

SOMETIME.

Sometime, when all life's lessons have been learned, And sun and stars forevermore have set, The things which our weak judgments here have spurned, The things o'er which we grieved with lanes wet, Will flash before us, out of life's dark night, As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue, And we shall see how all God's plans were right, And how what seemed reproof was love most true. And we shall see how, while we frown and sigh, God's plans go on as best for you and me, How, when we called, he heeded not our cry, Because his wisdom to the end could see, And even as prudent parents disallow too much of sweet to craving babyhood, So God, perhaps, is keeping from us now Life's sweetest things, because it seemeth good. And if, sometimes, commingled with life's wine, We find the wormwood, and rebel and shrink, Be sure a wiser hand than yours or mine Pours out this portion for our lips to drink, And if some friend we love laying low, Where human kisses cannot reach his face, Oh! do not blame the loving Father so, But wear your sorrow with obedient grace! And you shall shortly know that lengthened breath Is not the sweetest gift God sends his friend, And that, sometimes, the sable pall of death Conveys the fairest boon his love can send, If we could push ajar the gates of life, And stand within, and all God's workings see, We could interpret all this doubt and strife, And for each mystery could find a key, But not today. Then be content, poor heart! God's plans, like lilies pure and white, unfold, We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart; Time will reveal the abysms of gold And if, through patient toil, we reach the land Where tired feet, with sandals loose, may rest, When we shall clearly know and understand, I think that we will say, "God knew the best."

-May Riley Smith.

THE FUNCTION OF BAPTISM.

REV. C. W. COREY.

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The form of baptism has been the battle ground of the theological world for more than a thousand years. Fierce and even bitter has been the conflict. But perhaps the function of that divine appointed ordinance has formed no minor element of the agitation. An institution so sternly practised by the fore-runner John, so positively sanctioned and established by Christ, and so rigidly adhered to by the apostles, can be treated as no unimportant or insignificant institution of the Christian church. It is not our intention to discuss in this paper the form of baptism. The writer takes his position as though all debate on that point were at an end. While some, and perhaps all, of the conclusions reached may emphatically pronounce to be in the form, yet it shall be so only because of the unavailing conclusions of Scriptural truth. Just here, it may be asked, does form argue to function or function to form. This seeming quandary exists alone in view of the perils of interpretation and the inexplicable perversion and the violent rending of the Word of God, by a party sanguine to dodge a simple Scriptural truth, which, for its very simplicity and originality, is unpleasant to the flesh. It is the writer's intention to find the simple and obvious function attributed to baptism either expressed or implied by Scripture.

I. ITS ASSUMED FUNCTION.

There are those who, clinging to some erroneous baptismal practices and having been driven from their once cherished ground of defence, have at last fled for shelter to what is the last shadow of an analogy. These baptizers of infants declare that baptism is a substitute for circumcision. But the idea that baptism is the rite of circumcision of the old covenant, continued in the new, in a changed form, is fallacious. God established the old covenant with Abraham and his natural seed (Gen. 17: 10-14); but the new covenant with Christ and a spiritual seed (Jno. 3: 5-7; Gal. 3: 28-29). It is true also that the subjects of each rite being carefully described, are not the same. (Gen. 17: 10 sq.; Mark 16: 16; Acts 8: 12). The male children of Jews and the male servants of Jews, with their male children, were to be circumcised; while believers in Christ, both male and female, Jew and Gentile, were to be baptized.

From such passages as Acts 16: 3 and Acts 11: 3 sq.; Gal. 2: 12; Acts 21: 20 sq., we find that circumcision was practiced by the Jewish Christians along with baptism for a considerable period. Paul moreover, as observed by Dr. Hovey, when opposing the circumcision of Gentile converts, never hints that baptism takes its place."

We cannot see how Christ could in any sense entail a peculiarly national rite upon a spiritual church, and much less to make baptism the medium. Had it been His intention to transfer the rite to the Christian church; why should he not have transferred it intact? Has the exchange (if it be an exchange) of

feared any advance upon the original rite? The conclusion we reach is that it in no sense belongs to the function of baptism to preserve the rite of circumcision.

In the light of Roman Catholic teaching, great stress is laid upon the intrinsic function of baptism. With them it is not a means to an end, but it is an end in itself. The council of Trent declared that in baptism not only remission of original sin was given, but also that which properly has the nature of sin is cut off." It makes one "a Christian, a child of God, and an heir of heaven."

Under the stress of a little logic these theories must be rejected as monstrous fallacies. The ideal never becomes caricatured. It is the imperfect and the grotesque. The religions may be, and even the so-called sacred, but the divine and perfect are not. So here, the grotesqueness of baptism as seen in the history of the church is only possible because men have misconstrued and perverted the real and scriptural conception of the ordinance. The place which Christ would have baptism occupy is such that the ordinance used never that most natural and simple and consistent in all its details.

Concluding that baptism possesses no mechanical function, what then is its place and purpose according to the scriptural declaration alone. Dr. J. B. Thomas calls baptism by the significant title, "The Mould of Doctrine." (See page 28, "Mould of Doctrine.") Dr. Pepper in the "Baptist Quarterly," (vol. 6, 1877, p. 174) speaks of baptism as a "mould" and "exhibitions of truth, and as such they are memorials, declarations, symbols and prophecies. What he here says of baptism as an element of the complete regeneration, with Christ, and "are, to a certain extent, self-interpreting, and there can be no reasonable doubt that in most instances their true meaning lies on the face of them—that they are chosen as being a sort of universal language, readily understood by men of every age and nation."

To show that the Scriptures attest to such conceptions will be our aim. (1) Baptism symbolizes regeneration. No regeneration is set forth as being on the one hand a dying to sin and on the other a rising to holiness. In Eph. 2: 5, 6 we read thus: "Even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up with Him and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The same idea of being dead in sin and being made alive in Christ is set forth in Gal. 2: 19, 20. This is no unusual idea of regeneration.

Look now at Rom. 6: 4. "We were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead, we also might walk in newness of life." Again, Col. 2: 12, "Having been buried with Him in baptism, wherein we were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead." The passage Lightfoot says: "Baptism is the grave of the old man and the birth of the new. As he sinks beneath the baptismal waters, the believer buries there all his corrupt affections and passions, as he emerges thence he rises regenerate, quickened to new hopes and a new life. . . . Thus baptism is an image of his participation both in the death and in the resurrection of Christ." (See Apost. Const. 3: 7.)

The British Conference of Wesleyan Methodists decided within the past ten years "that the Lord has not in the course of His ministry connected regeneration with baptism in any way."

We can conceive how any pedo-baptizer might see in this declaration a weak point. If baptism is only sprinkling, then there is no significance in this apostolic language—it is idle talk. But it may be asked: "If it be true that baptism symbolizes the passing of the soul from death to life, why would it not be in order and even significant for the ordinance to be often repeated." To this we reply that its very singleness is full of meaning. Christ once only rose from the dead, and men once only regenerate, so baptism is once only to be administered.

(2) It commemorates the accomplished death and resurrection of Christ. Paul says in Rom. 6: 3: "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death?" Also in Col. 2: 12, "Having been buried with Him in baptism, wherein we were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

Dr. Dollinger, as quoted by Dr. Hovey, says: "St. Paul made this immersion a symbol of burial with Christ, and the emerging a sign of resurrection with Him to a new life. . . . Messenger also remarks: "This baptism, which is an emblem of submergence with the death of Christ, and that of emergence with the resurrection of Christ—a symbolism of the baptismal rite which has lost its significance with the disappearance of the rite as then observed." Dr. Schaaf says: "All commentators of note, except Stewart and Hodge, expressly admit or take it for granted that in this verse . . . the ancient prevailing mode of baptism by immersion is implied as giving force to the idea of going down of the old and raising up of the new man." (Lange's Comm. on Romans. Note p. 202.)

Commenting these central facts of the Christian religion, baptism was administered by Paul. His Sonship was declared by His resurrection. (1) Of the fact that Christ had risen. (2) Of the pre-eminence of the fact and its consequent primary place in the Christian doctrine. (3) Of the corporality of the fact, as against all mystifying tendencies.

The same author calls attention to the parallelism between baptism and resurrection, as seen in the New Testament. Christ's Messiahship was manifested by His baptism. His Sonship was declared by His resurrection. The apostles were ordained to be witnesses of His resurrection "beginning with the baptism of John." If, as Peter says, the "figure" of baptism saves, it is by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The continual representation of this fact of Christian history in a visible act was a forcible reminder to the unbelieving world that the apostles rested their teaching on a fact. That Christ had died would require no effort to be

Heve or any reminder, but that He had risen and so established the central fact of Christianity needed to be reiterated by every new-born soul.

"The idea of immortality was common to all men, but that of bodily resurrection was looked as absurd by the Athenians, or refined into a metaphor as in its literal form too gross by the Greeks. . . . But the apostle declares that Christ is no mystic notion, and Christianity is a historic religion, and by an outward and tangible sign—baptism—they set forth the fact of resurrection as offsetting the prevailing mystic notions."

It may be said that a large number of pedo-baptist scholars agree with this most obvious interpretation of the apostle's language.

(3) It represents regeneration as a purging process.

"And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name?"—Acts 22: 16. Comment upon this passage to show that it sustains the position taken is nearly unnecessary. It is only to be claimed that there is more than the symbolic in the washing here spoken of. "His blood cleanseth from all unrighteousness" is the Scriptural declaration as to the source of cleansing for the sinner. Without the "blood" of blood there is no remission of sins; likewise directs to the source of cleansing. We can therefore readily understand Peter's words, "Even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the word of God which cleanseth the conscience." (1 Peter 3: 21.) We must therefore conclude that Amman makes no assertion of baptismal purification in his instruction to Paul. "The idea of purification is never in the New Testament explicitly associated with baptism and the term 'wash' but once." (J. B. Thomas, "Mould of Doctrine," page 85.) The word "wash" referred to, being that above discussed, makes further examination of this point unnecessary.

That the New Testament writers use the figure of washing or bathing to set forth the washing of the soul in Christ is quite evident. "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Tit. 3: 5.) Also, "That He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word." (Eph. 5: 26.) Again, "Which also saves us from all unrighteousness, when we have put away from us the filth of the flesh, but the putting away of a good conscience toward God."

Washing or bathing in water, says Dr. Hovey, is a natural symbol of purification, and if Baptists have insisted on this as often as on other ideas symbolized by immersion in water, it is perhaps due in part to a reaction of feeling against the exclusive reference made to it by pedo-baptists; yet they have by no means failed to recognize this part of the meaning conveyed by the rite. Says Dr. Chase, "In baptism there is retained in all its significance the idea of cleansing or purifying, for the water symbolizes a purifying element. Thus there is a figurative washing away of sins—a putting off of the body of sinful propensities, and, as it were, a depositing of it in the grave—from which in this emblem, we come forth alive, as from the dead, to walk in newness of life, and at length to enter on the life everlasting."

(4) There is in baptism a setting forth of the Trinity. C. H. Spurgeon, in reviewing an ancient pamphlet on baptism, calls attention to this function as of Christ, God and the Holy Spirit, and that the Son was the subject, and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove. This fact gives special significance to the words of the apostle Peter, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." To say that this was intentionally a function of baptism as seen by Christ may be too strong a statement; yet the fact remains that both with the administration of the personal avowal of faith in the doctrine of deity is set forth with every performance of the ordinance.

(5) An act of confession on the part of the candidate is seen in baptism. It gives expression to the experience within. Peter describes baptism as "the answer of a good conscience." Dr. Hovey interprets "answer" as "request"—"the request of a good conscience." So that it is more than a mere setting forth in a mechanical way the historical facts of Christianity—it is the personal avowal of faith in Christ, setting forth the fact that the subject has appropriated to himself the divine salvation, and publicly announces the same to the world.

(6) Baptism has a function pertaining to church discipline. "Among both Protestants and papists there is a general agreement that one of the prime signs of a true church is the proper administration of these two ordinances." (Dr. Pepper, in "Quarterly Review" for 1872, page 174.) The two ordinances here referred to are baptism and the Lord's Supper. The same author further states: "It is hardly too much to say that they are the organization of the church—that all else is subsidiary or incidental. We do not, indeed, forget the place which the gospel as the Word of God is to have; but the gospel spoken is the interpretation of the gospel embodied in ordinances. . . . and since the church is a body visible, that which visibly embodies its life in its origin and perpetuation, in its relations God-ward, world-ward and self-ward, may most fitly be deemed the very constitution of the church." We may readily give assent to this position. Its truth is attested by the appalling tendency of mere Christian sentiment of the present day, to abandon the ordinances as fictitious and non-essential attachments, and so to abandon the church.

According to the Scriptural representation the church is "the body of Christ." What then is the relation of baptism to this body? "Is it not of its very origination," asks Dr. Pepper. "This question is settled by Paul when he writes to the Corinthians: 'For in one spirit we all were baptized into one body.'—1 Cor. 12: 13. It makes not the least difference whether baptism here is the inward, spiritual invisible baptism, or the outward ritual visible baptism." This position therefore set-

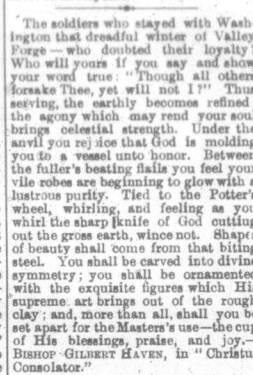
les the question as to whether we are made members of the church by vote or by baptism. "The vote, or rather the consent, of the church is contained in the baptism. Baptism makes the membership. The old-fashioned expression 'Baptism the door into the church,' used in its right connection is thoroughly consistent, therefore, and sets forth another function of the ordinance.

Investigation of this subject leads one to liken baptism in the fulness of its preserving and conserving function to the rain drop. As the little drop of water has carefully stored up in miniature all the colors of the rainbow, which may be brought to view under microscopic scrutiny, so has baptism been made the minute storeroom of Gospel truth, and failure to see it, we believe, arises from lack of investigation, to which indifference and prejudice largely contribute. We are led by this inquiry firmly to believe that to preserve the ordinance is to preserve the visible church; to surrender it is to obliterate the church. To mangle it is finally to consign to forgetfulness the crucial facts of Christianity; to flatter humanity with its own inherent goodness and adequateness, and to reduce the ruggedness and radicalness of Gospel truth to the superficiality of a mere moral system.

The soldiers who stayed with Washington that dreadful winter of Valley Forge—who doubted their loyalty? Who will you be if you say and show your word true? 'Though all others forsake Thee, yet will not I?' Thus saying, the earthly becomes refined; the agony which may rend your soul brings celestial strength. Under the wheel, whirling, and feeling as you whirl the sharp knife of God cutting you to the cross earth, wine not. Shapes of beauty shall come from that biting steel. You shall be carved into divine symmetry; you shall be ornamented with the exquisite figures which His supreme art brings out of the rough clay; and, more than all, shall you be set apart for the Master's use—the cup of His blessings, praise, and joy.—BISHOP GILBERT HAVEN, in "Christ's Consolator."

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