject<sup>2</sup> offers this conclusion:

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Alfred Schmoller, Handkonkordanz zum Griechischen Neuen Testament (Tenth edition; Stuttgart: Priv. Wuertt. Bibelanstalt, 1953), sub βασιλεία, pp. 79-81, and ἐκκλησία, pp. 154-155.

<sup>2</sup> Gösta Lindeskog, "The Kingdom of God and the Church," This Is The Church, edited by Anders Nygren, translated from the Swedish by Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1952), pp. 136-147.



In the New Testament sense, then, the Church means the fellowship of Christ here and now--this and nothing else . . . The Church is no more identical with the Kingdom of God than Jesus Himself is. But one must doubtless say that according to the early Christian concept the Church represents the continuation of Jesus' historic activity. The full consummation of the Kingdom of God did not come either with the work of Christ in history or with the Church. The work of Jesus was to call to the Kingdom of God and to save in that Kingdom. This is also the task of the Church. The Kingdom of God has not yet come, but its powers are at work both in the life of Jesus and in the Church (cf. Heb. 6:5--Christians share in the powers of the age to come). In this sense the Church belongs to the Kingdom of God; but the Kingdom of God is more than the Church. The Kingdom of God is a cosmic, universal concept, and therefore it is the only rigorously eschatological concept in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup>

On the basis of the foregoing study the conclusion is validly drawn that Christian baptism as the act of incorporation into the Church parallels the baptism of John, whose baptism effected entrance into the Kingdom. The radically new element of the New Testament, however, is that entrance into the Kingdom is by way of the Church, which is to say, by way of fellowship with Christ. The Kingdom, conceived as the sphere of God's gracious activity, is in the New Testament focused in the person and work of Christ, whose Body is the Church. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (Jn. 5:17). In this sense, therefore, we properly speak of Christian baptism as the act of incorporation into the Church; namely, that it effects a fellowship with Christ. It remains now to examine baptism more closely as incorporation into fellowship

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 146-147.



with Christ.

The thought that baptism brings one into fellowship with Christ is variously expressed in the New Testament. In Gal. 3:27 the verb expresses the idea of clothing oneself with Christ (ἐνεδύσαοθε). Ro. 6:3-4 pictures this fellowship as a sharing of His death and resurrection. The idea of baptism as a covenant with the new Israel is implied in Gal. 3:27-29. The phrase εἰς τὸ ὄνομα gives yet another picture.

The expression εἰς τὸ ὄνομα is common in a commercial context: some property is paid or transferred 'into the name' of someone, i. e., into his account. So the person baptized εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου bears public testimony that he has become Christ's property.<sup>4</sup>

The different prepositions used in connection with the baptismal formula (εἰς, ἐν, ἐπί), though each perhaps bearing a slightly different connotation, nevertheless all convey the idea of fellowship with Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Only a superficial reading will read a real difference

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<sup>4</sup>F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles (London: The Tyndale Press, 1951), p. 187. Flemington finds the origin of the expression within Judaism, especially in view of the frequency with which ὄνομα occurs in the Septuagint. As to its meaning, however, he also concludes that "the 'name' offers a mark of ownership." W. F. Flemington, The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism (London: SPCK, 1953), p. 45.

<sup>5</sup>Bruce understands ἐν instrumentally; e.g., in Ac. 2:38, where he reads the variant. "The name of Jesus Christ is an 'accompanying circumstance' of the baptism. According to Acts 22:16 the person baptized called at his baptism on the name of Jesus, cf. Acts 2:21, probably by way of confessing faith in Him. . . . ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τινος [e.g., Ac. 2:38, Nestle text] means 'on the authority of someone,' cf. Luke 24:47." Bruce, op. cit., p. 98.



into the various objects of the baptismal fellowship with Christ. When the New Testament uses the expressions of being baptized "into Christ" (Gal. 3:27), or "in His Name" (Ac. 10:48), or "into His death" (Ro. 6:3), or "into His Body" (1 Cor. 12:13), or into the Trinity (Mt. 28:19), it speaks of different aspects of the same thing. The name identifies the person and his work (1 Cor. 1:13). Hence to be baptized into Christ's Name is to be baptized into His person and work. The same thought is expressed in the phrase "baptized into His Body." "The Body of Christ into which we are baptized is at the same time the crucified Body of Christ and His resurrection Body."<sup>6</sup> And fellowship with Christ means to have fellowship with the Triune God.<sup>7</sup>

Baptismal fellowship with Christ rests ultimately upon His death and resurrection. "The whole work of our salvation was accomplished in Christ's death and resurrection. By baptism we were made partakers in the fulness of this salvation."<sup>8</sup> This thought is given classical expression in Ro. 6, where Paul discusses what takes place in baptism. This passage,

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<sup>6</sup> Oscar Cullman, Baptism in the New Testament, translated by J. K. S. Reid (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1950), p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jn. 10:30,38; also infra, Chapter IX. The Trinitarian baptismal formula of the Great Commission assumes the same Trinitarian presence that was revealed at the occasion of Jesus' own baptism

<sup>8</sup> L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (London: Dacre Press, 1950), p. 61.



furthermore, reflects one element of the new content which baptism had received at the occasion of His baptism. The previous chapter showed that in the revelation of Jesus as the Suffering Servant, baptism was henceforth inseparably connected with death; and the revelation of Jesus as the victorious Messiah-King connected baptism with resurrection. Paul spells out the inferences of this revelation for Christian baptism.

Jesus had been revealed as the Suffering Servant who was to die a representative death for His people. Paul seized on the same thought in Ro. 5, where Christ is the inclusive Representative of the people of God, or redeemed humanity, which constitutes in union with Him a sort of corporate personality. "That which Christ did and suffered on behalf of mankind is the experience of the people of God as concentrated in Him."<sup>9</sup> The once-for-all events of Good Friday and Easter stand behind each separate act of baptism, so that this sacrament is an act by which "the believer enters into all that Christ did as his Representative, in that He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised that we might be justified."<sup>10</sup>

Baptism is thus a baptism into Christ's death, so that each person who has been baptized may be said to have died

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<sup>9</sup>C. H. Dodd, "The Epistle of Paul to the Romans," The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, n.d.), p. 86. Cf. also 2 Cor. 5:14.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 87.



Christ's death in baptismal union with Him. "In solidarity with Him we have died and risen again."<sup>11</sup> This thought serves to explain the Baptist's words: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." In chapter V of our thesis it was noted that this referred to the double aspect of the baptism of the Coming One: grace and judgment. The baptism which Jesus authorized on the basis of His own baptism and in connection with His death and resurrection is in the full sense a descent of God's judgment of sin upon the head of each person baptized. For he shares Christ's death, the fearful visitation of God's wrath for sin. In baptismal union with Christ he experiences God's condemning anger.

Yet Christian baptism is at the same time a sharing of Christ's resurrection and, therefore, an experience of God's grace, by which we are included in His ultimate loving purposes. Karl Barth points out that God's design is a merciful one:

because the shattering and undermining and disintegration which proceed from it [the baptismal sharing of Christ's death] are the action of God; because its negation is positive and its power is the primal authority; because the final word spoken over the man of this world is at once hinge, and threshold, and bridge, and turning-point to the new man."<sup>12</sup>

So also says Luther:

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 38

<sup>12</sup>Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, translated from the sixth edition by E. C. Hoskyns (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 194.



Your baptism is nothing less than grace clutching you by the throat; a grace-full throttling, by which your sin is submerged in order that ye may remain under grace. Come thus to thy baptism. Give thyself up to be drowned in baptism and killed by the mercy of thy dear God, saying, "Drown me and throttle me, dear Lord, for henceforth I will gladly die to sin with Thy Son."<sup>13</sup>

Two extremes need to be avoided for a correct understanding of the Ro. 6 passage. The one is that it ought not to be interpreted in a merely moral or symbolical manner. Those who have been baptized "were baptized into union with, not merely obedience to, Christ. The act of baptism was an act of incorporation into Christ."<sup>14</sup> Althaus also warns against an oversimplification:

Aber er [der Ritus] ist eben mehr als Sinnbild, naemlich wirkliche Beteiligung an Christi Tod, Uebertragung des Todes. . . . Der Anteil am Tode bedeutet aber zugleich Anteil an der durch Gottes Macht gewirkten Auferweckung Christi.<sup>15</sup>

The other danger is to give the passage some sort of mystical interpretation. Such a view is completely foreign to Paul's thought. Nygren comments thus on this point:

The truth is not that, through some endeavor on our part, Christ and that which happened to Him are to be introduced into our lives. The truth is rather that, by God's action we are included in, and made sharers of that which befell Christ. That of which Paul speaks

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<sup>13</sup>Martin Luther, as quoted in Barth, op. cit., p. 194.

<sup>14</sup>William Sanday and Arthur Headlam, "The Epistle to the Romans," The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), p. 156.

<sup>15</sup>Paul Althaus, "Der Brief an die Roemer," Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1949), VI, 50.



is a simple and unmythical reality. God has made Christ the head of a new humanity; and into that new organic relationship he has brought us through baptism.<sup>16</sup>

No more or less ought to be posited concerning this baptismal fellowship than what Stoeckhardt said of it:

Wir sind auf Christum getauft, das heiszt nichts anderes, als das wir durch die Taufe zu Christo Jesu in Beziehung, mit ihm in Verbindung und Gemeinschaft gesetzt worden sind.<sup>17</sup>

The New Testament consistently views Christian baptism as the sacrament of incorporation into fellowship with Christ and His Body, the Church. The question whether it were absolutely necessary for entry never seems to have crossed the minds of the New Testament writers. For them baptism as an initiatory rite was the normal practice. The closest approach to the problem is the record of Jesus' statement to Nicodemus (Jn. 3:5), where baptism is referred to as the means for being born again or being born from above.<sup>18</sup> There is no doubt as to the meaning of  $\epsilon\upsilon\omega\delta\epsilon\upsilon\ \mu\eta\prime$ . "The Biblical 'necessity' . . . denotes the absolute requirement of the will of God."<sup>19</sup> The

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<sup>16</sup>Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans, translated by Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1949), p. 237.

<sup>17</sup>George Stoeckhardt, Commentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Roemer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1907), pp. 284-285.

<sup>18</sup>For a discussion of the meaning of  $\epsilon\upsilon\omega\delta\epsilon\upsilon$  (vv. 3,7) cf. E. C. Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by F. N. Davey (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1950), pp. 211-212.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 215.



question arises, however, whether the  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\ \mu\eta$  refers to the necessity of rebirth or to baptism as the means of rebirth. Verse 7 would seem to suggest the former. This problem, however, has no immediate bearing for this thesis, since it serves more the interests of systematic construction.<sup>20</sup>

In summary of this chapter we conclude that, as John's baptism provided entry into the Kingdom, so also does Christian baptism. But it does so by an act of incorporation into the Church, the Body of Christ. Incorporation into Christ's Body is via the fellowship with Christ effected by the sacrament of baptism, especially the baptismal fellowship with Christ in His death and resurrection.

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<sup>20</sup>The question, however, does serve also a practical interest; e.g., in the case of an unbaptized infant who has died. Cullman holds that, since in baptism entry is opened into the "inner circle" of Christ's Kingdom, that is, the Church, "emergency baptisms are meaningless. A dying child will not belong to this earthly Body of Christ." Cullman, *op. cit.*, p. 34, note 1. The historic Lutheran position is stated by C. P. Krauth: "The Lutheran Church holds that baptism is necessary to salvation inasmuch as God has commanded it, and obedience to His commands is necessary to salvation; and, furthermore, because He has appointed baptism, as one ordinary and positive channel of His grace, through which channel we are to seek the grace He offers. But our Church denies that, where the command cannot be carried out, because of a necessity which is of God's creating, the lack of the sacrament involves the loss of the soul." C. P. Krauth, The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, c.1913), p. 563.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CHRISTIAN BAPTISM AND RENEWAL

In Chapter IV it was affirmed that John's baptism both presupposed and effected the repentance which his preaching demanded. His was, furthermore, a baptism for the forgiveness of sins. In this respect Christian baptism again parallels this rite, as the New Testament abundantly testifies (Ac. 2: 38; 22:16). But again this process is radically changed as the new content of Christian baptism witnesses. This forgiveness is henceforth effected only through the death and resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis on the death of Christ has been noted in the previous chapter. Peter reinforces the baptismal link with the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet. 3:21). The role of the Spirit in baptismal renewal is evidenced in such passages as 1 Cor. 12:13 and Tit. 3:5, a passage, which commentators agree, refers to baptism.<sup>1</sup> The burden of this chapter is to investigate the nature of the forgiveness which Christian baptism effects.

The passage in Tit. 3:5 speaks of a regeneration (*πάλιν γενέσθαι*) and a renewal (*ἀνακαίνωσις*). The question may arise as to how God saves us: by means of the washing of

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<sup>1</sup>A discussion of the role of the Spirit in baptism is reserved for the next chapter.



regeneration, on the one hand, and by means of the renewal of the Holy Ghost, on the other? or by a single means of the washing, which includes both, regeneration and renewal?

Plummer concludes that the latter is more probable, but that in either case the reference is to one and the same event in the Christian's life; namely, his baptism.<sup>2</sup> The important thing is that they both occur in connection with baptism.

παλιγγενεσία is virtually a hapax legomenon.<sup>3</sup> Hence its definitive content must be derived from the ἀνακαίνωσις with which it is paralleled.<sup>4</sup> This is the conclusion reached by Jeremias:

Das Wasserbad der heiligen Taufe, in dem uns Gott seine Vergebung und Rechtfertigung (v. 7) zuspricht und das die Gabe des heiligen Geistes uebermittelt (vgl. 1 Kor. 12:13), bedeutet eine Erneuerung des ganzen Menschen von Grund auf. . . . Die Taufe ist eine Neuschöpfung, das will das Bild von der Wiedergeburt (Jn. 1:13; 3:3-8; 1 Jn. 3:9 ff.; 5:18; 1 Pet. 1:3,23; Jak. 1:18) sagen.<sup>5</sup>

In Christian baptism, then, the person baptized under-

<sup>2</sup>Alfred Plummer, The Pastoral Epistles (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1900), p. 292. He nevertheless makes a distinction, in that the washing occurs only once, while the renewal is repeated.

<sup>3</sup>It occurs only here and in Matthew 19:28.

<sup>4</sup>So Friedrich Buechsel: "Here παλιγγενεσία is the fruit of baptism, parallel to ἀνακαίνωσις." Friedrich Buechsel, "παλιγγενεσία," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1933), I, 688.

<sup>5</sup>Joachim Jeremias, "Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus," Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1949), IX, 62.



goes a radical transformation, transcending the radical turn demanded by John and conveyed by his baptism. For Christian baptism places one in the fellowship of Christ, who stands at the head of a new humanity, God's new creation. This new creation is the glorious end of God's redemptive revelation, the highest goal of New Testament hope. It shines out of the future into the present, because the new age, which has broken in with Christ, brings that new creation. Christians share in the new creation and are included in the new humanity by virtue of their baptismal renewal which God has shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, who is Himself the new man (Ro. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21 ff., 45 ff.).<sup>6</sup>

This new creation begins for each individual at his baptism. There God acts decisively and definitively for him.

Auf den einmaligen, grundlegenden neuen Anfang, den der heilige Geist in der Taufe mit den Menschen macht, gent das Wort, Tit. 3:5. Ohne alles menschliche Zutun entsteht hiernach in der Taufe die  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  (2 Kor. 5:17) durch das Wunder der Erneuerung durch den heiligen Geist, das ein so noch nicht dagewesenes Leben schafft.<sup>7</sup>

This whole process of renewal is one effected by the Holy Trinity.

The Father saves us by the medium of the outward laver which conveys the inward grace of the regenerating and renewing Spirit; that Spirit again is vouchsafed to us,

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<sup>6</sup>Johannes Behm, "ἀνακαλύψωις," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1933), I, 451.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 455.



yea, poured out abundantly on us, only through the merit of Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup>

This again recalls the Trinitarian revelation at the occasion of Jesus' own baptism and stamps it as a redemptive revelation. Therefore, also church baptism can only be performed in the Name of the Trinity according to the words of Christ's Great Commission (Mt. 28:19).

The nature of repentance, which John had already demanded, also changed. John had called for a radical break with evil and a universal return to God. Henceforth repentance also involves a radical break with evil, but that evil is now defined as that which is inconsistent with the new order or creation (Ro. 12:1-2). Repentance is thus a daily necessity in order that Christians through appropriate lives might evidence that they belong to the new aeon and are members of the new humanity (Col. 3:10).<sup>9</sup> The return to God henceforth means a return to that point at which God in Trinitarian revelation acted definitively in man's behalf. This means a return to baptism. For in baptism Christians were joined to Christ in His death and resurrection, which events effected once and for all forgiveness and salvation. That is the use to which Paul put the "doctrine of baptism." He recalled to baptized Christians their baptism and drew from it the inference for

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<sup>8</sup>C. J. Ellicott, The Pastoral Epistles of Saint Paul (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1883), p. 208.

<sup>9</sup>Behm, op. cit., p. 455.



the new life.

Our old self has been crucified with Him [Christ]. That is the meaning of our incorporation into His Body by baptism. It means a passing out of the old order into a new sphere of life.<sup>10</sup>

Luther gives classical expression to repentance as a daily regressus ad baptismum in his Small Catechism:

[Such baptizing with water] signifies that the old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.<sup>11</sup>

The emphasis in baptism is rightly laid on the fact that in it God acts on man and for him. But this emphasis seems to leave unanswered the questions which are posed by some as to the relationship between baptism and faith, particularly in view of the historic dispute over infant baptism. The questions revolve basically around two issues. In the first place, the charge is made that a doctrine of baptismal regeneration violates the cardinal New Testament doctrine of justification by faith alone. It is claimed that such a doctrine makes God's saving work independent of faith. As a corollary to this position its adherents also posit faith as a condition of baptism, and adduce as proof the usual sequence of events

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<sup>10</sup>C. H. Dodd, "The Epistle of Paul to the Romans," The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, n.d.), p. 88.

<sup>11</sup>Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism," Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 551.



described in the book of Acts: verbal declaration--faith--baptism. The other objection comes from those who charge that a doctrine of baptismal regeneration makes of the sacrament something magical, effective ex opere operato in the common understanding of that term.

In both instances it will readily be seen that such objections rest on a misunderstanding of the New Testament view of the nature of faith and baptism as a means of grace. Faith is nowhere the condition of God's grace. God's grace is always uncaused. Nor is faith a man's own act. "Faith itself is an expression of God's will and work."<sup>12</sup> Such faith appropriates the act of God's grace, as the proper response of men, a response that is in itself a divine gift (Eph. 2:8-9). And so baptism embodies both an objective aspect, the salvation grounded in Jesus' death and resurrection; and subjective, faith's appropriation.

It [baptism] is a solemn showing forth, a "re-presentation," of that act of God which was achieved once for all in the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is at the same time a concrete expression of faith on the part of the believer.<sup>13</sup>

The objection that baptism replaces faith as the means

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<sup>12</sup>Ruben Josefson, "The Church and Baptism," This Is The Church, edited by Anders Nygren, translated from the Swedish by Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952), p. 252. This is an enlightening discussion of this very problem.

<sup>13</sup>W. F. Flemington, The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism (London: SPCK, 1953), p. 84.



of salvation fades when baptism is viewed as a means of grace. The New Testament continually speaks of it as the instrument by which God makes effective His redemptive activity (Ro. 6:3 ff.; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21).

In the whole question regarding the relation between faith and baptism raised in Europe by Karl Barth, Gullman in his answer offers the following conclusions:

- (1) after baptism, faith is demanded of all those baptized;
- (2) before baptism, the declaration of faith is a sign of the divine will that baptism take place, demanded from adults who individually come over from Judaism and heathenism, but in other cases lacking;
- (3) during the baptismal act, faith is demanded of the praying congregation.<sup>14</sup>

Regarding the difference in practice in the Church of demanding a declaration of faith from an adult, while baptizing an infant without such declaration, Gullman justifies it on the grounds that in this way the Church avoids arbitrariness in the selection of the candidates for baptism.

It runs contrary to the meaning it has pleased God to give baptism if the Church undertakes the baptism of a man indiscriminately, that is, without any divine sign suggesting the prospect of his perseverance in baptism within the community.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, "this sign is provided for the Church by the birth of the child into a Christian family in the one case, and in

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<sup>14</sup>Oscar Gullman, Baptism in the New Testament, translated by J. K. S. Reid (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1950), p. 55.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 50.



the other by the faith of the adult."<sup>16</sup>

In summary of this chapter, we conclude that the forgiveness of sins imparted by John's baptism continues in Christian baptism. But the new content of Christian baptism gives this forgiveness the form of renewal, effected decisively in the baptism of the individual where by God's act he was joined in fellowship with Christ as the Head of the new humanity and with His saving work. The nature of this renewal demands a daily return to baptism, for which the Church seeks assurance, either by baptizing infants of Christian parents or demanding a prior confession of faith from adults.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 51.



## CHAPTER IX

### CHRISTIAN BAPTISM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the preceding chapters reference has already been made to the presence of the Holy Spirit in Christian baptism. The burden of the present chapter, however, is to view the Holy Spirit's role in Christian baptism as it presents a contrast to the baptism of John.

The passage where the contrast is most explicitly stated occurs in Ac. 19:1-6. In this passage the disciples at Ephesus, having been baptized with John's baptism, were unaware of the existence of the Holy Ghost. After Paul had instructed them that the One to whom John witnessed had come in the person of Jesus Christ, they submitted to baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and with the accompanying rite of the laying on of hands, they received the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup>

This passage gives rise to a number of questions, for it declares that the Holy Spirit does not come in John's baptism, but only in Christian baptism. One of the difficulties stems from the fact that the men at Ephesus are explicitly called

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<sup>1</sup>On the basis of a number of passages, especially in Acts (8:16-19; 9:17-19; 19:5-6), the inference seems to be valid that the transmission of the Spirit occurred not in baptism alone, but also in connection with the laying on of hands. This can best be explained as a part of the external form which the sacrament assumed. The theologically significant factor, however, is that the Spirit did descend when the total act was performed.



disciples, and, as Bruce<sup>2</sup> points out, μαθηταις, when used absolutely, presumably means disciples of Christ in accordance with its meaning elsewhere. He, therefore, concludes that the Holy Spirit is here to be interpreted in a special sense, of the Holy Spirit as sent at Pentecost, but without manifestation. In support of this contention he calls attention to the variant readings both for Ac. 19:2 and Jn. 7:39.<sup>3</sup> Lake and Cadbury seem to feel that the difference reflected merely the respective interpretation which Paul and the Ephesian Christians placed on Christianity, but that no real difference is implied:

The point--and it is of very great importance--is that to Paul and Luke, Christianity was essentially a means of obtaining 'Holy Spirit,' while the Ephesian Christians had looked on it in a different way, which had not contemplated inspiration as the result.<sup>4</sup>

But the difference is more fundamental. The Baptist himself already testified to this essential difference between his rite and the Christian sacrament (Mt. 3:11). The key to the answer to this problem lies rather within the events of redemptive history.

The gift of the Holy Spirit always stands in closest

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<sup>2</sup>F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles (London: The Tyndale Press, 1951), p. 354.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Kirsop Lake and H. J. Cadbury, The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles, edited by Foakes-Jackson and Lake (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1933), IV, 237.



connection with the events of Good Friday and Easter. It is bound up with the person and work of Christ and presupposes His resurrection. This is the import of Jesus' words to His disciples in Jn. 16:7: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." "There can be no mission of the Spirit that proceeds from the Father, until the Son has accomplished the command of the Father, and has returned to His side."<sup>5</sup> This word of Christ found dramatic fulfillment in the events of Pentecost, where the Spirit was poured out upon all flesh (Ac. 2:17; Joel 2:28).

The gift of the Holy Spirit is, then, not merely a super-additum to John's baptism with water, which also effected the forgiveness of sins. Rather it is given in closest connection with the redemptive work of Christ, His death and resurrection. It is, therefore, an integral part of the new content of baptism with which it was invested at Jesus' baptism. Forgiveness of sins henceforth is based on Christ's death and resurrection and is dispensed in the Church by the Holy Ghost. Both of these elements are present in Christian baptism. It follows, then, that "Christian baptism is only possible after the Church has been constituted as the locus of the Holy Spirit."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>E. C. Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by F. N. Davey (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1950), pp. 483-484.

<sup>6</sup>Oscar Cullman, Baptism in the New Testament, translated by J. K. S. Reid (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1950), p. 10.



But at the same time only Christian baptism is possible after Pentecost, for it enjoys the authority of Christ, in whom redemptive history reached its climax, and who sends His Spirit to unfold the final stages of redemptive history.

The gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism, then, means nothing less than receiving the forgiveness of sins as effected by Christ's death and resurrection. Cullman point up this connection thus:

For being buried with Christ means forgiveness of sins, and the emergence from this burial with Him means 'walking in newness of life,' Romans 6:4; and this is not other than the 'walking in the Spirit' of Galatians 5:16.<sup>7</sup>

This would seem to justify the conclusion that there was an actual difference indicated in the passage in Ac. 19:1-6.

This becomes even more likely when it is stated that the Ephesian disciples submitted to baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus when Paul identified for them the Coming One of John's message with the Christ who had in fact already come. Thereupon the Holy Ghost came upon them.

While this essential difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism must be observed, a similarity ought also to be noted. In both his message and his baptism John displayed a heavy eschatological emphasis (Jn. 1:19-27; Mt. 3:11). His was not the final word to be spoken, nor did his baptism represent an end in itself. He pointed forward to

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 14.



Him who was yet to come with a yet greater baptism.

Christian baptism likewise sounds a strong eschatological note. Flemington observes:

Just as John's baptism looked on to the future, so Christian baptism itself, above and beyond the reality of the present gifts which it bestowed on the believer, looked forward to a future consummation.<sup>8</sup>

Christian baptism makes the believer a partaker in the fullness of salvation accomplished in Christ's death and resurrection. But the full fruits of this saving work for him and in him still lie in the future. This is a dominant theme in the writings of the New Testament.

. . . in a real sense the New Age dawned with Jesus, and . . . in baptism the blessings of this New Age are mediated to the believer. The inexhaustible wealth of this inheritance which already belonged to him and his fellow-Christians seems to have become increasingly a present possession. . . . But, with it all, St. Paul never quite ceased to look forward to a consummation in the future.<sup>9</sup>

The similarity in the eschatological emphasis in the two baptisms is seen to be merely a similarity, however, when it is born in mind that the Spirit of God is the distinctive gift of the new order, and that He constitutes a new element in Christian baptism. The eschatological work of the Holy Spirit in baptism is seen in a passage like Eph. 4:30. There He is the instrument whereby the believer has been "sealed

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<sup>8</sup>W. F. Flemington, The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism (London: SPCK, 1953), p. 74.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 73-74.



unto the day of redemption."<sup>10</sup> In another passage (Eph. 1: 13-14) the Holy Spirit, bestowed in baptism, is described as the "first installment" (*ἀρραβών*) of the inheritance to be fully appropriated in the future.<sup>11</sup> Both of these ideas are combined in 2 Cor. 1:22.

In summary of this chapter, we conclude that, while Christian baptism shares with John's baptism an eschatological expectation, it differs radically in that the New Testament eschatology is informed and shaped by the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit.

The eschatological expectation of the New Testament is fundamentally different from that of the Old Testament. The Old Testament eschatology is centered on the Kingdom of God, the sphere of God's gracious activity, represented by the radical reversal and return to God, and the who was to come. The New Testament eschatology, like the characteristic New Testament eschatology, with its emphasis on Spirit as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in His death and resurrection, the Church as the sphere of God's gracious activity, represented as a daily return to the point of forgiveness, the Cross and Empty Tomb, and the Holy Spirit as the promise of the final eschatological consummation. To this thought Fleming's gives expression thus:

"... it [baptism] is regarded as a practical expression of the willing of the Gospel, a concrete enactment of the apostolic teaching. It is the realization of sin, membership of the new Israel, the approach of the Holy Spirit, all of these blessings of the New Age, the gift of which had been made in the present Word."



## CHAPTER X

### CONCLUSION

On the basis of the preceding material this thesis offers the following conclusions:

The relationship between the two baptisms shows certain similarities, but within those similarities certain radical differences also appear. Both baptisms are enactments of the respective messages which lie behind them. Behind John's baptism lay the characteristic Old Testament prophetic emphasis on the Kingdom as the sphere of God's gracious activity, repentance as the radical reversal and return to God, and the One who was to come. Behind Christian baptism lies the characteristic New Testament kerygma, with its emphasis on Christ as the Fulfiller of Old Testament prophecy in His death and resurrection, the Church as the sphere of God's gracious activity, repentance as a daily return to the point of forgiveness, the Cross and Empty Tomb, and the Holy Spirit as the promise of the final eschatological consummation. To this thought Flemington gives expression thus:

. . . it [baptism] was regarded as a practical expression of the meaning of the Gospel, a concrete embodiment of the Apostolic preaching. It connoted remission of sins, membership of the new community, the endowment of the Holy Spirit; all of those blessings of the New Age, the offer of which had been made in the preached Word.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W. F. Flemington, The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism (London: SPCK, 1953), p. 50.



Essentially the difference between the two baptisms must be seen as the different roles which the temporal course of redemptive history assigned them. John's baptism received its validity in view of those events which were yet to come, while Christian baptism receives its validity from those events which already lie in the past. Yet the underlying differences are more than merely temporal. The events which are the basis for the differences are focused in the earthly life and work of Jesus Christ, who is God's final revelation to men. And in Him "old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

W. G. Lambert, "The Baptisms of John and Jesus," *Theological Studies*, Vol. 1, Grand Rapids, Mich., Baker's Publishing Co., 1930.

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