

The Meaning of Baptism.

READ AT THE ANNAPOLIS CO. MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE, HELD AT NOTATAUX, JAN. 16, 1878.

BY REV. J. BROWN.  
(Published by request.)

The ordinance of baptism, as taught and practised by the Apostles in primitive times, and by Baptists in the present day, has a deep, spiritual meaning; and one full of interest to the believer. In Romans v. 20 and vi. 1-6 we read the following instructive passage, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. . . . What shall we say then, shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Paul is pressing on the Romans the duty of holiness, and teaches them not to suppose that they have liberty to sin because where sin abounded grace did much more abound. "How shall we," he says, "who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" As a dead man is not affected or influenced by anything, but is dead to everything; so we, who have died to sin, we who are in a certain sense dead, should not be affected or influenced by sin. In our baptism, our death to sin, burial and resurrection with Christ were represented. We were buried in the water as representing burial in the grave; we rose out of the water as rising out of the grave. Or, to give it the language of the Reformers:—"The Apostle emphatically shews that all who had been baptized into the name and religion of Jesus, had received the sign and made the profession of communion with Him, and conformity to Him in His death; that in virtue of His dying for their sins, they should die to all sin, and have done with all unholy pursuits and connexions. This profession was equivalent to being buried with Christ, as dead with Him. As His burial was a manifestation that He was really dead, and was followed by His resurrection, so baptism was a professed manifestation of death to sin, and all carnal pursuits and affections, and led to walking in newness of life, not only as to outward actions, but as to inward principles. . . . Baptism teaches the necessity of dying to sin, and being, as it were, buried from all ungodly and unholy pursuits, and of rising to walk with God in newness of life."

Paul, in writing to the Colossians (ii. 12), says:—"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God." Here he shews to them, as he did to the Romans, that their baptism was a representation of their union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

On this subject William Tyndale says:—"The plunging into the water signifieth that we die, and are buried with Christ, as concerning the old life of sin, which is Adam; and the pulling out again signifieth that we rise again with Christ in a new life, full of the Holy Ghost which shall teach us and guide us, and work the will of God in us, as thou seest, Rom 6."

The Westminster Assembly of Divines have this note on the same passage (Rom. vi. 4), "In this phrase the Apostle seemeth to allude to the ancient manner of baptism, which was to dip the persons baptized, and, as it were, bury them under the water for a while, and then to draw them out of it, and to lift them up, to represent the burial of our old man, and our resurrection to newness of life." Baxter's view is very similar; he says:—"In our baptism we are dipped under the water, as signifying our covenant profession, that as He was buried for sin, so we are dead and buried to sin." Dr. Chalmers notes the meaning of baptism in the following extract:—"We doubt not," he says, "that the prevalent style of administration in the apostles' days was by an

actual submerging of the whole body under water. We advert to this for the purpose of throwing light on the analogy that is instituted in these verses. Jesus Christ, by death, underwent this sort of baptism by an immersion under the surface of the ground, whence He soon emerged again by His resurrection. We, by being baptized into His death, are conceived to have made a similar translation,—in the act of descending under the water of baptism to have resigned an old life, and in the act of ascending to emerge into a second, or new life."

In harmony with this is the view of the theologian, Buddeus. He says:—"Immersion, which was used in former times, as we have before declared, was a symbol and image of the death and burial of Christ: by which we are taught, that the remains of sin, which are called the old man, should also be put to death; that is, as Paul elsewhere speaks, our flesh, with its affections and lusts, should be crucified. For in that way we, as it were, die and are buried with Christ, which Paul expressly shews, Rom. vi. 4. An emersion out of the water follows, (Matt. iii. 16,) which exhibits a most beautiful image of the resurrection of Christ; and at the same time, it affords matter of instruction concerning that spiritual resurrection, which is effected by daily renovation." Luther explains it thus:—"It signifies that the old man of our nativity, that is full of sins, which is entirely of flesh and blood, may be overwhelmed by Divine grace. The manner, therefore, of baptism should correspond to the signification of baptism, that it may shew a certain and plain sign of it" What, I would here ask, can more clearly represent the death, burial and resurrection of Christ: the communion His people have with Him in these momentous facts, and their interest in the blessings resulting therefrom, than immersion?

In addition to this, baptism may fitly represent our literal death, burial, and resurrection. The believer, when about to be baptized, is said to be dead to sin, and as burial naturally follows death, he is buried in the water, and as resurrection will follow burial, he is raised out of the water; so baptism may be viewed as prefiguring the Christian's death to this world, his burial in the grave, and his resurrection at the last day.

If we look at baptism as a washing, we shall see a further meaning to this ordinance. In Heb. x. 22 it seems to be viewed in this light: "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Of this verse Alford says, "There can be no reasonable doubt that this clause refers directly to Christian Baptism." In Titus iii. 5, Paul speaks of the "washing of regeneration," not meaning, as Benson very properly remarks, baptismal water, but the thing signified. Regeneration cleanses the soul as washing does the body. Viewed as a washing, how fitly it represents the cleansing influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart, and the washing away of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, of which we sometimes sing:—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains."

The dying thief rejoiced to see  
That fountain in his day;  
And there may I, though vile as he,  
Wash all my sins away."

This same view is given by Peter (1 Pet. iii. 21), i. e., baptism as a washing, "The like figure whereunto even 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 from the dead." Immersion, then, is emblematic of the washing away of the sins of the person immersed. Water may be said to wash the body: regeneration, or cleansing of the soul, is the work of the Holy Spirit; of which, water in baptism is a fit emblem.

Immersion is also a representation of the gift of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, we are told that the apostles were "filled with the Holy Ghost;" they were baptized with the Holy Ghost; and as when a person or thing is baptized with water they are under the influence of the water, so when the apostles were baptized with the Holy Ghost, they were under His

influence; the Spirit had His own natural effect upon them. How appropriate then, and necessary, too, is the desire we sometimes hear expressed by Pædobaptists and Baptists alike, for a baptism of the Holy Ghost, which I take to mean such an overwhelming of the Spirit that we may be under His entire influence.

Would to God that the oft-repeated prayers were answered; that there might be a great overwhelming of all Christians by the Holy Spirit, then would strife and discord, hate and contention cease, peace, love and harmony abound, and union of the true kind everywhere prevail; for then would the true baptism believed in, we think, by tens of thousands who practice differently be practised and taught, and those who do practise and teach it would be a little more tender towards those who err in this matter, whether it be from indifference or ignorance. May the Lord of Hosts send to the churches of our day a Pentecostal baptism of the Spirit of love, gentleness and good-will. Especially should Baptists be gentle and generous towards Pædobaptists, since some of their noblest and best men have come to them from the ranks of their Pædobaptist brethren. Twenty of the leading Baptist ministers in Canada came over from the Presbyterian Church, among them Drs. Crawford, Cooper, Stewart, Davidson, Professor Torrens, and the Editor of the *Canadian Baptist*. Many others, also, have come from other bodies of Christians, so that we should be very gentle towards our brethren, being, as we are, under such a heavy debt of obligation to them; while they, on the other hand, should also be very gracious toward us, seeing there are so many among us who were once among them.

But, to return. In looking into the catechism of the Church of England we find there an explanation not unlike what is already given. To the question, "How many parts are there in a sacrament?" we find this answer:—"Two; the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace;" and the next question but one is:—"What is the inward and spiritual grace?" (that is in baptism), Answer, "A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness," which is just according to truth, while at the same time, against the latter part of the answer, "for being by nature born in sin we are hereby made the child of grace," we utter a distinct and emphatic protest, as being inconsistent with the Word of God, as well as the 18th and 19th articles of the Church of England.

Another meaning of baptism, and not the least important, is this: It is a public profession of our giving up the world and sin, and a declaration of our allegiance to Christ, and determination to serve Him. This is very distinctly set forth in the Church Catechism. The child when sprinkled, there called baptism, is said to promise through the godfather and godmother, to renounce the devil and all his work, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh, . . . to keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life. This meaning we also give, and this profession we also make; may the Lord make us all more faithful in the fulfilment of those vows.

The last meaning of the ordinance of baptism which I shall suggest, is that derived from the commission, "Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Baptism in, or into the name of any one means, according to Locke, to enter one's self as a disciple of him into whose name we are baptized, with profession to receive his doctrines and rules, and submit to his authority. It is in this sense the Israelites are said to have been baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. In baptism we profess to take Christ as our pattern, our model, our Master, our Leader, our King; and His character the standard to which we are to seek to bring our own. The person baptized thereby professes to enter into a union with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; to seek to be conformed to God, to Christ, to the Spirit; to love what God loves, to hate what He hates, and to obey Him when He says, "Be ye holy for I am holy;" to obey Christ when He says, "Follow Me," and to "Walk in the Spirit." "In our public profession in baptism then we under-

take by God's help to seek to be holy as He is holy; to follow the Lord Jesus; and be subject to the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is a profession that God is our Father, and we will obey Him; that Christ is our Saviour and Leader, and we will follow Him; that the Holy Spirit is our Instructor and Teacher, and we will learn those truths which He reveals, and rejoice in those assurances which He gives." "For the Spirit itself witnesseth with our spirits that we are the children of God." We are thus in union and communion with the Holy Trinity, and that oneness has already begun of which Christ said, "The glory which thou gavest me have I given them, that they may be one even as we are, I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.  
United States Correspondence.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Jan'y 29, 1878.

Last week was signalized by three brilliant events which, as they can neither be repeated nor eclipsed, will of necessity make it the notable week of the season. That which will be most universally known and commented upon throughout the country is the presentation to the Government by Congress of the King statue, which would not be especially significant but for the row kicked up over it in the Senate by Messrs. Blaine, Dawes, and Hoar. Blaine caused it all, and has been both lauded and blamed therefor, some of his friends crying "Bravo! the old spirit of fight is still there!" and others, considering his attack as unnecessary and out of place; while his enemies unanimously declare it to have been unmanly and ungenerous to rake up old wounds as he did. Anyway, it was a good time for the spectators; such a one as they have been looking and longing for all winter, for you must know nothing so much delights the lookers on in Congress as a malicious and spirited tilt, no matter how unjust or vicious, between some of our great and dignified(?) law makers. Thus is our human nature shown.

In the other remarkable events mentioned the antithesis of royal life were presented most forcibly to our American senses, being ceremonies in honor of the death of Italy's king and the marriage of Spain's, conducted by the respective legations. The funeral obsequies could not fail of seeming farcical to those not particularly interested, of burning candles and incense, and sprinkling holy water over an empty coffin, must needs be ludicrous. The display, however, was grand and imposing in the extreme. None such has been witnessed here since those attending the burial of Abraham Lincoln. The floral decorations were exceptionally fine and tasteful, being mostly of white blossoms, scarlet leaves and vines of smilax, representing the Italian national colors, white, scarlet and green. The Diplomatic Corps was out *en masse* and in full uniform, and many Congressmen, President Hayes and the entire Cabinet. The audience was by no means wholly composed of big bugs and dignitaries, as a generous sprinkling of the Patrick-and-Biddy element bore witness. Mrs. Hayes stood side by side with the lowest scrub-woman, as did Counts and Barons with pea-nuts vendors and boot-blacks. Democracy prevailed, and the scene was one of jam and crowd and jostle.

Senor and Madame Mantilla's *fete* in honor of King Alfonso's marriage was different in that no plebians were invited. The crowd was as great and probably the discomfort. The marriage had something to eat, also, while the funeral could only smell.

No marriage in a royal family has been celebrated here since that of the Princess Royal of England to the prospective Emperor of Germany in 1858, when a grand ball was given in honor of the event by the British Minister, Lord Napier. The community of Washington (I mean the *high* community) has degraded itself in connection with this affair by manoeuvring and soliciting for invitations from Madame Mantilla. The floral decorations here were also mostly in the national colors, of which the hostess carried a rare bouquet. She was dressed in white satin, pearl network and diamonds, her toilet being sur-

passed by none in richness and beauty. I will not describe other costumes, but only say that every description of rich material and color and jewels were worn. The gentlemen (those who could lay claim to any) were in uniform, regalia, badge and medal. The table damask and the china were manufactured in Paris for the occasion and ornamented with Madame Mantilla's coat-of-arms.

MERRILL.

For the Christian Messenger.

The College Fund.

TRURO, N. S., Feb. 4, 1878.

To the Editor of the Christian Messenger:

DEAR SIR:—We are pleased to hear from many parts of the Province of the success of the agents in collecting and obtaining subscriptions for the re-building of Acadia College, but I fear you have overlooked some places, from which we have been expecting to hear something handsome. For instance, we have heard of a large public meeting held at Amherst, and from our knowledge of the wealth and readiness to contribute in every good word and work of our friends in that quarter, we have been expecting to see a subscription list of at least \$1,500 and perhaps \$2,000 published in the *Messenger*, but not a word have we seen yet about that meeting.

Then, again, we had a meeting in Truro—a small meeting, I am sorry to say, owing to "short notice"—and there was a list opened there, but you have n't received any notice of that either.

Well, Mr. Editor, I have secured a copy of the Truro subscription list, which I herewith enclose you, and, if you think proper, you are at liberty to publish it in your next issue, as the Executive Committee require a copy this week.

The amount subscribed is \$934, besides some other amounts sent forward, and we confidently hope to increase the sum to \$1000. My modesty forbids any comments.

I am yours truly,

A SUBSCRIBER.

P. S.—By all means let us hear about Amherst.

Subscriptions to Re-building of Acadia College, Truro, N. S.

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RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

BILTOWN, CORNWALLIS.—Dear Editor, —You will be glad to know that the powerful work of grace which began a few weeks since is still going on in our midst. Some who have passed through revivals hitherto unmoved, have been smitten down and brought to the Saviour. God is truly in the midst of his people, and is showing himself mighty to save. The church is greatly quickened and encouraged. The congregations are very large indeed, and all seem to be deeply interested in the good work.

On Lord's day morning, Jan. [27th, twenty-three were buried with Christ by baptism into death. We gathered again at the baptismal waters yesterday, when eight more followed the Saviour, making in all, since the work began, forty-nine. We are going to continue the meetings; our faith is strong, and