

# BAPTISM

ITS HISTORY  
PAST AND PRESENT

By V. JAMES LOVALVO

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## About the Author

V. James Loyalvo is one of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ, which has its headquarters in Monongahela, Pennsylvania.

(Please note: The above church was organized July 7, 1862, at Greenock, Pennsylvania. It is a distinct and

independent entity without affiliation to any other faith in the world.

At a very early age, he aspired to a musical career, namely, an operatic one. He studied voice culture and pedagogy at the Institute of Musical Arts in Detroit, Michigan, under the tutorship and guidance of Dr. William Howland, a voice teacher of world reknown. Just prior to going to Europe to continue his musical studies with some of the great voice coaches, he was introduced to The Church of Jesus Christ. After a short period of investigating the Church's principles and its beliefs in the Apostasy and Restoration of the Gospel, he was baptized. This happened on July 16, 1933.

Nine months later, much to the chagrin of his voice teacher, and his parents, he gave up his career and cast his lot with the people of God completely. He was ordained into the Ministry of the Church when he was twenty-three years old. Four years later, he was ordained an Evangelist, and, two years after that, he was ordained an Apostle, making him one of the youngest men to ever be ordained in that office.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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In 1936, he was married to Mary Randazzo, whom, he says, has been an inspiration to him in his religious endeavors and an indispensable help in his Ministry. "Without her, I could never have accomplished the things I have for the Lord and His Church," he reiterates.

Brother Lovalvo has spent many years doing missionary work among the Seed of Joseph (American Indians) and also among the Gentiles. He has written several hymns to the glory of God and continues to use the voice God gave him in singing His praises everywhere he can. He has also written many religious articles, most of which are printed in the Church's paper, *The Gospel News*, under the caption, "It Is Written."

Brother Lovalvo testifies to the world that he is a witness to the Restoration of the Gospel and its glory, and to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon and the Bible, the "Two Sticks" spoken of in the 37th chapter of Ezekial. He wishes all who read this book the richest of God's blessings.

## DEDICATION

This Treatise is dedicated to Mary, my beloved wife and dearest friend, who is always an inspiration in all my literary endeavors.



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My thanks to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ for reading and approving this Treatise.

May the Lord bless all of you with health and happiness, and may He overshadow you with His great love all the days of your lives.



# Preface

As I began to research the doctrine of baptism, I became deeply engrossed with its fascinating history, and writing a short treatise on this very important subject germinated within me. With intense regard for truthful historicity, I embarked on this project with an affinity for proper documentation. Primary sources for this work were the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Secondary sources were the works of several historians and theologians. Tertiary sources were the writings of some Early Church Fathers.

The Bible and Book of Mormon are filled with rich information on this topic, and they gave me the incentive to put in writing what I gleaned from their pages. If nothing else had ever been written, these two books would have been sufficient to give the seeker of truth enough evidence concerning the mode and function of baptism. The instructions of Jesus Christ to the Twelve Disciples leaves no room for doubt concerning the manner in which they were to baptize (Book of Mormon, III Nephi 11).

The Bible, although not specific in the manner in which His Apostles were to baptize, has enough to give one an insight to the mode, meaning, and function of baptism. The words, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water" (Matt. 3:16), indicates primarily a "going down" into the water (submersion [or immersion]), and secondly an emersion (coming up out of the water). "Submersion" because baptism by immersion was well known to the Jewish people. In their ritual "washings," immersion was the mode. "Sprinkling and/or pouring" was a much later practice, adopted in lieu of immersion.

The words of Jesus to Nicodemus conveyed a message of rebirth by water and Spirit. Nicodemus understood what being "born again" meant in the physical sense, and that elicited the question, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" To his logical mind, being "born again" was an impossible feat, and the spiritual analogy escaped his reasoning. Although Christ explained it clearly, Nicodemus was still bewildered. Notwithstanding the fact that the Bible does not elaborate on the subsequent reaction of Nicodemus, some writers claim that he eventually understood and became a Christian.

It is a well-known phenomenon that before a child is born, it is encased in water in its mother's womb. Jesus' analogy becomes very clear; in baptism, one must be encased [immersed] in water, and the coming up "out of the water" is likened to a "natural" birth. Baptism is the first integral part of the "whole" birth. The second part is that of being "born of the Spirit."

Being "born of the Spirit" is analogous to a child receiving a soul, or a portion of the Spirit of God, making it a human being. When it is born, it has two component parts, a body and a soul [or spirit]. Likewise, when a person is baptized and "hands are laid upon him/her for the reception of the Holy Spirit," two component substances are intermingled, birth of water and of the Spirit. Now a person is a child of God, and heir to the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the "new birth" or the "born again" experience that Jesus spoke of to Nicodemus.

In researching material for the history of baptism, I became amazed at the debates that were engendered by this topic. It was not whether baptism is a vital ordinance, but what was its original meaning, mode, and function. The debates then centered around who are the proper subjects,

and when, where, and how this ordinance should be administered. It seems that every ordinance [baptism, Lord's Supper, laying on of hands, etc.,] was debated throughout the centuries. Councils were held from time to time to attempt a unification on these ordinances, but the controversies still continued throughout the years. The debates continue, even in this century, and probably will never stop.

It is my hope and prayer that our church, The Church of Jesus Christ, will always be faithful to the ordinances which Jesus Christ initiated and His Apostles promulgated. Also, that The Church of Jesus Christ will be a "role model" for other churches and organizations to pattern themselves accordingly.



# Introduction

It is the purpose of this paper to: a) trace the history of baptism from Old Testament times to the New Testament era beginning with John the Baptist to the present day; b) to point out the original translation and definition of the word baptism, its original mode and subsequent changes; c) and to trace as closely as possible the scriptural, and historical basis upon which the early church leaders based their doctrine of baptism, including that of The Church of Jesus Christ of which I am a member.

I shall make a comparison of the past with the more modern doctrine and practice of baptism. From the very introduction of the Christian dispensation, baptism was central to becoming a member of the body of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus Christ set the example by having John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, baptize Him (Matthew 3:13-16). Thereafter, the Apostles followed the commandment of their Lord and Master and baptized repentant believers. On the day of Pentecost, the Church had its birth when 3000 persons were baptized (Acts 2:28-31).

I shall explore primary and secondary sources to express what is written in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, the Patristic writings concerning the meaning and significance of baptism, and baptismal practices among different denominations.

From time to time I shall insert my own opinions to confirm or rebut the opinions of others. I shall also endeavor to prove by the Scriptures (Bible and Book of Mormon) that baptism was intended for the remission of sins and as such

is an important part of the process of eternal salvation. I shall also attempt to prove that the original mode of baptism was by immersion.

It is extremely important to understand that the outward washing of the body (baptism) alone does not save a person, otherwise one could merely be baptized without any further commitment or obligation. The Scriptures clearly state that faith and repentance precede water baptism. There is no question that baptism presupposed faith [belief] and repentance. John the Baptist's words verify this: "Bring therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

This treatise will not enlarge upon faith and repentance (since these will be considered in another article). I will attempt to prove that some religious organizations from early centuries to the present day have departed from the original meaning and mode of baptism.

## **BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST**

*(Found in the Bible)*

John the Baptist practiced the rite of baptism prior to the start of Christ's mission. The inception of the doctrine of baptism (which eventually became the root of the baptismal doctrine in the Church) occurred when John baptized Jesus Christ at Jordan. It is written:

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him.

But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

And Jesus answering him said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt. 3:13-17).

Certain facts are evident in the Scriptures. 1) Christ was baptized in the river Jordan, in open, running, living waters. 2) He came "up straightway out of the waters," signifying that John immersed Him.

## **WHY JESUS WAS BAPTIZED**

*(Found in the Bible)*

There has been a question in the minds of many scholars, theologians, and lay persons alike as to why it was necessary for Jesus to be baptized. To simply say that it was an ex-

ample set for others to follow, doesn't answer the question fully. In reply to John the Baptist's statement regarding his need to be baptized by Jesus, the Lord answered, "Suffereth to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:14-15). Even this statement by Christ has been a subject of diverse opinions. In my opinion, Jesus' act of being baptized identified Himself with His people, and it proclaimed His messianic position. He was the prophesied Messiah. In being baptized by John, He acknowledged His work as a continuation of that begun by John, His forerunner. Finally, it served as an act of consecration as the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove and the voice of God rang out imperiously and decisively, acknowledging Him as His Son, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). Thus began Jesus' messianic mission.

### FULFILLS ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

*(Found in the Book of Mormon)*

In the Book of Mormon however, there is an explicit interpretation to the words of Jesus, ". . . for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." A young prophet, Nephi, spoke the following words circa B.C. 559:

And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfill all righteousness in being baptized by water? Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments.

Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the

Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove.

And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straightness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them (II Nephi 31:6-9).

## **BAPTISM: AS A MEANS OF REGENERATION**

*(Found in the Bible)*

Baptism is the vehicle by which one receives regeneration of spirit as well as remission of sins. There is sufficient evidence in the Scriptures that substantiate this ordinance. Jesus told Nicodemus that a person must not only be born of water but also of the Spirit. This is a complete and total regeneration. Being regenerated by water means that ones sins are washed away (remitted). Regenerated by the Holy Spirit means that ones spirit, mind and heart are cleansed and purified enabling the repentant person to be eligible for the kingdom of heaven.

In the original Greek language, the word for "being born" or "begotten" is *gennao*. The Greek word for regeneration is *paliggenesia*.<sup>1</sup> John, the Apostle, uses *gennao* (born again. 3:3-5). Titus uses *paliggenesia* (regeneration). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). "Rebirth" and "regeneration" are quite similar in the context of the Scriptures but have a slight variation, depending on its usage. "Rebirth," however, combines *gennao* and *paliggenesia* and, is therefore in essence a re-creation. Hence, to be "born again" has a nuance of being re-created. In baptism one rises a new creature.

## JUSTIN MARTYR

Justin Martyr was one of the early Church Fathers who lived from 114 A.D. to approximately 168 A.D. He wrote his "Apology" between 147 A.D. and 161 A.D. On regeneration, he wrote:

All those who are persuaded and believe that these things are true . . . are taught to pray and, with fasting, to ask of God remission of their former sins, the while we pray and fast along with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are made regenerate with that manner of regeneration with which we ourselves were made regenerate. For Christ it was who said, Except ye be regenerate ye shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven.<sup>2</sup>

## BAPTISM: FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS

*(Found in the Bible)*

According to the Holy Scriptures, baptism is for the remission of sins despite the personal interpretation that any person may otherwise give.

The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins:

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. [Original Greek: they were having themselves baptized of him while confessing their sins] (Mark 1:4-5).

On the day of Pentecost, when the question, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" was asked, Peter, the Apostle replied, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37-38). One must conclude that faith and repentance are the first steps that lead to baptism. To be baptized without the grace of God which motivates one to seek baptism is futile.

Therefore, without faith and the grace of God which generates repentance, baptism would only be an outward washing without any meaning of remission of sins or salvation. Justin Martyr, in his "Apology" makes it very clear that baptism was for the remission of sins:

. . . in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed. . . .<sup>3</sup>

### IRENÆUS

(120 A.D.—202 A.D.)

Irenaeus, writing on the relationship between baptism and remission of sins says:

The faith . . . as the Presbyters, the disciples of the Apostles, have delivered it to us . . . above all teaches that we have received baptism for the forgiveness of sins in the name of God the Father, and in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was incarnate, died, and rose again, and in the Holy Spirit of God, and the regeneration of God, by which we become the children, not of mortal men, but of the eternal and everlasting God.<sup>4</sup>

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

(150 A.D.—211 A.D.)

Clement considered baptism as imparting regeneration, enlightenment, divine sonship, immortality, and remission of sins.<sup>5</sup>

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

(310 A.D.—386 A.D.)

Cyril accepted baptism as the vehicle for remission of sins. He wrote:

Great is this baptism to which you are coming; it is ransom to captives and remission of sins. It is the death of sin and the soul's regeneration. It is a garment of light and a holy seal that can never be dissolved. It is a chariot to heaven, the delights of paradise, the pledge of the kingdom, the gift of sonship.<sup>6</sup>

AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF HIPPO

*(Born at Thagasta in 354 A.D. and died in Hippo in 430 A.D.)*

Augustine, on baptism for remission of sins said, "Baptism washes away all our sins, whether of deed, word, or thought, . . . whether knowingly or unknowingly contracted (cited by Kelly).<sup>7</sup>

PHILIP SCHAFF

Schaff, an historian of no little reputation, argues that in the development of baptism in the first century, it was understood to be for the remission of sins and for regeneration by the Holy Spirit. He bases his argument on Scriptural and historical data. He writes:

Baptism was solemnly instituted by Christ before His Ascension to be performed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It took the place of circumcision as a sign and seal of church membership. It is an outward sign of Christian discipleship, the rite of initiation into the covenant of grace. It is the sacrament of repentance (conversion), of remission of sins, and of regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

### **BAPTISM: FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS**

*(Found in the Book of Mormon)*

In the Book of Mormon, baptism as a means of remission of sins was predicted by the young prophet Nephi approximately 550 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. It is written:

Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost (II Nephi 31:17).

Nephi, the son of Nephi baptized unto remission of sins. The Book of Mormon says, "And it came to pass that Nephi went forth among the people, and also many others, baptizing unto repentance, in the which there was a great remission of sins" (III Nephi 1:23). When Jesus Christ appeared to Nephites on this continent, He spoke to them concerning baptism for the remission of their sins. He said to them:

And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are those who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins (III Nephi 12:2).

In baptism, the believer declares to the world that he belongs to Jesus Christ and that Christ is in him. He does not belong to Paul, Peter, or any other person, only to Jesus Christ. He takes on the characteristics of the Lord in the new birth of water and the Spirit. He is now a new person; the old has been buried in the liquid grave.

I have given adequate space and data to support baptism as a means for remission of sins and regeneration. To write what many early church Fathers wrote on this phase of the subject would require a much longer and more comprehensive paper, therefore, I shall limit myself to the above. Following are a few symbols and types which baptism represents:

**BAPTISM: A TYPE AND/OR SYMBOL  
OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION**

*(Found in the Bible)*

Death and life through baptism are depicted in three-dimensional perspective by Paul the Apostle:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism in-

to death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we should also live with him (Romans 6:3-8).

To the Colossians, Paul teaches, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12).

### JOHANNES WARNS

Warns concurs with the Apostle Paul and writes:

Through the once-for-all act of baptism, it is publicly demonstrated that we assume once and for all the position in the grace of God as dead toward sin and alive in Christ. God regards the believer as crucified, dead, buried, and raised from the grave with Christ, so as to live perpetually for God. In fact, the believer is transferred into the life-sphere of the risen and exalted Christ.<sup>9</sup>

"Baptism," continues Warns, "completes the reception into the living fellowship with God in Christ. By baptism one becomes a Christian before the whole world, as it were, in a responsible and legally binding form."<sup>10</sup>

The allegorical language used by Paul the Apostle is very interesting and sensible. It depicts the burial of one's sinful self into the mystical liquid grave from whence one is raised a regenerated being into a new life with Christ. However, I believe that the element of regeneration is of a two-fold occurrence; once before baptism by repentance, and the other after baptism with the washing of water. The grace of God can be extended to persons before baptism—as in the case of Cornelius—or after baptism. The grace of God given before baptism motivates one to repent and seek baptism as happened to Cornelius (Acts 10) and the Eunuch (Acts 8:26-38).

### **BAPTISM: GRACE OF GOD POURED OUT BEFORE BAPTISM**

*(Found in the Book of Mormon)*

There is a special occasion in the Book of Mormon where the grace of God was manifested prior to baptism. This effusion of the Holy Spirit motivated the people to repent and seek baptism. Alma, who had believed the words of the prophet Abinadi, gathered with a group of people at a place called Mormon (circa B.C. 147) and, after speaking to them for a while ended his preaching with these words:

Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts (Mosiah 18:10-11).

Immediately, Alma baptized all that were present—they numbered about two hundred and four people. This was the first physical act of baptism recorded in the Book of Mormon.

## **BAPTISM: KNOWN BEFORE THE ADVENT OF CHRIST**

*(Found in the Book of Mormon and Historically)*

The practice of baptism was known to the Jews. If it was not, how does one explain the fact that the whole Jewish people and Jerusalem went out to John to be baptized by him?

Ritual baths of purification were taken in rivers, in caves, and in pits by immersion. However, to accommodate the High Priests and priests, arrangements were made for them in the Temple.<sup>11</sup>

Baptism was well-known in the Book of Mormon. Six hundred years before the birth and advent of Jesus Christ, God revealed to Lehi, a prophet, concerning John the Baptist who should baptize Jesus Christ. Nephi, the son of Lehi recounts this revelation.

Yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. And much spake my father concerning this thing.

And my father said he should baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan; and he also said he should baptize with water; even that he should baptize the Messiah with water.

And after he had baptized the Messiah with water, he should behold and bear record that he had baptized the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world (I Nephi 10:8-10).

Nephi also had a revelation given to him similar to his father's in which he saw John baptizing Jesus Christ:

And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, of whom my father had spoken; and I also beheld the prophet who should prepare the way before him. And the Lamb of God went forth and was baptized of him; and after he was baptized, I beheld the heavens open, and the Holy Ghost come down out of heaven and abide upon him in the form of a dove (I Nephi 11:27).

Alma, the son of Alma, baptized a certain Zeezrom (ca B.C. 81) and established a church in the land of Sidom consecrating priests and teachers to baptize whoever were desirous to be baptized. It is recorded, "And it came to pass that there were many; for they did flock from all the region round about Sidom, and were baptized" (Alma 15:12-14).

### **BAPTISM: AS ADMISSION TO CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

*(Found in the Bible)*

Some scholars argue that baptism took the place of circumcision as a "sign and seal of church membership."<sup>12</sup> Be that as it may, the fact is that from the days of Christ and the Apostles, one could not participate in the ordinances of the Gospel (Lord's Supper, etc.) unless one was a baptized member of the church.

On the day of Pentecost three thousand persons were added to the church. From then, the Scriptures say that, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:41, 47).

**BAPTISM: AS ADMISSION  
TO CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

*(Found in the Book of Mormon)*

Baptism, as an ordinance and a means of admission to church membership was adhered to strictly before the birth of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon records:

And it came to pass that in this same year (ca B.C.45) there was exceeding great prosperity in the church, insomuch that there were thousands who did join themselves unto the church and were baptized unto repentance.

And so great was the prosperity of the church, and so many the blessings which were poured out upon the people, that even the high priests and the teachers were themselves astonished beyond measure.

And it came to pass that the work of the Lord did prosper unto the baptizing and uniting to the church of God, many souls, yea, even tens of thousands (Helaman 3:24-26).

In the land of Zarahemla, because of the preaching of Nephi and Lehi, the sons of Helaman, thousands were baptized. At one time, eight thousand Lamanites were baptized (Helaman 5:17-19 (ca B.C. 30).

## **BAPTISM: ITS ORIGINAL MODE (IMMERSION) AND DEFINITION**

According to Webster's dictionary, the word baptism is defined as: "The ceremony of proclaiming one a Christian or admitting one into membership in a Christian church by immersion, sprinkling, or pouring."<sup>13</sup>

Another definition is: "A method of Christian baptism by submerging the entire person in water."<sup>14</sup>

Until the close of the first century, there was no question as to the meaning and mode of baptism; it was by immersion into the water. I have researched some language professors and scholars which I will call to witness.

### **ALEXANDER CARSON**

*BAPTO* has two meanings: to dip or to dye. *BAPTIZO*, a derivative of *BAPTO* has one, i.e., immersion.<sup>15</sup> *BAPTO* and *BAPTIZO* with respect to the ordinance of baptism is stronger in support of immersion. *BAPTIZEIN*, a Greek word for baptism, signifies to let anything into water or any liquid; baptism can be dipping or immersing in any liquid. In the German language, John the Baptist is called Johannes der Tauffer (John the Dipper). In Dutch, he is called John der Dooper (John the Dipper). In the Saxon Testament, he is called John le Fullubre (John the Fuller).<sup>16</sup>

Carson gives Scriptural examples of dipping: Ex. 12:22; Lev. 4:6; 14:6; (not sprinkling). To his opponents he says, "It is strange to find Christians arguing that the word, though it signifies 'to immerse,' may be applied when only a part is dipped; yet in their own practice, dipping neither

in the whole or in part, but substituting 'pouring or sprinkling' in its place."<sup>17</sup>

Carson argues that *BAPTO*, signifying "to dip" is strongly confirmed by the circumstances; that "dyeing," which it also imports, was usually performed, both among the Greeks and the Romans, by immersion. He also says that the word *BAPTIZO*, applies to baptism by immersion. *BAPTIZO* not only signifies immersion, but emersion also (to emerge from the water). But as in the case of the ordinance of baptism, the "emersion" is as necessary as the "immersion."<sup>18</sup>

I agree with Mr. Carson's definition of the word *BAPTIZO* meaning immersion, not sprinkling or pouring. "Emersion" from the water is very significant as it shows a baptized person emerging [coming up out of the water]. One is immersed a repentant sinner, and emerges a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Carson, continuing his argument says, "The word *BAPTO* in the original Greek signifies 'to dip.' If so, why should not the Greek word by which it is translated have its own particular meaning? How can the mode [immersion] be excluded, if it is in both the original and the translation? With respect to *BAPTIZO*, I believe that it always signifies 'to dip'; never expressing anything else but mode." He also says, "If baptism had not been by immersion, there could be no adequate cause alleged for going to the river. . . . If a handful of water would have sufficed for baptism, why go to the river?"<sup>19</sup>

### RICHARD FULLER

Mr. Fuller is fully convinced that in speaking of the ordinance of baptism, the Holy Spirit uses one single word;

that word is *BAPTIZO*.<sup>20</sup> He cites a Dr. Newman's visit to a Professor Porson, a celebrated Greek scholar at the London Institution, relative to his inquiry concerning the word *BAPTIZO*. He [Dr. Newman] was assured that *BAPTIZO* signified a total immersion. Fuller continues, "When the ordinance [baptism] is mentioned, *BAPTIZO* is always the word, and never was there a word the meaning of which was more clear and precise." Fuller argues, "They [those who think that baptism means sprinkling or pouring] have been defied to produce a single instance where it means sprinkle or pour. They have ransacked all the Greek writings and have failed." "What does baptism mean?" he asks. He answers, "It means immerse. It no more means to pour or sprinkle than to fly. But in Greek, *BAPTIZO* means to immerse."<sup>21</sup>

Fuller cites some prominent scholars:

a). John Calvin (Founder of the Presbyterian Faith).

Calvin was one of the Reformers who cared little whether one was baptized by immersion, sprinkling, or pouring is also quoted as saying, "The word *BAPTIZO* signifies to immerse; and the rite of immersion was performed by the Ancient Church."<sup>22</sup> Following are his own words:

Whether the person baptized is to be wholly immersed, and that whether once or thrice, or whether he is only to be sprinkled with water, is not of the least consequence: churches should be at liberty to adopt either, according to the diversity of climates, although it is evident that the term baptizo means to immerse, and that this was the form used by the primitive church.<sup>23</sup>

b). Martin Luther (Founder of the Lutheran Church).

Baptism is a Greek word and it may be translated immersion, as when we immerse something in water, that it may be wholly covered. And although it is almost wholly abolished (for they do not dip the whole children, but only pour a little water on them), they ought, nevertheless, to be wholly immersed, and then immediately drawn out.

- c). Theodore Beza (Calvin's second in command and successor in Geneva).

Christ commanded us to be baptized; by which word it is certain, immersion is signified. *BAPTIZESTAL*, in this place, is more than *NIPTEIN*: because it seems to respect the whole body, this only the hand. Nor does *BAPTIZEIN* signify wash, except by consequences; for it properly signifies to immerse for the sake of "dyeing." To be baptized in water signifies no other than to immerse in water, which is the external ceremony of baptism. *BAPTIZO* differs from the word *DUNAI*, which signifies to plunge in the deep and to drown.<sup>24</sup>

- d). H. Venema.

"The word *BAPTIZEIN*, to baptize, is nowhere used in the Scriptures for sprinkling."<sup>25</sup>

### BRETSCHNEIDER

"An entire immersion belongs to the nature of baptism. This is the meaning of the word. In the word *BAPTIZO* and *BAPTISMA* is contained the idea of a complete immersion under water; at least, so is *BAPTISMA* in the New Testament."<sup>26</sup>

In arguing against any other mode than immersion, Mr. Fuller says:

In commanding His disciples to be baptized, Jesus knew what act He enjoined, and He could have been at no loss for a word clearly to express His meaning. Did He intend sprinkling? The word was *RANTIZO*. Did He require pouring? The word was *KEO*. If wash, *NIPTO*. If bathe, *LOUO*. If immerse or dye (the word having this latter meaning because dyeing is by immersing), *BAPTO*. If Jesus meant immerse, and nothing else, the word was *BAPTIZO*. This is the word He used, and which the Holy Spirit always employs, when the rite of baptism is mentioned.<sup>27</sup>

#### CHARLES ANTHON

In defending the word *BAPTIZO*, Fuller cites a correspondence between an E. Parmely and Charles Anthon, a Professor of Languages at the Columbia College in New York. [*This is the same Professor Anthon to whom Martin Harris brought a sample of the "characters" taken from the Plates from which Joseph Smith was translating (Italics mine)*]. To Parmley's inquiry, Professor Anthon replied:

Dr. Parmely:

My dear sir: There is no authority whatsoever for the singular remark made by the Reverend Doctor Spring relative to the word *BAPTIZO*. The primary meaning of the word is to dip or immerse; and its secondary meaning, if ever it had any, all refer, in some way or another, to the same leading idea. Sprinkling, etc., are entirely out of the question. I have delayed in answering your letter in

the hope that you would call and favor me with a visit, when we might talk the matter over at our leisure. I presume, however, that what I have written, will answer your purpose.<sup>28</sup>

### JOHANNES WARNS

Warns argues in favor of baptism by immersion as being the original mode exercised by John the Baptist and Christ's disciples. Sprinkling and pouring he discards using Scriptural references and original definitions to substantiate his views.<sup>29</sup> A Doctor F. M. Steinmeyer, Professor of Theology of Berlin is quoted by Johannes Warns relative to the baptism of Christ in which immersion is implied:

Imbued by the deepest impulse and fully divining that the Father would work with Him, He desired this service from John the Baptist. John obeyed and performed this momentous act. He, the baptizer, was to understand thereafter; He, the baptized One, understood at once. The water closed above His head, He feels, He knows Himself to be consecrated to be the Messiah, the Messiah who should become perfected through the suffering of death. Floods cover Him (Ps. 69:21). With uncovered eyes He surveys His course, which completely and absolutely corresponds to the symbol.<sup>30</sup> [His suffering on the cross].

### NAPHTALI RUDNITZKY

Rudnitzky, a learned Hebrew Christian, is cited by Warns on baptism by immersion:

The Hebrew language of the Old Testament and its relative, the Aramaic, which the Lord Jesus and

His first disciples spoke as their native tongue, have the same words for "baptism" and "baptize." Both branches of the language unite with their expressions and conception of a plunge bath *tebilah* and an immersion *tabal*. Whenever, in the Old Testament, the verb *tabal* (to dip, immerse) is found, in the Greek translation, the verb *baptein* is used, which in the German New Testament is translated *taufen* (baptize).<sup>31</sup>

That baptism by immersion was practiced exclusively in the first century is attested to by that noted historian, John Laurence Mosheim. He writes, "In this century, baptism was administered in convenient places without the public assemblies; and by immersing the candidate wholly in the water."<sup>32</sup>

### B. F. SMITH

Mr. Smith quotes Tertullian, another Historian:

When we are going to enter the water, but a little before, in the presence of the congregation, and under the hand of the president, we solemnly profess to disown the devil, and his pomp, and his angels. Thereupon, we are immersed.<sup>33</sup>

It is a strange phenomenon that, while many of the Reformers and other scholars of note attested to the fact that immersion was the original mode of baptism, they didn't care whether one was baptized by other modes than immersion. In an earlier era, the Apologist Tertullian, said that it made no difference whether one was washed [baptized] in the sea, in a pond, a river, a fountain, a cistern, or a tub

for, according to him, all waters, when God is invoked, acquire the sacred significance of conveying sanctity.<sup>34</sup>

The particular Baptist Confession of 1644 speaks of the mode of baptism in this wise:

The way and manner of dispensing of the Ordinance the Scriptures hold out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water. . . . that as certainly as the body is buried under water, raised by the power of Christ in the day of the resurrection, to reign with Christ.<sup>35</sup>

Baptism by immersion, in the newly formed Mennonite Brethren Church was first performed on September 23, 1860 in Russia. A Jakob Bekker was about to baptize two women when Johann Classen approached him and asked him, "If you are going to baptize, how are you going to do it? Are you also going to sprinkle or pour?"

This terse question startled Bekker who immediately began to search the Scriptures to see if he could find any proof relative to the mode of baptism. Despite the fear of the Russian government and the opposition of the large Mennonite Church (who baptized by sprinkling and/or pouring), he diligently studied the writings of Menno Simons (a 16th century Anabaptist Radical Reformer in Switzerland) who had written a treatise called "Basic Fundamentals" in which he [Bekker] found that, since Simons recognized Apostolic baptism as taking place in flowing water, it was sufficient grounds for him to defend baptism by immersion in court as a form of Mennonite baptism. Thereupon, since the newly formed church now supported immersion, on September 1860, a wagon loaded with members drove to the waters and, then Bartel baptized Bekker. Bekker next baptized three others. This gave the Mennonite Church identity.<sup>36</sup>

Pouring/sprinkling became the practice of quite a few of Anabaptists. Servetus of Vienna;<sup>37</sup> Hubmeier of Waldshut, Zurich, and Moravia,<sup>38</sup> the Hutterites of Moravia and Bohemia;<sup>39</sup> and the Mennonites who followed Menno Simons all practiced pouring/sprinkling.

At the same time, immersion was practiced by Conrad Grebel of Geneva, Uliman of St. Gaul,<sup>40</sup> by the believers in Strasburg,<sup>41</sup> by the Munsterites,<sup>42</sup> by the believers in Rhynsburger,<sup>43</sup> by the Protestant Party in Poland, and by the English Baptists.<sup>44</sup>

I have stated the above-mentioned references to indicate that baptism by immersion (from the early centuries to the 19th century) had degenerated to baptism by sprinkling and pouring, until some had the courage to reinstate and continue baptism by immersion.

### GREEK LEXICOGRAPHERS

(cited by Wm. O. Baker)

To further strengthen the argument that immersion is essential to Christian baptism, Mr. Baker calls upon well-known Greek lexicographers:

#### Scapula (1579)

*Bapto*—"To dip, to immerse; also to dye, because that may be done by immersing."

*Baptizo*—"To dip or immerse."

#### Henricus Stephanus (1572)

*Bapto* and *Baptizo*—"To dip or immerse, as we dip things for the purpose of dyeing them, or immerse them in water."

Schleusner (1822)

*Baptizo*—"Immerse, I dip, I immerse in water."

Pasor (1650)

*Bapto et Baptizo*—"To dip, to immerse, to dye, because it is done by immersing."

Donnegan

*Baptizo*—"To immerse repeatedly into a liquid, to submerge, to sink thoroughly."

*Baptismos*—"Immersion, submersion, the act of washing or bathing."

*Baptistees* (a Baptist)—"One who immerses, submerges."

*Baptisma*—An object immersed, submerged, washed or soaked."<sup>45</sup>

**BAPTISM: BY IMMERSION**

*(Recorded in the Book of Mormon)*

Alma, the young priest who had been converted by the prophet Abinadi, baptized about two hundred and four persons [by immersion] at a place called the Waters of Mormon. The first person he baptized was called Helam. Following is a brief account of the manner in which Alma baptized:

And now it came to pass that Alma took Helam, he being one of the first, and went and stood forth in the water, and cried, saying, O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart.

And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he said: Helam, I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body; and may the Spirit of the the Lord be poured out upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world.

And after Alma had said these words, both Alma and Helam were buried in the water; and they arose and came forth out of the water rejoicing, being filled with the Spirit (Mosiah 18:12-14).

The greatest example of baptism by immersion was after Jesus Christ appeared to the Nephites on the land of America. He called twelve men who were referred to as Disciples and, not only commanded them to baptize, but instructed them in the manner in which they were to baptize. It is written:

And it came to pass that he spake unto Nephi (for Nephi was among the multitude) and he commanded him that he should come forth.

And Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet.

And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him.

And the Lord said unto him: I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven.

And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize. And he said unto them: On this wise shall ye baptize: and there shall be no disputations among you.

Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them—Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them.

And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying;

Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water.

And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name; for behold, verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.

And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been (III Nephi 11:18-28).

Subsequent to Christ's commandments, the Twelve Disciples began to baptize according to the instructions of the Lord.

And when they had thus prayed, they went down unto the water's edge, and the multitude followed them.

And it came to pass that Nephi went down into the water and was baptized [*it is not recorded who baptized him*] (italics mine).

And he came up out of the water and began to baptize. And he baptized all those whom Jesus had chosen.

And it came to pass when they were all baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire (III Nephi 19:10-13).

I believe that sufficient evidence has been given to prove that the mode of baptism (*baptizo*) was [and should be] by immersion. In time, however, another mode of baptism was accepted by many of the early Church Fathers.

### **BAPTISM: TRINE IMMERSION**

In process of time, single immersion was replaced with trine immersion, once for each entity of the Trinity. This happened in the early centuries. Cyril and other Early Church Fathers practiced [and taught] trine immersion.<sup>46</sup> Schaff writes that:

Trine immersion was the custom until a certain Eunomius introduced single immersion {again} for which he was condemned on pain of degradation. Single immersion reappeared in Spain, and Pope Gregory declared both single and trine immersion a valid form of baptism. . . . He explained that the trine immersion indicated a type of the Trinity while the single immersion was typical of the Unity of the Godhead. The Eastern Church still adheres to the trine immersion mode.<sup>47</sup>

Some scholars like W. O. Baker, James Crystal, et al, argue that "trine" baptism was the mode in the early Church, even from the Apostolic days [from the second to the twelfth centuries]. Cited are excerpts from Tertullian, Cyprian, Theodoret, Basil, Ambrose, Gregory Nyssen, Chrysostom, the Canon 50 of the Apostles and many others

to substantiate their arguments.<sup>48</sup> However, there are many others who refute the above argument. Some of the above scholars merely interpret the sayings of prominent early Christians to augment their position. For example, some theologians assume that Justin Martyr (who was only forty or fifty years from St. John) believed in trine baptism, and that he spoke in literal [not figurative] language when he declared, "For in the name of God, the Father, and Lord of the universe, and our Saviour Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit, they [the ones being baptized] receive the washing with water."<sup>49</sup> It is difficult [for me] to believe that a man living a few years from the Apostle John could believe in trine baptism. The very fact that he [Justin] says, ". . . they receive the washing with water," not "washings," indicates "one immersion."

Whatever the arguments in favor of trine baptism may be, the fact is that nowhere in the Bible does it say to immerse three times when baptizing. This became the interpretation by some Christians and eventually it became a practice with some who thought that they had discovered the true mode of baptism.

However, since the Restoration of the Gospel and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, we now have positive proof that Christ taught one immersion. It is written:

And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying,  
Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water (III Nephi 11:24-26).

The words of Jesus to the Nephites should answer the question, completely and forever; that single immersion must indeed be the only mode of baptism.

Euminius (ca 375 A. D.) reintroduced single immersion. He disagreed with trine immersion as he didn't believe that the members of the Trinity were equal. He argued that the basic symbolism of trine immersion was simply to show the equality of the Trinity. To change all this, he started single immersion into the death of Christ only.<sup>50</sup> The First Council of Constantinople condemned this kind of baptism, primarily because it was only "into the death of Christ."

It is easy to see how the Scriptures were distorted by the Eumanians, for the Bible neither teaches the inequality of the members of the Trinity nor a baptism into the death of Christ only. The Scriptures teach baptism as a symbol of Christ's death and His resurrection.

## **BAPTISM: BY SPRINKLING OR POURING**

The mode (or manner) of baptism underwent a radical change during the first part of the third century. Immersion (typifying death), followed by emersion (typifying resurrection), was no longer deemed essential. In its place sprinkling with water replaced immersion. This practice started when the learned Bishop of Carthage, Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus [known as Cyprian] (200 A.D.-258 A.D.) advocated that sprinkling could be administered in lieu of immersion in cases of sickness or physical weakness. He first administered sprinkling to an heretic named Novatus who, upon his deathbed, requested to be rebaptized.<sup>51</sup> Baptism by sprinkling eventually led to the practice of "clinical baptism."

## CLINICAL BAPTISM

Philip Schaff, writing about clinical baptism says:

In the second and third centuries, “pouring and sprinkling” were allowed in cases of scarcity of water. But afterwards this mode was applied only to the infirm or sick persons. This was called “clinical baptism.” . . . Those who had received clinical baptism were not allowed to be promoted to the priesthood because they had not been baptized from free choice but of necessity (sickness). However, if he excelled afterwards in zeal and faith, or if there was a deficiency of men, he could be accepted into the priesthood.<sup>52</sup>

Circa 1439 A.D., baptism by aspersion (sprinkling and/or pouring in lieu of immersion), by the Catholic Church had become widespread. Aspersion gained popularity, extending to the Reformation era (and up to the present time). Conrad Grebel (a 16th century Anabaptist and a Radical Reformer), in defense of pouring instead of immersion said:

They were poured over with water, meaning that just as they were cleansed within by the coming of the Holy Spirit, so they also were poured over with water externally to signify for the inner cleansing and dying to sin.<sup>53</sup>

In Zollikon, near Zurich, Switzerland, on January 23, 1525, a Felix Manz baptized Hans Bruggbach by taking a dipper of water and pouring it upon his head.<sup>54</sup>

It is also written that Balthasar Hubmeier [another Radical Reformer], baptized over three hundred out of a pail of water.<sup>55</sup>

Today, both the Catholic Church and many of the mainstream Protestant churches baptize by either sprinkling or pouring. This is certainly a deviation from the original mode. The mode of baptism, and who should be baptized has generated many debates. I shall give a brief account of one of these debates.

### HERETICAL BAPTISM

Heretical baptism was, in the third century, the subject of heated controversies. Cyprian and Tertullian rejected totally the idea of baptism by heretics as an inoperative "mock" baptism. Cyprian demanded that all heretics who requested readmission into the church should be rebaptized. He also said that heretics had no right to perform the sacrament of baptism. The church alone had this right as it was the "sole repository of all grace." Others, like Stephen, the Bishop of Rome, considered heretical baptism valid, but only if the heretics were baptized in the name of the Trinity or in the name of Christ alone. Schaff, the Historian, notes that the doctrine of Cyprian on heretical baptism was a logical one whereas Stephen's was more sacramental. The debate on baptism by and for heretics was finally settled at the Council of Trent (March 3, 1547, canon 4) a few centuries after the death of Stephen and the martyrdom of Cyprian.<sup>56</sup> The Council's decision stated unequivocally:

If any one says that the baptism, which is even given by heretics in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, with the intention of doing what the church doth, is not true baptism; let him be anathema.<sup>57</sup>

This decision meant that even heretics who were received into the church by rebaptism could also baptize others.

## POSTPONEMENT OF BAPTISM

A strange notion of postponing baptism until one was almost at death's door crept into the minds of some Early Church Fathers. Many like Constantine the Great, Gregory of Nazianzun, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine put off being baptized until they were well into their 30's or nigh unto death because they preferred the risk of dying unbaptized to that of forfeiting forever the baptismal grace. (Ambrose was thirty-four years old when he was baptized, and he was already the Bishop of Milan). They thought that the effects of baptism extended only to sins committed before receiving it. Apparently, deathbed baptism was then practiced, even as deathbed repentance is today accepted by some.

Postponement of baptism was encouraged by some of these Early Church Fathers [Tertullian et al] until the candidate was no longer in danger of losing forever the "grace of baptism" by committing adultery, murder, apostasy, and any other of the seven sins which Tertullian calls "mortal sins."<sup>58</sup>

There were however, voices raised in opposition to this practice. Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesaria, wrote a scathing rebuke against this unsound practice (ca A.D. 370).

Do you demur and loiter and put off baptism?  
When will you make a Christian? When shall we  
see you as one of us? Last year you were staying  
till this year; and now you have a mind to stay until  
next year. Take heed, that by promising yourself  
a longer life, you do not quite miss of your hope.<sup>59</sup>

The practice of postponing baptism until one was almost at death's door could have been a result of the earlier practice of postponing baptism until the two major holidays,

Easter and Whitsuntide.<sup>60</sup> Prior to this, the candidates were baptized upon declaration of faith, but eventually, the candidates had to undergo a period of instructions {catechism}. Learned men were appointed as instructors at Alexandria and elsewhere by the third century. In process of time, this led to the establishing of schools of Theology among Christians.<sup>61</sup>

There were various levels of instructions for the *catachumens* [candidates of baptism]. Mosheim writes:

The instructions given to the *catachumens* was different according to their genus and capacity. For those of feeble minds were instructed only in the more general and fundamental principles of religion: While those who appeared capable of grasping and comprehending all Christian knowledge were instructed in every thing that could render a Christian stable and perfect according to the views of that age.<sup>62</sup>

Persons who desired to be baptized had to undergo up to three years of instructions before they were baptized. This begs the question, "How much did those three thousand on the day of Pentecost know about Jesus and His doctrine? They were baptized immediately. But humans, being what they are, will always be prone to make a simple act very complicated.

### THE DIDACHE

*(Teachings of the Twelve Apostles  
on Baptism. True or False?)*

It is apropos at this juncture to write about the *Didache* (the alleged teachings of the Twelve Apostles) in which a

section on baptism recommends both immersion and pouring. I will give a very brief account of this document.

The Didache or Teaching [that is what the Greek word means] is divided into two parts. The first part is a code of Christian morals, presented as a choice between the way of life and the way of death [called the Two Ways]. The second part is a manual of Church Order. It lays down in a well-arranged manner, some simple, at times even naive, rules for the conduct of a rural congregation. It deals with such topics as baptism, fasting, the Lord's Supper, itinerant prophets, and the local ministry of bishops and deacons.<sup>63</sup>

Following is what the Didache proposes on baptism:

Now concerning baptism. This is the way ye must baptize. When ye have given them [the candidates] all this instruction, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in living water. And if thou hast no living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold, do it in warm; and if thou art short of both, pour out water thrice upon his head into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Before the baptizing, let the baptizer and the baptized fast along with any others who can, and thou shalt tell the baptized to fast for one or two days before.<sup>64</sup>

The Didache is purported to have been written approximately A.D. 130, but was never heard of in modern times until a certain Philotheos Brennios discovered it in 1873 and published the same in 1883. There is no historical evidence that the Twelve Apostles ever held a Council to decide on a formal set of Teachings. I cannot, and do not believe that the Apostles whom Jesus chose and instructed would be so cavalier about such a serious doctrine as baptism. The very

words, "If thou hast no living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst in cold, do it warm; and if thou art short of both, pour out water upon his head, etc." are incongruous with Scriptural teaching, and a supercilious manner of handling baptism per se. When one reads in God's Word how solemnly and sacredly the rite of baptism was considered, the validity of the Didache is questionable.

Evans argues that the Didache could not be regarded as a certainty:

It could not be regarded as certain that this slight work represents the actual practice of any church, however remote and backward, at any time. It quite possibly expresses the personal ideas of a good and simple-minded man who, on the basis of what he could draw from the Apostolic writings, and of what appealed to him in the practice of the church he knew, had drawn up the plan of a "model church" for his own pleasure and that of a few others, though not necessarily with the intention of having it adopted for use.<sup>65</sup>

It is also said that the substance of the Didache was known primarily through the seventh book of *The Apostolic Constitutions*, a church manual brought into its present form by unknown authors from early oral traditions and creedal forms. Henry M. Morris III—the writer of the above—says that the first six or seven books were composed at the end of the third century in Syria and that these "*Constitutions*," along with the expanded Didache, never did become accepted as formal authority. According to Philip Schaff, it was rejected for heretical interpolations by the Tertullian Council of A.D. 692. Scholars who wanted to find historical evidences of baptismal modes other than immersion refer, with conviction, to the Didache. Conversely, those scholars

who favor immersion are not so kind to the accuracy and historicity of the Didache.<sup>66</sup>

C. C. Richardson advances opinions of different authors on the origin and authenticity of the Didache.

“Some writers,” he says, “claim that the author Barnabas [an historical writer] invented the ‘Two Ways’ [Life and Death]. Others contend that the ‘Two Ways’ was originally an independent catechism [perhaps Jewish in origin].” Richardson then proceeds to give various accounts on how the “Two Ways” got into the Didache. He implies that a person other than the Apostles wrote or compiled the Didache. He writes that:

Some of these difficulties, moreover, can be removed if we do not follow the general assumption that the Didachist wrote this section of the Didache himself. It is much more plausible to suppose that he was a compiler rather than an author: and that just as he made use of the “Two Ways” at the beginning, so in the second part of his work he utilized an early source for his Church Order.<sup>67</sup>

There is abundant proof that the Didache is an undocumented writing attributed to the Twelve Apostles. Other scholars go a little further in their criticism and claim that the Didache was a fictitious work. Richardson argues that:

The first of those fictitious Church Orders which edit ancient material and claim Apostolic authorship . . . Hence a degree of caution is needed in citing the Didache as a witness to first century customs. The picture we gain from this source of the Didache is one of rural communities periodical-

ly enjoying a visitation from the leaders of some Christian center. Indeed, a city like Antioch may well have been responsible for this primitive manual to guide the rural churches.<sup>68</sup>

From the above writings, a doubt—and justifiably so—is cast upon the authenticity of the Didache. If there is a certain amount of skepticism regarding the authorship of the “Two Ways” and other teachings, the exhortation about baptism certainly falls into the same category.

### **BAPTISM: ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION**

*(Found in the Bible and Patristic Writers)*

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is quoted as saying, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). No words can be plainer than these. Christ is equating baptism with salvation. These words of the Savior, while He ministered in the flesh, proclaimed baptism to be essential to salvation.

While these promises are plain and simple, there are still some who assume that because He said, “. . . he that believeth not shall be damned,” instead of “he that is not baptized shall be damned,” baptism is merely a personal choice to do or not to do, and not an essential factor in the plan of salvation. They stake their argument on the word “believe” rather than baptism. To believe in the Word of God and not put it into effect is a contempt of His commandments and a hypocritical addition to one’s profession of faith.

A certain ruler of the Jews, Nicodemus, came to Jesus by night and confessed that Christ was a “teacher come from God.” Jesus, seeing his faith, declared to him one of the most important segments of obedience by which the Kingdom of God may be attained: “Except a man be born again, he can-

not see the kingdom of God.” Taken aback somewhat, Nicodemus asked, “How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” The Lord answered, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5ff). Christ’s answer should dispel any doubt as to whether baptism is essential to salvation.

It is equally interesting to note that the final commandment of Christ to His disciples was concerning the importance of baptism as the gateway to salvation. In His resurrected state, He gave them the final commission: “Go ye, therefore, and teach 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: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:19-20).

Jesus’ declaration was inclusive, and embraced all peoples, regardless of race or color, or sex. It states explicitly—not merely implicitly—that it was indeed essential to salvation. Why would He include it in this commission if it were not?

The Apostle Peter, in his first Epistle General, symbolizes and typifies the saving of Noah and his family to baptism, saying:

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Peter 3:21).

Peter’s expressions “saved by water” (v. 20) and “the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us”

(v. 21) are both symbolical and represent the real means of salvation. The former symbolized faith and obedience by Noah and his family, and the latter symbolizes faith in the atoning blood of Christ and obedience to His commandments.

No person should take abstraction for substance and reality regarding baptism; for the Apostle adds parenthetically: "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." Baptism per se does not save a person without the prerequisites of faith, repentance and an answerable and accountable good conscience. It is important to note that if baptism is the gateway to the kingdom of heaven, it must be an essential component in the great plan of salvation. Scriptures are replete with evidences proclaiming baptism as necessary for salvation.

#### TERTULLIAN

*(Born between 150 A.D. and 160 A.D.  
and died ca. 250 A.D.)*<sup>69</sup>

Tertullian argued that baptism was an essential ingredient for salvation. In his "Homily on Baptism" he says:

Now there is a standing rule that without baptism no man can obtain salvation. It derives in particular from that (well-known) pronouncement of our Lord who says, "Except a man be born of water he cannot have life." It follows that the health which the waters bring is not, like that at Bethesda, of a temporary sort but, as the grace of God has since that time made progress, has become salvation which is eternal.<sup>70</sup>

## **BAPTISM: ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION**

*(Found in the Book of Mormon)*

Prior to Jesus' birth (ca B.C. 550), Jacob, the son of Lehi, predicted that baptism was necessary for salvation. He said:

And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.

And if they will not repent and believe in his name, and be baptized in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned; for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has spoken it (II Nephi 9:23-24).

Alma preached baptism as indispensable to salvation when he told those who were gathered around the waters of Mormon, . . . "that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life" (Mosiah 18:9). Alma, the son of Alma, preaching to those in the land of Zarahemla said:

I speak by way of command unto you that belong to the church; and unto those who do not belong to the church I speak by way of invitation, saying: Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life" (Alma 5:62).

Jesus speaking to the Nephites said, "And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned" (III Nephi 11:33, 34). During the final hours that Jesus was with the Nephites He reiterated His prior statement on baptism: "And whosoever will hearken unto my words and repenteth and is baptized, the same shall be

saved. Search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things" (III Nephi 23:5). And again He exhorts, "And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world" (III Nephi 27:16).

The words of Jesus Christ resound with force, clarity, and sharpness. There is no mincing of words. Baptism is conducive to salvation; its avoidance means damnation. The necessity of baptism for salvation is brought forth with three-dimensional clarity. No one needs to question His words as they are simple and easy to understand. Therefore, regardless what interpretations scholars or theologians may render, Jesus' words, couched in such a manner that even the unlearned would have no trouble understanding them, should suffice.

Moroni, the son of Mormon, in some of his last prophetic admonitions, writes the words of Jesus Christ relative to baptism:

Therefore, repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and believe in my gospel, and be baptized in my name; for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned; and signs shall follow them that believe in my name (Ether 4:18).

## **BAPTISM: AS A WITNESS AND COVENANT BEFORE GOD**

*(Found in the Book of Mormon)*

Alma, in preaching to those around the waters of Mormon had this to say concerning baptism being a witness before God:

Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you (Mosiah 18:10)?

Just a year or two prior to Jesus descending upon this Western hemisphere, a renowned prophet, Mormon, writes that people were brought into the community of believers by baptism as a witness before the Lord:

Now I would have you to remember also, that there were none who were brought unto repentance who were not baptized with water. Therefore, there were ordained of Nephi, men unto this ministry, that all such as should come unto them should be baptized with water, and this as a witness and testimony before God, and unto the people, that they had repented and received a remission of their sins (III Nephi 7:24-25).

It appears conclusively that baptism stands for symbols and types, yet the reality is that it is an outward act of obedience to the commandment of Jesus Christ for the purpose of remission of sins, and for eternal salvation. The types are related to the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is also a means of regeneration of body and spirit. The

“old man” is buried, and a new person arises from the watery grave. The crux of the matter however, is spelled out clearly that baptism of itself will not save a person; one must endure to the end. This means that a person must obey His commandments and live a righteous life as long as he/she is alive.

All the changes and innovations in the meaning and mode of baptism, while they can be viewed in terms of “apostasy” from the simple truth of the Gospel, are shadowed by a more heinous practice, “infant baptism.”

### **INFANT BAPTISM AND/OR BAPTISM OF LITTLE CHILDREN**

No more infamous doctrine could have been advocated than the concept of infant baptism. To even think or consider that infants (or little children) have need of baptism is a perversion of the original intent of baptism. During the first century “there were no indications of the baptism of children.”<sup>71</sup> In the second and third centuries infant baptism was introduced. In consequence of this custom, intelligent theologians among the Early Church Fathers advocated such a practice whole-heartedly.

#### **AUGUSTINE**

Augustine, one of the revered theologians (and saints of the Catholic Church) argued in favor of infant baptism:

At this point men are wont to ask what good the sacrament of Christ’s baptism can do to infants, seeing that many of them die after having been baptized but before they can know anything about it. In this case it is pious and right to believe that

the infant is benefitted by the faith of those who bring him to be consecrated. This is recommended by the salutary authority of the church; so that everyone may realize how beneficial to him is his faith, seeing that one man's faith can be made beneficial for another who has no faith of his own.<sup>72</sup>

It is argued by many Catholics and Mainstream Protestants, in defense of Augustine's teachings, that the key to infant baptism is: As Christ's death stands for ours, so the sponsor or godparent's faith stands for the faith of the infant. However sincere may have been the intent of Augustine, Schaff, in rebuttal says, "This horrible doctrine was indeed inferred by St. Augustine and the Roman Church, from the supposed absolute necessity of baptism. But it is in direct conflict with the spirit of the Gospel and Christ's treatment of children, to whom belongs the kingdom of heaven."<sup>73</sup>

### IRENÆUS

It is reported that even Irenaeus alluded to infant baptism when he said, "He came to redeem all by Himself; all who through Him are regenerated to God; Infants, little children, boys, young men and old."<sup>74</sup>

The above statement cannot be substantiated by any theologian to mean baptism of infants and children. It is the same as saying that Christ came to save the whole world. But, analyzed carefully, it would mean only if men and women would believe and be baptized. The very fact that Christ took little children in His arms and pronounced a blessing upon them does not infer—by any stretch of the imagination—that it implied baptism.

## CYPRIAN

Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, argued vehemently in favor of infant baptism. He said:

No one ought to be hindered from baptism and from the grace of God . . . which since it is to be observed and maintained in respect of infants and newly born persons, who, on this very account deserve more from our help and from the divine mercy that, immediately, on the very beginning of their birth, lamenting and weeping, they do nothing else but entreat.<sup>75</sup>

At a Council held at Carthage in A.D. 253, Cyprian and sixty-six other bishops decided that infants should be baptized. The question revolved around whether infants should be baptized immediately or on the eighth day according to the Jewish custom of circumcision. Joseph Milner, a greatly respected historian, records the following:

Before this holy assembly a question is brought—not whether infants should be baptized at all—none contradicted this, but whether it is right to baptize them immediately, or on the eighth day. Without a single negative they all determined to baptize them immediately.<sup>76</sup>

## GREGORY OF NAZIANZUN

(329 A.D.-390 A.D.)

Gregory was a contemporary of Cyprian, and a leading theologian in the Eastern Church. He advocated infant baptism as a “seal of grace and a consecration to the service of God.”<sup>77</sup>

However, not all of the early Catholic theologians believed in infant baptism. Alouin, a Catholic Abbot, opposed the practice. He made some interesting observations: "No one," he said, "should receive baptism till he has become firmly grounded in his persuasion of the principle doctrine of Christianity." He insisted that "everything depended upon the preaching of faith and the conviction of the hearer; without this, baptism could be of no avail."<sup>78</sup>

### TERTULLIAN

Tertullian opposed infant baptism. He once said:

So let them come when they are growing up, when they are learning, when they are being taught what they are coming to: let them be made Christians when they are competent to know Christ. Why should innocent infants come with haste to the remission of sins? Let them first learn how to ask for salvation, so that you may be seen to have given to one that asketh.<sup>79</sup>

Men like Gregory of Nazianzun argued that infants should be baptized to "sanctify and dedicate them to the Spirit from earliest infancy." Augustine argued that any child born into this world was polluted with sin, and therefore, "baptism was the indispensable means to its abolition." He continues, "Even infants are endowed with the graces of illumination and justification, and are grafted into Christ's body."<sup>80</sup> "The infant of a pious mother who died before he was baptized is lost, while the baptized infant of an enemy of Christ was saved."<sup>81</sup>

Some of these Early Church Fathers were thoroughly convinced that infants are born with the "original sin" and only baptism can obliterate it. One is aghast at the think-

ing of these Early Church Fathers. How could they even think that one baptized child could be saved eternally, while the unbaptized one would be eternally damned? About 1040 A.D. a group called "The Paterines" [so named because they met at Pararia Street in Milan, Italy] dissented from the established [Catholic] church disagreeing with the practice of infant baptism:

. . . because a strange will, a strange faith, and a strange confession, do not seem to belong to a little child, who neither wills nor runs, who knoweth nothing of faith, and is altogether ignorant of his own good and salvation, and in whom there can be no desire of regeneration, and from whom no confession of faith can be expected.<sup>82</sup>

JAMES E. TALMADGE

Talmadge quotes a certain Carcellaeus saying:

The baptism of infants, in the first two centuries after Christ, was altogether unknown. . . . The custom of baptizing infants did not begin before the third age after Christ was born. In the former ages no trace of it appears: and it was introduced without the command of Christ. . . . It is certain that Christ did not ordain infant baptism. From those places where baptism of a whole family is mentioned (as in Acts 16:33; I Cor. 1:16) we can draw no such conclusion, because the inquiry is still to be made, whether there were any children in the families of such an age that were not capable of any reception of Christianity.<sup>83</sup>

Talmadge says that there is no verifying record of infant baptism being practiced in the first two centuries after

Christ. It probably did not become a general practice before the fifth century.<sup>84</sup> Until the Reformation, it was accepted by the dominant church organization—the Roman Catholic Church—in spite of the voices raised against it. In the early part of the sixteenth century, the Anabaptists became distinguished for their opposition to infant baptism.

### WILLIAM REUBLIN

Reublin, a renowned Anabaptist and others, publicly debated Ulrich Zwingli [one of the early Reformers in Zurich, Switzerland], and charged him with insincerity and inconsistency. Zwingli was declared victorious, and immediately commanded that all unbaptized children be baptized within eight days on pain of banishment for rebellious parties.

### BALTHASAR HUBMEIER

Hubmeier had once indicated his doubts concerning infant baptism—as early as 1520—and in early May, 1523, a report is given of a conversation between him and Ulrich Zwingli beside a moat in the city of Zurich. At that time, they discussed infant baptism and agreed that children should not be baptized. Later on, Zwingli denied this and threw his support for infant baptism.<sup>85</sup>

### MARTIN LUTHER

*(1483-1546)*

Luther, one of the strongest Reformers, who defended infant baptism is blamed for inventing a doctrine of infant baptism with justification. He punctuated his argument by saying:

Infants are aided by the faith of others, namely, those who bring them to baptism. For the Word of God is powerful, when it is uttered, to change even a godless heart, which is no less deaf and helpless (spiritually) than any infant. Even so the infant is changed, cleansed and renewed by the inpoured faith, through the prayer of the Church that presents it for baptism and believes, to which prayer all things are possible.<sup>86</sup>

In a sharp answer to his foremost opponents—the Anabaptists—he said, “Who made you so sure that baptized children do not believe in the face of what I here prove that they can believe?” Luther then uses his own singular logic by saying that John the Baptist jumping in his mother’s womb was analogous to a child having faith and belief.<sup>87</sup> It is the opinion of this writer that John leaped in his mother’s womb in recognition of the greater presence, and to show that God can do the impossible: to allow an old sterile woman to conceive against all biological odds, and a virgin [Mary] to conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Luther’s logic escapes reason; it makes no sense. For a man of tremendous knowledge and understanding to believe such an analogy is beyond comprehension. He and others appealed to some Early Church Fathers [like Augustine, et al] for their support of infant baptism, but in spite of their opinions, they could not substantiate the practice by the Word of God.

### MENNO SIMONS

*(Founder of the Mennonite Churches)*

Simons, a leading Anabaptist, gave a scathing answer to Luther, Zwingli, et al:

Lastly they (Luther and others) appeal to Origen and Augustine and say that these assert that they have obtained infant baptism from the Apostles. To this we reply and inquire whether Origen and Augustine have proved it from the Scriptures. But if not, we must hear and believe Christ and His Apostles, and not Augustine and Origen.<sup>88</sup>

### RICHARD FULLER

Fuller, in exegeting the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) argues, "Even if infant baptism could be established by other portions of the Bible, it would not, it could not, be baptism under the Commission."<sup>89</sup>

Many, during the Reformation period, were martyred because of their stand on "believers' baptism" [only believers should be baptized] as well as being against infant baptism. The list of martyrs is a long one, but I will write of a few. Felix Manz, on January 5, 1527, was drowned in Lake Zurich for denouncing infant baptism. Balthasar Hubmeier was burned to death in Vienna, March 10, 1528.<sup>90</sup> Georg Blaurock and Hans Langeegger were burned to death on September 6, 1529 in the Tyrol (Klausen on the Eisack).<sup>91</sup>

These martyrs stand out as heroes in the annals of history; men who would rather die than yield one iota of their faith. One can readily agree with the Apostle Paul who said that the "world was not worthy of them" (Heb. 11:38). Certainly included in Paul's eulogy were not only those martyrs of the past but also of any future era when heroic men and women would rather face execution than concede unfaithfulness to the Lord. The list of martyrs goes on and on. Who knows how many in the future will give their lives for their faith also?

Some who had preached against infant baptism eventually recanted and became champions of this horrible doctrine. Such a one was Melchior Hofman. During the time that he was definitely against infant baptism and upheld just adult baptism, he said:

Baptism is the sign of the covenant of God, instituted solely for the old, mature, and the rational who can receive, accept and understand the teaching and preaching of the Lord. . . . Nowhere in the Old or New Testament is there even one letter regarding children. The Apostles of Christ Jesus gave no command concerning infant baptism . . . there is no evidence that they baptized any child and no such will be found in all eternity.<sup>92</sup>

#### JOHN HORSCH

Horsch quotes Zwingli as saying, "For I know that infant baptism brings to the Christian people great blessings. If the matter is closely looked into, it will be seen that ye contend for vain outward things."<sup>93</sup>

#### DALE MOODY

Moody, writing on the same Zwingli says, "He applied the covenant sign of circumcision to the external sign of baptism, claiming that children born into a Christian household are inside the covenant but outside the body of Christ."<sup>94</sup>

#### G. R. BEASLEY

Beasley, a theologian of no little reputation, in a strong defense against infant baptism, quotes the sayings of three scholars:

**Forsythe:** “The point of origin for infant baptism is obscure . . . it is not in the New Testament.”

**J. R. Nelson:** “The New Testament says nothing explicitly about the baptizing of little children . . . greater weight must be placed for the defence of the practice upon theological rather than Scriptural background.”

**H. T. Andrews:** “There is no shred of real proof that baptism was ever administered to infants in the Apostolic days.”<sup>95</sup>

### PAUL K. JEWETT

Jewett quotes a John Hill as saying:

It is strange, exceeding strange, that among the many thousands baptized at Jerusalem, Samaria, Corinth, and other places, that there should be not one instance of them bringing their children with them to be baptized, and claiming the privilege of baptism for them upon their own faith.<sup>96</sup>

The Great Commission given to the eleven Apostles before Christ’s Ascension into heaven was to make disciples and teach them everything that He had commanded them (Matt. 28:18-20). If candidates for baptism are to be taught all of Christ’s commandments, it makes no sense to baptize infants or little children as they are incapable of understanding His commandments.

### MORMON (TO HIS SON MORONI)

Given, thus far, in this document, has been a collection of Scriptural, historical data, and views by leading scholars and theologians. In reference to the abominable practice of

infant and child baptism, the Bible is silent; there is no evidence whatsoever [except personal interpretations] in favor of this odious practice. However, in the Book of Mormon, the practice of infant or child baptism is severely opposed by the prophet Mormon who writes to his son Moroni:

For, if I have learned the truth, there have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children.

And now, my son, I desire that ye should labor diligently, that this gross error should be removed from among you; for, for this intent I have written this epistle.

For immediately after I had learned these things of you I inquired of the Lord concerning the matter. And the word of the Lord came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost, saying:

Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done away in me.

And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children.

Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children.

And their little children need no repentance, neither baptism. Behold, baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins.

But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism!

Wherefore, if little children could not be saved without baptism, these must have gone to an endless hell.

Behold I say unto you, that he that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity; wherefore, should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell.

For awful is the wickedness to suppose that God saveth one child because of baptism, and the other must perish because he hath no baptism.

. . . Little children cannot repent; wherefore, it is awful wickedness to deny the pure mercies of God unto them, for they are all alive in him because of his mercy.

And he that saith that little children need baptism denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption.

Wo unto such, for they are in danger of death, hell, and an endless torment. I speak it boldly; God hath commanded me. Listen unto them and give heed, or they stand against you at the judgment-seat of Christ.

For behold that all little children are alive in Christ. . . (Moroni 8:5-22).

The language which Mormon uses is strong and bold. What makes it more important is the fact that this was not Mormon's personal view, but a revelation given to him from the Almighty! He inquired of God first; he did not give his opinion when he heard that some were baptizing little children. But after diligent seeking, the Lord spoke to him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Of all the earlier-mentioned Church Fathers, historians, theologians, and scholars, none have been found by this writer who say that their opinions, either in favor of infant baptism or against this practice, came through direct revelation from God. But Mormon makes this declaration and therefore, it seems reasonable that Mormon's words should suffice. There is nothing more concrete than the revelation of God.

### **BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD**

*(or Vicarious Baptism)*

One of the greatest controversies arising in Christendom was centered around the subject of "baptism for the dead." This debate was concerning some words which Paul the Apostle wrote to the Corinthian Church: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" (I Corinthians 15:29).

If the Apostle would have had the slightest inkling that his words would have engendered so great a controversy, he would have certainly been explicit in his assertion. The most common interpretation of the verse is that of vicarious baptism [one person baptized for another]. It is said by some Early Church Fathers, scholars, and theologians [up to the 19th and 20th centuries], that vicarious baptism was practiced by Corinthian Christians.

MARCION

*(Initiates Vicarious Baptism)*

It appears that Marcion [a 2nd century heretic] was the first to teach and practice vicarious baptism.<sup>97</sup> Others followed the practice until it became widespread.

THIRD COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE

In the year 397 A.D., canon six of the Third Council of Carthage condemned the practice of vicarious baptism. It sent out a declaration saying, "Take care lest the ignorance of the brethren lead them to believe that the dead can be baptized."<sup>98</sup>

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER DAY SAINTS (UTAH)

In the 19th century, the practice of vicarious baptism was revived by the LDS church (ca 1840-41).<sup>99</sup> It claimed that baptism for the dead was initiated because of the revelation of God given to it. The church was commanded to keep diligent records of all who would be baptized [dead or alive] as these records [or books] would be the means whereby the dead would be judged. Vicarious baptism was defended on the grounds that the priesthood authority which the church had received was similar to that which had been given to the first Apostles (Peter, Andrew, et al) and therefore justified this practice. It was said:

Now, the nature of this ordinance consists in the power of the priesthood, by the revelation of Jesus Christ, wherein it is granted that whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Or, in other words, taking a different view of the translation, whatsoever you record on earth shall be recorded in heaven, and whatsoever you do not record on earth shall not be recorded in heaven; for out of the books shall your dead be judged, according to their own works, whether they themselves have attended to the ordinance in their own *propria persona* [personally] or by the means of their own agents [proxies].<sup>100</sup>

### HUGH NIBLEY

Nibley, one of the Mormon's foremost writers, has the following to say in defense of baptism for the dead:

It is an unthinkable and immoral doctrine to admit that all those men who died or will die without Baptism are damned forever.

For Christ, according to II Peter 4 and the Apostles, according to the Shepherd of Hermas, Book II, Simil. IX, no. 16, came to the dead to preach the Gospel to them; so "the dead not only have the Gospel preached to them, but are free to accept or reject it, exactly like the living.

But since the souls of the dead, on account of their being souls, cannot be baptized or washed with water, it is necessary that somebody allow himself to be baptized as a proxy of the dead.<sup>101</sup>

### THE REORGANIZED CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS (INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI)

The RLDS Church records a revelation concerning baptism for the dead. However, it does not yet practice vicarious baptism as "a house must be built first wherein this or-

dinance of baptizing for the dead belongeth." It is also recorded that "in Zion, and in her stakes, and in Jerusalem, those places which I have appointed for refuge, shall be the places for your baptisms for the dead."<sup>102</sup>

A sharp criticism relating to baptism for the dead as a "false doctrine" was launched at the RLDS Church by a Mrs. Pauline Hancock who wrote, "It (the doctrine of baptism for the dead) was created for you by the leaders of the church which preceded you." Summarily, her criticism was answered in a letter written to her by Israel A. Smith, President of the RLDS Church in which he declares:

I agree with you, Baptism for the dead is a false doctrine, and if it was created by sections 109 and 110 or even 107, then and to that extent they were false revelations. But I do not admit that the doctrine of baptism for the dead was ever created so far as the law of this church is concerned.

We are told that the Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the gospel . . . and until I can be shown that baptism for the dead is even mentioned in the Book of Mormon, I will deny that such a heresy is or ever was a part of the beliefs of our church.<sup>103</sup>

Whether the RLDS Church will ever practice baptism for the dead remains to be seen in its future.

### BERNARD FOSCHINI

Foschini, a Catholic priest, in his criticism of the Mormon doctrine of vicarious baptism, says:

Joseph Smith's interpretation of "to bind" as meaning "to write a record" is entirely arbitrary.

And to say that the earthly and material book of those records corresponds to the allegorical, heavenly book of life, is the fruit of “revelations” or of dreams, not of exegesis [*interpretation of Scripture*].

If we, independently from the dead, can decide or change their eternal destinies, then the fact that they are damned or saved can no longer be attributed to their faults or their merits, but to ours. It would be our responsibility!<sup>104</sup>

Foschini’s [and others] criticisms of those who believed in vicarious baptism [including the Salt Lake Mormons] would take too much space. However, there are some conclusions that need to be written.

Firstly, Paul the Apostle, in I Corinthians 15:29, is not speaking of vicarious baptism, but—in the opinion of this writer—is castigating the Corinthians because of the contention among them concerning the resurrection of Christ. Some believed in His resurrection while some did not. The entire 15th chapter is devoted to the resurrection of the Lord. Therefore, Paul sums it up by asking a question, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not up at all?”

Secondly, the theme of Christ’s resurrection in the 15th chapter, paraphrased would read, “Else what shall they do who are baptized unto a Christ who will not rise or has not risen from the dead?” In v. 30, the Apostle asks, “And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?” He is saying, “Why are we suffering persecution daily and why do we always put our lives in danger for His sake [Christ] if He isn’t risen?”

It seems logical that to be “baptized for the dead” refers to those who are baptized because of the dead [and risen] Christ; or of the Christ whom death could not detain.

Vicarious baptism raises a lot of questions that need clarification.

1. The requirements before baptism are belief and repentance. How can a dead person believe or repent? There are only two times when the dead would hear the Gospel; once, when Jesus went down to preach to the spirits in prison (I Peter 3:19, 20; cf John 5:25), and in the end-time (John 5:28-29). Christ did not preach to dead bodies, but to the spirits of the dead bodies.

2. Jesus told Nicodemus that if a person wanted to “see and/or enter the kingdom of God” a personal “born again” experience had to take place. Now, if no one can be “born again” for another, living or dead, how can one be baptized for a dead person?

3. Paul does not speak of “baptism for the dead” otherwise one could surmise an inference of “baptism of the dead.” But Paul speaks rather of “those who are baptized (baptizomenoi) for the dead.” This statement emphasizes not the rite but those who practice it.<sup>105</sup> Let the reader understand however, that Paul the Apostle was not inferring that “baptism for the dead” was practiced in his day, but rather castigating the Corinthians for misunderstanding the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the “baptism like unto the Christ who died and resurrected.” For if Jesus had not risen, why then be baptized for a Christ who died but did not resurrect?

Some heretics, the Cerinthians, Montanists, Marcionites, and others, became so enamored of vicarious baptism that they went as far as baptizing corpses.<sup>106</sup> John Chrysostom tells of a strange usage among the Marcionites that went beyond the ridiculous. He said that when a catechumen died among them, a living person would hide under the bed of the deceased. Then they [the Marcionites] would approach

the dead person lying on the bed and ask him if he would receive baptism. Since he could not answer, the one who was hidden underneath spoke for him, saying that he does wish to be baptized. And so they baptized the living one for the sake of the one who died, just as if they were acting on the stage.<sup>107</sup> When one reads accounts like this, it begs the question, "Just how far will mankind wrest the Scriptures, and distort its meaning merely to either accommodate itself to the prevailing time or to the interpretation of some influential figures?"

### **BAPTISM AS PRACTICED BY THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST (BICKERTONITES)**

The mode of baptism as well as its meaning and purpose has undergone many changes from the Apostolic dispensation. Changes in doctrines brought about the Apostasy (cf. Rev. 12; II Thess. 2:1-4, et al). In time, (1820-1830 A.D.) the Lord restored the Gospel with the same doctrines as initiated by Jesus Christ. Among these doctrines was "Baptism." Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery baptized each other by immersion. In process of time however, baptism was practiced in a font, not in open, living waters.

From the time that William Bickerton disassociated himself from the Latter Day Saints Church of Salt Lake City, Utah, and, along with others, organized The Church of Jesus Christ at Greenock, Pennsylvania in 1862 [by revelation from God], the doctrine of baptism by immersion has been strictly maintained. This Church believes that with the restoration of the Gospel [and the Church] all of the doctrines taught by Jesus Christ must be adhered to without any infractions whatsoever. The Church takes the example of baptism by immersion from the Scriptures, especially the passage found in III Nephi ch. 11 wherein are found the words of Jesus Christ concerning the mode of baptism.

Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them—Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them.

And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying:

Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water.

And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name; for behold, verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.

And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been (III Nephi 11:23-28).

Not only does The Church of Jesus Christ practice baptism by immersion, but is extremely careful that only adults [those of an accountable age] are baptized.

## CONCLUSION

The history of mankind has been cyclic; mostly one of "rise and fall." If one would make a graph of the religious world from the beginning to the present day, one would see a short increase, followed by a levelling off, then a gradual decline until God destroyed the earth by water. Next, there is another short increase, ensued by a levelling off, and then a decline [from Abraham to Moses to the dispersion of the House of Israel, in that order]. Next, there is a religious increase (during the Apostolic era), followed by a short levelling off, and then a decline [the apostasy].

For a few short years, the Church prospered; then a decline [an apostasy] occurred, brought about by persecution and internal changes. The changes in doctrines and principles that came into the Church did not make for a more righteous organization. Not only did baptism undergo several alterations but the whole hierarchy of governmental church structure underwent changes. Baptismal changes did not bring unity in the Church but created divisions and strifes.

Paul, the Apostle, saw these changes coming into the Church and warned the saints that the "mystery of iniquity was already at work" (II Thess. 2:7). He saw that these changes would bring disaster upon the church, not blessings. Forcing the populace to accept altered doctrines is never conducive to happiness or freedom, but tends to create spiritual bondage. The Crusades are a good example. The then-established church went out to make disciples with the sword and spear, not with the Word of God. The Spanish Inquisition is another example of infamy in the name of religion and a blot of the history of the Church. The Reformation was an attempt to declare freedom from oppression by the Catholic Church. The Radical Reformers (Anabaptists, et al) attempted to escape from the yoke of spiritual

bondage and opposed both the Catholic Church as well as the leading Protestant Reformers.

That different opinions as to the mode of baptism should exist at all, whether by immersion, sprinkling and/or pouring, is certainly difficult to understand, because the word baptism (or baptize) in the original Greek language means to dip or immerse. This is not only historically proven, but scripturally also if one examines the Word of God thoroughly.

If baptism can be likened to persons being buried in the likeness of His death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection, how can sprinkling or pouring accurately justify the Apostle Paul's analogy of "death, burial, and resurrection?" When a person dies, he is buried underground {unless he is cremated or interred in a vault}. A shovel full of dirt poured or sprinkled upon him does not constitute burial. Nor does a handful of water sprinkled or poured upon one's head bury one in a liquid grave. One must remember that sprinkling and pouring, in lieu of immersion, were introduced in the church many years after the noble band of Apostles had gone to their reward.

Among the doctrines that were changed since the days of the Apostles of Christ, none has been more hotly disputed than baptism. The debates centered around the meaning, mode, and subjects. Were infants and children to be included with adults as proper candidates for baptism? Diligent research reveals that no other doctrine, with its various interpretations, brought about so much confusion and controversy. In its wake there followed persecution and martyrdom for those hardy souls who would not yield their faith despite the threats of imprisonment and/or death.

Changes in the mode of baptism were merely the personal interpretation of individuals as attested by even those

who did not practice immersion any more. Any change in the mode of administering the ordinances is not progression. It is retrogression. It is apostasy!

The sixteenth century produced some very sincere advocates of religious reform. Credit must be given to men like Luther, Zwingli, Hess, Knox, Calvin, Grebel, Menno Simons and a host of others—whether one agrees with them or not—for the courage they displayed in the face of strong opposition by the predominant Catholic Church; and the tenacity of the Reformers to even oppose each others' views.

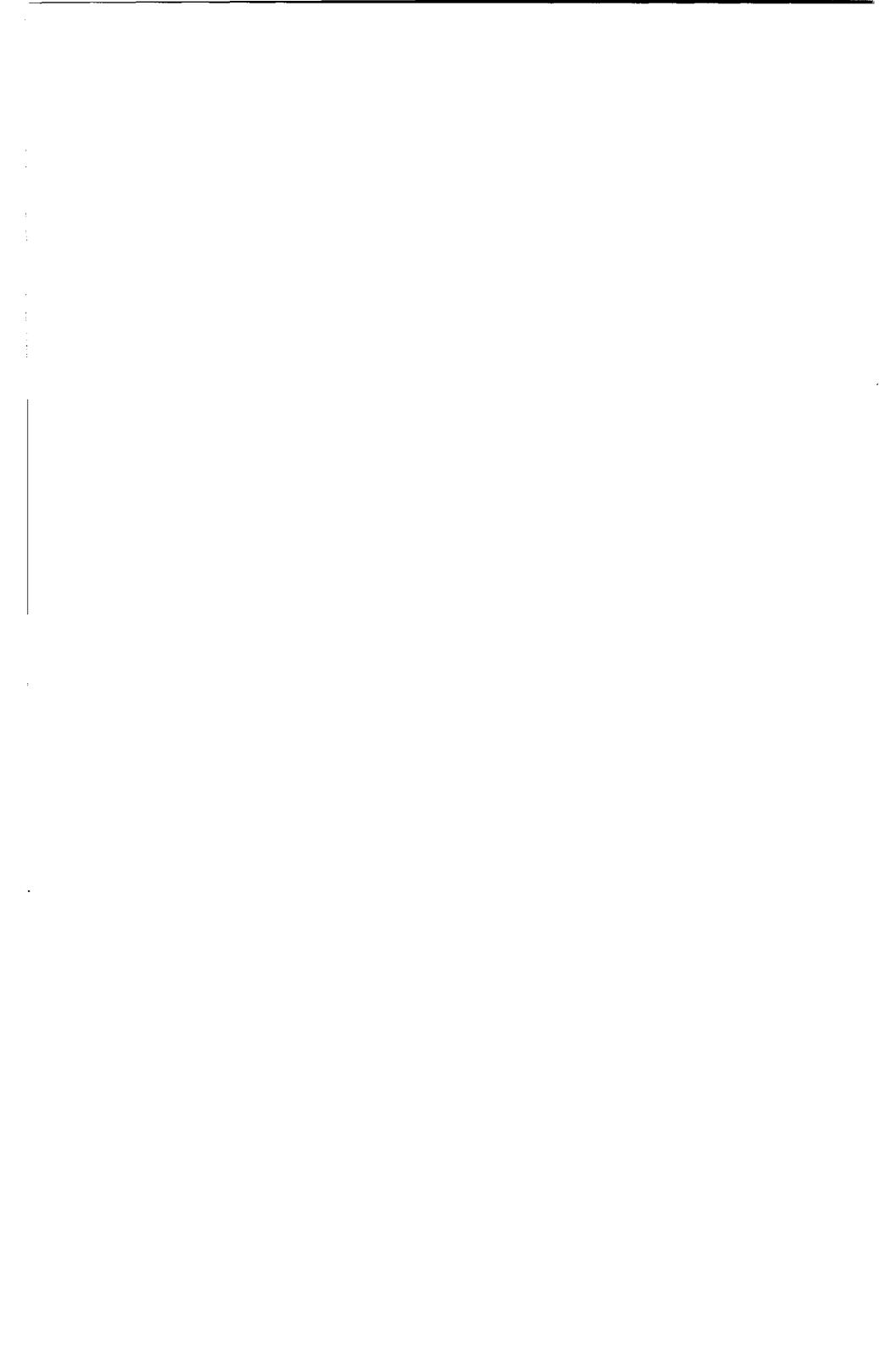
Will all of the controversies ever end? A ray of hope, breaking through the clouds of dissensions and controversies, comes through the Word of God. According to Jesus, the kingdom of God will be established on the face of the earth: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). The prophet Isaiah predicted that the "mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills . . . neither shall they learn war any more" (Is. 2:1-5). He also prophesied that "None shall hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain" (Is. 11:9).

Some may question what all this has to do with baptism. Prophecies indicate that one day [God alone knows when], there will be a unity on earth unequalled in the annals of history. For the Scriptures declare unequivocally, that the revealed Word of the Lord shall go forth from Jerusalem and the righteous law from Zion (Isaiah 2:3). This is the regenerated Church [or the Kingdom of God] in which there will be no schisms, and no place for heresies, as Christ will be in the midst of His people, keeping them, as it were, in the palm of His hand (I Nephi 22:25). There will be no more violent controversies on baptism or any other doctrine, for the Spirit of the Lord will give perfect understanding of their meaning and function. This is not a dream of utopian glory,

## CONCLUSION

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but the fulfillment of Scripture in which are recorded the proclamations of the holy Prophets concerning the future Kingdom of the Lord. Amen.



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