

The Doctrine of the Lord's Supper

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From the book, *The Church: Its Polity and Ordinances*, 1879

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This ordinance, which commemorates the dying love of Christ, has been for ages the centre of fierce theological conflict. In the Roman Church many a martyr perished for his temerity in opposing the papal dogma, and among the Reformers it proved the chief occasion of division and strife. These controversies relate chiefly to the question how, or in what manner, Christ is present in the Supper; in respect to which the Christian world is divided by four different theories.

I. TRANSUBSTANTIATION

Many of the Fathers used language which implied a supernatural presence of Christ in the Supper, but none of them conceived of an actual change of the bread and wine into his flesh and blood. This was first taught, in formulated statement, by Paschasius Radbert, in the ninth century, who held that after the words of consecration are uttered there remains only the appearance of bread and wine: the actual substance is the body and blood of Christ.

After three centuries of conflict this was proclaimed a dogma in the Roman Catholic Church by the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215, and in the sixteenth century it was reaffirmed with more ample statement and higher solemnity by the Council of Trent.

The doctrine, as thus stated, involves the following points:

1. That when the words of consecration are uttered by the priest, the bread and wine are instantly changed into the real body and real blood of Christ just as they actually existed on the cross. The properties of bread and wine, indeed, remain, such as color, form, and taste, but the substance is wholly changed.
2. That, as the body and spirit of Christ cannot be separated, it follows that not the body and blood only, but also the soul and divinity, the whole Christ is contained in the elements thus changed, and is contained in each separate particle of them.
3. That the Lord's Supper, or mass, is a true and proper sacrifice to God, the priest therein offering the real body, soul, and divinity—the whole Christ as he was offered up on the cross; it is, therefore, a real propitiation for sin and a means of securing God's favor.
4. That the elements, having thus become the true and real Christ, are to be worshipped and adored with the adoration and worship offered to God.

5. That, as the whole Christ is in each separate particle of the elements, the communicant receives in the bread or wafer, not the body only, but also the blood, of the Lord; and, as in the universal administration of the cup there is special danger of spilling the blood, the cup is to be withheld from the laity and given only to the clergy.

This miracle, which at the word of a mere man trans-mutes a wafer into God and makes the eucharist a perpetual repetition of the sacrifice of the cross, is affirmed chiefly from two passages.

1. The words of Christ (John 6:53): "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." In this, however, a reference to the Lord's Supper is plainly inadmissible. For when Christ spoke these words, that ordinance had not been instituted. If they relate to it, the Old Testament saints and all who have died without the Supper have perished. The with-holding of the ordinance from infants would be, in this case, fatal to their salvation. This literal interpretation of the passage, moreover, is condemned by Christ in verse 63: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Whatever; therefore, be the meaning of these words, plainly they do not relate to the Supper.

2. The words used by Christ at the institution of the sacrament: "This is my body," "This is my blood." It is affirmed that these words are to be literally construed, and that with such construction they necessarily teach that the sacred elements are the true body and blood of Christ. But we deny the necessity of a literal construction. For the verb "to be" in all languages has a common meaning to signify, to represent, and in the New Testament; this usage is frequent. Thus it is said: "I am the door;" "That rock was Christ;" "The seven candlesticks are the seven churches." In these passages, and in many others, the verb clearly means to signify or represent; and if in these, why not also in the words relating to the Supper? Indeed, the most imperative reasons require this interpretation. For,

(1) Christ, when he uttered these words, was sitting at the table with his disciples in his own proper body, and it is impossible that they could have understood him literally.

(2) The bread, after the words of consecration, and at the time of eating, is still called bread, I Cor. 10:17: "We are all partakers of that one bread;" 11:26, 27: "As often as ye eat this bread,"—thus clearly showing that no such change had occurred.

(3) The literal construction is opposed to the plain testimony of the senses, which perceive in the elements only bread and wine; and if we reject the testimony of the senses, the foundation of all knowledge is destroyed, not on this subject alone, but on all subjects.

(4) It necessitates also the monstrous consequences that man has power to transmute bread and wine into God—a supposition not less impious than absurd; that the sacred elements or host, being thus the divine Christ, ought to be worshipped and adored, which is idolatry; and that the priest in every celebration of the mass offers a true and real sacrifice to God, whereas the Scriptures, in language emphatic and unmistakable, represent the one offering of Christ on the cross as complete and final.

Finally, the withholding of the cup from the laity is opposed to the apostolic example and the uniform practice of the early churches; for the whole church, and not the clergy only, are represented as partaking of the wine. The apostles (1 Cor. 10, 11) never separated the elements as if the bread were common, but the wine appropriated to the clergy.

It is evident, therefore, that the dogma of transubstantiation has no basis either in Scripture or reason, and can be accepted only by those who place the so-called author of the church above both.

II. CONSUBSTANTIATION

At the Reformation, Luther denied transubstantiation, but insisted on the real and corporeal presence of Christ in the Supper. He taught that "in, with, and under the consecrated bread and wine the true and essential body and blood of Christ are imparted to the communicant, and are received by him, though in a manner inexplicable by us and altogether mysterious."

Zwingle, the Swiss Reformer, on the other hand, asserted that the sacred elements simply represent as symbols the body and blood of Christ. The struggle between the German and the Swiss theologians on this point was long and bitter, during which the moral power of the Reformation was seriously weakened.

The Lutheran doctrine, as finally evolved, may be thus stated:

1. The bread and wine remain bread and wine after the words of consecration, but the real body and blood of Christ are mystically united with them; so that the communicant receives, in a corporeal sense, the actual body and blood of Christ in, under, and with the elements.
2. As a logical sequence, Christ's glorified body either is ubiquitous by the communication of divine omnipresence to it, or is, by divine power, especially present at each celebration of the sacrament; the former was Luther's view, the latter is the more common view of the Lutheran Church.
3. In partaking, the worthy and the unworthy alike receive the real body and blood of Christ, but with opposite effect. The worthy receive them unto salvation, the unworthy to condemnation.

III. THE MYSTICAL PRESENCE

Calvin proposed a middle ground between the Lutheran and Zwinglian positions, hoping thus to reconcile the opposing parties. He denied the presence of Christ in the Supper in any corporeal sense, but insisted that he is dynamically present—that is, as the sun is in heaven, but its light and heat are on earth, so the glorified body of Christ is in heaven, but special divine influences radiate from it upon the believing soul while partaking of the sacrament.

His words are:

"Our souls are fed by the flesh and blood of Christ, just as our bodily life is nourished by bread and wine. The analogy of the signs would not hold unless our souls find their sustenance in Christ, which cannot be the case if Christ does not actually coalesce into one with us and support us through his flesh and blood. And although it seems incredible that, the places being so distant, the flesh of Christ should penetrate to us so as to be our food, let us remember how much the secret power of the Spirit transcends our senses, and how foolish it is to measure his immensity by our standard."

And in his treatise on the Lord's Supper he adds: "We all, then, confess with one mouth that, on receiving the sacrament in faith according to the ordinance of the Lord, we are truly made partakers of the proper substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ." His teaching plainly is that the believer, in partaking of the Supper, partakes, in a true and real sense, of the human nature of Christ.

Now, it is evident that the real presence in the Supper, whether conceived as corporeal or spiritual, must ultimately rest on a literal interpretation of the words of institution, the objections to which I have already stated. Here Luther and Calvin were less consistent than the Roman Catholics; for while the former accepts and the latter denies the literal construction, both, by labored refinements, explain away the simple, natural sense, and exhibit the vagueness and incoherence necessarily consequent on a forced construction of plain language.

For when Christ says, "This is my body," he either means literally that it is his body, or figuratively that it represents his body; there is, and can be, no intermediate sense. If the body and blood of Christ are in any sense in the elements, they are there corporeally, because only thus do flesh and blood exist; and the bread and wine, therefore, which the senses perceive, must, on this hypothesis, be transmuted, as the Roman Catholic affirms, into the body and blood of Christ. If the literal construction be adopted, all attempts to evade transubstantiation are a violation of the plain laws of language.

IV. THE LORD'S SUPPER SYMBOLIC

The bread and wine are symbols divinely appointed to represent the body and blood of Christ, through which symbols the sacrifice of Christ is vividly presented to the mind, and by partaking of which the believer expresses, in an outward and significant act, his faith in that sacrifice.

The Supper is thus at once a symbol, setting forth this central, vital fact more distinctly than is possible in language, and a significant act, declaring the partaker's personal reliance on this fact as the ground of his salvation. Christ is present in the ordinance, as, according to his promise, he is always present in his truth; but, as truth finds its clearest and strongest expression in the symbol, he is present in the Supper in a more marked manner than in the word; for as, in the Supper, the believing soul more clearly apprehends Christ and more fully yields itself to him, so in it Christ more clearly manifests himself to the soul and more fully communicates to it of the fulness of his life.

No logical standpoint can be found between transubstantiation and this symbolic view. For, as we have seen, when Christ said, "This is my body," he either affirmed a literal, physical fact, as the Romanist claims, or he affirmed a symbolic fact: "This represents my body." Any other than the symbolic interpretation involves not only an unnatural construction of the words, but also an element of mystery, if not of superstition, most injurious in its tendency.

If, then, we regard the Lord's Supper as symbolic, what is its significance?

1. **It symbolizes the death of Christ.** The bread broken and the wine poured forth represent the body and blood of Christ as offered up an atonement for sin. It is a vivid symbolization of the atoning sacrifice offered on the cross. "For, as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

2. **It is a personal profession.** The partaker declares by eating of that bread and drinking of that cup his personal reliance on Christ's sacrifice as the only ground of his acceptance with God, and the only means of spiritual, eternal life. As the Hebrew, in partaking of the sacrifices offered on the altar, professed his faith in the truths those sacrifices symbolized, so the Christian, in partaking of the consecrated bread and wine, professes his faith in the truths symbolized by that sacrament.

In this sense (as the apostle clearly shows, 1 Cor. 10:14-22) "the cup of blessing which we bless" is "the communion of the blood of Christ," and "the bread which we break" is "the communion of the body of Christ;" for it is the personal avowal by the partaker of reliance on him whose body was broken and blood shed for sin.

3. **It is an act of grateful commemoration—a service done in remembrance of Christ's compassion in suffering and dying for us.** He said: "This do in remembrance of me." As we look on the face of a departed friend which art has preserved, and handle afresh the tokens of affection he left behind, and recall in memory his words and acts of love, till it seems almost as if the dead were present and the familiar voice were sounding in the ear, so in the Supper the Saviour is "set forth evidently crucified among us;" and as we look on the symbols of his dying love we gratefully adore him as dying for us.

4. **It is a symbol of church-fellowship.** When a man eats of that "one bread" and drinks of that "one cup," he in this act professes himself a member of that "one body" in hearty, holy sympathy with its doctrines and life, and freely and fully subjecting himself to its watch-care and government (1 Cor. 10: 17). Hence, in 1 Cor. 5:11, the church is forbidden to eat (in the Lord's Supper, as the context clearly shows) with immoral persons, thus distinctly making the ordinance a symbol of church-fellowship.

5. **The Supper is prophetic: it is a type of the marriage-supper of the Lamb in heaven. Jesus said, when instituting it:** "I will not drink hereafter of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). His eye glanced down the ages of sorrow and oppression and blood through which his church should pass to the day of final triumph, when all his disciples, of every age and clime and people, shall gather in one body before his throne, exulting in his presence, to be forever with their Lord.

As we now gather at the table, therefore, not only do we look backward to the agony of his cross and the crown of thorns he once wore, but also forward to his throne of triumph and the "many crowns" which shall deck his brow there. And as we

have fellowship with his sufferings and death here, we exultingly hope that we shall there be sharers of his blessedness and life.

Such is the import of the Lord's Supper. It is a striking and beautiful symbol of Christ's death for the soul, and is a solemn, personal profession, by the soul, of faith in his death as the ground of salvation. And through all the ages "till he comes" this ordinance is the Heaven-appointed symbol to express before men that divine fact and that high profession.



Weighed and Found Wanting

E. L. Bynum

Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." (Daniel 5:24-28)

A great celebration was taking place in Babylon, for after all King Belshazzar wanted to celebrate the greatness of his kingdom. Humanly speaking he had every right to feel confident and secure. After all, his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the mighty Assyrian Empire with its capital at Nineveh. He had defeated many other nations including Judah and the holy city of Jerusalem. When they overcame Jerusalem, they plundered the riches that had been obtained by David and Solomon. The brass, silver and gold used in the temple were more than a king's ransom, and all the other riches from the other nations they had conquered. The real wealth of a nation was measured by its silver and gold, for they had no paper money, which history has proven may possess little or no value.

They felt completely confidence and security in the great city of Babylon, which Nebuchadnezzar had built: *"The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30)* The wall that surrounded the city was 32 feet thick and was 180 feet high. It had strong secure gates that were guarded by well trained and disciplined soldiers. It would seemingly be impossible for any army to successfully mount a successful attack upon this city.

JUDGMENT EARNED BY THE SINS OF RULERS AND NATIONS

"Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." (Daniel 5:1-4)

Celebrations like this were drunken orgies where every evil passion was turned loose. These drunken feasts were not one night affairs, but many times lasted for weeks, wherein every sin was on exhibit, so there was little that was not tolerated. There would be an abundance of food and an endless supply of wine which flowed through their sodden bodies. As we look at this long list of putrid sins, we will enter our attention on five destructive ones.

Their first sin was that of Drunkenness. This feast was no doubt given to honor himself as well as a thousand of his lords.

The flagons of wine flowed freely from the finest vineyards of this great kingdom. Nothing was spared to make this a feast that would satisfy every person who gathered in that great banquet hall. We can only imagine how many people were there since there were a thousand of his lords along with their wives and concubines. Doubtless there were at least three thousand that were present. There were no restraints, since they knew little or nothing of the Bible on strong drink. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things." (Proverbs 23:31-33) "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." (Proverbs 31:4-5)

Their second sin was Debauchery. Debauchery means "excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures." Inflamed by wine and lust there was no act that was too vile or wicked. Their mood was "if it feels good do it." They knew nothing of the God of the Bible and His command, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" (Exodus 20:14) An unbelieving world sees nothing as sacred and holy. Without moral restraint there is nothing that wicked men and women will not do.

Their third sin was Defiling. The sacred vessels of gold and silver had been dedicated to the temple worship of the thrice holy God. They depicted the holiness of God and the salvation of the sinner. Nebuchadnezzar had taken these vessels from the temple of God at Jerusalem, when he conquered that city, and placed in the treasure house of his god. (Daniel 1:2) The holy vessels were only to be touched by the Jewish priests, and only to be used in the manner that God prescribed. This within itself was a vile thing to do, but even worse Belshazzar took those vessels dedicated to God, to be used in this drunken banquet hall.

Their fourth sin was Denial. They denied the true God by elevating the false gods of Babylon over the mighty God of Israel. Babylon was not without knowledge of the true and living God. Daniel and his three Hebrew companions had lived there for many years. Their knowledge had been spread abroad by the miracles that had accompanied their encounters with Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel had given the dream of the king and had given him the interpretation of that dream, which all of the wise men of Babylon could not do. (Daniel 2) In addition the three Hebrew companions of Daniel refused to bow to the golden image, and they were thrown into the fiery furnace heated seven times hot. A fourth man appeared with them in that furnace and "*the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*" (Daniel 3)

This led Nebuchadnezzar to make a decree that recognized the one true God:

"Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." (Daniel 3:28-29)

These miracles, as well as others, were not secret events, but were well known to the public. In spite of these manifestations of the power of God, these wicked men had the audacity to deny the one true and living God.

Their fifth sin was the Deifying of false gods. "*They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.*" (Daniel 5:4) The worship of idols has always been a mystery to me. Man used his skill and his imagination to carve idols from wood and then worship them. He may be more sophisticated and mold a god of silver or gold, and not realizing that he is creating his own gods. Christians realize that God is their creator and of all things. We should not ever forget that God is our maker and that we are to worship Him. "*Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*" (Psalm 100:3)

As we look at Belshazzar and his people, we should notice the way our nation and leaders are going. Our own nation is steeped in drunkenness and all manners of illegal habit forming drugs. Alcoholic drink is to be found in liquor stores, drug stores, grocery stores and restaurants. When I moved to Lubbock you could only buy a beer by driving more than 100 miles to get it. This was true of all alcoholic beverages. Elections were held from time to time to try to legalize alcohol sales, but time after time they were defeated.

As churches and the public weakened their stand on strong drink, little by little wet territory moved closer to Lubbock. We were told that people will use it, even if they have to make it in their bath tub. Why not legalize it and get all the tax money for schools and other necessities. Alcohol has always been a detriment to society. When you consider the broken homes, the children left un-cared for, and the people that are reduced to poverty and government aid, and all the jails filled with people who committed crimes while under the influence of alcohol it puts a tremendous burden upon society.

Of course they tell us that sales will not increase, even when we legalize the sale of these beverages that just as many will drink whether it is legal or illegal. Only a deluded mind could be deceived into believing this. It makes no sense, because it contradicts the whole science of advertising. Grocery stores make their merchandise easily available and attractive in order to sell more groceries.

Car dealerships are placed in the most strategic locations for maximum exposure and made attractive simply to make more sales. Every large wholesale distributor schemes to get their products on the best shelf place in the grocery store. Do not tell me that if all the grocery stores were ten miles out of town that they would sell just as many groceries. The same goes for cars and indeed all merchandise, of course they would sell groceries, but they would not sell as many. The same principle applies to alcoholic drinks.

Perhaps the last two paragraphs should be much shorter, but I felt the need of getting it off my chest. Many of the decisions made by diplomats have been done under the influence of alcohol. Many other important decisions in Washington and our state capitals are also made under the influence of strong drink. I would like to know how much money is spent by our federal government on liquor. I think that we all would be astounded by the wasteful amount. *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."* (Proverbs 20:1) For over a half century I have witnessed the awful curse of strong drink on individuals, families, and society. You will never convince me that alcohol is any more than evil in a bottle, just waiting to wreak havoc upon souls.

Our nation is rampant with the sin of debauchery. Movies, the Internet, TV, computers, and new cell phones are filled with lust, adultery, and sex of every kind is glorified and promoted. Sacred things such as the Bible, holiness, modesty, and the Lord's churches are defiled with the sins of this world. On every hand we see the denying of the one and only true God. In addition we see the deifying of false gods being celebrated in our society. Almost anything is substituted for God. Pleasures of the vilest kind are substituted for God, and even more innocent activities, such as golf, fishing, and other activities are given first place over God.

JUDGMENT EXPLAINED BY THE PROPHET

While this drunken feast was taking place, a holy God was about to pass judgment, which would break up the party:

"In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." (Daniel 5:5-6)

The King called for the wise men of Babylon to interpret this strange writing on the wall. Little did he know that it was the message of doom for him and his kingdom. When the wise men utterly failed, the queen mother who apparently was not in the banquet hall was informed, but she came and reminded him of an old wise man by the name of Daniel. Daniel was called for and presented with the problem. He had most likely been put on the shelf and branded an old foggy.

Before giving him the writing and the interpretation, he preached a bold sermon which revealed the sin of Belshazzar and his kingdom. Daniel made it strong and to the point, for he did not fear the ruler, but he did fear God. (Read Daniel 5:17-23)

The writing was short, but what an earth shattering message it was: *"And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN."* (Daniel 5:25) Then Daniel gave the interpretation and explained this powerful message of God: *"This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the*

balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” (Daniel 5:26-28)

The foolish king kept his word and made Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom. How foolish; he and his kingdom had already been weighed in the balances and been found wanting. Babylon was finished and so was king Belshazzar and his lords. Little did the King know that soon he would see the glittering swords of the Medes and Persians.

JUDGMENT EXECUTED BY GOD

God had already said that Belshazzar and his kingdom would be divided to the Medes and Persians. In the same night this prophecy would be fulfilled.

Josephus the Jewish historian gives us his version of how this was fulfilled. The Euphrates River ran right through the city of Babylon. Along the river banks, the Babylonians had built high and thick walls where gates could be opened and they would have access to the river and the other part of the city. Apparently in their drunken condition the gates of the city were left open. Josephus tells us that the Medes and Persians had diverted the Euphrates River out of its channel so that their army could march into the city through the river channel. Herodotus the ancient writer also supports the story by Josephus.

Others have written that there were spies in the city that secretly opened the gates. There is another version of the story found in one verse of Isaiah. *“Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut.” (Isaiah 45:1)* Isaiah wrote this prophecy at least 200 years before its fulfillment in Daniel 5. How did Isaiah know the name of Cyrus many years before Cyrus’ birth? Let me tell you how, because there is a God in heaven, and Isaiah was his prophet. Many scholars have interpreted Isaiah 45:1 to mean that God opened the gates for the Medes and Persians. However it may have happened we know that God caused it to come to pass.

JUDGMENT EXECUTED BY ALMIGHTY GOD

“In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.” (Daniel 5:30-31) The kingdom going to the Medes and Persians is a fulfillment of Daniel chapter two, because the head of Gold would be followed by the chest and arms of silver representing the alliance between the Medes and Persians.

Who knew at the beginning of the great feast, where he was in his glory days, that in a few short hours the Scripture would be fulfilled? *“In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.” (Daniel 9:30)* Kingdoms and great civilizations shine in their glory not knowing that their kingdom is going to end in the judgment of Almighty God. Where are the great kingdoms of Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Greece, and Rome today? They are in the dustbin of nations where sin had taken them. They have gone where our own nation is going sooner than we think if we do not turn back to God.

I love the United States of America and treasure its history and amazing progress. However, we may be even now in the scales of God, weighed and found wanting. Our sins are many and growing at blinding speed. If there ever was a time in the history of our when Christians should be reading and obeying II Chronicles 7:14; that time is now. We may not have much time to repent, but I assure you that God is watching. There is a saying, the mills of God grind slow, but they grind exceedingly fine.

I pray that lost sinners will read this message, and understand that you are also in God’s balances and found wanting. The only way you can escape judgment is to turn in repentance and faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation. When you have Christ as Saviour, though you may be small He will tip the scales in your favor. No one can tip the scales of God’s judgment unless you have Him as your Savior. Do not wait until, “thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”



The Paterines

David Benedict

From the book, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination, 1848*

For this article I have copied the entire quote below from Jones' *Ch. Hist.* pp. 287-289. By him it was selected from Robinson's *Ecclesiastical Researches*, pp. 409-412, and p. 455:

"Much has been written on the etymology of the word Paterines; but is the Italians themselves are not agreed on the derivation, it is not likely foreigners should be able to determine it. In Milan, where it was first used, it answered to the English word vulgar, illiterate, low-bred; and these people were so called because they were chiefly of the lower order of men ; mechanics, artificers, manufacturers, and others who lived of their honest labors. Gazari is a corruption of Cathari, Puritans; and it is remarkable that in the examination of these people, they are not taxed with any immoralities, but were condemned for speculations, or rather for virtuous rules of action, which all in power accounted heresies.

"They said a Christian church ought to consist of only good people; a church had no power to frame any constitution; it was not right to take oaths; it was not lawful to kill mankind; a man ought not to be delivered up to officers of justice to be converted; the benefits of society belonged alike to all the members of it; faith without works could not save a man; the church ought not to persecute any, even the wicked; the law of Moses was no rule to Christians; there was no need of priests, especially of wicked ones; the sacraments, orders, and ceremonies of the Church of Rome were futile, expensive, oppressive, and wicked, with many more such positions, all inimical to the hierarchy.

"As the Catholics of those times baptized by immersion, the Paterines, by what name soever they were called, as Manicheans, Gazari, Josephists, Passigines, &c., made no complaint of the mode of baptizing, but when they were examined, they objected vehemently against the baptism of infants, and condemned it as an error. Among other things, they said that a child knew nothing of the matter, that he had no desire to be baptized, and was incapable of making any confession of faith, and that the willing and professing of another could be of no service to him. 'Here then,' says Dr. Allix, 'very truly, we have found a body of men in Italy, *before the year one thousand and twenty-six*, five hundred years before the Reformation, who believed contrary to the opinions of the church of Rome, and who highly condemned their errors.'

"Atto, Bishop of Verceulli, had complained of such people *eighty years before*, and so had others before him, and there is the highest reason to believe that they had always existed in Italy. It is observable that those who are alluded to by Dr. Allix were brought to light by mere accident. No notice was taken of them in Italy, but some disciples of Gundulf, one of their teachers, went to settle in the Lower Countries (Netherlands), and Gerard, bishop of Cambrai, imprisoned them under pretence of converting them.

"From the tenth to the thirteenth century the dissenters in Italy continued to multiply and increase, for which several reasons may be assigned. The excessive wickedness of the court of Rome, and the Italian prelates, was better known in Italy than in the other countries. There was no legal power in Italy in these times, to put dissenters to death. Popular preachers in the church, such as Claude of Turin, and Arnold of Brescia, increased the number of dissenters, for their disciples went further than their masters.

"The adjacency of France, and Spain too, contributed to their increase, for both abounded with Christians of this sect. Their churches were divided into sixteen compartments, such as the English Baptists would call associations. Each of these was subdivided into parts, which would be termed churches or congregations. In Milan there was a street called Pataria, where it is supposed they met for divine worship. At Modena they assembled at some water-mills. They had houses at Ferrara, Brescia, Viterbo, Verona, Vicenza, and several in Rimini, Romandiola. and other places.

"Reinerius says, in 1259, the Paterin church of Alba consisted of about five hundred members; that at Concorezzo of more than fifteen hundred ; and that of Bognola about two hundred. The houses where they met seem to have been hired by the people, and tenanted by one of the brethren. There were several in each city, and each was distinguished by a mark known to themselves. They had bishops, or elders, pastors and teachers; deacons and messengers; that is, men employed in traveling to administer to the relief and comfort of the poor and persecuted. In times of persecution they met in small companies of eight, twenty, thirty, or as it might happen; but never in large assemblies for fear of the consequences.

"The Paterines were decent in their deportment, modest in their dress and discourse, and their morals irreproachable. In their conversation there was no levity or scurrility, no detraction, no falsehood, no swearing. Their dress was neither fine nor mean. They were chaste and temperate, never frequenting taverns or places of public amusement. They were not given to anger and other violent passions. They were not eager to accumulate wealth, but content *with the* necessaries of life. They avoided commerce, because they thought it would expose them to the temptations of collusion, falsehood, and oaths, choosing rather to live by labor or useful trades. They were always employed in spare hours either in giving or receiving instruction. Their bishops and officers were mechanics, weavers, shoemakers, and others who maintained themselves by their industry.

"About the year 1040 the Paterines had become very numerous at Milan, which was their principal residence, and here they flourished at least two hundred years. They had no connection with the (Catholic) church, for they *rejected* not only Jerome of Syria, Augustine of Africa, and Gregory of Rome, but also Ambrose of Milan, considering them and other pretended fathers as corruptors of Christianity. They particularly condemned Pope Sylvester as anti-Christ. They called (the adoration of) the cross the mark of the beast. They had no share in the State, for they took no oaths, and bore no arms. The State did not trouble them, but the clergy preached, prayed, and published books against them with unabated zeal.

"About the year 1176 the archbishop of Milan, an old infirm man, while preaching against them with great vehemence, dropped down in a fit and expired as soon as he had received extreme unction. About fourteen years afterwards, one Bonacursi, *who pretended he had been one of these Paterines, made* a public renunciation of his opinions, and embraced the Catholic faith, filling Milan with fables, as all renegades do. He reported that *cities, suburbs, towns, and castles, were full of these false prophets—* that it was the time to suppress them, and that the prophet Jeremiah had directed the Milanese what to do when he said, 'Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood!' advice which we shall presently see was too implicitly followed."

"The scene is here laid between six and seven hundred years ago, and among this people, besides their opposition to infant baptism, we see in the arrangement of their associations a very distinctive trait of the Baptist character. One of these associations at this time, about 1060, contained upwards of fifteen hundred members."

Mr. Orchard has traced the history of the Paterines in Italy to the middle of the thirteenth century (*Orchard's Foreign Baptists*). A few detached sketches in the words of this author I shall now present to the reader.

"It is acknowledged that the Latin church in this century (the 12th) was troubled with the puritans, a term, according to Moshem, expressive of the successors of the Novatianists; but the pontiffs were particularly annoyed by the Paulicians, who emigrated in numbers from Bulgaria, who, leaving their native land, spread themselves throughout various provinces. Many of them, while doing good to others, and propagating the gospel, were put to death with the most unrelenting cruelty. Their accessions from different sources made the puritan or Paterine churches very considerable, and to their enemies, very formidable even before the name of Waldo of Lyons was known.

"Besides these foreign accessions, some books had been written and circulated by the puritans, while several reformers appeared in different kingdoms, all advocating the same doctrines and practice so that the clergy and pontiff were aroused to vigorous opposition.

"In 1180, the Puritans had established themselves in Lombardy and Puglia, where they received frequent visits from their brethren who resided in other countries; in this and the next century they were to be found in the capital of Christendom." Effective measures were matured about this time when Waldo and his followers were driven from France.

"In 1210, the Paterines had become so numerous and so odious to the State clergy, that the old bishop of Ferrara obtained an edict of the Emperor Otto IV for the suppression of them; but this measure extended only to that city. In five years after, Pope Innocent III, of bloody celebrity, held a council at the Lateran, and denounced anathemas against heretics of every description. Dr. Wall declared that this council did enforce infant baptism on the dissidents, as heretics taught it was to no purpose to baptize children.

"In this council the Milanese were censured for sheltering the Paterines. After a variety of efforts to suppress them, the cruel policy of the court of Rome extended its sanguinary measures over Italy. In 1220, Honorius III procured an edict of Frederick II, which extended over all the imperial cities, as had been the case for some years over the south of France, and the effects of the pontiff's anger were soon felt by the deniers of the infant right.

"These edicts were every way proper to excite horror, and which rendered the most illustrious piety and virtue incapable of saving from the most cruel death such as had the misfortune, says Mosheim, to be disagreeable to the inquisitors. No alternative of escaping those human monsters presented itself but that of flight, which was embraced by many; indeed, Mosheim observes, they passed out of Italy and spread like an inundation throughout the European provinces, but Germany in particular afforded an asylum, where they were called Gazari instead of Cathari (puritans).

"One Ivo, of Narbonne, was summoned by the Inquisitors of heretical pravity. Ivo fled to Italy. At Como he became acquainted with the Paterines, and accommodated himself to their views for a time. They informed him, after he was a member of high society, that they had churches in almost all the towns of Lombardy, and in some parts of Tuscany; that their merchants, in frequenting fairs and markets, made it their business to instill their tenets in the minds of the rich laymen with whom they traded, and the landlords in whose houses they lodged.

"On leaving Como, he was furnished with letters of recommendation to professors of the same faith in Milan; and in this manner he passed through all the towns situated on the Po, through Cremona, and the Venetian States, being liberally entertained by the Paterines, who received him as a brother, on producing his letters and giving the signs, which were known by all that belonged to the sect.

"The Paterines knew their discipline could not possibly be practiced in the church, they therefore withdrew, constantly avowing the sufficiency of scripture, the competency of each to reform himself, the right of all, even of woman, to teach; and openly disclaiming all manner of coercion in matters of religion.

"In conformity with their declaration of the sufficiency of the scriptures to regulate a Christian church, they had houses in many cities in which they assembled for religious worship, with their barbs, or religious teachers.

"And notwithstanding the persecutions to which they were exposed, they maintained themselves in Italy, and kept up a regular correspondence with their brethren in other countries. They had public schools where their sons were educated, and these were supported by contributions from churches of the same faith in Bohemia and Poland. Their prosperity irritated the pontiff, who, on Frederick's death, 1250, and during an interregnum, resolved on extirpating heresy. The usual methods were attempted—preaching

and mustering crusaders; but, after every effort devised for their instruction, they appeared no less in number, and still formidable to their adversaries.

"Indeed, it was found in the middle of this century that the Paterines had exceedingly increased, so that his holiness found it necessary to give full powers to his inquisitors, and to erect a standing tribunal, if possible, in every country where puritans were known to infest. These inquisitors were armed with all imaginable power to punish all those persons who dared to think differently to the pope and his successors. Unity of views, sentiments and practices was to be effected by these cruel measures; but, instead of accomplishing this object, we conclude the Paterines were dispersed abroad into other provinces, or else they retired into obscurity, from either of which circumstance their local names would become extinct.

"The terror of the inquisitors awed the Italians into silence; but it is highly credible, indeed, there are some reasons to believe the Paterines did continue dispersed in Italy till the Reformation in Germany. It is very probable that many of these people became incorporated with the Waldensian churches in the valleys of Piedmont, which at this period enjoyed, under the Duke of Savoy, the sweets of religious liberty. This incorporation could be easily effected, since it is proved, by Allix and others, that the most part of the Paterines held the same opinions as the churches in the valleys, and therefore were taken for the one and the same class of people.

"The straitened circumstances of the Vaudois in Pragela, suggested the propriety of seeking for a new territory. This they obtained on their own terms of liberty, in Calabria, a district in the northeast of Italy. This new settlement prospered, and their religious peculiarities awakened displeasure in the old inhabitants; but the landlords, well pleased with their industry, afforded them protection. This colony received fresh accessions from time to time of those who fled from the persecutions raised against them in Piedmont, and continued to flourish when the Reformation dawned on Italy, after which they were barbarously murdered.

"These plain facts allow us to conclude that Italy must have, in parts, enjoyed the lamp of truth from apostolic days. That the Cathari or puritan churches continued for ages, is acknowledged of the views of which we have spoken. Such churches were strengthened by the Baptists from Bulgaria, whose sameness of views admitted their incorporation. When these congregations became too large to assemble in one place, they parted, and held separate assemblies, in perfect unity with each other.

"They owned the scriptures as a rule of conduct, and administered the ordinances of baptism to believers by one immersion. They maintained church discipline even on their ministers, as examples are recorded. They were always found on the side of religious liberty, and considered the oppressing, clergy the locust which darkened and tormented the world. They were persecuted, awed, dispersed, or destroyed, yet their spirit and conduct will be again exhibited in future sections of our history."

"The Paterines, in 1260," says Reinerius, "had four thousand members in the perfect class, but those called disciples were an innumerable multitude."



*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

What is the Mission of the Church that Jesus Built?

Roy Mason

From the book, *The Church That Jesus Built*, 1923 (Chapter 11)

"The church is here to save men out of the world. It is here to save them out of the system that is called the world...The church bears the same relation to the world that a lifeboat and its crew do to a ship pounding to pieces upon the rocks....The church is here to impress upon men two immense facts, the fact of the SOUL, and the fact of ETERNITY."

—I. M. Haldeman, in *The Mission of the Church*.

"His marching orders are His program for that church (The, church at Jerusalem) and every other Baptist church until He comes again."

—H. B. Taylor, in *Why I Am a Baptist*

In the preceding chapters I have sought to show the reader the Biblical teaching as to what a genuine New Testament church is. With this I have presented historical evidence to prove to a demonstration that Baptist churches have had continuous existence from the time of Christ until now. I trust that the views of you who have read thus far have narrowed and become more distinct, so far as your conception of the church is concerned.

Now that we are clear that Baptist churches are the true New Testament churches, divinely perpetuated throughout the ages, let us go further and inquire concerning *the mission of the church in the world*. The world has many erroneous views concerning what a church is for. Those who belong to the different so-called churches share in many of these mistaken notions, and in some cases Baptists have come to have a perverted idea as to the proper function of a church.

It is no uncommon thing for one to see in the magazines and newspapers of today the bold charge that the churches have "failed." By this is meant that some churches have failed as measured by the standard that some individual or group of individuals have set up. Let us consider for a few moments some of the erroneous views that are commonly held concerning what a church is for.

As some conceive it, *A CHURCH IS TO BE CHIEFLY ENGAGED IN THE WORK OF CIVILIZATION*. In proportion as churches aid a nation to advance in the arts and sciences of civilization, they are thought of as having succeeded. Especially does this idea obtain as regards Christian efforts on the foreign mission fields. If only the heathen can be brought to dress properly, observe rules of cleanliness and sanitation, and adopt the ways and manners of civilized nations, it is often considered that the missionary has abundantly succeeded.

But, as I shall presently seek to prove, it *is not the primary business of churches to civilize*. When on the mission field the dominant motive comes to be to civilize, then the labors of the workers on that field are a failure from the standpoint of the true mission of the church.

Then there is the *CLUB IDEA OF THE CHURCH that some have*. It is to be feared that some look upon church membership largely as they do membership in some club or fraternal organization. Church work comes to be a sort of pleasant diversion, and it seems quite the nice and respectable thing to be a church member, especially if the church is one of the fashionable kind that includes in its membership some of the socially prominent persons of the community.

But of this idea it may be said that if a church is merely on a par with clubs, lodges, societies, and other such organizations, it has little to justify its separate existence.

Again, there are those who hold *THE SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN IDEAL FOR THE CHURCH*. To them the church's main concern should not be preparation of individual souls for life in an eternity beyond, but the transforming of society as a

whole until this world becomes a better place for men to dwell during this present life. Their chief emphasis is not upon the *then* but upon the *now*. To the end of approximating the ideal they have in view, they insist that the church engage in all sorts of humanitarian projects; that it deal with politics and legislation, and that it lay out an ambitious program of social service and reform. To those who conceive of a church in this way, as their ideas are carried out, the churches come to deal less and less with the spiritual and more and more with the physical.

They are the advocates of the "institutional" church, where, as one writer puts it, one can get anything from a sermon to a sandwich. In the church buildings of such a church *recreational features are prominent*. They have swimming pools, reading rooms, shower baths, gymnastic apparatus, social halls, etc. Often supper is served from the church kitchen, so many nights a week at so much per plate. All sorts of social affairs are constantly being planned. All in all the church building is used in such a way that people come to look upon it as a place to have a good time.

If Christ should enter some church buildings today, I am sure that He would throw out a lot of the things to be found in them. He would overturn and cast out the gymnastic apparatus, the motion picture machines and the other amusement paraphernalia, just as He overturned the tables of the money changers long ago and drove out those who desecrated and secularized the temple. His words to those who desecrate and secularize the places of worship today would be the same as to the same kind of culprits of long ago, when He said, "Mine house shall be called an house of prayer." Is there any reason in the world to believe that Jesus looks more leniently today upon the secularizing of the house of worship than He did two thousand years ago? Those who bring all sorts of secular things beneath the church roof, follow exactly in the steps of the Jews whom Jesus drove from the temple.

Of the view that makes of a church an organization whose primary concern is the improvement of social conditions, and the physical betterment of humanity it may be said that it is wholly at variance with the truth concerning the real mission of a church. True, social conditions improve where the gospel is preached and churches thrive. Most great moral reforms have had their genesis among Christian people, but these things ought to be considered merely as *by-products* of church activity and influence and not as things of paramount concern.

In regard to the matter of the church's mission, when there are so many divergent opinions, where shall we go for the truth concerning the matter? There is but one place to go — *THE NEW TESTAMENT*. It is not a question of what this person or that thinks the church should be, or engage in. *It is a question as to what Jesus Christ founded His church for, and what orders He left for it to follow*. Strange indeed that men should ever go astray in regard to the church's mission, when it is set forth so very clearly in His own words.

For Baptists to err in regard to their mission is inexcusable. Other denominations, sects, and so-called churches may engage in the things mentioned, and may make humanitarian projects their chief concern if they please to do it, without being liable to such strict censure, because *they have no Commission or orders from Christ*. He is not responsible for their existence, and they are not responsible for the carrying out of the Commission which He gave centuries before they came into being.

But Baptists are responsible, because it was to a Baptist church that the Lord Jesus Christ gave His Commission. This Commission forever settles the question of what a church exists for by clearly defining its mission and purpose. Some will no doubt think me very "narrow" for saying that the Great Commission is a Baptist Commission, but "narrow" or not, it is the truth. The whole of my book thus far is proof of this fact.

A well-known editor recently expressed the truth that I am trying to convey, in these words:

"This Commission was given to none but Baptists. All present were Baptists because they had been baptized by John or by the twelve, all of whom had been baptized by John the Baptist. It was given to them, not as preachers or individuals, but as a church, for it was to be obeyed until the end of the age and none of them would live that long. But the Master had promised that the church He founded would not be destroyed by the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18); and to that church and other churches founded through their missionary labors the Master gave this world-wide and age-long Commission.

"No infants, no seekers, no probationers, no sinners, no proselytes, none but disciples or Christians, are

included by the Master in His orders to be baptized. This Commission was given to Baptists, for every one present was a Baptist. It is a very definite command to make men Christians by preaching the gospel to them, and then to make them Baptists by giving them Baptist baptism, for that is the only kind there was at the time the Commission was given. No one else but Baptists can obey this Commission, because no one else has the kind of baptism that Jesus commanded Christians to submit to. And no one else can do what this Commission enjoins, namely, make the disciples Baptists by giving them Baptist baptism."

And now let us examine the Commission that Jesus gave to His church, and let us analyze it for a few moments. These are the words: "*Go ye therefore and teach (R. V. 'disciple') all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" Here is the church's mission. Nothing less than this, nothing more should be included in its program. As one has put it, "That should be the horizon of our visions and the limits of our tasks."

Note well what the Commission includes:

1. MAKE MEN CHRISTIANS

That is the first, the foremost, the most important thing —to make disciples or Christians. A study of the Commission in the original will show that the emphasis or accent is upon making disciples. When in church and denominational affairs we major on education, hospitals, orphanages or anything else no matter how worthy, we are going contrary to the Great Commission.

The Commission puts *first* the making of disciples. Disciples or Christians are to be made by preaching the gospel to the lost. It is the gospel that makes Christ known to men. When they hear the gospel and receive Him as their personal Saviour they become children of God. John 1:12, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

The main concern of every true church ought to be soul winning. To follow the Commission demands that each church shall be intensely missionary both as regards the lost of the immediate community in which the church exists and the lost unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Often the building of a "plant" comes to be thought of as the main thing, the securing of social recognition, or something apart from the thing that the Master emphasized.

I repeat, the first task given by the risen Lord is to make Christians. This must always precede baptism and indoctrination. In John 4:1 we are given the example of Jesus on this point, where we are distinctly told that Jesus made disciples before He baptized them. Those who baptize infants, and those who baptize to help make disciples are plainly at outs with both the Master's precept and example, as are those who receive "probationers" and seek to indoctrinate before discipling. As I indicated earlier in the chapter, the Commission is a Baptist Commission. It puts salvation before baptism and church membership. It was not only given solely to Baptists; it is obeyed by them alone. For remember the statement made earlier in the book, "Baptist churches are the only churches on earth that require a person to profess to be saved before the person unites with the church or is baptized."

But let us examine the Commission further and we shall see that the second part of this three-fold Commission is the command to:

2. MAKE CHRISTIANS BAPTISTS

We are to make men Christians by preaching salvation through faith in Christ to them; then we are to make those Christians Baptists by baptizing them according to His orders. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." While the command to make disciples takes the place of precedence in the Commission, the command to make Baptists is just as obligatory and binding upon us. Some censure Baptists, claiming that they put too great an emphasis upon baptism.

This criticism is wholly unjust, for Baptists place baptism exactly where the Master placed it in the Commission. They hold

that it should never precede salvation, but that it should in every case follow it. They do not believe that they are warranted in stopping with the making of disciples, for their orders read—"baptizing them," and as they see it they have no right to change their orders.

The third part of the Commission is just as explicit as the rest; it commands the-

3. INDOCTRINATION OF BAPTISTS

It reads, "...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The "all things" means every teaching of Jesus contained in the New Testament, such, for instance, as the teaching concerning the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, the security of believers, and stewardship. To separate some of His teachings into a group and call them "non-essentials" and refrain from teaching them is to violate His command.

It is a sad fact that most of the denominations omit two-thirds of the Commission and only take note of the part that refers to making disciples. They assume, although incorrectly, that the Commission was given to them as well as to Baptists, then they show their unfitness to be custodians of Christ's sacred trust by cutting off two-thirds of the Commission—the portion that commands to immerse and to teach all things that He commanded. Baptists are absolutely the only people who are willing to carry out all three parts of the Commission.

It is often the case nowadays that what is commonly termed "Christian Education" is justified and taught from the last clause of the Commission. This is either the result of a faulty exegesis or else it is wilful misinterpretation of the Scriptures. This passage cannot rightly be interpreted to refer to the teaching of history, mathematics, biology, psychology and such as is taught in denominational schools and colleges.

Jesus said, "All things whatsoever I have commanded you." Christian education in the truest sense is education in the things of the Word of God. That is the only education authorized in the Commission. Many good arguments can be made in favor of Christian schools, but the point I am making is that they are not authorized by the Great Commission.

The last clause of the Commission places upon Baptist churches the responsibility of teaching and indoctrinating all of those who are saved and added to the church. No teaching of Christ is to be ignored or omitted, but every doctrine is to be taught, no matter how many charges of "narrow" are called forth, or how displeasing it may prove to those who minimize certain teachings of Christ on the ground of their being "nonessential."

I bring this chapter to a close by recapitulating the things said before.

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT?

It is not the mission assigned by the world, set forth by the press, and conceived by some churches. It is not the *civilization of mankind*, it is not *social and moral reform*, it is not the *physical, intellectual and social elevation of the race*—save as the things come about incidentally as by-products, of Christianity. But the mission of the church is that which was given by the Founder, Jesus Christ, in the Great Commission, namely, to make Christians, immerse, and indoctrinate them.

Or, to put it more at length, the divine program for the church is this: To preach the gospel to every human being that lives in this world; to baptize those who accept a free salvation through Christ; then to teach the saved and baptized until they know the commands of Christ, and until His will is expressed through those redeemed lives unto the world.



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The Baptism of Jesus

John Armitage, D.D., LL.D.

Taken from the book, *History of the Baptists*, 1886

The Evangelist says that Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be immersed by him, "But John sought to hinder him, saying, I have need to be immersed of thee, and dost thou come to me? And Jesus answering said to him, Suffer it now; for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him." In approaching this august event, the forcible words of Godet attract our attention. He says:

"John and Jesus resemble two stars following each other at a short distance, and both passing through a series of similar circumstances. The announcement of the appearing of the one follows close upon that of the appearing of the other. It is the same with their twin births.

"This relation repeats itself in the commencement of their respective ministries, and lastly in the catastrophes which terminate their lives. And yet, in the whole course of the career of these two men, there was but one personal meeting—at the baptism of Jesus. After this moment, when one of these stars rapidly crossed the orbit of the other, they separated, each to follow the path that was marked out for him. It is this moment of their actual contact that the Evangelist is about to describe."

Jesus' journey from Galilee to the Jordan, after the touch of parting with his loved ones, stirred heaven with a deeper interest than the footsteps of man had ever excited, for then he recorded the hallowed resolution, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Many a hard-fought battle had soaked the plain which he crossed, with blood; but that day he went forth single-handed to the hardest war that had ever been waged upon this globe. After he had swept the foot of Tabor, at every step he trod on holy ground.

And when he reached the western slope of the Jordan, like Jacob, his great ancestor, he crossed the ford that he might lead many pilgrim bands over a darker stream 'to glory' All the people had been baptized, and he presented himself as the last arrival of that day because he was not one of the common repenting throng. He had done no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; hence, remorse never broke his heart. Yet, he numbered himself with the transgressors. At the close of his ministry he was to sleep in a sepulcher wherein never man had laid; and it was meet that in opening his ministry he should be buried in the liquid grave alone, and separate from sinners.

Baptism was the door by which he entered upon his work of saving mediation. The Baptist says, that up to this time he knew him not, as if he had not met him before, and yet, he also says, "I have need to be baptized of thee," as if he knew him well. This apparent discrepancy has led to large discussion, with this general result; that while John knew him in person as Jesus, he did not know him in Messiahship until Jehovah who sent him to baptize in water said to him, before the baptism of Jesus: Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding on him, the same is he who baptizes in the Holy Spirit. But do John's words necessarily imply that he was ignorant, either of the person or Messiahship of Jesus, before his baptism?

One great prerogative of the Christ was that he should baptize men in the Holy Spirit. This fact had not come to John's knowledge till Jehovah gave him the special revelation that One should come to him for baptism, on whom he should see the Spirit descending and abiding,' and that he should be the pre-eminent Baptizer, who should baptize in the Holy Spirit. This thought seems to have struck John with deep awe, for he carefully draws a contrast between his own baptism, which was 'in water' only, and that of Christ which should be in the Holy Spirit himself. If John did not know him, in the sense of the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit till Jehovah had announced to him the impending token and its signification, then we can well understand why he said, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" The revelation that Jesus should be the Baptizer in the Spirit was special to John.

With godlike serenity and dignity the Prince of Peace presented himself for baptism. The words of his mouth, the repose of his body, the purity of his face, the soul of his eye, overpowered John with a sense of reverend princeliness. When the stern herald stood face to face with the Son of the Highest his soul was submerged under a rare humility, which extorted the cry, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"

Captivated by the dignity of the Candidate, and abashed by his own inferiority, he was helpless as a child before this incarnate God—this shrine of the Holy Spirit. He who had walked rough-shod over all pride, and had leveled all distinctions of human glory, was seized with the conviction of a worthless menial, and as a holy man, was thoroughly daunted when the Lord sought a favor of his own servant.

The reasons are apparent. He found the Promised of all promises, the Antitype of all types, the Expected of all ages, standing before him in flesh and blood, and he was startled at the thought of inducting him into the new faith by the new ordinance; for his baptism was administered to the penitent, but the Nazarene was guiltless. "Suffer it now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." He defers to John's scruple, and asks for the new baptism, not of right, but on sufferance. What did Jesus mean by these words?

Viewed in any light it seems strange that Christ should have sought baptism as a high privilege which he could not forego, for what could it confer upon him? He clearly intended to render obedience to some law of his Father. What law? He had honored every requisition of the Old Covenant by circumcision, obedience to parents, hallowing the Sabbath, temple worship, observance of the feasts, all except in bringing the sin-offerings. For a full generation he had submitted to every claim of Jehovah's law upon him, in every institution and ordinance. But now his Father had established the last test of obedience in the baptism of John, and Jesus, born under God's law, must honor the new divine precept. Jesus himself gave this reason when he accused the Pharisees and lawyers with rejecting "The counsel of God toward themselves" in not having been baptized by John. The will of God was his only reason for obeying any law; he held it an act of obedience to keep all the Divine appointments.

Although not a sinner himself, Jesus impleaded to be treated as a sinner; therefore he humbled himself to receive a sinner's baptism, as well as to submit to a sinner's death. This deep mark of mediatorial sympathy and mystery must have entered largely into his plea, "Suffer it now." With great clearness Geikie puts this point - Baptism was an ordinance of God required by his prophet as the introduction of the new dispensation. It was a part of "righteousness," that is, it was a part of God's commandments which Jesus came into the world to show us the example of fulfilling, both in the letter and in the spirit." His baptism was the channel through which the Divine attestation could best be given to his Messianic dignity; and when we consider that he had reached the full maturity of all his human powers of mind and body, this manner of entering upon his public work gave a mutual and public sanction to the mission both of John and Jesus.

Yet, with our Lord's interpretation of his own words before their eyes, men will insist upon it that he was initiated into his sacrificial work by baptism, in imitation of the mere ceremonial ablutions of the Aaronical priesthood. Jesus was not even of Aaron's line as was John, much less of his office, but sprang of the tribe of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

Did Jesus receive the vestments, the consecrating oil, or any other priestly insignia? Even when he made his sin-offering, and assumed the Christian High-priesthood, three years after his baptism, he neither assumed the vesture nor breastplate, the censer nor miter of Aaron - because he was not made a High-priest after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedec, who knew nothing of sacred oils, ablutions, or vestments. How much better is it than a solemn caricature to set forth the baptism of Jesus as an idle, empty, ritualistic pageant? He came to abolish and cast aside forever the Aaronical priesthood with the economy that it served, and how could he do this by submission to any ceremonial act which they observed? John felt the binding force of Christ's words, when he appealed to the obligations of spotless holiness, and he threw aside his objections in a moment.

With gratitude and grace he yielded and obeyed. He found that his Master was under the same law of obedience as himself, and with holy promptitude he honored the sacred trust which God had put into his own hands, but which no other man had ever yet held. "Then he suffered him." O, sublime grandeur — awful honor! And when the great Baptist bowed the

immaculate soul and body of Jesus beneath the parting wave, all the useless ceremonies of past ages sank together like lead, to find a grave in the opening waters of the Jordan, and no place has since been found for them.

This traditional spot is fixed in human memory as are points on the Tiber, the Thames, and the Delaware, where great armies have crossed. It is a little east of Jericho, near by the conquest of Joshua, also where David crossed in his flight. The place so fascinates and subdues the spirit that the visitors of every land and creed, reverently descend into the stream once a year. Having been baptized, Jesus went up immediately out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending, as a dove, and coming upon him. And lo, a voice out of heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." To this account taken from Matthew, Luke adds: That the heavens were opened while Jesus was *'praying,'* that the Spirit took *'the bodily shape'* of a dove, and the Baptist says, that he saw the Spirit *"abiding on him."*

What act performed by John is called baptism? John was his proper name, and the term Baptist' added by the inspired writers, is a title of office, as Bloomfield thinks, to distinguish him from John the Evangelist. By this name he was known pre-eminently as the administrator of the religious rite called baptism. That is, according to Liddell and Scott, one that dips; or Donegan, one who immerses or submerges. Dean Stanley says, "On philological grounds, it is quite correct to translate John the Baptist, by John the Immerser." (*Nineteenth Century*)

Baptism is a fundamental practice in Christianity, which has run through all its ages. Of baptism, in association with John, Edward Irving says, "This is the first baptismal service upon record. The new rite of baptism was unknown under the Mosaic dispensation."

Much has been said on the subject of Proselyte Baptism, whereby heathen converts were inducted into the Jewish faith, and so, many have depreciated John's baptism as a mere imitation of an existing rite. But modern scholarship has shown conclusively that the reverse of this is true, and that Proselyte Baptism is, in fact, an imitation of the Christian rite, incorporated into Judaism after the Destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70.

It is true, that the Jews from early times used various symbolical lustrations as well as the Gentiles, but these were always purely ceremonial, and were never used as a rite by which others were inducted into their faith. Josephus says that many of these washings amongst the Jews were purely of their own will, without direction from the Lord, and Von Rohden denies that they were 'performed by immersion.' He also points out these fundamental differences:

"The washings enjoined by the Law had for their object purification from ceremonial defilement; but the baptism of John did not: the one rite was performed by the candidates themselves upon their own persons: the other was administered to its recipient by the Baptist himself, or by one of his disciples properly authorized: the former was repeated upon every occasion of renewed defilement; the latter was performed upon the candidate only once for all. The two ceremonies, therefore, were essentially different in their nature and object."

The first witness in favor of Proselyte Baptism is found in the Commentary of the Talmud, which was composed in the fifth century after Christ, and it represents the rite as existing in the first century. But this Commentary is not valid history; it is mere tradition at the most, and does not carry the ceremony back so far as John; nor could it have been known at that time, for had it been, the Jews would have scouted John's baptism, instead of submitting to it, because it would have placed them on a level with the heathen as converts to the new faith.

Proselytes to Judaism were divided into *proselytes of the gate, and proselytes of righteousness.* The first class had renounced idolatry, and bound themselves to keep the seven Noachic precepts, against idolatry, profanity, incest, murder, theft, eating blood and things strangled, and permitting a murderer to live. The second class not only renounced heathenism, but became Israelites in every respect excepting birth. Males were admitted into Judaism by circumcision, females by a free-will offering. After Christ, the Jews added baptism for both sexes admitted into their faith.

Dr. Lightfoot thus describes this baptism, as the Jews practiced it in after Christian times:

“As soon as he grew whole of the wound of circumcision, they bring him to baptism, and being placed in the water, they again instruct him in some weightier and in some lighter commands of the law”—then, “he plunges himself, and comes up, and behold, he is an Israelite in all things. The women place a woman in the waters up to the neck, and two disciples of the wise men standing without, instruct her about some lighter precepts of the law, and some weightier, while she, in the meantime, stands in the waters. And then she plungeth, and they, turning away their faces, go out while she comes up out of the water.”

Maimonides gives this circumstantial account also:

“Every person baptized (or dipped, whether he were washed from pollution, or baptized into proselytism) must dip his whole body, now stripped and made naked, at one dipping. And wheresoever in the Law, washing of the body or garments is mentioned, it means nothing else than the washing of the whole body. For if any wash himself all over, except the very tip of his little finger, he is still in his uncleanness.”

On the same subject, Geikie well says, “Bathing in Jordan had been a sacred symbol, at least, since the days of Naaman, but immersion by one like John, with strict and humbling confession of sin, sacred vows of amendment, and hope of forgiveness, if they proved lasting, and all this in preparation for the Messiah, was something wholly new in Israel.”

In this case, circumcision availed nothing, nor did uncircumcision, but a new creature. Jew and heathen must alike be immersed into the new faith, or they could not be numbered amongst its votaries. This view is presented also by Godet. He says:

“The rite of baptism, which consisted in the plunging of the body more or less completely into water, was not at this period in use among the Jews, neither for the Jews themselves, for whom the law only prescribed lustrations, nor for proselytes from paganism, to whom, according to the testimony of history, baptism was not applied until after the fall of Jerusalem. The very title, *Baptist*, given to John, sufficiently proves that it was he who introduced this rite.

“This follows, also, from John 1:25, where the deputation from the Sanhedrin asks him by what right he baptizes, if he is neither the Messiah nor one of the prophets, which implies that this rite was introduced by him; and further, from John 3:26, where the disciples of John make it a charge against Jesus, that he adopted a ceremony of which the institution, and consequently, according to them, the monopoly, belonged to their master.”

It is clear enough, that John did not pick up and use an old, effete institution, and adopt it as the door into the New Age of the great salvation, but that his “baptism was from heaven,” as directly from God as his commission to preach. The preaching, the baptism, and the man, were all newly sent from God to usher in the Gospel Day

Prof. Lindsay, of Glasgow, says:

“The connection between the baptism of John and the Jewish baptism of proselytes, of which a great deal has been made, is all founded on assumptions which cannot be proved. This very plausible theory first assumes that proselytes were baptized from the early time of the Jewish Church, although the Old Testament tells us nothing about it, and then supposes that John simply made use of this ordinary rite for the purpose of declaring symbolically that the whole Jewish nation were disfranchised, and had to be readmitted into the spiritual Israel, by means of the same ceremony which gave entrance to members heathen nations.

“But the subject of the baptism of proselytes is one of the most hopelessly obscure in the whole round of Jewish antiquities, and can never be safely assumed in any argument, and the general results of investigation seem to prove that the baptism of was not one of the Jewish ceremonies until long after the coming of Christ, while there is much to suggest that the Jewish rite owes its origin to Christian baptism.”

And Herzog writes, "The later origin of proselyte baptism is to be accepted."

The place where he administered the ordinance demands our attention, namely the great river of Palestine, the Jordan. Some of the most interesting associations of sacred story cluster around this stream. Israel first knew it when they crossed its channel dry-shod, in their flight from bondage. The exact spot where John first used this Divine baptism cannot now be positively identified. Anciently, it was known as Bethabara, supposed to be about three miles from Jericho, and his second baptismal scene was farther north, being known as Ænon, near Salim.

Each eminent writer and traveler now fixes upon some picturesque locality, often selected largely on poetical taste; but all conjecture fails to point it out definitely. Some pitch on a line between Gilgal and Jericho, and some still farther north, at the ford where Gideon threw up fortifications against his foes. But as the whole valley was filled with crowds of candidates, from the Salt Sea to the head-waters, it is most likely that he used various places, especially as John 10:49, speaks of the place where he '*first baptized.*' Frequently, reckless writers rush into random statements, and assert that its depth would not allow of immersion, utterly regardless of all topographical exploration, such as that made by Lieutenant Lynch, of the United States Navy. Yet, Jehovah found it necessary to divide the waters for Israel and Elijah, while Pocke and other explorers estimate its daily discharges into the Dead Sea, to be about 6,000,000 tons of water.

Dr. Schaff (*Through Bible Lands*, 1878) speaks thus:

"At the bathing place of the Pilgrims, the traditional site of Christ's baptism, the river is 80 feet broad and 9 feet deep...After the salt bath in the lake of death it was like a bath of regeneration. I immersed myself *ten* times, and felt so comfortable, that I almost imagined I was miraculously delivered from rheumatism. I have plunged into many a river and many a lake, and into the waters of the ocean, but of all the baths, that in the Jordan will linger longest in my memory."

Was John's baptism a burial in water or not? Candid minds can scarcely doubt what this action was, when they weigh the meaning of the Greek word *baptizo*, the places where lie administered it, and all its attendant circumstances. John, as well as all other sacred speakers used words in their commonly accepted sense, of their times, and this is as true of this word as of any other. Its sense is easily found. Conant, the great philologist and translator, gives a complete monograph of the root word, in his *Baptizein* taken from the best known Greek authors, running from B. C. 500 to the eleventh century A. D.; and, in 168 examples from the Greek literature, covers both the literal or physical, and the tropical or figurative, sense of the word. Their whole scope shows that the ground meaning of the word is: "*To immerse, immerge, submerge, to dip, to plunge, to imbathe, to whelm.*" A few of these examples, taken from objects already in water, will clearly illustrate its sense:

Pinder, born B. C. 522 years, in likening himself to a cork floating on the top of a net, says "When the rest of the tackle is toiling deep in the sea, I, as a cork above the net, am unbaptized (undipped) in the brine."

Aristotle, born B. C. 384, speaking of discoveries made beyond the Pillars of Hercules, says, that the Phoenician colonists of Gadira, 'came to certain desert places full of rushes and sea-weed; which, when it is ebb-tide, are not *baptized* (overflowed), but when it is flood-tide are overflowed.'

Polybius, born B. C. 205, speaking of the sea-battle between Philip and Attains, tells of one vessel as pierced, and being baptized (immersed) by a hostile ship."Again, in his account of the naval engagement between the Romans and Carthaginians, he accords the greater skill to the latter. 'Now sailing round and now attacking in flank the more advanced of the pursuers, while turning and embarrassed on account of the weight of the ships and the unskillfulness of the crews, they made continued assaults and "*baptized*" (sunk) many of the ships."

Strabo, born B. C. 60, says that about Agrigentum, in Sicily, there are Marsh-lakes, having the taste indeed of sea-water, but of a different nature ; for even those who cannot swim are not *baptized* (immersed), floating like pieces of wood." In the same work he speaks of Alexander's army marching on a narrow, flooded beach of the Pamphilian Sea, in these words: Alexander happening to be there at the stormy season, and, accustomed to trust for the most part to fortune, set forward before the swell subsided; and they marched the whole day in water; *baptized* (immersed) as far as to the waist."

Diodorus, who wrote about B. C. 60-30, reports the Carthaginian army defeated on the bank of the river Crimissus; and that many of them perished because the stream was swollen: The river rushing down with the current increased in violence, *baptized* (submerged) many, and destroyed them attempting, to swim through with their armor. He also describes the annual overflow of the Nile thus: "Most of the wild land animals are surrounded by the stream and perish, being *baptized* (submerged); but some, escaping to the high grounds, are saved."

These examples bring us down to John's day and fully sustain the learned Deylingius, when he says of him: "He received the name *ton Baptiston*, from the office of solemn ablution and immersion, in which he officiated by a divine command. For the word *baptizesthai*, in the usage of Greek authors, signifies immersion and demersion."

Lucian, born about A. D. 135, in a satire on the love of the marvelous, tells of men that he saw running on the sea. They were like himself except that they had cork-feet. He says, "We wondered, therefore, when we saw them not *baptized*, (immersed) but standing above the waves and traveling on without fear."

Dion Cassius, born 155 A. D., says of the defeated forces at Utica who rushed to their ships and overloaded them, and that "some of them were thrown down by the jostling, in getting on board the vessels, and others *baptized* (submerged) in the vessels themselves, by their own weight." In the same work he gives an account of the sea-fight between Marc Antony and Augustus, at Actium, when, near the close of the battle, men escaped from the burning ships. He says, "others leaping into the sea were drowned, or struck by the enemy were *baptized*, (submerged).

These citations from classic Greek writers, covering about 700 years, including the Apostolic Age, unite in describing things on which water was poured, or which were partially immersed, as *unbaptized*; while others, which were dipped or plunged in water and overwhelmed, they declare to have been baptized; showing, that when the sacred penmen use the same word to describe the act of John in the Jordan, they use it in the same sense as other Greek authors, namely to express the act of dipping or immersion.

Lightfoot states, "That the baptism of John was by the immersion of the body, seems evident from those things which are related concerning it; namely, that he baptized in the Jordan, and in Ænon, because there was much water, and that Christ being baptized went up out of the water."

MacKnight says the same thing, "Christ submitted to be baptized, that is, to be buried under the water by John, and to be raised out of it again."

Olshausen agrees with these interpreters, for he says, "John, also, was baptizing in the neighborhood, because the water there being deep, afforded conveniences for submersion."

De Wette bears the same, "They were baptized, immersed, submerged. This is the proper meaning of the frequentative form of *bapto*, to immerse."

And Alford, on Matt. 3:6, says, "The baptism was administered in the day-time by immersion of the whole person."

These authorities abundantly show that our Lord, in requiring the first act of obedience on the part of his new disciple, employed a Greek word in common use for expressing the most familiar acts of everyday life.



*Payer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watch-ward at the gates of death; -
He enters Heaven by prayer*