

## Baptism into Christ's Death

*"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." [Rom. 6:3-5](#)*

We, who are by nature Gentiles, cannot do better than accept this very complete explanation of the true baptism addressed by the Apostle Paul to the believers at Rome—many, if not all, of whom had been Gentiles, "children of wrath." In three verses here the Apostle deals most thoroughly with the subject of baptism as it applies to us. These verses are very generally used to prove all the various doctrines of baptism, but quoted especially by our brethren who recognize baptism as signifying immersion in water. Let it be clearly noticed, however, that the Apostle makes not one word of reference to water baptism. Water baptism is merely a symbol, or picture of the real baptism; and the Apostle, in these verses explains, from various standpoints, the true, the essential baptism, without which no one can be considered a member of the body, or Church of Christ, while all who receive this baptism, of whatever name or place, color or sex, are to be counted as members of the *Ecclesia*, members of the New Creation.

The Apostle is addressing those who are already members of Christ. He says: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ"—we pause here to notice that he does not say, So many of us as were sprinkled with water, nor, So many of us as were immersed in water, but, "So many of us as were baptized [immersed] *into Jesus Christ*." What is it to be immersed into Jesus Christ? Surely he here is carrying out the same thought that he elaborates in [1 Cor. 12:27](#): "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." How do we get into the body of Christ? The Apostle answers that we were baptized into it, and, hence, are now counted as members of our Lord, members under him as our Head, members of "the Church which is his body."

But let us inquire particularly what was the process by which we came into membership in Christ Jesus. The Apostle answers the question in his next statement, "So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were *baptized into his death*." Not a word about our being baptized into him by being baptized into water. No, no! How evident it is that if we were baptized a thousand times in water it would not bring us into membership in the body of Christ! But, accepting the Apostle's statement, we realize that our union with Christ, our membership in his Church or *Ecclesia*, whose names are written in heaven, dated from the time that we were *baptized into his death*. But, when and how were we baptized into the Lord's death? We answer that this baptism into death with the Lord, this overwhelming, or burial of ourselves, our flesh, which resulted in our incorporation by him as members of his body, as New Creatures, took place at the moment when we made the full surrender of our wills to him—consecrating our all, to follow and obey him, even unto death.

The *will* represents the entire person, and all that he possesses. The will has the control of the body, hands, feet, eyes and mouth and brain. It has the control, too, of the pocket, the bank account, the real estate. It controls our time, our talent, our influence. There is not a thing of value that we possess which does not properly come under the control of the will; and, hence, when we surrender our wills to the Lord, or, as the Scriptures sometimes represent it, our "hearts," we give him our all, and this burial of our human will into the will of Christ is our death as human beings. "Ye are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God." ([Col. 3:3](#)) This death, this burial, is our baptism into his death. Henceforth, from the divine standpoint, we are not to count ourselves as human beings, of human nature, of the earth, earthy, and as having earthly aims, objects and hopes, but as New Creatures in Christ Jesus.

The instant of this burial or immersion of our wills into the will of Christ is followed by our begetting to newness of life—to a new nature. As our Lord consecrated his human nature unto death, in the doing of the Father's will, and yet did not remain in death, but was raised from the dead to a newness of nature, so we who thus in consecration become "*dead with him*," sharing in his consecration, are not left in a death state, but may instantly rise through faith to a realization of our kinship to the Lord as New Creatures. Thus the Apostle declares: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwell in you." ([Rom. 8:9](#)) To the world all this is a "hidden mystery." They do not appreciate our faith-justification in the Father's sight, but regard us as other men, who are yet in their sins. Likewise, they see no reason why we should sacrifice or consecrate our wills to the Lord—to be dead as human beings, that we may have a share with him as New Creatures. Neither do they see our consecration and its acceptance, nor appreciate our figurative resurrection to newness of life, newness of hopes, newness of ambitions, newness of relationship to God through Christ. We trust, indeed, that they may see some fruitage in our lives, but we cannot hope that it will be such fruitage as will to them appear to be good or wise or profitable under present conditions. "The world knoweth us not [as New Creatures] because it knew him not." [1 John 3:1](#)

In all this believers are but following the footsteps of Jesus—taking up their cross to follow him. Being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from the sinner-race, he needed not to wait for any sacrifice for sins, for he "knew no sin"—but immediately on reaching the age of manhood under the Law (thirty years) he hastened to make a complete consecration of himself, a full sacrifice of all his earthly interests, hopes, ambitions and desires—that he might do the Father's will only. The language of his heart, as he came to John at Jordan, was prophetically foretold, "Lo I come—in the volume of the book it is written of me—to do thy will, O God. I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is written in my heart." ([Psa. 40:7,8](#); [Heb. 10:7](#)) Our Lord, thus consecrating himself to the Father's will, realized that his outward baptism symbolized the surrender of his earthly life and nature, already immersed, or buried, into the Father's will—even unto death. His water immersion was merely a symbolical representation of the baptism, or burial of his will, which had preceded it. From this standpoint his baptism was full of meaning to him, though not to John, who greatly marveled that he who "knew no sin" should be baptized, whereas the baptism of John was a baptism only for transgressors against the Law Covenant—for the remission of sins.

None but our Lord Jesus himself understood fully why it thus "behooved" him to fulfil all righteousness. None but him realized that while such an immersion (figurative cleansing from sin) was not necessary for him, as though he were a sinner, yet it behooved him who was the prospective Head of the prospective body, to set an example in himself that would be appropriate

as a lesson full of meaning to all of his followers—not only to those "body" members which were of the house of Israel after the flesh, but to those members also who were still aliens and strangers and foreigners. It behooved him to symbolize the full consecration of his will and all that he had, even unto death, that we, coming after, might follow in his steps.

That our Lord did not receive the water immersion at the hands of John as the real immersion, but merely as its figure, or illustration, can be readily demonstrated. In evidence mark his words about the time of the last Supper. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" ([Luke 12:50](#)) Here our Lord shows that his baptism was not the water baptism, but the death baptism—baptism into death, in harmony with the divine arrangement—as man's redemption price, or sin-offering.

Having consecrated himself to this death-baptism at the earliest possible moment, when he attained thirty years of age, and having during the three and a half years of his ministry carefully carried out the provisions of that consecration—"dying daily," pouring out his soul unto death—using up his life, his energy, his strength, in the service of the Father, in the service of his followers and, in a large sense, in the service of his enemies. Finally, realizing himself near the close of this death-baptism, when it would be fully accomplished, and feeling the weights, the trials, the difficulties, growing heavier and heavier each moment, and having not a sympathizer—"Of the people there were none with him"—not one who understood the circumstances and conditions, and who could share his grief by offer of sympathy, encouragement or consolation—then longing for the end of the trial he exclaimed, "How am I straitened [in difficulty] till it [my death-baptism] be accomplished!" ([Luke 12:50](#)) His baptism was fulfilled very shortly after, when he died, crying—"It is finished!"

The whole world is dying, and not merely the Lord and the Church, his body; but the world does not participate in Christ's death, as does the Church, his body. There is a great difference. The whole world is dead with father Adam under his sentence or curse; but our Lord Jesus was not of the world, not one of those who died in Adam. We have already seen that his life was holy and separate from that of all sinners, notwithstanding his earthly mother—that he was not under condemnation. Why, then, did he die? The Scriptures answer that he "died for *our sins*"—that his death was a sacrificial one. And so it is with the Church, his body, baptized into him by baptism into *his death*—participants with him in his sacrificial death. By nature children of Adam, "children of wrath, even as others," they are first *justified* out of Adamic death *unto life*, through faith in our Lord Jesus and his redemptive work; and the very object of that justification to life out of Adamic condemnation to death, is that they may have this privilege of being baptized into Jesus Christ (made members of his body, his *Ecclesia*) by being baptized into his death—by sharing death with him as joint-sacrificers. Ah! What a wide difference there is between being dead in Adam, and being dead in Christ!

This mystery of our relationship to Christ in sacrifice, in death-baptism now, and the resulting relationship and union with him in the glory that is to follow, is incomprehensible to the world. It should, however, be appreciated by the Lord's faithful, and is asseverated repeatedly in the Scriptures. "If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him"; "if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him." We are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, *if so be* that we suffer with him [if we experience death-baptism with him as his body members] that we may be also glorified together." [2 Tim. 2:12](#); [Rom. 6:8](#); [8:17](#)

In the fourth verse of the text we are examining, the Apostle repeats the same thought from another standpoint, saying—"Therefore are we buried with him by baptism into death." Again no suggestion of water baptism, but a most positive statement of death-baptism, our consecration unto death. Proceeding, the Apostle carries forward the picture, stating the wherefore or reason of our baptism into Christ's death, saying, "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." Only indirectly does the Apostle here refer to our share in the First Resurrection, when we shall share the glory of our Lord in his Kingdom: he refers chiefly to the present life. All who make full consecration of their lives to the Lord, to be dead with him, to be joint-sacrificers with him in the service of the Truth, are to reckon themselves while living in the world as being separate and distinct from others around them. They covenant to die to earthly things which so engross others, and may, therefore, use them only as servants to the New Creation. New Creatures become alive through the Redeemer to heavenly things and prospects, which the world around us see not, understand not. In harmony with this our lives in the world should be new, distinct, separate from those of others about us; because we are animated with the new spirit, the new hopes, the new aims, the heavenly.

Coming to the fifth verse, the Apostle still makes not the slightest reference to water baptism, although some, at first, might think otherwise of his words: "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." If this being planted together in the likeness of his death be understood to mean water baptism, it would be laying more stress upon water baptism than any teacher in the world would be willing to admit. What is it that as Christians we most earnestly hope for? Is it not that we may share in the Lord's resurrection, the First Resurrection? The Apostle expressed this as the grand ideal and hope before his mind, saying—"That I might know him and the power of *his resurrection* [as a member of his body, his Church], and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death—if by any means I might attain unto *the resurrection of the dead*." ([Phil. 3:10,11](#)) Now to understand [Romans 6:5](#) to mean that a share in Christ's resurrection would be the sure result of an immersion in water would be to make this passage contradict every other passage, and to outrage reason. Why should a planting, or burial, in water result in a share in the First Resurrection? We are safe in assuming that thousands have been planted, or buried, or immersed, in water who will never share in the First Resurrection—the Christ Resurrection.

But when we understand this verse, in harmony with the two preceding it, to refer to baptism *into death*, to planting *in death*, in the likeness of *Christ's death*, then all is plain, all is reasonable. Having been called of the Lord to be joint-heirs with his Son, and to suffer with him and to be dead with him, to live with him and to reign with him, how sure we may feel that if we are faithful to this call, if we are planted or buried into his death, like as he was buried into death—as faithful soldiers of God and servants of the Truth—we shall eventually get the full reward which God promises to such, viz., a share in the First Resurrection—to glory, honor and immortality.

Baptism into death is the real baptism for the Church, as it was the real baptism for our Lord; water baptism is only the symbol, or picture of it to us, as it was to him. This is conclusively shown by our Lord's words to two of his disciples, James and John, who requested that they might have his promise that eventually they should sit with him, the one on his right hand and the other on his left hand in the Kingdom. Our Lord's answer to them was, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to be baptized with the baptism that I am [being] baptized with?" Their avowal of their willingness to share, not only his ignominy but also his baptism into death, our Lord approvingly

answers, "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." ([Mark 10:35-39](#)) Whoever of his called ones are willing at heart for these experiences, the Lord will grant them the privilege—and also his assistance. Such shall indeed be immersed into Christ's death, and, as a consequence, have a share with him in the First Resurrection and in the Kingdom glories appertaining thereto. That our Lord here made no reference to water baptism is evident; for these two disciples had been with him from the beginning of his ministry, and as his representatives had been baptizing multitudes in water, "unto repentance and remission of sins"—John's baptism. ([John 3:22,23; 4:1,2; Mark 1:4](#)) Our Lord's inquiry respecting their willingness for a share in his baptism was not misunderstood by the apostles. They had no thought that he wished them to be baptized again in water; they understood well that it was the baptism of their wills into his will and the Father's will, and accordingly their participation with him in his sacrifice—dying daily, laying down their lives for the brethren, to the finish, unto death actual.

### **"By One Spirit We Are All Baptized into One Body"**

—[1 Cor. 12:12,13](#)—

Let no one misunderstand the Apostle, when referring to our baptism into death with our Lord—"into his death"—to mean the baptism of the holy Spirit. Death and the holy Spirit are distinctly separate, and the two baptisms are distinct and separate. The baptism into death is an individual matter, in which each who would become a member of the body of Christ must individually consecrate and sacrifice his will. Subsequently, his sacrifice accepted, the Lord by his Spirit assists each to lay down his life in the service of the Truth and for the brethren—even unto death. The baptism of the holy Spirit was one baptism for the entire Church. It took place in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, and has needed no repetition, because it has not ceased to abide with the Church from then until now. A repetition of some of the outward manifestations was given in the case of Cornelius; but merely as an evidence to Peter and to all the Jewish believers, and to Cornelius and all Gentile believers since, that God makes no distinction or discrimination as between Jews and Gentiles. The Pentecostal immersion was accomplished, we are told, by the filling of the upper room with the holy Spirit, so that the 120 brethren present "were all immersed in the holy Spirit," the apostles receiving, additionally, a symbol of divine favor in the appearance as of cloven tongues of fire upon their heads.

This anointing with the holy Spirit corresponded to the anointing of Israel's high priests and kings with the holy anointing oil. The oil was poured upon the head and ran down over the body. The antitype of this pouring upon the head was the impartation of the holy Spirit to our Lord at the time of his consecration at thirty years of age, when the Father gave him the spirit "without measure." ([John 3:34](#)) When Pentecost was fully come, and our glorified Head had appeared in the presence of the Father, and made propitiation for the sins of his people, he was permitted to "shed forth this," the Pentecostal holy Spirit immersing his Church; thus signifying their acceptance by him and by the Father, as members of his *Ecclesia*, his body—members of the New Creation. His Church, his body, has since continued, and the holy Spirit has continued in and upon it; and as each additional member is added to the Church, which is his body, each becomes a participant in the one baptism of the Spirit which pertains to and pervades the body, the Church.

The text under consideration links this Pentecostal baptism of the Spirit with our individual baptism into death, and shows us the relationship of the two. It is as justified men that we are baptized into death; it is as members of the New Creation that we are anointed of the holy Spirit and constituted members of the *Ecclesia*, the body of Christ. As already seen, we must first be justified out of Adamic sin and death, by faith in our Redeemer, before our *sacrifice could be accepted* and we be counted "dead with him"—with our Lord, our Head. So, likewise, we must first make this consecration, or *sacrifice*, of our justified selves, and be accepted as members of the New Creation, before the dying processes begin which will, by the Lord's grace, result in our complete *baptism into death*, in the likeness of our Lord's baptism into death, and thus insure a share in his "First Resurrection." This is in accord with what we have already seen; viz., that it is not our justification that constitutes us New Creatures—members of the body of Christ—but our baptism into death with him as the Apostle says, "As the body is one, and hath many members...so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." [1 Cor. 12:12,13](#)

This Gospel age is the "acceptable year of the Lord," during which he has been willing to *accept* the sacrifices of believers, their full consecration unto death. Each sacrificer thus responding to the Call of the age ([Rom. 12:1](#)) has at once been accepted to a place, a membership in the "Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven." But this acceptance, as we have seen, does not conclude the matter: it is required of all consecrators that they shall "die daily"—that is, that their attitude of entire consecration shall be continued daily until they too can finally declare, "It is finished." It is required by the consecration that this perseverance in sacrificing and well-doing shall be continued patiently and faithfully, and that the end, with us as with our Lord and Head, shall be literal death. As it is written: "I have said, Ye are gods [*elohim*—mighty ones] all of you sons of the Highest—yet ye shall die like men, ye shall fall like one of the princes"—not like Prince Adam, convicts; but like Prince Jesus—participators in his death. ([Psa. 82:6,7](#)) This faithfulness, this daily dying is requisite to our making our calling and election sure; and it is to such as faithfully walk in the footsteps of the Lord that he promises the glory, honor and immortality reserved for the faithful overcomers who shall constitute the "Very Elect" members of the New Creation. Our Lord's words are, "Be thou faithful unto *death*, and I will give thee a crown of life." ([Rev. 2:10](#)) We see, then, that it is with the Church as it was with her Lord and Head—that the consecration brings the first-fruits of the Spirit, faithfulness daily continues the blessing of the Spirit, with increasing joys and fruits, while the faithful finishing of the covenant in actual death is essential to the receiving of the full inheritance—a share in the First Resurrection and its glories and honors. [Eph. 1:12-14](#); [Rom. 8:16,17](#)

### The Baptism of Fire

We have already at considerable length\* called attention to the statement of John the Baptist, made to the Jews respecting Jesus, "He shall baptize you with the holy Spirit and with fire," ([Matt. 3:11](#))—thus pointing out the Pentecostal blessing upon faithful Israelites and the fire of God's anger, "wrath to the uttermost" ([1 Thess. 2:16](#)), that came upon the remainder of that nation. The baptism of fire is not a blessing, nor is it intelligently that Christian people sometimes pray for it. As there was such a baptism of fire in the end of the Jewish age upon the "chaff" of that nation, so our Lord indicates there will be in the end of this age a similar "fire" upon the "tare" class of Christendom—a baptism of fire, of trouble, which will be appalling; "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation." [Dan. 12:1](#)

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### The Symbolical Baptism in Water

We have already called attention to the various water baptisms in vogue amongst Christian people, and almost universally misunderstood by them to be the real baptism; we have shown how false and inconsistent are the tests which are based upon these water baptisms, which cannot affect the heart, and which at very most are symbols, but not seen to be symbols by their advocates, because they do not clearly discern the real *baptism into death* with Christ. How simple and yet how accurate becomes this test of real baptism, as respects the Church of Christ—the "body," the *Ecclesia*, whose names are written in heaven—not depending upon earthly enrollment! This true baptism is, indeed, the door into the true Church, for no one can be admitted or enrolled as a member of the Church, the body of Christ, and have their names written in heaven as such, except first he have experienced this baptism of his will, of his heart, into *death with Christ*, and has thus been inducted into membership in his Church, which is "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." ([Col. 1:24](#)) Ah, yes! Such believers, making such consecration, such baptism into death with the Lord, must all be true "wheat"—not one of these is a "tare." The water door may let in "tares" as well as "wheat" into the Baptist Church; but the baptism into death as a door will admit only the wheat class into the true Church, because none others will care to come under the conditions, though some may imitate them in a measure, as the "tares" are imitations of "wheat."

From this standpoint it will be observed that there may be members of the true Church—baptized into Jesus Christ, by being baptized into his death—amongst Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Roman Catholics, etc., as well as amongst Disciples and Baptists. On the other hand, undoubtedly the great majority in all denominations (including Disciples and Baptists immersed into water) have neither part nor lot in the body of Christ, the true *Ecclesia*, because of not having come through the *real door* into the *real Church*, by the *real baptism* into "his death." This proposition is incontrovertible.

Having thus laid all the stress, as the Apostle does, upon the true baptism, we turn to the symbol of it, the water baptism, and inquire, first, Is the symbol proper or necessary to those who have the real baptism? Second, If so, which is the proper symbol?

### Is the Symbolic Baptism Necessary?

The testimony of the Lord and the apostles clearly indicates the propriety of the symbolical or water baptism, because not only they themselves were baptized with water, but taught water baptism in respect to others—not Jews only, but also Gentile converts. We have already shown that our Lord Jesus' baptism was separate and distinct from that of John's baptism to the Jews in general—that it was not only unto repentance for remission of sins—that John did not understand the matter; and that our Lord, in thus instituting a symbol of his own death, did not attempt to explain what John and others of that time could not have understood, because the holy Spirit was not yet given, for Jesus had not yet accomplished his sacrifice for our sins, nor been glorified so as to present the sacrifice on our behalf. We note the commission given by our Lord to the apostles, and to us through them, as recorded in [Matt. 28:19,20](#): "Go ye, therefore, and teach all

nations, baptizing them in the name [by the authority] of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit." This commission has applied to this entire Gospel age, and under it all ministers of the Truth today labor. The Lord did not here refer to the Pentecostal baptism of the Spirit, because it was not in the power of the apostles thus to baptize anyone. The Lord himself, and he alone, had this authority and retained it. It was, however, granted to the apostles, and to all the faithful teachers of the Lord's Word, to instruct people respecting the grace of God in Christ—respecting their justification, and respecting their sanctification, or consecration, or baptism into death with Christ, if they would be partakers of his new nature and coming glory. And the baptizing included also the symbolical, or water baptism, which was to be the outward sign by which the inward or heart-consecration of the believer would be made known to his fellows, even as our Lord himself first made the heart-consecration to the Father, and then symbolized it in water.

That the inspired apostles so understood their commission and ours is evident from all their teachings. They first taught the people respecting the grace of God in the work of redemption, encouraging them to believe unto justification of life. They thus urged upon them a full consecration of heart, saying, "I beseech *you, brethren* [no longer sinners, but justified through faith in Christ, and, hence, designated members of the "household of faith," or "brethren"], by the mercies of God [a share of which you have already received in your justification], that ye present your bodies living sacrifices, holy [justified], acceptable to God, your reasonable service." This was the invitation to consecrate, or sacrifice, or be "*baptized into his death*." So many as heard the word gladly, in the proper condition of heart, appreciatively, were baptized—not only really baptized in their consecration vow, but also symbolically baptized in water, as an outward testimony of this.

Notice the following testimonies that baptism was the custom of all the apostles—not merely with the Jews, but also with the Gentiles. We read of the people of Samaria, "When they believed Philip...they were baptized, both men and women [not children]." ([Acts 8:12](#)) The Ethiopian eunuch converted by the preaching of Philip was also baptized in water. ([Acts 8:35-38](#)) After Peter had preached to Cornelius and his household, "The holy Spirit fell on all them that *heard* [appreciated] the word [no infants, therefore], ...and he commanded them to be baptized." ([Acts 10:44-48](#)) Again we read, "Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." ([Acts 18:8](#)) Again we read, "Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things spoken by Paul....She was baptized and her household." ([Acts 16:14,15](#)) The Philippian jailer, when he had believed, was baptized by Paul and Silas in the prison. ([Acts 16:33](#)) Again, we read, "I baptized also the household of Stephanus." [1 Cor. 1:16](#)

True, the Apostle in this last case mentions how few he had baptized, but this, undoubtedly, was because of his thorn in the flesh, his imperfect eyesight; and the few whom he baptized probably received this service at his hands because no one else suitable to perform it was conveniently at hand. He thanked God that he baptized so few; but this does not imply that he had changed his mind in respect to the propriety either of the real baptism or of its symbol; but in view of the fact that a dispute had arisen in the Church—a sectarian or factious spirit leading some to say, "I am of Paul," others, "I am of Apollos," others, "I am of Peter," etc.—the Apostle was glad that he could say he had baptized very few of them himself, lest any of them might have been led to claim that he had been making personal disciples, baptizing them in his own name, instead of making disciples for Christ, and baptizing them into the name of Christ.

In the light of these plain declarations of Scripture respecting the precept and practice of the Lord and the apostles, it would be a bold man indeed who would declare that symbolical or water baptism is not taught in the Scriptures; or that it was taught as applicable only to the Jews; or that it was intended only as an introductory work. On the contrary, it has been both taught and practiced from the beginning of the age to the present time, even though with varying forms and ceremonies, and with more or less incorrect conception of its meaning, confounding the symbol and losing sight of the real baptism. It is surely with good reason that all Christian people respect water baptism as of divine institution. If any are still inclined to controvert this question, we have no quarrel with them, but believe that if such an one is honest and has performed in his heart the true baptism of his will into the will of the Lord—if he has become dead to self, and to the world, and alive toward God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, God will reveal even this matter also unto him in due season. [Phil. 3:15](#)

Meantime, we shall rejoice with such that they have found the real baptism, and become participators in it, and we congratulate them upon the truth that it is far better to see and enjoy the real baptism while blind to the symbol, than it would be to see the symbol and be blind to the reality. In view of this, however strongly we favor the symbolical baptism, we could not base Christian fellowship upon it, but only upon the real baptism into death with Christ. All, therefore, who confess the Lord as their Redeemer, and confess a full consecration of heart and life to him, we accept as brethren in Christ Jesus, members of the *Ecclesia*, whose names are written in heaven—New Creatures in Christ, whether by birth Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, male or female, baptized with water or not baptized with water.

On the other hand, let it not be forgotten that every item of knowledge brings not only an increase of privilege and joy, but also an increase of responsibility. Whoever, therefore, comes to see the beauty and authority of the water symbol, comes at the same time to another test respecting the *deadness* of his will—respecting his real baptism into death with his Lord. A failure to obey as to the symbol under these circumstances, it will readily be seen, would mean a withdrawal of the sacrifice, and thus a failure to make the calling and election sure.

### **The Proper Symbol of Baptism**

We will not attempt a discussion of the multitudinous pros and cons as between sprinkling, pouring and immersion—as to which was the original apostolic mode of performing symbolical baptism. We will suggest, however, that no infant could possibly be in the condition of mind and heart which would permit it to make a consecration or baptism of its will into the will of Christ, so as to become dead with him to self and to the world. We will insist further, that the symbolical baptism *could not* be performed prior to the real baptism, with any validity; because symbolical baptism is intended to be merely the outward expression or confession of what has already transpired between our hearts, our wills, and the Lord in secret.

These things being true, it follows that the great majority of Christian people have never had symbolical or water baptism, since they could receive it only after intelligently making their consecration vow. The immersion of adults prior to *consecration* would be no more efficacious than an ordinary bath, no more of a symbolic baptism than the sprinkling of an unconsecrated infant. It behooves all, therefore, to inquire earnestly which is the true water baptism, the true symbol, designed by our Lord, and to obey it promptly. And every consecrated heart, "dead indeed" to self-will and worldly opinion, will be on the alert to know and to do the will of the

Lord in this as in every other matter. Such alertness is implied in the expression, "Alive toward God through Jesus Christ our Lord." [Rom. 6:11](#)

Suppose that the confusion on the subject of the mode of baptism were so complete, and the testimony respecting the procedure of the early Church so confused, that we had nothing whatever to guide us in determining whether the apostolic mode of water baptism was by sprinkling or pouring or immersing, we are now in a place where, seeing clearly what constitutes the real baptism, it is possible for us to see clearly what would and what would not constitute symbols or pictures of it. Scrutinizing every form practiced, one only seems at all to *picture* death and burial with Christ. We fail to see any symbol of death to the world and self, and with Christ, in many or few drops of water upon the forehead, or in a pailful of water poured over the person. If there is any symbolical likeness of death in either of these we are unable to perceive it. But when we come to consider immersion we see at a glance a wonderful, a striking, a remarkable, a fitting illustration of all that is implied in the real baptism to death. Not only does the Greek word *baptizo* signify submergence, covering, burying, overwhelming, but the whole procedure connected with one immersion backward into the water in the name of Christ is a most striking picture of a burial, fitting in every particular. The administrator in the symbol represents our Lord. As the candidate goes to him so in our hearts we go to the Lord for baptism. Confessing that we cannot of ourselves become dead to self and to the world, we give ourselves into the hands of the Lord, asking him to accept the will for the deed, and requesting that, our wills being given up, *he will bury us into his death*—that he will cause such experiences, disciplines, assistances and chastisements, as will best enable us to carry out our covenant of consecration. When the candidate has given up his will, the administrator gently lets him down into the water, and while he is thus on his back, helpless in the water, he furnishes a complete illustration of our powerlessness to assist ourselves while in death; and as the administrator raises him to his feet again we see in picture just what our Lord has promised us—to raise us up from the dead in due time by his own power. We make no attempt to constrain the consciences of others who differ with us; but it seems to us evident from the fitness of this symbol that its author was the Lord. Who else could have arranged so complete a picture or symbol of the entire matter?

Whoever has already performed the real baptism—whoever has already given himself into the hands of Christ, to become dead with him, buried in the likeness of his death, and then sees the beauty of this symbolic picture, must, we believe, feel an intense desire to fulfil it in his own case. The language of his heart must surely be, "I delight to do thy will, O my God!"

What advantages will accrue from obedience to this symbol? We answer that the advantage does not accrue on the fulfilment of any one part of our consecration vow, but will only be ours if we seek to fulfil all the requirements, first and last—everything included in the full surrender of our wills to the Lord's will, and a full endeavor to walk in his steps. But while the full advantage will accrue at the end of the journey, in the First Resurrection, and its glory, honor and immortality, there is a measure of advantage to be enjoyed even now. The satisfaction of mind, the peace of heart, the fact that, like our Lord, we have endeavored to "fulfil all righteousness"—these contribute to that peace of God which flows like a river, regularly and steadily and forcefully, through the lives of those who are his—the peace of God that passeth all understanding, in our hearts.

The Apostle's testimony is, that there is "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." ([Eph. 4:4-6](#)) It follows that as there is only one proper baptism so there can be but one

proper symbol to it; and Christian people in general are agreed that immersion in water corresponds most closely to the meaning of the Scriptural language.

### **Who May Administer Water Baptism**

Since all of the consecrated, all baptized into Christ's death, constitute the "Royal Priesthood," and members of the anointed body of the Lord, it follows that they not only are commissioned by [Matt. 28:19](#) to teach the people, and thus to lead them to the baptism, or burial of their wills into the Lord, but would be equally commissioned to perform for them the symbol of this consecration, the water baptism. And, further, if no such consecrated person could be found convenient for the service of the symbol, we can conceive of no sound objection that could be raised to its performance by an unconsecrated believer, or even by a worldly person, an unbeliever; because the real contract is between the Lord and the individual consecrating himself; and as the water baptism is not the real one, but merely a picture, so the administrator is not the Lord, but merely a man, and whether a good or a bad man he would act merely as a representative for the convenience and service of the immersed one. Nevertheless, there is a general fitness and order which it is well to observe in this as in all matters pertaining to the *Ecclesia*: this would indicate that the most proper persons for such service would be the chosen elders.

### **The Form of Words**

No particular form of words for this service is set before us in the Scriptures, and all can readily see that the words are of secondary importance—that the baptism might be equally valid if no words at all were used; because, as previously stated, the real contract is between the baptized one and the Lord, and the *act* of water baptism is the open confession of it. It is not, therefore, a question of what the administrator may believe or disbelieve, say or omit to say, but of what is the thought and intention of the heart of the one thus symbolically baptized. Nevertheless, basing our judgment upon the words of the Lord, in [Matt. 28:19](#), and the words of the Apostle in [Rom. 6:3](#), we recommend as a simple form of sound words for the occasion these:

"Brother John [or other Christian name], in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, by this authority, I baptize thee into Christ."

### **Repetition of the Symbol**

Because the true meaning of baptism has been so long lost sight of, we have many inquiries from those who have already been immersed in water, respecting the validity of their water baptism, and whether or not it would be proper to repeat the symbol. Our reply is that the symbol needs no repetition; but since it would have no meaning whatever, and no virtue whatever, any more than any other bath or dip in water, unless it *followed* the full consecration unto death, each must decide for himself whether or not he has obeyed this witnessing. But if the water baptism followed consecration, or baptism into death, it would not be necessary to repeat it—even though knowledge on the subject was deficient.