

**THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM: AS  
TAUGHT IN THE HOLY  
SCRIPTURES, AND HELD BY THE  
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH, PP. 1-109**

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THE  
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AS TAUGHT IN THE

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AND USED BY

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THE  
DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM.

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THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT.

“God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth,”\*

SUCH was the teaching of Him who spake as never man spake. In the midst of a people, blinded by carnal prejudices, inflated by self-righteousness, confident in their descent from Abraham, proud of their divinely-given religion, superstitiously rigid in their adherence to its rites and ceremonies, but sadly ignorant of the nature of true holiness, the Lord Jesus Christ bore witness to the truth. He stood forth among His countrymen, not less as a reprover than a Messiah. He vindicated the spirituality of religion in an age of formalism, exposed the worthlessness and hollowness of mere external obedience, denounced the prevailing confidence in ritual observances as a refuge of lies, called men from the shell of religion to the substance, traced sin through all

\* John 4: 24.

its disguises, unveiled the hidden corruption of the heart, and would tolerate no plausible substitute for the faith, repentance, and love of the soul itself. Such doctrine was new, surprising, offensive, intolerable to a people whose boast was, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we;" and the malignant enmity and envy of Priests and Pharisees was insatiate until Jesus Christ was crucified.

In the study of the new religion which names him as its Author, and for a right appreciation of his teachings, it is most important to bear in mind this marked characteristic of his ministry. The Saviour was constantly opposing an excessive reliance upon the ritual of religion, to the neglect and oblivion of its spirit and reality. And while he disencumbered the ancient faith of the corruptions and traditions wherewith it had become encrusted and hidden, he revealed the new faith, related to the former as is the substance to the shadow. The new and better covenant, which he sealed with his own blood, presented heavenly truth, not under the cumbrous drapery of Levitical institutions, but in its native clearness, simplicity and beauty. The object of his mission from God was not merely to ordain new ceremonies, substitute sacraments for sacrifices, a symbolic church for a symbolic temple, a Gentile instead of an Aaronic priesthood. Christianity was not to be Judaism reproduced, with a ritual outwardly modified, but a character not essentially changed. It should be light contrasted with obscurity, liberty



as opposed to bondage, simplicity instead of gorgeous and complicated ritualism, freedom of access to the Holiest instead of distance and barriers, a light yoke and easy burden in place of that system which, however indispensable as a preparation for the Gospel, proved to the Jews, St. Peter being witness, a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. The Gospel, contrasted with the Law, is "the Ministration of the Spirit," and therefore preëminently "glorious."\*

In place, therefore, of the multiplied, burdensome, and imposing ceremonies of the former dispensation, the Saviour instituted two simple and impressive rites, and enjoined them upon all his disciples. These were in some degree parallel to the two symbolic Jewish ordinances, Circumcision and the Passover. In the case of each, the acts prescribed, and invested with religious significance, were not previously unknown. Like the two previous ordinances, one was initiatory and single, applied to individuals, and not admitting repetition. The other was constant and social. Besides their other important uses, they visibly represented and exhibited two cardinal doctrines of the new faith: the cleansing of the soul from the pollution of sin by the Holy Ghost, and the taking away of guilt by the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God, offered once for all. Thus were held up before man the two great essentials to salvation, pardon and holiness. "This is He that came by water and blood."†

\* 2 Cor. 3: 8.

† 1 John 5: 6.

## BAPTISM.

THE first of these ordinances, that which is parallel to Circumcision, the badge of discipleship, the initiation into the visible fold of Christ, is known as Baptism. It was practised during the Saviour's personal ministry, by his disciples acting under their Lord's direction,\* and was by him enjoined, in his parting commission to his Apostles to evangelize the world, with the utmost solemnity.† From the occasional notices found in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Epistles, we can not doubt that this command was invariably and scrupulously obeyed. From the Scriptures may be gathered the following particulars respecting this holy rite.

1. Its universal obligation upon all who would be Christians.

2. The requirement in the case of adults of spiritual qualifications, namely, repentance and faith, prior to the reception of the rite.‡

3. The unprofitableness thereof to such as received it without suitable dispositions.§

4. That Baptism was the outward visible sign of spiritual regeneration.||

5. That Baptism is the seal of the forgiveness of sins to the penitent.¶ Not the actual channel of

\* John 4 : 1, 2.

† Matt. 28 : 19; Mark 16 : 16.

‡ Acts 2 : 38; 8 : 37; 10 : 47; 16 : 14, 15, 30-33.

§ Case of Simon, Acts 8 : 21.

|| John 3 : 5; Rom. 6 : 3, 4; Col. 2 : 12.

¶ Acts 2 : 38; 22 : 16.

pardon, but the pledge of a pardon already granted to the believing.\*

6. That the ordinance, and the grace which it exhibits and symbolizes, are not inseparable.†

7. That infants are proper subjects of baptism. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God."‡ We must understand "the kingdom of God" here, either of the Church of God on earth, or of the heavenly state. If the former be meant, the question is settled at once in favor of infant baptism. If the latter, is it credible that they, who are the proper heirs of heaven, were to be excluded from the Church below?—that they who are admissible into the inner sanctuary, can not be received into the vestibule and outer court of the temple? Congruous with this interpretation of our Saviour's words was the language of the Apostle Peter at Pentecost. "The promise is to you and to your children;"§ that of St. Paul, that when one parent is a Christian, the children are "holy;"|| the record of the baptism of households in

\* John 5 : 24; 5 : 40 compared with 6 : 35. Acts 11 : 15-17; 16 : 31; Rom. 4 : 1-12; 5.

† Simon received the ordinance, but not the grace. Cornelius and his friends were baptized with the Holy Ghost, before being baptized with water. 1 Cor. 10 : 1-5, compared with verse 11.

‡ Mark 10 : 14.

§ Acts 2 : 39.

|| 1 Cor. 7 : 14. The word *holy* here is understood to mean not inherent but relative holiness, capable of dedication to God in his covenant.