

BAPTISM FOR REMISSION OF SINS.

BY JOHN S. SWEENEY.



WE should endeavor to avoid extremes. There is a manifest proneness among men, and especially men of earnest natures, to go to extremes on all subjects. This has been quite conspicuously developed in the different theories of the importance of baptism. My brethren are supposed to hold an extreme position on this question; at least, they are frequently so represented, and this should admonish them to be cautious.

It will be generally admitted that baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, and that the recorded teachings of Jesus and His inspired apostles are the only authoritative teachings upon the subject. Whoever cleaves closest to these is the most conservative.

Jesus came into this world to be the teacher and exemplar of men in religious matters. We shall do well, therefore, to consult Him first in our inquiry into this subject. In entering upon His public ministry, we have this brief record of Him: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3: 13-17).

Now, from this Scripture we may learn several facts of some significance. Jesus was baptised at the threshold of His personal ministry; before the Spirit of God descended upon Him; before the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Here we have His *example*.

Now let us have His *teaching* as to baptism. In John 3: 3-5, he said to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

It is hardly worth while to argue at any length that "born of water" here means to be baptised. It has only recently been called in question; and, even now, those who question this meaning do so generally in controversy. Men can do some very strange things, in the way of exegesis, when hard pressed in controversy, and great allowance is to be made for them. Dean Alford, one of the best, and by many esteemed the very best, of modern critics, says: "There can be *no* doubt, on any *honest* interpretation of the words, that 'to be born of water' refers to the token, or outward sign, of baptism." Jesus here teaches, then, beyond any reasonable doubt that to enter the kingdom of God, and become a child of God, one must be baptised. This accords with the example He gave,

being Himself baptised before the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus both by precept and example, He says to all, "If you would be children of God, you must be baptised." His teaching and example can by no fair construction be made to mean less than this.

In His last commission given to His disciples, sending them to all nations with the gospel, He said the same thing, without figure or symbol: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16: 15, 16). This language, fairly and honestly interpreted, puts the salvation promised upon the conditions of belief and baptism. How would fair-minded people understand such language out of the Bible? For instance, let a responsible man of this city proclaim thus: "He that believes and is baptised shall have one thousand dollars." Would the people have any difficulty in understanding the conditions of obtaining the money? Certainly not. Every believer who desired the thousand dollars would be baptised. He would listen to no finely drawn criticisms; he would not delay; nor would he be satisfied with any doubtful "modes." He would be baptised.

We have had some fine specimens of cavil, of late years, over these words of the Master. This, for example: "True, the Saviour said he that believes and is baptised shall be saved; but He only said he that *believes* not shall be damned. He did not say he that believes not, and is *not baptised*, shall be damned." Well, suppose He had said, "He that believes not, and is not baptised, shall be damned;" would there have been any sense in it? No. And if there were any sense in it, would the phrase "and is not baptised," put into the latter clause of the sentence, either add to or diminish the conditions of *salvation*? Certainly not. It would only add a condition of *damnation*, would it not? But unbelief being an all-sufficient ground of condemnation, there would be no sense whatever in adding "and is not baptised." Besides, the unbeliever would not if he could, and could not if he would, be baptised.

But we should not go to this commission to ascertain the conditions of *damnation*; but, rather, the conditions of *salvation*. It is that, at any rate, we are inquiring after now. "He that believes and is baptised shall be saved," said the Lord; thus joining belief and baptism together, and upon the two conjointly conditioning salvation.

Richard Watson, the eminent and standard theologian of the Methodist Church, in commenting on this commission, in his *Theological Institutes*, uses this language: "To understand the force of these words of our Lord, it must be observed that the gate of the 'common salvation' was only now for the first time going to be opened to the Gentile nations. He himself had declared that in His personal ministry He was sent but to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel;' and He had restricted His disciples in like manner, not only from ministering to the Gentiles, but from entering any city of the Samaritans. By what means, therefore, were 'all nations' now to be brought into the church of God, which from henceforth was most truly to be catholic or universal? Plainly, by baptising

them that believed the 'good news' and accepted the terms of the new covenant. This is apparent from the words; and thus was baptism expressly made the initiatory rite by which believers of 'all nations' were to be introduced into the church and covenant of grace" (Inst., Part 4, p. 620).

With Mr. Watson's idea of the church before this commission was given, of circumcision and so forth, we have nothing to do now. This quotation is made to show that this eminent Methodist divine understood our Lord, in these words, to make belief and baptism "the terms of the new covenant," and baptism "the initiatory rite into the church and covenant of grace." Just so my brethren understand it. In the church and covenant of grace, and only in it, so far as the word of God teaches, is salvation. Hence, in this commission, belief and baptism are made conditions of salvation, to all nations and for all ages; not belief alone, but belief *and* baptism. The two are by divine authority and divine appointment joined together in their relation to salvation. "What, therefore, God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

When the apostles went forth to preach under this commission, we find, as might reasonably be expected, that they preached to people of all nations strictly in accordance with its stipulations. That they might be able to do this they were inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit. Hence, our Lord said unto them: "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." This endowment, or clothing with power by the Holy Spirit, was, no doubt, what the Saviour, by a figure of speech, called being "baptised with the Holy Spirit." This brings us to the Acts of Apostles, where we shall find their preaching. The first to preach was Peter. The first discourse was at Jerusalem, on the first Pentecost after the ascension and coronation of our Lord. The Holy Spirit came as the Lord had promised. The disciples were there, as they had been instructed to be. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." "The multitude came together." They were amazed, and wondered at what they saw, and heard. Peter explained the cause of their wonder. And then, as directed by the Spirit, he preached to them, as he had been, directed by the Lord in the commission. The conclusion of the great and first sermon was in these words: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." To the hearts of many of the multitude the sermon carried conviction; for we read that "When they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It is not worth while to spend time arguing that these inquirers believed, so far as faith is a conviction of the heart. That fact, to a mind fairly disposed, is perfectly apparent. Else how could they have been pricked in their hearts? Are persons *ever* pricked in the heart with what they do *not* believe? Why would they say to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "What shall we do?" Does this question indicate unbelief? These Jews had despised Jesus. They had said, "Crucify him;" "Let his blood be upon us and our children." They had crucified Him. They had mocked Him in His agonies. They had

revelled in His blood. But all this was in unbelief. Now they believe, and earnestly call for their duty. Peter answered, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2: 38). Now, were not Peter's instructions in accordance with the commission he had received of the Lord? There must be, there can be, no translation or interpretation of Peter's language here that makes it teach less, or more, or in anywise differently from the commission under which he was acting. He had been commanded to "preach." He did it. He had been commanded to preach repentance and remission of sins, in the name of Jesus, beginning at Jerusalem. He had received a commission from the Lord that said: "Preach the gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptised shall be saved." To all this Peter was *true*, both at Jerusalem and elsewhere thereafter.

In this discourse, then, we find that Peter told believer to repent and be baptised, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. To their belief produced by hearing what he had preached, he added the further duties of repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus--repentance and baptism *joined together*--for the remission of sins. "What, therefore, God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

Let us next look briefly at the history of Saul's salvation. And we will begin the examination by reading the words of Ananias to him, sent to tell him what he "must do:" "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22: 16). We learn in this chapter, and others where Saul's conversion is recited, that on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus, persecuting the disciples, the Lord Himself appeared to him. The main purpose, however, for which the Lord appeared *personally* to Saul was to make him an apostle. This the Lord explained to him at the time. But when the Lord appeared to him, Saul was convinced that Jesus was the Christ; was made a believer in Him whom he had theretofore persecuted, by hearing the truth from the Lord's own mouth. And he asked: "What shall I do, Lord?" The Lord told him to go into Damascus, "and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do." We have already seen what was "appointed" for believers to do in the commission; and it was to this appointment, no doubt, the Lord referred. Saul arose and went into Damascus. The Lord sent Ananias to tell him what was "appointed" for him to do, and what he "must do." Ananias went, and told him, as we have read, "Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Ananias did not need to preach Jesus to him. Saul had seen him in the way. Ananias did not tell him to believe. Saul did believe already. Ananias did not tell him to repent. Saul was a penitent man already. He had been three days waiting in patience and prayer to know what was "appointed" for him yet to do. That Ananias told him. That only he needed to tell him. And now, let us notice that we have in Saul, a *believer*, a *penitent* believer, a *praying*, penitent believer told to arise and be baptised, and *wash away his sins*, calling on the name of the Lord. Does not this strictly harmonise with the commission, in which the Lord "appointed" that "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved?" It is no wonder Mr. Wesley should say, in his note on these words of Ananias

to Saul: "Baptism, administered to real penitents, is both a means and seal of pardon. Nor did God, ordinarily, in the primitive church, bestow this on any, unless through this means."

We are often asked the impertinent question, "How can *baptism* wash away sins?" We do not know how. Neither do we know how blood cleanses from sin. Still, we believe the word of God. We shall, perhaps, never be able to see how baptism washes away sins, and especially if we look upon it as an empty ceremony. But as long as we see written on it "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," we ought to consider it sufficiently endorsed to be good for all it calls for. Let us not be troubled by questions of doubt or unbelief. Remember Abraham's faith, and walk in the steps thereof, nothing doubting.

Before leaving this case of Saul, let us indulge a single reflection further. Almost every passage of Scripture quoted to support the doctrine of justification by faith *only*, is taken from. Paul's writings and preaching. Here we have seen how *he* came to the remission of sins. Was it by faith only? Surely not. Well, as we have here his experience, would it not be fair, to him, to interpret his preaching. and writings in the light of the same? Would it not be wise, as well as fair, to interpret what he said to the jailer, and all he said in his epistles about justification, in harmony with the recorded manner in which he came to the remission of sins?

Before dismissing this part of the subject, let us notice a few passages in the epistles, referring to baptism, and showing its design. (Titus 3: 5): "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The washing--or laver--of regeneration is baptism. All the better critics so understand it. The apostle here teaches, then, that God saves us by two things in the regeneration, namely: the renewing of the Holy Spirit and baptism. This accords strictly with the Saviour's own words (John 3: 5): "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." In the one birth the Spirit renews the heart, and the person is baptised--and is thus saved by the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Spirit. And *both* these passages accord with our Lord's commission, and with the preaching we have noticed under that commission.

(1 Peter 3: 21): "Wherein [Noah's ark] few, that is eight, souls were saved by water, the antitype whereof, [as Wesley correctly translates], baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." "Baptism now saves us," because our Lord has said, "He that believeth and is baptised *shall be saved*." That's the explanation. Before dismissing this passage--plain enough without comment, but a little difficult to understand after much comment--let us read a remark upon it by Richard Watson, the great Methodist theologian: "In like manner [he had defined the word rendered *answer* to mean aim, intent, and had given an instance in the Old Testament] baptism has an end,

an intent, 'not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,' but obtaining 'a good conscience toward God;' and it *requires, claims*, this good conscience through that faith in Christ whereof cometh remission of sins, the cleansing of the 'conscience from dead works,' and those supplies of supernatural aid by which, in future, men may live in all good conscience before God. It is thus that we see how St. Peter preserves the correspondence between the act of Noah in preparing the ark as an act of faith by which he was justified, and the act of submitting to Christian baptism, which is also obviously an act of faith, in order to the remission of sins, or the obtaining a good conscience before God." (Theo. Inst., Part 4, page 624.)

Other passages of Scripture might be cited to show that baptism is *initiative* to the church of God, and hence to the enjoyment of all its promises and blessings; but what has been read must suffice. Now, are we at liberty to conclude, in the light of these passages from the word of God, that baptism is a mere "*ceremony*," and that one can be justified without it as well as with it? Can we conclude that it is a mere "symbol," and in no sense connected with the sinners justification or salvation? Surely not.

The view some people now take of baptism, that minimises it to a mere empty ceremony for christening gunboats, cannons and infants, and of no importance even in such cases, is one of the workings of the law of reaction upon the public mind. It is an extreme, begotten by another. The church fathers of the third century magnified baptism as much as some now minimise it. Tertullian, about the beginning of the third century, contended that there was a virtue or grace imparted to the waters of baptism, as to those of the pool of Bethesda, by the angel, that made them efficacious in taking away sins. Others of the church fathers, especially in Egypt, took the same view. And it was in Egypt, and early in the third century, that infant baptism, so-called, was brought into the church. It was put upon the ground of original sin, and the efficaciousness of the waters of baptism to wash away guilt. Tertullian, it is true, did not believe in infant baptism, but it was because he did not believe infants were sinners. But Origen believed in the guilt of infants, and also took the extreme view of the efficaciousness of the waters of baptism. Hence, he contended for infant baptism, to wash away the pollution of their birth. And he was the first man on record to advocate the practice. When this great father was besieged with inquiries as to why infants were baptised, when the practice was a new one, he answered as follows: "Having occasion given in, this place, I will mention a thing that causes *frequent inquiries among the brethren*: Infants are baptised for the *forgiveness of sins*. Of what sins? Or when have they sinned? Or how can any reason of the laver in their case hold good, but according to that sense we mentioned even now; none is free from pollution, though his life be but of the length of one day upon the earth? And it is for that reason, because *by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away*, that infants are baptised" (Vol. I., 65).

Original sin, and the virtue of the sacrament of baptism, without faith or penitence, to cleanse from sin, compose the ground upon which infant baptism, so-called, was brought into the church, and upon which it was defended by its advocates universally,

until within a comparatively recent period. Mr. Wesley thus grounded it in his writings upon the subject. Hear him: "As to the grounds of it: If infants are guilty of original sin then they are proper subject of baptism; seeing, in the ordinary way, they cannot be saved, *unless this be washed* away by baptism. . . . It is true, the second Adam has found a remedy for the disease which came upon all by the offence of the first; but the benefit of this is to be received through the means which he hath appointed; through baptism in particular, which is the ordinary means he hath appointed for that purpose, and to which God has tied us, though he may not have tied himself" (Treatise on baptism, Doct. Tracts, p. 251). In the ritual of baptism, in the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, it was grounded upon the same doctrine, until that ritual was changed, only a few years ago. Since the great reaction among Protestant pædo-baptists on the question as to the necessity and importance of baptism, the practice of infant baptism is about left groundless. If it were not already in their churches, it would most likely never come in, since they have now no substantial *reason* for it. In fact, they deem it of comparatively little importance now that even penitent believers should be baptised. With many of them now, baptism is a mere ceremony--almost an empty ceremony. In their controversies they not infrequently belittle it; and in practice they neglect it, especially in the case of infants. Now, they tell us that the only baptism worth contending for--the only real baptism, in fact--is that of the Holy Ghost. Some of them say, with the Quakers, that that is the "one baptism" of the New Testament--the true Christian baptism.

As this discourse is intended to have considerable scope, a few words about the baptism of the Holy Spirit may be allowed. There never was any such literal thing as a baptism with or in the Holy Spirit; no one was ever literally dipped into the Holy Spirit, nor was the Holy Spirit ever literally poured or sprinkled upon any person. The very idea of such a literal baptism is preposterous. What! is the Holy Spirit a liquid or other element that can be turned out in a stream or scattered in particles upon a person, or that a person may be dipped into? Surely not. How, then, comes it to pass that we have in the Scriptures the expression "baptised with the Holy Ghost?" Clearly, it is a figurative expression. When John the Baptist and our Lord spoke of the abundant communication of the Spirit to the first disciples, after the ascension, they called it a baptism by a figure of speech. What is a figure of speech? When one calls one thing by the name of another, in some respects different thing, he uses a figure of speech. It is a very common mode of expression. We all use words figuratively, and do so frequently. Children do it. It was more common among oriental people two thousand years ago than it is here and now. This method of expression is adopted for the purpose of giving force and emphasis to our thoughts beyond what we are able to do by the literal use of words. If, for example, one wishes to give great emphasis to the thought of some man's *power*; mental or physical, he could do so by calling him an *engine*. This would, of course, be a figure of speech, but one that all would readily understand without concluding that a man is really an engine, or an engine really a man. We have heard boys call some little hero a horse,

and we understand the meaning of this homely figure without concluding that a boy is really a horse, or a horse a real boy. The Holy Spirit was given, in a measure, before Jesus ascended to heaven. The prophets had it in some measure, and so did John the Baptist himself, and other good people. But when Jesus ascended to the throne in heaven and was glorified, it was given to his apostles and first disciples in a measure not theretofore known. They were endowed with the Spirit--guided by the Spirit into all the truth, and into the utterance of the truth, in languages with which they were wholly unacquainted. They could interpret tongues, heal the sick, foretell events yet in the future, and even raise the dead to life. When John and our Lord foretold this abundant and extraordinary communication of the Spirit to the disciples of Jesus, they called it a *baptism* of the Spirit. The people to whom they thus spoke knew what it was to be baptised. They had been baptised. John had baptised thousands of people in a recent period. Jesus, by his disciples, baptised more than John. Indeed, baptising had come to be a common, every-day thing. It was immersion, too. It was an abundant thing, as to the element used--water. It was performed in the river Jordan. It required "much water." As to the subject, it was an overwhelming, a burial. Now, this was a very suitable word, to use figuratively, to express the abundant, the overwhelming, gifts of the Spirit promised to the disciples. Jesus so used this very word, because so common and so well known, to convey an idea of the overwhelming character of the sufferings he was to endure. The very best critics have taken this view of the expression "baptised in the Holy Spirit." Bloomfield, speaking of the expression as used by John the Baptist (Matt. 3: 11) says: "The most probable opinion is that of Chrysostom and others of the ancients, that baptism here, in the sense *obruere aliquem re*, has reference to the *exuberant abundance* of those extraordinary spiritual gifts soon to be imparted to the first converts." And, on Acts 1: 5, where our Lord uses the same figure, he says: "*Baptised* suggests the *abundance* of the thing--*q. d.* 'ye shall be *plenteously* imbued with the influences of the Holy Spirit."

Dr. MacKnight expresses about the same view: "The descent of the Spirit upon the first converts was called baptism on account of the multitude, variety and greatness of the gifts with which it was attended, insomuch that the minds of those on whom He descended were as fully replenished with his gifts as their bodies were covered with water in baptism."

We see nothing now among Christians, nor has there been anything since the extraordinary formative period of the church, that could properly be called, even by a figure, a *baptism* of the Spirit. The children of God now have and enjoy the Holy Spirit in a measure proportioned to their faith, obedience, and trust, but certainly in no measure such as Paul and Peter did. Men now who make the loudest profession of Holy Spirit baptism are the men who can not be induced, in some cases, to preach the words we all confess were spoken by the Spirit. They oftentimes belittle the commandments given by the Holy Spirit. They are mistaken about having a *baptism* of the Holy Spirit: it was only a *sprinkling* that they got.

The baptism of the Spirit was a *promise*. The baptism appointed in the commission of our Lord is a *command*. The baptism of the Spirit was not an ordinance or command to be obeyed by the believer, but the baptism of the commission is a command to be obeyed. The baptism of the Spirit was not a baptism "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" but that of the commission is to be so performed. The baptism of the Spirit was not to be initiative of its subjects; but the baptism of the commission is initiative into the church, into the one body. The baptism of the Spirit was not connected with salvation or the remission of sins; but the baptism of the commission is so connected. The baptism of the commission is an act of the faith of the individual believer, and is hence a transitive act--one in which, by his own voluntary acts he passes into the one body, into Christ: is born into the kingdom of God. The baptism of the Spirit is a figurative baptism; but that of the commission is a literal baptism of the believers of all nations and all times.

The baptism of the commission, and of all those passages already quoted from Acts of Apostles and from the epistles, is the "one baptism"--the literal baptism of the new institution--and its element is *water*. It is, in almost every way possible to words and figures, connected with the sinner's salvation or pardon. It is joined with faith, and made with it a condition of salvation. It is connected with repentance, and with it made for the remission of sins. It is shown to be *initiatory* in its character--believers are said to have been "baptised into Christ," and so to have "put on Christ;" "baptised into his death," and so to have come into the benefits of His death; "baptised into one body," and so to have been made members thereof -- and in this way shown to be for remission of sins. It may be said in all candor and fairness, and with all proper respect for every one, that no intelligent, fair-minded person can read the Scriptures cited already in this discourse without feeling in his heart that they do certainly, at least, *seem* to make baptism a condition of remission of sins. And yet it must be granted that intelligent, fair-minded, honest Protestants reject the doctrine, and look upon baptism as a mere "ceremony," or "symbol," or "outward sign" of something; or *something else*, they may not know what--only they may think they know it is not for the remission of sins. And why is this?

Well, Protestants generally have accepted the doctrine of justification by faith; and that is certainly a doctrine of the Scriptures. Justification by faith, it is generally agreed, is opposed to justification by works. This is true. The Apostle Paul, most conspicuously of the New Testament teachers, sets the one over against the other. He most emphatically denies that justification is by works of righteousness, and as emphatically affirms that it is by faith. Baptism has been classed with works; and hence baptism for the remission of sins has been rejected because it has been supposed to be opposed to the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith. This is the most formidable difficulty to-day that the truth on this subject has to contend with. Let us look at the seeming conflict. Let it be granted that if "baptism for the remission of sins" is really opposed to "justification by faith," then it is false. Let us look, however, at the classification. Is baptism *rightly* classed with what Paul calls "works of righteousness?" It certainly is not; and here is the

fundamental difficulty. Baptism belongs on the other side. It is always to be classed with faith. It is an act of faith. It is an objective expression of faith. It is faith actualised. Without faith, it is nothing. Without faith, it is indeed an empty ceremony. All that it is, it is *as an expression of faith* in Jesus the Christ. It is *of faith*, and cannot be scripturally separated from it. "Baptism for the remission of sins," therefore, *is* justification by faith. Belief and baptism are *divinely* wedded, and can not be *humanly* divorced. Baptism is opposed to works of righteousness, just as faith is, and just because faith is. Let us consult Paul on this point. Titus 3: 5: "*Not* by works of righteousness which we have done, *but* according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Here is *opposition*. In this sentence the apostle opposes "works of righteousness" on the one hand to "the washing of *regeneration* and renewing of the Holy Ghost" on the other. He teaches that God does *not* save us by the "works of righteousness," but *does* save us by the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Now, "the washing [or laver] of regeneration" is *baptism*; the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is effected through *faith*: so here we have faith and baptism on the same side, and *opposed* to works of righteousness on the other side. This is *Paul's* classification. It has been denied by some that the "laver of regeneration" is baptism, and asserted, in the interests of error, that it refers to the work of the Spirit in regeneration. This view, however, hardly deserves a notice. It is only necessary to observe that "the renewing of the Holy Ghost" is *added* to the "laver of regeneration." They are two things. The passage clearly means the same as "born of water and the Spirit," and both mean the same as "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." Any way, in every scriptural classification, belief and baptism go together, and are opposed to what Paul calls "works of righteousness."

Richard Watson, in his *Biblical and Theological Dictionary*, in an article on "Baptism," says: "The design of this institution [baptism] which was *to express faith* in Christ on the part of those who were baptised, and to declare their resolution of openly professing his religion and cultivating real and universal holiness, appears from . . . Titus 3: 5." And, again, in his *Theological Institutes*, part 4, page 624: "Baptism, which *is also obviously an act of faith*, in order to the remission of sins, or the obtaining a good conscience before God." This standard Methodist authority is quoted as corroborating the view of baptism which we take, that it is an act of faith, because it is of great weight with some, who, in their controversies on this subject, class baptism with works of righteousness, and to show that such a classification is not only in the teeth of Paul's teaching upon the subject, but also of their own standard theology.

But let us now give attention to what is considered the strongest passage, and the one often quoted, to prove justification by faith only, and without baptism, in all Paul's writings: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4: 4, 5).

Now, is the apostle here combating the *acts of faith*? Is he to be understood as intending to exclude those acts by which faith expresses itself, and, in fact, *becomes* real, *actual*, living faith? When he says "to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace," does he mean the one who confesses Jesus Christ, and is baptised into Him--the one whose faith *speaks* out and *acts* out? Surely not. This would contradict his own experience in coming to remission of sins, as we have already seen, as well as so many unmistakable passages of Scripture--many of them in his own writings. How, then, are we to understand him? Let us hear on this point also a somewhat distinguished Methodist writer, Dr. Whedon, in his *Commentary on the New Testament*. We will read from his notes on Romans, third and fourth chapters. He says: "The battle of the apostle against works in this epistle is part of his great battle against circumcision as a means of salvation, against the claim of the power of the Jewish ritual to *save without Christ*, and against the proud pretences of heathen moralism. It is, indeed, the battle of *the gospel* against all anti-Christianity . . . This exclusion of works as a condition means an exclusion of all *merit* or *compensation* to God . . . If, whenever we find the word *works* in the epistle, we read it *adequate compensation*, we shall at once see the conclusiveness of the apostle's reasoning."

Now, does baptism propose to "*save without Christ*?" Does it deny or repudiate Christ? Does it belong to "anti-Christianity?" Does it propose to "*pay* or *compensate* God?" Does any one look upon it as having in it any *purchasing* power? Surely not. On the contrary, baptism *is of* the gospel, and goes with it in "the great battle of the gospel against all anti-Christianity." It is of faith. It is faith *accepting* Christ. It is faith putting on Christ. So far from being a purchasing or compensating work, disclaiming any need of Christ, it is the act of faith by which the penitent believer puts on Christ, "*in whom* we have redemption by his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." It is not opposed to grace. It emphasises the doctrine of salvation by grace. It is the act in which the penitent believer surrenders himself to Christ to be saved by his grace. It is faith reaching out for the death of Christ. The penitent believer is "baptised into his death"--"is buried with him by baptism into death"--into *His* death. It preaches louder than words can the merit of the death of Christ. Paul was combating a plan or system of justification by works of merit or compensation *without the sacrifice of Christ*--a plan that proposed to save the sinner without faith in Christ, without Him at all, in any sense. The effort to class the baptism of the believer with such works is a frightful misrepresentation of the apostle, and is pitiable indeed. It is a stupendous blunder and full of mischief.

We *believe* into Christ, it is true; and it is equally true that we are baptised into Christ. The explanation is that baptism is the act of faith by which we put Him on. The doctrine of justification by faith is scriptural, and the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins is scriptural also. They are both alike and together scriptural. This is the scriptural and conservative view of the subject. It neither magnifies baptism, by attributing to it some merit or virtue to take away sins without faith, nor minimises it, by making it a mere ceremony and one of little importance. And, besides, it admits of the truth of all the

Scripture statements, both about faith and baptism, without mutilating them. This view of the subject puts an end to that kind of discussion that consists in one party quoting and emphasising all those passages of Scripture that teach justification by faith, and the other party quoting with emphasis those passages which teach baptism for remission of sins; thus seeming, to the untaught, to array Scripture against Scripture.

And this view, too, harmonises perfectly the teachings of the apostles Paul and James. The sinner is justified by faith, without such works as Paul excluded; and yet faith, without such acts as make it a real, actual, living faith, "is dead, being alone," as James taught. We are justified without such works as Paul combated; but we are justified by such works as James contended for--*works of faith*--"obedience to the faith"--as Paul also taught.

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The **Gospel Preacher**, edited by A.B. Maston