

BAPTISM AND REMISSION.

BY

J. W. WILLMARTH.

REPRINT FROM THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY,
JULY 1877.

INTRODUCTION BY

J. W. SHEPHERD.

Harding Graduate School
of Religion Library

NASHVILLE, TENN.
McQUIDDY PRINTING COMPANY.
1908.

INTRODUCTION.

BY J. W. SHEPHERD.

James W. Willmarth, the author of the following pages, was born of American parents in Paris, France, on December 23, 1835. His early studies were greatly impeded by an affliction of the eyes, but his great thirst for knowledge could not be held in check by any difficulty not insurmountable. He gave time and toil to the ancient languages, and his heart to the acquisition of biblical knowledge, and at an early period in life was regarded as a scholarly preacher.

When preparing my "Handbook on Baptism," I wrote a letter to George D. Boardman, Philadelphia, Pa., asking: "Can you give me any information concerning J. W. Willmarth, who once lived in Pemberton, N. J.?" This letter was referred to Mr. Willmarth, who wrote me the following letter:

"ROXBOROUGH, PHILADELPHIA, February 16, 1893.

"DEAR SIR: Yours to Dr. Boardman was sent by him to Mr. Henry E. Lincoln, and by him referred to me. I have been the pastor of the following Baptist churches: Metamora, Woodford County, Ill.; Amenia, N. Y.; Wakefield, Mass.; Pemberton, N. J., eight and one-half years; Roxborough, Philadelphia, since April 1, 1878 (nearly fifteen years), where I still am. I was editor of the *Advanced Quarterly* and other publications on the International Sunday School Lessons of the American Baptist Publication Society in 1882-1883. . . . Have been moderator of the West New Jersey and of the Philadelphia Associations, of the Philadelphia and Trenton Conferences of Baptist Ministers, etc. I am a member of the Board of American Baptist Publication Society, chairman of its Committee of Publication, trustee of Crozier Theological Seminary, on the City Mission Board, and a member of the Nugent Home. In 1899 received the degree of D.D. from Carson College (Tennessee) and LL.D. from Southwestern Baptist University (Tennessee)."

These positions of distinction and honor show that he was held in high esteem by the Baptists, not only in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, but also in Tennessee.

As to Mr. Willmarth's standing among the Baptists, William Cathcart, in his voluminous Baptist Encyclopedia, published in Philadelphia in 1881, says:

"He is a writer of great power, and he uses a prolific pen. His articles on 'The Future Life' and 'Baptism and Remission,' in the *Baptist Quarterly*, showed much originality, and produced a profound impression upon cultured men of God.

"No one stands higher in the estimation of his friends, and all that know him may be reckoned among that number. His position on any subject is very decided; he knows nothing of half-heartedness; his thoughts are as transparent as a sunbeam. He shuns no responsibility in defending any truth; he avoids no sacrifice in assisting a friend. He is an able preacher, with a noble intellect, ardent piety, and a bright earthly future, if his slender frame will permit him to stay on earth a few years." (Page 1256.)

Since he has received such encomiums from his learned brethren who know him best, and is now old and decrepit and stands on the brink of the eternal world, it is exceedingly unkind—yea, cruel—for those moved by a partisan spirit to try to break the force of his logical and masterly presentation of the scriptural teaching on the relation of baptism to the remission of sins by trying to make it appear that he has never been esteemed by his own brethren.

The article as here given was set directly from the *Baptist Quarterly* of July, 1877, and is *verbatim* in every respect. Even the pages are numbered the same as they are in the quarterly. I own the original, which can be examined by any one who calls in question the accuracy of this reprint.

NASHVILLE, TENN., March 9, 1908.

BAPTISM AND REMISSION.

BY Baptism is meant the immersion in water of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. By Remission is meant the forgiveness of sins, necessarily connected with the favor of God and the gift of Eternal Life.

There are several passages in the New Testament which assume or teach a connection or relation between Baptism and Remission. Perhaps the most important and striking example is to be found in Acts ii, 38: *Repent and be each one of you baptized upon [not "in," but ἐν, "upon"]¹ the name of Jesus Christ for [eis] remission of sins.* The relation, whatever it is, is here expressed by the preposition *eis*. A careful examination of the meaning of *eis* is therefore the first step to be taken.

Meaning of *Eis*.

Eis belongs to a group of three related Greek prepositions, a comparative view of which will be advantageous.

E N signifies *in the space within*. General English equivalent, *In*.

E K or *E Z* signifies *out of the space within*. General English equivalent, *From*.

¹ See Winer N. T. Gr., pp. 407-409.
(296)

E I signifies *into the space within*. General English equivalent, *Into*.¹

The conception common to them all is that of a space (literal or metaphorical) defined by limits. The state of being within it is expressed by *εν*. Motion from the within into the without by *εκ*; motion from the without into the within by *εις*. "The prepositions," remarks Crosby, "have primary reference to relations of *place*, and are used to express other relations by reason of some *analogy*, real or fancied—many similar extensions of use appearing in our own and other languages."² Every Greek preposition, then, has a definite signification, "primarily referring to relations of place," and thence, "by analogy," applied to all sorts of other relations; but always in a manner not only analogous to, but derived from, its ground-meaning as to relations of place, and therefore always in harmony with it. The old idea that Greek prepositions are used in the New Testament in an indiscriminate manner, meaning "anything you please," has long since been exploded.³

It does not, indeed, follow that we can always translate a Greek preposition by a uniform English equivalent. The reason is, not that the preposition has changed its radical signification, but that the thoughts and conceptions of men, in different ages and countries, run in different channels, are cast in different molds. Consequently arise peculiar forms of speech and use of words, which we call *idioms*. Sometimes patient thought is required to ascertain what exact form of conception is expressed by the use of a Greek preposition; but when ascertained, we find that the preposition is used in harmony, strictly so, with its distinctive meaning. We may be obliged to translate it by an English preposition of different meaning, or to alter essentially the form of expression, in order to bring out the meaning of the whole sentence in our idiom. But it remains true that the Greek preposition retains its radical signification; and that the Greek idiom, in which it is used in harmony with that signification, is capable of being reproduced in English by a paraphrase. These observations are made to settle, in the outset, the right mode of dealing with Greek prepositions. They are fixed, not variable

¹ This statement is compiled from Crosby's exposition of the meanings of the Greek prepositions. Liddell and Scott give substantially the same thing, though (as it seems to us) with less keenness of analysis. They define thus: "*E N* . . . Radic. signif. *a being or remaining within*." "*E K* . . . Radic. signif. *from, out of, away from a thing*." "*E I* . . . Radic. signif. *direction towards, motion to, on, or into*."

² Crosby's Revised Greek Grammar, § 689.

³ Winer's New Testament Grammar. Preface to 6th ed., and general remarks on prepositions, pp. 358-363.

quantities. They are blocks of granite, not masses of soapstone which we may hew into any shape supposed to be required by exegetic or dogmatic necessity.¹

The radical signification of *eis* is *into the space within*. It is used to express motion or movement from without, terminating and resting within; and also, naturally, to express simple tendency towards; but towards the within, although the motion may be arrested. It is used of place, primarily; then, by analogy, of time, number, purpose, result, etc.; but always with the idea of motion or tendency, literal or figurative, from without to within. *E. g.*, of reaching a number, or point of time; of entering into a relation or condition; of the direction of the mind or of discourse towards an object of thought. Its general English equivalent is, *Into*. But *unto*, *in order to*, *for*, *until*, and other English prepositions, translate it better in certain cases, owing to difference of idiom.²

Eis is often used to denote the *purpose of actions*. In this case the conception is that the act or acts move towards a certain result

¹ A Greek scholar will smile at these statements, as the repetition of elementary truths in Greek grammar. But such will pardon the writer, if he recites his grammar correctly; which is more than many of us always do. If there were none but great scholars, who would care to write or need to read discussions like these?

² See Winer's New Testament Grammar, pp. 396-398. The use of *eis* may be somewhat miscellaneous illustrated by noting all the examples in the sermon of Peter, of which Acts ii. 38 is a part.

Va. 20. *eis* *σκοτος* . . . *eis* *αιμα*. *Into darkness, into blood*; signifying "the condition into which something is brought" (Winer)—conceived of as the termination of the change.

Va. 22. *eis* *υμεις*, *unto you*—accredited by testimony directed unto the minds of those to whom it was given.

Va. 25. *eis* *αυτον*, *concerning him*; "aiming at (referring to) him," explains Winer. Speaking, with him in view as the object to which his speech was directed.

Va. 27 and 31. *eis* *ηδου* [or, *ηδην*] *unto hades*. "Thou wilt not abandon my soul unto hades" (Hackett), *eis* marking the termination of the act of abandonment.

Va. 34. *eis* *τους ουρανους*, *into the heavens*. Expressing relation of place—primary meaning.

Va. 38. *eis* *επειν* *εμαρτυαν*. This Winer places under the head "the purpose and end in view."

Va. 39. *eis* *μακρην* . . . *unto afar off*, marking extent; the conception being clearly derived from that of motion.

Winer's New Testament Grammar furnishes a full statement of the various uses of *eis* in N. T., with copious examples. In every case, however obscure at first sight, the ground-signification can be traced as giving form to the conception in the mind of the one using *eis*. Thus in Matt. xii. 41, *eis* *to κηρυγμα* *Ιωνα*, *at the preaching of Jonah*, the idea is the direction of the mind of the hearer to the preaching. So in Matt. x. 41: *εις* *ονομα* *προφητου*, *in the name of a prophet*, i. e., as a prophet, *eis* marks the direction of the mind to the character of the one received. "In treating of prepositions," says Winer, "It is necessary, in the first place, to seize with clearness and precision the true primary meaning of each from which all its applications emanate as from a common centre, and to trace back to this all the various shades of meaning the preposition may have assumed—i. e., to show how the transition to every such application was effected in the mind of the writer or speaker." (N. T. Grammar, p. 359.)

in which they terminate or are intended to terminate. And as this "movement" is purposed and willed by the actor, whether the end in view is actually reached or not, *eis* expresses the purpose of actions, or the motive by which men are moved to act, or from which they are urged or exhorted by others to act.

Eis in Matthew xxvi. 28.

A remarkable example of the use of *eis* to denote the purpose of actions, and that, too, in connection with the Remission of sins, occurs in Matt. xxvi. 28. Instituting the Holy Communion, our Lord said, in giving the cup to his disciples, *Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for [ἐπὶ, in behalf of] many, for [eis, in order to] remission of sins.* *Eis* here expresses the purpose, not of the Jews in murdering our Saviour, but of Jesus himself, in "laying down his life." He "gave his life a ransom for many."¹ The Remission of sins was the end toward which his action was directed, so far as this statement is concerned. In that end the act terminated, the purpose was accomplished.²

In what sense Remission is procured by the shedding of the Blood is not determined by the word *eis*. That marks the motive or purpose in the mind of Christ and of God. Other Scriptural statements leave us in no doubt on this point. The Blood of Christ (or his Atonement, which is the same thing) furnishes the ground or reason on account of which God can and does forgive sinners in righteous-

¹ Matt. ix. 28; John x. 17, 18. cf. John xix. 11, Acts ii. 23.

² The use of *eis* to denote aim, object in view, purpose, is very common and natural. It is directly derived from the physical idea of motion towards a given space in which it rests and terminates. The following passages afford examples: Luke v. 4, *eis ἄγαν*, *in order to a draught*, i. e., for the purpose of catching fish. Acts iv. 30, *eis ἰασιν*, *for healing*, showing the purpose of "stretching forth thy hand," i. e., exerting thy power. Rom. xv. 18, *eis ὑπακοὴν ἐθνῶν*, *unto the obedience of Gentiles*. Paul says he will only speak of those things which Christ wrought in him for this purpose. 1 Tim. i. 16, *eis ζωὴν αἰώνιον*, *unto life eternal*, aim and result of "believing"—exact parallel to use of *eis* in Acts ii. 38. So the phrases *eis τι*, *unto what?* what for? why? *eis τοῦτο*, *unto this*, for this purpose.

Where is the example of the use of *eis* to denote a relation between an act as a symbol and some past event or accomplished fact, which such symbol is intended to set forth as emblem or declaration or commemoration?

We may here note the meaning of the phrase *πιστεύειν εἰς* (literally *to believe unto*) used so many times by our Saviour in John, ch. iii. *Eis* here marks the direction of the believer's mind going out towards Christ and resting upon him as the object and end of faith. The act of believing terminates in or on him. Hence the phrase: "*πιστεῖν τῷ εἰς, τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν*," etc. (Acts xx. 21), is appropriately rendered "*faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*." This does not come under the specific heading of *purpose*, but of *direction of mind*, etc.; it is here noted, because this use of *eis* has been strangely cited to impugn the correct rendering in Acts ii. 38.

ness.¹ With one accord the Church of God confesses this truth. Apostles, prophets, bishops, martyrs, saints in every clime and in every century from the beginning, confess it. We reverently repeat the confession.

No difference of opinion as to the meaning of *eis* in this passage exists, so far as we know, among believing men.

Meaning of *Eis* in Acts ii. 38.

With this example in mind let us examine Acts ii. 38. Peter had just been charging home upon the consciences of his Jewish hearers the enormous guilt which they had incurred by rejecting and murdering the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit, in his converting power, accompanied the word. Very many, *pricked in their heart*, or more properly, *pierced to the heart*, cried out: *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Peter, answering these perishing and self-condemned sinners, replied: *Repent and be each one of you baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for (eis) remission of sins.*

What is the force of *eis* here?

First. These words are Peter's answer to unsaved, but awakened sinners, forced by pungent conviction of guilt and danger to ask, *What shall we do?* i. e., of course, *do* in order to secure forgiveness of their great sin. It is natural to suppose that Peter told them what to do in order to secure that end. And he uses the very same phrase used in Matt. xxvi. 28: *eis ἀφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, unto remission of sins*. Is it possible to doubt that *eis* here marks the relation of certain actions to the end sought and purposed, namely the Remission of sins?

Second. Note carefully Peter's directions in detail, embracing as they do, three things. In the order of his statement these are—(a) Repentance, (b) Immersion, (c) Faith in the Lord Jesus. For this last is necessarily implied in the phrase *upon (ἐν) the name of Jesus Christ*. Here is expressed the ground or foundation upon which they were to act in being baptized, viz.: the *name*, i. e., the revealed character and work of Jesus Christ. In other words they were to be baptized in the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus.² Hence it follows that they must believe before being baptized. Therefore, in the order of logic and of time,³ these three things would stand thus: (a) Repentance, (b) Faith, (c) Immersion.

¹ Romans iii. 21-26.

² The Baptism here commanded was Believer's Baptism. This is a good text from which to preach Believer's Baptism.

³ It was not expected by Peter that any considerable interval of time would separate repentance from "being baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ"; much less faith from baptism. In point of fact, three thousand repented, believed, and were baptized in one day.

Third. *Eis* here marks the relation of Baptism to the Remission of sins, but not of Baptism alone. The people cried out, *What shall we do?* Peter replies, in substance, *Repent, believe and be baptized—all three things—eis ἀφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν—unto remission of sins—their sins, of course.*

Fourth. The meaning of *eis* in Matt. xxvi. 28, beyond all question is IN ORDER TO. Christ shed his blood in order to the remission of the sins of others—"the many." What but IN ORDER TO can it possibly mean here? *In order to* the remission of sins—their own sins? In answer to earnest inquiry Peter points out a course of action which will tend towards, and result in, the forgiveness which they desire; he directs them to take that course for that purpose. He assures them of other blessings besides *remission*, if they obey; and *ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost* (vs. 38). He encourages them to obedience by precious promises (vs. 39), and solemnly warns them of the peril of disobedience (vs. 40). Three thousand gladly received his word, were baptized, were added to the church, and rejoiced in the assurance of forgiveness and the hope of eternal life. Everything unites to render a mistake as to the force of *eis* almost impossible. Everything compels us to assign to it its obvious, natural, distinctive meaning, as used to denote the purpose of actions. It here marks the purpose for which, the object in order to which, the inquirers of Pentecost were to repent, believe and be baptized.

In this view we are supported by Dr. Hackett, in his unrivaled Commentary on the Acts. He translates the phrase in question, *in order to the forgiveness of sins*. He refers to Matt. xxvi. 28 (*blood . . . shed for remission*) and also to Luke iii. 3 (*the baptism of repentance for [eis] remission*) as passages illustrating the meaning and construction here. He adds: "We connect naturally"—the words *eis ἀφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν*—"with both the preceding verbs [*μετανοήσατε*, repent, and *βαπτισθήτω*, be baptized.] This clause states the motive or object which should induce them to repent and be baptized. It enforces the entire exhortation, and not one part of it to the exclusion of the other." He mentions no other interpretation as possible.

Dr. Hackett's interpretation was nothing new among Baptists. Dr. Henry J. Ripley, a very cautious and conservative commentator, gives a similar explanation of the passage in his "Notes on the Acts." But his remarks are too extended and diffuse to be quoted here.¹

But here, as in Matt. xxvi. 28, *eis* does not determine in what

¹ Alford translates "for the remission of sins," and Noyes "for forgiveness of sins." Of course "for" means, in such a connection, *in order to*. The Bible Union Version,

sense or upon what principle the action or actions named procure or secure Remission. It only shows that such action or actions were performed or commanded in order to, for the purpose of reaching, the desired result, namely, Remission.

That this is the obvious and natural meaning we think no scholar will question. That the best authorities concur in holding that it actually is the meaning, is also true as far as we have been able to consult them. But there is an explanation of *eis* in this passage, current in oral and newspaper polemics, which it is necessary to notice. Connected with the idea of symbolizing Remission or with the shadowy conception of an "immersion into a profession of remission,"¹ it makes *eis* here equivalent to *on account of*, and represents Peter as meaning: *Be baptized . . . [not in order to, but] on account of remission of sins.* That is, because your sins have been remitted. To this view there are insuperable objections.

First. It puts an unauthorized sense upon the preposition *eis*. "On account of" is not one of the recognized meanings of *eis*. No Greek would have employed the phrase here used to express the idea of *on account of an [accomplished] remission*. Another preposition would have been used, *διὰ*, or *ἐπὶ*, for example. If *eis* were followed by some word signifying *profession* or *declaration*, then we might translate: *in order to the profession or declaration of remission*. When Paul wished to convey an idea very similar he did not say *eis* *δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ*; but he used words enough to express what he meant

representing the scholarship of Drs. Conant, Hackett, Kendrick, etc., renders "unto remission of sins," which can mean nothing else than *in order to*.

De Wette: Zur Vergebung der Sünden, unto or for forgiveness of sins.

Lange: Peter's demand, therefore, embraces a change of mind and faith in addition to the outward Baptism. . . . The Apostle promises to those who repent and receive baptism: (1) the remission of sins, (2) the gift of the Holy Ghost.

David Thomas: He directs them to the course of conduct essential to the attainment of those blessings . . . hence he directs them to repent and be baptized.

Meyer: *Eis* indicates the object of the baptism, which is the remission of the guilt incurred by sin in the state preceding the *μετάνοια* [repentance]. Compare xxii. 16.

Winer names Acts ii. 38 as illustrating the use of *eis* to denote "the purpose and end in view."

Olshausen: With this repentance Baptism is then connected, which necessarily presupposes Faith, because it requires an acknowledgment of Christ as Messiah; and Baptism is accompanied with the remission of sins, as a result.

¹ "Baptized into a profession of," etc., if it has any real meaning, must be equivalent to "baptized in order to profess," etc., which would here be equivalent to "baptized on account of a [past] remission." [See foot-note on page 317.] "Baptized into the fact of remission," an equally cloudy rendering, must mean "Baptized so that remission may become a fact"; i. e., in order to remission. So, "baptized into a state [or, sphere] of Remission" can mean nothing but "baptized so as to have the remission of sins." We are not baptized *into* any thing, literally, except water. There are but two interpretations of this phrase—*in order to*, etc., and *on account of*, etc., for which last there is no authority.

—*eis* ἰνδεδεῖν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ, in order to the exhibition of his righteousness.¹ If Peter had meant in order to declare or profess remission, he would have said so. As he did not, what right have we to insert here a word or an idea of which there is not the slightest trace in his language? It is true that *eis* is sometimes equivalent to "with reference to"; but even then it would here mean the reference of purpose or aim. "In order to declare [or symbolize]" would be a monstrous translation of *eis*; and if it ever means "with reference to" in the sense of a retrospective and commemorative reference to a past event, we have failed to find an example.

Second. This interpretation compels us either to do violence to the construction, or to throw the argument or course of thought in the context into complete confusion. Indeed we can hardly escape the latter alternative, even if we choose the former.

(a) For those who contend for the interpretation "on account of remission," will hardly be willing to admit that Peter said "repent" as well as "be baptized on account of remission of sins." This is too great an inversion of natural sequence. Yet to escape it we must violently dis sever "repent" and "be baptized," and deny that *eis* expresses the relation of μετανοήσατε as well as of βαπτισθήτω to ἀφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. But the natural construction connects the latter with both the preceding verbs. It "enforces the entire exhortation, not one part of it to the exclusion of the other," as Hackett says.

(b) If we shrink from this violence to the construction, what becomes of the context? Peter is directing inquiring sinners. They ask "What shall we do?" i. e., in order to be forgiven. He replies by telling them to repent and to be baptized [believing] upon the name of Jesus Christ, *not* in order to reach pardon, the desired result: but to do all these things, to exercise Repentance and Faith (inward acts of the mind) as well as to be baptized, in order to signify or declare that their sins were already forgiven! He directs unconverted men to repent, believe and be baptized, not in order to be forgiven, but to set forth by this whole process, mental and physical, and to profess by it, a remission which had not taken place! This only needs to be stated to show its naked absurdity.

(c) And if we recoil from this we shall yet not wholly escape it by preferring the alternative of doing violence to the construction. For (1) Peter did not tell his hearers to repent and believe in order to

¹ Rom. III. 25. In verse 26 he uses the same phrase again, except that he substitutes *epi* for *eis*. (See Winer, pp. 411, 412.) Whatever the full force of this expression may be, the Apostle's conception is not "in order to righteousness," but "in order to the exhibition (Noyes, "manifestation;" Liddell and Scott, "pointing out, indicating") of righteousness."

Remission, and then to signify or declare Remission in Baptism, but (on this hypothesis) he told them to repent without any statement whatever as to the purpose or result, and also directed them to "be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ" in order to profess the remission they were seeking! And (2) Faith in Christ, the very central part of Gospel obedience, being here indissolubly linked with Baptism, Peter directed terrified sinners to declare, as an accomplished fact, the very Remission which they had not received, but were at that moment seeking; and to declare this, too, by Believing, as well as by Baptism!

Third. This interpretation was doubtless suggested, and is now defended, on purely dogmatic grounds. It is feared that if we give to *eis* its natural and obvious meaning, undue importance will be ascribed to Baptism, the Atonement will be undervalued, and the work of the Holy Spirit disparaged. Especially is it asserted that here is the vital issue between Baptists and Campbellites.¹ We are gravely told that if we render *eis* in Acts ii. 38 *in order to*, we give up the battle, and must forthwith become Campbellites; whereas if we translate it *on account of*, or *in token of*, it will yet be possible for us to remain Baptists.

Such methods of interpretation are unworthy of Christian scholars. It is our business, simply and honestly, to ascertain the exact meaning of the inspired originals, as the sacred penmen intended to convey it to the mind of the contemporary reader. Away with the question—"What *ought* Peter to have said in the interest of orthodoxy?" The real question is, "What *did* Peter say, and what did he *mean*, when he spoke on the Day of Pentecost, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?"

But having entered this *caveat*, as a lawyer might say, it may do no harm to show that dogmatic dangers here exist only in imagination. The natural and obvious interpretation cannot give undue importance to Baptism, for Baptism is here united with Repentance and Faith. It cannot undervalue the Atonement, for the Baptism is one resting upon, and deriving all its value from, *the name* of the Lamb of God; and this is distinctly understood by the person baptized, who submits to the rite as a believer in that *name*. It cannot disparage the work of the Spirit, since he alone effectually calls men to Repentance and Faith; and it is *by* (Greek *en*, in, within the influence of) *one Spirit* that *we were all baptized into one body*, i. e.,

¹ We use this term as a well known designation, like "Calvinists" and "Arminians," without intending any discourtesy.

the Spirit leads the penitent believer to Baptism and blesses the rite.¹ And as to Campbellism, that spectre which haunts many good men and terrifies them into a good deal of bad interpretation, shall we gain anything by maintaining a false translation and allowing the Campbellites to be champions of the true, with the world's scholarship on their side, as against us? Whoever carries the weight of our controversy with the Campbellites *upon the $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ will break through*—there is no footing there for the evolutions of the theological skater. Shall we never learn that Truth has nothing to fear from a true interpretation of any part of God's word, and nothing to gain by a false one?

The truth will suffer nothing by giving to $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ its true signification. When the Campbellites translate *in order to* in Acts ii. 38, they translate correctly. Is a translation false because Campbellites endorse it?

In reality, the chasm which yawns between us and them is something more than a *crevasse in the $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$* , or even than a difference of theory as to the design of Baptism. It is indeed somewhat difficult to define their doctrinal position. They have no Creed. The writings of their great Master contain apparent inconsistencies, if not contradictions. Their current literature is kaleidoscopic in the variety of its hues; churchly and anarchical by turns; now breathing an evangelical fervor, and now benumbed by a semi-Arian atmosphere. Still, judging this chameleon-like literature as a whole, and noting the general contents and tone of Campbellite preaching, we are forced to conclude that their system is, to say the least, more extreme and bald Arminianism than Methodism itself. Repentance and Faith are self-determined acts of the human will. There is no eternal election nor even effectual calling. The personal agency of the Spirit on the mind does not begin till after Baptism. Man wins the battle for himself; then, perhaps, the Divine Helper comes to be his guest, but not to remain if the man "falls away," nor necessarily, to *prevent* his falling away. Thus spiritual religion is vitiated in its very sources. All Campbellites do not thus believe; there are excellent and evangelical men among them; but if it is possible to understand the system called Campbellism, we think we have not misrepresented it. Now is it not childish to assert that the difference between such a theology and ours is measured by the interpretation of $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ in Acts ii. 38? When the Campbellites shall adopt Calvinistic sentiments, when they shall believe in and pray for the converting power of the

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

Holy Spirit, when they shall practice strict communion (as of all people in the world they are logically bound to do), and when they shall be willing to write down in plain words the faith which they hold, neither *is* nor water will separate them and us. Meantime, let us go about the business of correctly interpreting Scripture and logically formulating the doctrinal teachings of the Bible, like men and scholars, unterrified by the bugbear of Campbellism. If that schism has led us to take any untenable positions, or has revealed any traditional errors of the Baptists, let us retire from the former and correct the latter. Beyond this, and a respectful attention to what Campbellite scholars advance, such as we give to all scholars, there is no reason why we may not go serenely on our way in the search for Biblical truth, just as if Campbellism had no existence.

Fourth. Finally, suppose we force *is* in Acts ii. 38 to bear the unnatural and unauthorized meaning of "on account of." After all we have gained nothing. Other passages there are which cannot be explained away. Thus our Saviour said, just before he ascended the heavens: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.* We shall hardly dare to tamper with his royal word and make it run, *He that believeth and is saved shall be baptized.* And unless we do thus change his saying, we have, by the highest authority, an importance attributed to Baptism certainly not less than that given to it in Acts ii. 38, translated according to its obvious meaning. What then is the advantage of violently torturing *is*, the construction and the context?

We conclude without hesitation, and in accordance with such authorities as Hackett, Winer, Meyer, etc., that the proper rendering of *is ἀφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν* in Acts ii. 38, as in Matthew xxvi. 28, is *unto, for, i. e., IN ORDER TO, Remission of Sins.*

Acts ii. 38 is a very important passage—the key-note of the New Testament teaching as to obedience to the Gospel. For the first time inquiring sinners throng the inspired Twelve with the question, *What shall we do?* on their lips; and the answer is invested with the great significance of the first formal direction given by the apostles to inquirers. The occasion was striking and wonderful; and here we may well believe was furnished a precedent which all the primitive preachers of the Gospel were sure substantially to follow. This much is clear from the passage before us: *that there is a relation between Baptism and Remission;* and such a relation as warranted and required Peter to use the language which he did. He meant what he said.

But in proceeding to examine the question—

What is the Relation of Baptism and Remission?

we ought not to confine our attention to a single text, however important, but make a full and fair induction from all the teachings of the New Testament which bear upon the subject, whether positive statements, clear implications, or practical precedents. This we shall now attempt as far as our limits will permit.

First of all, however, let us prepare ourselves to look at the matter from a purely New Testament point of view. For this something more is necessary than ability to read the record in English or in Greek; something more than honesty of purpose. We must be able to free ourselves from the domination of the present, and guard against unconsciously carrying back its opinions and customs into the past. Without this precaution we shall see everything in a false light, and misunderstand the plainest facts. The exegete must have the true historical spirit, perfect candor, and the ability to reproduce in imagination the circumstances and the thoughts of other times and other lands.

Those were early days. There were no elaborate creeds or theologies, no rival churches and disagreeing commentators, no denominational differences—the outgrowth of centuries. The Apostles taught by inspiration, being infallibly “guided into all the truth;” and miracles attested their authority to speak for God. If men accepted the new Gospel at all, there was no room for error or mistake as to what was required in order to discipleship. Thus no question existed, or could exist among Christians, as to Baptism—its form, subjects, design or divine authority. The catechumenical system was yet unknown. “Anxious seats,” “rising for prayers,” and all modern “revivalistic” methods, good and bad, were unheard of. The Gospel was preached as a practical thing—a divine message to be at once obeyed. Those who received it were made the subjects of no spiritual diagnosis; but their profession of faith in the Lord Jesus was accepted, and they were immediately baptized. By that act the convert crossed the great gulf which separated the Church from Jews and Pagans; and rendered himself liable to persecution, perhaps, to death. Everything was in solemn earnest; sensationalism and fanaticism were not yet introduced, and hypocrisy was rare.

This brief statement is made for one simple purpose. It is no part of our present task to inquire how far in later, or in present times, change of circumstances justifies change of methods, provided the Gospel be preserved intact; nor how far Christianity has been corrupted by departure from Apostolic ways. But it is essential that

we enter into the spirit of primitive times, in order that we may see the teaching and the example of the Apostles in a true light.

Scripture Testimony as to Baptism and Remission.

The first mention of Baptism is in connection with the mission of John, the forerunner of Christ. He came *preaching the baptism of repentance unto [eis] i. e., in order to, remission of sins.*¹ This his father, Zachariah, had predicted, explaining how he "should go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, in order to give knowledge of salvation to his people, in remission of their sins."² "Confessing their sins" and being baptized,³ sincere penitents were sure of Remission.⁴ That Baptism, as commanded and administered by John, was not an emblem of Remission previously granted, but (with Repentance) a condition of Remission promised, is clear, not only from the use of *eis*, but from John's own words to certain hypocrites, Pharisees and Sadducees: "Who hath warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"⁵ and also from our Lord's words, "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God concerning themselves, not being baptized by him."⁶ And in refusing Baptism they refused everything.

Christ himself, in his early Judæan ministry, "made and baptized

¹ Luke III. 3.

² Luke I. 76, 77.

³ Matt. III. 6.

⁴ John also said (Matt. III. 11), "I indeed baptize you in water unto (*eis*) repentance." This has been misunderstood. *Eis* does not here change its ground-meaning, is not equivalent to *on account of*. John's Baptism looked to the future, to the near approach of Messiah, whose people must be prepared for him. Those baptized by John were indeed required to repent, but also to stand pledged *unto repentance*, thenceforward to have a changed heart and life, so as to be in a state of readiness for Messiah's coming. So Olshausen says that John's Baptism "aimed at awakening repentance;" only his remark is too unqualified, present, as well as prospective repentance being required (Matt. III. 2, 7, 8). This explains the phrase *eis metanoia*. In harmony with this also, was John's teaching of Faith. "John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Jesus." (Acts xix. 4.) After Christ's ascension we meet no more with the phrase *baptized unto repentance*, because Baptism now acknowledges the Messiah already come, and Faith and Repentance, as conditions of Remission, are conceived of as wholly in the present. But the phrase *baptized unto remission* remains—is used by Peter, Acts II. 38. Those who render *eis* in Matt. III. 11 *on account of*, furnish a notable instance of missing an important idea through failure to understand the force of the Greek preposition.

⁵ Matt. III. 7. By professing Repentance and asking Baptism they appeared to be fleeing from coming wrath; but John knew them to be insincere; and demanded *proof* of Repentance, refusing to baptize them without it. The professions of all others seem to have been accepted by him.

⁶ Luke vii. 30. *Eis* does not here mean *against* (Common Ver.); it marks the direction of the counsel (revealed plan) of God towards those concerned; in our idiom *concerning*.

disciples."¹ His preaching, at the outset, was of similar purport with that of John.² It is natural to suppose that his Baptism (in connection with Repentance and Faith) was, like John's, in order to Remission. We are confirmed in this by our Saviour's words to Nicodemus, who came to him during that early period to learn more fully, no doubt, of the kingdom which Christ and John were preaching. Christ said to him: *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, i. e.,* Baptism and Renewal by the Spirit are the conditions of true citizenship in the kingdom of God on earth. Unquestionably Remission was one of the blessings of that kingdom.³

In giving the "Great Commission" to his Apostles, the risen Lord commanded: *Go ye therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*⁴ . . . *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*⁵ Here Faith and Baptism are united as conditions, to the fulfillment of which is affixed his royal promise of salvation, including, of course, Remission. The circumstances invest this declaration with peculiar solemnity. It is a part of the Fundamental Law of Christianity, ordained by the great Founder himself, in his last hours on earth. It is a part of the Prime Article in the Charter of the Christian ministry. It is the last direction and promise to lost sinners, that fell from our Redeemer's lips ere he ascended to the right hand of God.

We learn from the Book of Acts how the Apostles and "apostolic men" understood and obeyed their Commission. The first Pentecost after the Ascension was most memorable not only for what it was in itself, but as model and precedent under the dispensation of the Spirit. What was then taught in regard to Baptism and Remission has already been elaborately examined. In accordance with the example there set Baptism was always closely associated with Repentance and Faith. The Samaritans,⁶ the Eunuch,⁷ the jailer at Philippi,⁸

¹ John iii. 22; iv. 1, 2.

² Matt. iv. 17; Mark i. 15.

³ John iii. 5. There is no force in the objection to this interpretation founded on vs. 10. *Of* Matt. xvi. 3; John vii. 17. Nor are our Saviour's words equivalent to the assertion that no unbaptized person can possibly be saved in the world to come. In vs. 12 he says: "If I have told you *the earthly things*;" which shows that he was here speaking of the kingdom of God on earth.

⁴ Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. See foot-note, page 317.

⁵ Mark xvi. 16. We are not unaware that the genuineness of Mark xvi. 9-20 is questioned. We do not share in the doubt. See article of Prof. J. A. Broadus on this subject in BAPTIST QUARTERLY, July, 1869.

⁶ Acts viii. 12.

⁷ Acts viii. 36, 38, 39.

⁸ Acts xvi. 14, 15, 30-33.

and others, must have been instructed as to its necessity in order to discipleship; for we find that being taught the "word of the Lord," *i. e.*, the Gospel, they were forthwith baptized. In one case, and one only, God seemed to have anticipated the complete obedience by bestowing miraculous gifts before Baptism.¹ Yet even in this abnormal case the full requirement of the Gospel must be exactly carried out, by express command of Peter. And Ananias divinely sent to Saul of Tarsus, blind, penitent and prayerful, thus instructed him: *And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins,*² *calling upon the name of the Lord.* The *washing away* refers to Remission; the last clause requires the exercise of faith in Christ.

The Epistles, addressed to Christians, are more distinctively doctrinal than the historical narrative of the Acts, yet are intensely practical. They contain many references to Baptism. It is represented as a *burial with Christ* and a *being raised together with him* "to walk in newness of life,"³ which necessitates Remission. We are said to be *baptized INTO* (*eis*) *Jesus Christ*,⁴ *i. e.*, so as to come to be *IN* Christ. Also to be *baptized unto Christ*, as the context seems to indicate direction of mind in the act, the result being stated, *ye have put on Christ*,⁵ clothed yourselves with Christ (so to speak), involving the ideas of unity and conformity. And this is mentioned (as the "for" shows) to confirm the preceding statement, "Ye are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Here, then, Faith and Baptism are united (as elsewhere), and united in their relation to adoption, which results from union with Christ. All this, of course, implies Remission. We read, *according to his mercy he saved us, by [or through] the washing [bathing] of regeneration and*

¹ Acts x. 44-48. In order to understand this case we must bear in mind that Cornelius and his friends were Gentiles, and that the Church needed to be taught God's readiness to receive all men as Christ's disciples, irrespective of nationality. (Verses 34, 35, and chap. xi. 1-18.) Peter had to be first prepared by threefold vision and express direction from the Holy Spirit. This needed lesson was taught by this striking departure from God's ordinary way of proceeding. Besides, these men were undoubtedly before that, worshippers of the true God, and pious. (Vss. 2, 4, 33, 35.) This "exception" only "proves the rule." At the utmost it only shows that God can directly certify to a man his pardon before Baptism; which, perhaps, no one ever doubted.

² Acts xii. 16. Hackett *in loco*: "This clause states a result of the Baptism in language derived from the nature of that ordinance. It answers to *eis ἀπονομίαν* in Acts ii: 39."

³ Rom. vi. 2-4; Col. ii. 12, 13; III. 1.

⁴ Romans vi. 3.

⁵ Gal. iii. 27. "Into" is a possible translation here in the same sense as in Rom. vi. 2. In these two passages *eis* signifies either purpose, direction of mind, "unto Christ," or the result of the action; viz., coming into a relation or condition, coming to be "in Christ." *Of. eis* in Acts ii. 20. Which, we must judge from the context and course of thought in each case. "Immersed into Christ," in a literal sense, is absurd. To translate "into a profession of Christ" is gratuitous assumption. See foot-notes, pp. 303 and 317.

*renewing of the Holy Spirit.*¹ Also, of Christ *cleansing* (from sin) his Bride, the Church, *by the washing [bathing] of water in the word;*² i. e., within the sphere of the Gospel, in obedience to it; "cleansing," of course, in a spiritual sense. We read of *One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism,*³ this rite being mentioned among the precious Unities of Christianity. Also, of Jewish and Gentile Christians *as all baptized into one body by* (Greek *en*, in) *one Spirit,*⁴ a passage already noted.

One more example from the Epistles must not be passed by, written by the same inspired teacher who directed the inquirers on the Day of Pentecost. *Which [water] in an antitype, baptism, doth now save us also (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh [i. e., not a ceremonial lustration for ceremonial defilement] but the requirement of a good conscience toward God [here repentance is necessarily implied]) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*⁵ This last can be only as we are "baptized upon the name" of the Risen One, and so faith also is assumed. In this remarkable passage it is positively asserted that, in some sense, *baptism saves us*; and in that same sense it must, of course, be related to the Remission of our sins.

Impression Produced by the Scripture Testimony.

Certainly, it would seem that Baptism must be very important, intimately connected with Remission and Salvation. How can an unprejudiced mind survey this testimony and then relegate Baptism to the realm of mere Emblem, Symbol and Profession? However they are to be explained, the facts from the record are these. Our Lord before his departure commanded that those who would be his disciples should be baptized; and united Baptism with Faith in the promise of Salvation. The apostles and their co-laborers directed inquirers to repent, believe and be immersed in order to Remission. Baptism is often alluded to in the Epistles in harmony with this view of it, and also as related to other important things in Christian life and hope. The Apostles seem never to have conceived of the possibility of a penitent believer refusing to be baptized; but if one professing this character had refused Baptism, is it possible to doubt,

¹ Titus iii. 5.

² Eph. v. 26. The idea of "cleansing" includes Remission.

³ Eph. iv. 4-6.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

⁵ 1 Peter iii. 21, 22, which should be compared with Acts ii. 38, words of Peter also. Is it wise, in the face of this text, to assert, unqualifiedly, that "baptism is not a saving ordinance?"

with this record before us, that they would have warned him of the guilt and danger of "rejecting the counsel of God concerning" himself? If these are the facts, and that they are is obvious, the Scriptures do teach that Baptism is a part of what is meant by "obedience to the Gospel,"¹ which has the promise of Remission of sins and of Eternal Life.

Indeed, some of these passages look at first sight like Remission solely conditioned on the act of Baptism, or even like "Baptismal Regeneration." But a careful examination will show that however easy or plausible the perversion, it is a perversion. In every case where Baptism is represented as related to Remission or Salvation, it is always joined with Repentance and Faith in terms, or by necessary implication. This is clear in the seven strong passages—Mark xvi. 16; Acts ii. 38, and xxii. 16; John iii. 5; Eph. v. 26; Titus iii. 5, and 1 Peter iii. 21, 22. For Repentance and Faith are both present, in germ at least, where one of them is; and both are sure to result from the life-giving work of the Spirit. We may be certain, then, that the Apostles never thought of inviting a sinner to Baptism in order to regeneration—in any sense in which Baptists are accustomed to use the word; nor in order to Remission, save as the complement of Repentance and Faith. This is the practical view; before considering the theory of this relation we must look at—

**Some Teachings of Scripture alleged to be inconsistent with the Obvious Teaching
as to Remission and Baptism.**

First. The alleged undervaluing of Baptism by Paul in 1 Cor. i. 10-17.

But Paul's thankfulness that he baptized so few at Corinth is *not* an undervaluing of Baptism, though this is a favorite argument of anti-immersionists. He does not deny that he preached Baptism, but only says that he did not there (generally) administer the rite with his own hands. He does not deny that the "Lord sent him to preach" Baptism, but does deny that his great mission was to baptize. It is evident from the narratives of Acts xvi and xviii that he did preach Baptism, at Corinth and elsewhere, as a part of the Gospel, and that those who believed under his preaching were immediately baptized. But he preferred, when practicable, that some one else should officiate; just as now an "evangelist" [so-called] might, for the best of reasons, prefer that the pastors should do the baptizing, while himself strenuously insisting on Baptism in his preaching. The

¹ Rom. i. 5; x. 10; xv. 18; 2 Thess. i. 8; 1 Peter iv. 17; Hebrews v. 9.

bearing of this passage on the subject in hand is exactly opposite to the inference drawn from it. It is this: Baptism was such an important thing in the view of the early Christians, that Paul congratulated himself in having baptized so few at Corinth, lest some should say that he "baptized in his own name."—lest the faith and reverence due to Christ might be "divided"—and a part transferred to the distinguished administrator. How could this have been, if Baptism had been a mere symbol of no vital consequence?

Second. The frequent omission of Baptism in the teaching of Christ and his Apostles.

We at once admit that there was no set form of words always used; and that the terms of the Gospel Salvation were not always explicitly and fully stated. It is to be observed here, (1) that negative testimony cannot invalidate positive testimony. We know what the Commission was, and are bound to believe that the Apostles were faithful to it. (2) By this mode of reasoning it may be shown that Repentance is not a condition of Salvation and Remission;¹ that Faith is not;² that neither of them is!³ (3) In many cases Baptism is not named because there is no occasion for it. Thus in Acts iii. 19 Paul is addressing the unbelieving rulers, and it is quite sufficient to exhort them to "repent and turn." Had they taken the position of inquirers, we know what directions he would have given. (4) In other cases a mere summary statement is made—a part for the whole. So in the case of the Philippian jailer. As soon as there was opportunity, full instruction was given, including Baptism, as is apparent from what followed.⁴ (5) After the death of John the Baptist it seems very probable that Baptism ceased to be administered until the day of Pentecost; which will account for the Saviour's silence as to Baptism during his Galilean and later Judæan ministry.

Third. The doctrinal statements of Christ and his apostles concerning forgiveness and justification, where these blessings are said to be bestowed on the penitent and believing, no mention being made of Baptism; *e. g.*, John, ch. vi; Romans, chs. iii-v.

With regard to these we observe, (1) if these statements are inconsistent with what the same teachers tell us of Baptism, they are also inconsistent with themselves. Thus there would be a contradiction between Luke xviii. 14 and Romans v. 1. (2) Christ taught either unbelieving Jews (*see* third and fifth observations under the last

¹ Acts viii. 38 and xiii. 38, 39.

² Acts iii. 19 and xi. 18.

³ Matt. xix. 21 and Heb. v. 9.

⁴ Acts xvi. 30-33; *Of.* Acts x. 43, 48.

head), or his own disciples, all of whom had been baptized,¹ and understood the import of Baptism; and the Epistles were addressed to Christians, every one of whom had been taught the Gospel, as Peter and Paul taught it, and had been baptized. Is it to be supposed that Christ and his Apostles intended to contradict their own instructions given at the first to inquirers? (3) Nor is there any necessary inconsistency here, even if we give to these doctrinal statements the most unrestricted latitude of meaning. If it be granted, that with God forgiveness instantly follows man's repentance, and justification man's faith, What then? Is it not obvious that the human heart needs and craves something tangible both as a seal of divine acceptance and as an expression of its own trust and love? Also that a test of obedience is necessary which shall reveal the genuineness of professed repentance and faith, or show their spuriousness? Is it not, furthermore, indispensable that Christ's disciples should be separated from the world? All this Baptism accomplishes, at the lowest possible estimate of its value. Why then should not the Lord conjoin Baptism with Repentance and Faith? Why should he not proclaim the assurance of pardon and salvation not merely to the penitent believer, but to the penitent believer baptized? Are professed repentance and faith, not sincere and earnest enough to abide the test, of any real value? Was it not well that they should be branded as insufficient to save the soul?² Would not genuine repentance and faith be perfected and strengthened by their outward expression? Does it nullify pardon and justification, or diminish any existing peace and joy in the believer's soul, to have all confirmed and assured to his mind by the ratification of an unchangeable covenant? Note also that in those early days Baptism swiftly followed that which it expressed, closely conjoined with Repentance and Faith in time as well as in teaching, so that little opportunity was given for the question, What is the *status* of an unbaptized believer? No one who accepted the Gospel in reality was ever known to refuse Baptism; and as to exceptional cases, such as the impossibility of receiving the ordinance,

¹ It is astonishing that this should ever have been doubted. Did Christ call his Apostles from those who had "rejected the counsel of God," or from the "people made ready for the Lord"? No doubt all his other followers were also of the "prepared people," or else had been "made disciples and baptized" by the Lord and his disciples (John iv. 1, 2.)

² If this is inconsistent with justification by faith, then are Matt. xix. 21; x. 22; x. 32, 33. But compare James ii. 14-26. This seems to have been the view of the late lamented Dr. Hackett. He sustains most positively the exegesis of Acts ii. 38 and xxii. 16 maintained in this article. On the latter passage he adds: "Baptism is represented as having this importance or efficacy, because it is the sign of the repentance and faith which are the conditions of salvation." Certainly this venerated man did not mean that the representations of Peter and Ananias were deceptive or mistaken. Hence we conclude that his view was according to the hypothesis here stated, although some exceptions may be taken to his terms.

be it remembered that God was then, is now, free to go before the letter of his Gospel promise, or to go beyond it, whenever, in his own sovereignty, he may see sufficient cause for so doing.

It is clear, then, that this objection is without weight. Even if we grant all that the objector claims, and take the lowest possible view of Baptism, there is no inconsistency or contradiction involved in making it one of the announced conditions which secure the Divine assurance of pardon and salvation.

Let us now proceed to formulate, in brief, the teachings of the New Testament as to the

Nature and Design of Baptism.

I. NATURE.—In itself considered, Baptism is a *symbol*; *i. e.*, “a sign or representation of something moral or intellectual, by the images and properties of natural things.” (Webster), Specifically, in this case, “a sign,” etc., of spiritual realities. Hence (1) its symbolical character fits it to be used, in a personal transaction between God and the soul, as a means of expression, as a covenant-seal, as the vehicle of a blessing (if so God will). And (2) this symbolism is many-sided. Infinite wisdom has chosen in this simple act one capable of shadowing forth almost every prominent fact and truth of Christianity. Of these, no doubt, it was intended to be a witness. But this function is incidental, though important. It is not dwelt upon in the New Testament; but is apparent from allusions of the sacred writers,¹ as well as from the nature of the rite itself. Strangely has this been supposed by many to be the main design of Baptism.

Symbols analogous to Baptism are found in the “anointing of oil” in the old dispensation, and the “laying on of hands” in the new, though of far less depth and breadth of meaning.

II. DESIGN.—First. *Considered as the act of the believer.*

1. Baptism is an expression of faith in Christ. *Baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ.* We object to the common designation of Baptism as “a profession of faith.” Scripturally, profession is made with the mouth.² But “actions speak louder than words.” In them the sentiments of the heart find expression, and in expression, completeness. Faith in Christ is acted upon, acted out, and so consummated in Baptism.³

¹ Rom. vi. 1-11 affords an example, especially the “burial.”

² Romans x. 10. The “confession” of the Common Version should be *profession*. This profession preceded Baptism, and as it is said to be “unto salvation” probably, by *synecdoche*, includes it.

³ See Pepper on “The Mutual Relations of Baptism and the Communion.”—BAPTIST QUARTERLY, April, 1872, page 171. Re-printed in pamphlet form by Am. Bap. Pub. Society.

2. Baptism is a representative act of obedience. *The requirement of a good conscience.* From it, as those who have *died to sin*, we rise to *walk in newness of life*. We object to the idea that Baptism is no greater than any other act of obedience. It is a typical, comprehensive, prophetic act; one that embodies the purposes and pledges of Repentance (i. e., a change of mind), and so consummates them. It includes in germ and sample every subsequent act of obedience.

3. Baptism is an act of self-identification with Christ. He identified himself with us in his Baptism;¹ and as the Head of his people proceeded to work out for them a perfect salvation. In view of all this the penitent believer in Baptism voluntarily and solemnly identifies himself with the Lord of glory. He is *buried* as to his old life, *is raised together with Christ*, PUTS ON CHRIST. He declares his acceptance of the offered union with Christ.

4. Baptism is a vow of allegiance to the Holy Trinity, including acceptance of the covenant of grace. *In [or unto] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*² *The name, etc.*, is the gracious revelation made of the character and work of the Three Persons of the Trinity. With full faith in this, and with his mind directed UNTO the Triune God, the penitent believer declares his acceptance of the offers of Gospel grace, and surrenders himself, soul and body, for time and eternity, to the service of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Hence Baptism takes hold of the blessings of pardon, of adoption, redemption and sanctification, and is an oath of allegiance.

Second. *Design of Baptism, as to what God accomplishes by it.* In the Scriptures, as we have seen, Baptism as a condition of Remission, etc., never stands alone; but is always associated, in terms or by necessary implication, with Repentance and Faith. We are safe, therefore, in asserting that apart from these it has no possible spiritual efficacy; indeed, that it is a falsehood, a farce. In vain, then, should we administer to unconscious infant or to impenitent adult a spurious baptism, borrowed from the Pope of Rome; or even a real baptism, immersion; or if we would overdo the thing in spite of reason and

¹ "Thus it becometh us," he condescended to say. Matt. III. 15.

² This phrase has been strangely tortured. It has been the fashion to substitute *into* for *in*, producing an expression in English not only un-idiomatic, but positively unmeaning. There seems to be confusion of ideas, occasioned by confounding the primary and secondary uses of *in*. In the primary, it points out that into which the body is literally plunged (*into the Jordan*, Mark I. 9). In the secondary, it points out purpose of the act of Baptism, direction of mind or result; e. g., the phrase *unto*, or *into*, Christ. So here the act is performed (by the believer) with reference to the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, (as revealed to us in connection with the plan of salvation,) and as a solemn vow *unto* the Triune God. So far as the administrator is concerned, the authority by which and purpose for which he baptizes are expressed or implied. If we alter the common translation at all, it should be to *unto* not *into*. In regard to the unauthorized paraphrase "*into a profession of*," see pages 303, 304, and foot-note, page 303.

common sense, a trine immersion. The empty rite would leave the subject where it found him, unregenerate, unsaved, unforgiven. Simon Magus, whose profession of faith was false, was pronounced by Peter himself to be "in the gall of bitterness" (unregenerate), and "in the bond of iniquity" (unforgiven), though he had been baptized. Equally clear is it, from the teachings of Scripture, that Baptism, when associated with Repentance and Faith, has a real value, and accomplishes something. If it be but a MERE symbol, or object-lesson, or a profession of accomplished facts, what meaning is there in language? or how shall we ever hope to understand the Gospel, as it fell from inspired lips, clothed in human words?

In speaking of what is accomplished in Baptism, we would tread with caution, not only to avoid error, but because the subject, considered with relation to the presence and operation of the Spirit, is confessedly mysterious, and in some of its aspects may baffle our poor powers of analysis and statement.

1. Without controversy, by Baptism God separates the believer from the world, and puts upon him the mark of Christ and the weight of solemn vows.

2. Baptism (with Repentance and Faith) secures the divine assurance of pardon and eternal life. The penitent believer baptized has for those blessings the word of a king who can never be "worse" (though he may be "better") than his word. So much objectively. Can we reasonably doubt that the Holy Spirit, in Baptism, "seals the grace" of forgiveness to the believer's soul?

3. Baptism consummates the union of the soul with Christ.¹ The Saviour accepts the believer's act of consecration, and self-identification with him; and the union of the soul with Christ becomes an established fact. So much is implied in the expressions, "*saves us . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*" "*Baptized into [so as to be IN] Jesus Christ.*" It is like the marriage ceremony which crowns and establishes the union of souls already loving. Nor can we doubt that when the believer comes in Baptism to ratify the covenant graciously tendered to him, and to identify himself with the risen Lord, he who promised his perpetual presence in the fulfillment of his own Great Commission, is a party to the transaction, and formally and fully receives him to be his own forever.

4. So Baptism incorporates the believer into the Church, the body of Christ. *Baptized into one body*, that is, so as to be a member of the one body. Even Baptism, on a mistaken profession of repentance

¹ Much that is suggestive on this point may be found in Dr. G. R. Bliss's article on "Ebrard's View of Baptism."—BAPTIST QUARTERLY, July, 1869.

and faith gives an outward and temporary membership in the Church, imperfect as it is, on earth. But the Baptism of the true believer makes him a living member of the body; and this membership will be eternal when the Church is perfected in the world to come.

5. Is there a special work of the Spirit on the believer's soul in Baptism? Must there not be if he seals the pardon? Can the believer's union with Christ be consummated, or he be ingrafted into the one body, without the operation of the Spirit of Life? At the beginning miraculous gifts followed Baptism. Did these exhaust the meaning of the promise, "And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit": or did they rather mark the bestowment of a personal blessing "which God hath given to them that obey" Christ,¹ intended for all time? The Spirit has "called" to Repentance and Faith, he has led to Baptism; why may we not suppose that he now performs a further work, and takes up his permanent "abode" with the disciple for help and sanctification? Is it not significant that the believer is said in Baptism "*to be raised*," as if by a power outside of himself? Does not the close connection of the Spirit's work with Baptism in John iii. 5, and Titus iii. 5, indicate that a work is *wrought upon* the believer, as well as that he performs a work himself?² And may not this be the completion of the whole process of the "new birth" (not the impartation of life, that is antecedent—the beginning of the process), the completion of the *regeneration* of the man, in the Scriptural, as distinguished from the theological sense? These questions we propound without attempting to give a dogmatic answer. But if, in opposition to their drift, it should be objected that such a view is not fully corroborated by experience, it might be sufficient reply to ask: May not shallow conceptions of Baptism hinder the full blessing originally intended to be connected with it, or at least obscure the consciousness of its reception? Besides, are we, strictly speaking, conscious of the Holy Spirit's work? The place whereon we stand is holy ground. We would equally shrink from making more of Baptism than the New Testament does, and from making less of it than a fair exegesis warrants and demands.

Independent of the point last named, we have obtained light enough to enable us to affirm the following conclusions:

Definition of the Relation of Baptism and Remission.

I. *The Relation of Baptism to Remission is not that of an Emblem or a Profession of an assured fact regarded as already accomplished.*

¹ Acts v. 32.

² See Ellcott on Titus iii. 5, and Ephesians v. 26. But with the views there expressed, how can he defend Infant Baptism?

II. *The Relation of Baptism to Remission is not that of a single specific and invariable Condition, on which Remission absolutely depends.*

III. *The Relation of Baptism to Remission is this: Baptism is the third of three Gospel Requirements or Conditions, to which, jointly, is annexed the Promise of Remission. The others are Repentance and Faith, which Baptism is designed to express, embody and consummate.*

Let us now, in order further to set this whole matter in a clear light, take a hasty glance at the

Place of Baptism in the Economy of Salvation.

continuing to look at the subject solely as it is presented to us in the New Testament, ignoring all the errors, corruptions and resulting complications, to which the centuries have given birth.

The Bible teaches us that salvation proceeds from the gracious purpose of God, which is two-fold: (1.) to render salvation possible to all our fallen race; (2.) to secure the salvation of the Elect. Hence the economy of salvation is two-fold, a plan within a plan.

1. The Gospel belongs to the outer, the man-ward side. It makes known Christ and his salvation, including the gift of the Holy Spirit, promising Remission and eternal life to all who obey its three requirements. Baptism seals the covenant between God and the soul, and introduces the believer to the life in Christ, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is indeed further required that the disciple shall "endure unto the end." If he should fall away, and repudiate the baptismal covenant, he would forfeit the promises of that covenant.¹ But he is now in a state of salvation, an heir of eternal life. Whether God will keep every true believer "through faith unto salvation," belongs to the other side of the subject. The Gospel warns and incites to faithfulness.

Now, if Baptism *alone* were connected with the promise of Remission, we should be shut up to the belief that sin is actually and only forgiven at the moment of Baptism. But it is associated with Repentance and Faith, which precede it by an appreciable, and in some cases, a considerable interval of time. The general drift of Scripture seems to indicate that the prodigal is actually forgiven as soon as he returns; instances are on record where divine assurance of pardon was given on the spot. It is not asserted that pardon is always delayed till Baptism, or that it is actually bestowed in the act, or that

¹ Hebrews vi. 4-6.

it is invariably refused to the unbaptized. *The Gospel simply guarantees pardon to the penitent believer baptized.* Baptism does not necessarily fix the exact moment of forgiveness; it assures of forgiveness. So that whoever neglects or refuses Baptism has not the certainty of being forgiven; and whoever properly receives it, has such certainty. Perhaps we may suppose that God, in his own mind, forgives the sinner when he repents, justifies him when he believes; but as a judicial act of his government, declares or pronounces his sins forgiven in Baptism, both by virtue of his written word, and by the sealing of his Spirit.¹ Naturally, the believer awaiting Baptism, whether for a few moments or many days, is likely to feel peace and joy; but Baptism increases and assures both. It remains through life a memorial of God's covenant with the obedient soul.

2. Human depravity prevents obedience to the Gospel, except as the result of sovereign grace. The Elect, for whom Christ specially died, are effectually called by the Holy Spirit, and their salvation is certain. There might be some incongruity between this truth, and the idea of Remission solely conditioned on Baptism; but between it and the Scripture doctrine of Baptism there is none. God predestines men to salvation, but not apart from the use of means; among these Baptism has a place. God effectually calls men, but he calls them to obey the Gospel. The salvation of the Elect is sure; but this is not inconsistent with conditions of salvation proclaimed to men; for if it is, we must repudiate the demand for Repentance and Faith as well as for Baptism. Every person quickened by the Spirit will infallibly desire to obey the whole Gospel. There is, therefore, no inconsistency here. In Baptism the soul "lays hold of that for which it was laid hold of by Christ Jesus,"² and fulfils a part of God's eternal decree by consecrating itself forever to him, and receiving whatever of promise and of blessing the Lord bestows in Baptism.³

And here let us note that the Scriptural doctrine of Baptism leaves

¹ Good old Du Vell, who found his way from Judaism, through Romanism and Anglicanism to the Baptist position, says in his *Commentary on the Acts*, London, 1685, (ii. 38), "*in the remission of sins*, that is, to seal the remission of sins, received or to be received, by the full assurance of the conscience." He confounded the use of *in* with that of *on*, according to the imperfect grammar of those days; but he had not heard of "on account of," as a translation of *in*.

² Phil. iii. 12.

³ "Regeneration," in the ordinary Baptist acceptance of that term, must precede forgiveness. The order is (1.) "Regeneration," or as we prefer to say, "effectual calling." (2.) Obedience to the Gospel, as a result. (3.) Pardon. God cannot forgive an "unregenerate" soul; if he did he would forgive an impenitent and unbelieving soul. "The sacraments of the New Testament are made means of grace to the individual who rightly partakes of them. . . . they pre-suppose or imply the possession of grace; but they are also made the means of adding to that grace. They are seals of a covenant already made between the soul and Christ they become effectual means of imparting saving blessings in addition to those enjoyed before." (Bannerman's "The Church of Christ," Vol. II, pp. 12, 13.)

room for God to carry out his electing decree in those cases where, if Remission were conditioned on Baptism alone, it might seem that that decree would be baffled.¹ Suppose one of his chosen ones, moved to penitence, but dying before Christ is made known so fully that he can "believe on him"; or believing, but dying before it is possible to be immersed. Is he lost? God's covenant binds us in obedience and preaching. We have no right to vary the terms of the Gospel by so much as a hair's breath. But he is free, if he will, to *exceed* his promise. Would not Cornelius have been saved if he had died before he heard Peter? Was not the robber on the cross, repenting and believing, but absolutely debarred from Baptism, received into Paradise? Philosophically speaking, only Repentance is, in the nature of the case, *necessary* to salvation—a *sine qua non* in every conceivable case. God can renew, pardon and save a soul ignorant of Incarnation and Atonement, though of course, for the sake of Christ. Many ancient saints, if not all, must have been thus saved. We believe that some of God's elect have first known conscious union with Christ on meeting him in Paradise. Much less is Baptism a *necessary* condition of salvation. It is what it is by divine appointment.² God will find means to complete his work of grace in every elect soul. He will find opportunity here or hereafter, to bestow on every one "given" from eternity to Christ, those gifts normally and regularly connected with Baptism.³ He will, also, keep those who truly obey the Gospel unto salvation,⁴ since such obedience shows that they have been effectually "called" by the Spirit, and is the result of God's electing decree.⁵ But we have no need to shrink from receiving his Gospel, or from announcing it, just as he has given it, through fear of conflict with the "Doctrines of Grace." Andrew Fuller made this clear as to Repentance and Faith; is it not equally clear as to Baptism?

In a word, the Spirit of God plants the germ of a new life in the soil of the human heart. Then, according to the law of a normal development, grows the dark root of Repentance, rises the firm stalk of Faith, blooms the "bright consummate flower" of Baptism, ripen the fruits of the Spirit unto Life Eternal.

JAMES W. WILLMARTH.

PEMBERTON, N. J.

¹ Hence those who hold to Remission solely conditioned on, or bestowed in Baptism, are uniformly Arminians.

² "The necessity of Baptism is not absolute, but relative." Dr. P. Schaff in Lange's John (iii. 5).

³ Ebrard (as interpreted by Dr. Bliss): "To every such soul Christ will communicate himself, with or without Baptism; but regularly and in the intended economy of salvation, Baptism is the ceremony of Christ's incorporation with the soul." We should prefer to say, the ceremony of the soul's union with Christ. Baptism, "We in Christ." The communion, "Christ in us."

⁴ Phil. i. 6; 1 Peter i. 5.

⁵ Acts xiii. 48; Rom. viii. 30.