

Deal Pentecostal Church Training School

Reference Material

Study 6 Water Baptism of Believers

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Water Baptism

Petts, David, *You'd Better Believe It*, Mattersey, Mattersey Hall, 1999, (Ch.13, *Water Baptism*, pp79-89).

Once we have been born again, the first step of obedience that is required of us is that we should be baptised in water. In this chapter we will consider various forms of 'baptism' practised in the church today in the light of the true meaning of the word baptise, and will then go on to examine why, how, and when we should be baptised. Finally we will take a look at some serious misunderstandings and misuse of baptism.

Methods of baptism

Largely speaking today there are two very different kinds of baptism. First, there is 'infant baptism'. This is perhaps the most common form of 'baptism' today. It is practised by the Roman Catholics, the Church of England, Methodists and others. During the 'christening' service the minister sprinkles the child's head with water.

The other form of baptism in common use today is believer's baptism by immersion. This is practised mainly by Baptists, Pentecostals, and the 'new churches'. It is quite different from 'infant baptism' because only believers are baptised. This means that no baby is ever baptised because he or she is too young to be a believer in Jesus. Another difference is that the person being baptised is not just sprinkled, but is completely immersed — that is, dipped — under the water. These, then, are the two main kinds of baptism today. We shall now seek to answer the question, Which kind is right? And in order to do so we will first consider the meaning of the word 'baptise'.

The meaning of baptism

For the meaning of a word it is usual to turn to a dictionary.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines baptism as follows: Religious rite of immersing (person) in, or sprinkling with, water in sign of purification and admission to the Church accompanied by name-giving.

Although this is a fair statement of how the word 'baptism' is used in English today, it is not the meaning of the Greek word used in the New Testament when Jesus commanded his disciples to baptise. We will say more about this under the heading 'The mode of baptism', so for the moment we will confine ourselves to the meaning of the Greek word baptizo which means 'I baptise'. In the Greek language baptizo can mean 'submerge', 'overwhelm', or 'immerse', but never 'sprinkle'. If a Greek wanted to say 'I sprinkle', he would say rhantizo, and if Jesus had intended his followers to be sprinkled he would have talked about 'rhantism' not baptism! In short, the Greek word baptizo cannot mean 'I sprinkle', and so if a person has only been sprinkled, they have not really been baptised, for to be baptised means to be immersed.

Having, then, considered the meaning of the word 'baptism', we shall now ask the question 'Why is it important for a Christian to be baptised? What are our motives for being baptised?'

Motives for baptism

a) Jesus was baptised

In John 12:26 Jesus told us that if we serve him we must follow him. Similarly 1 Peter 2:21 tells us that we should follow in the steps of Jesus. We see from these verses that as Christians we should follow Christ's example. Since Jesus was baptised (Matthew 3:13-17), it follows that we should be.

b) To fulfil all righteousness

When Jesus asked John the Baptist to baptise him, John protested on the grounds that he was not worthy to baptise Jesus. To this Jesus replied: Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). If Jesus who was sinless felt it necessary to be baptised in order to 'fulfil all righteousness' he clearly felt that he would not have remained completely righteous if he had not been baptised. It was a good thing to do, and Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it sins (James 4:17). How much more then ought we to be baptised?

c) Jesus commanded it

This is the simplest, strongest and most obvious reason for baptism. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus said:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...

To refuse to be baptised is to disobey Jesus. To delay one's decision to be baptised is to continue in disobedience.

d) Its connection with the baptism in the Holy Spirit

The following scriptures show us that, although the baptism in the Spirit is different from baptism in water, there is nevertheless a very important link between them (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5, Acts 2:38, Acts 11:16). However, we will deal with the important subject of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Chapter Fifteen.

e) Baptism is a symbol of death, burial and resurrection

In Romans 6:2 we are told that as Christians we are 'dead to sin'. Our old sinful nature was 'crucified with Christ' (v.6). Accordingly we must count ourselves to be 'dead to sin, but alive to God' (v.11). Putting it simply, a dead body cannot sin.

It cannot, for example, tell lies, kill or steal. It is incapable of sinning! So, since the Bible tells us to think of ourselves as dead as far as sin is concerned, when we are tempted we should say, No, I am dead to sin. I am only alive for God As far as sin is concerned, I'm dead. And as long as you think of yourself as dead to sin, you will be!

Now the thing about dead people is that they have to be buried. This is where baptism in water comes in. Romans 6:3-4 tells us that we are buried by baptism into Christ's death. Baptism, then, is a picture or symbol of the burial and resurrection of Christ. When we are baptised we are showing our identification and union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. We, too, are dead (to sin). We must, therefore, be buried (in baptism). As we come up out of the water, we come up, so to speak, out of the grave, raised from the dead (old life) to live a new life, free from sin.

f) God's motive

So far we have given five scriptural reasons why we should be baptised. But the question naturally arises, 'But why does God command baptism? It seems such an odd thing to do!' Of course, on the face of it, baptism does seem an unusual ceremony; but then, so too is the Communion Service (see Chapter Fourteen) humanly speaking. We must tread very carefully here. It is enough that God has commanded these things. It is not our prerogative to ask why God has commanded them. However, perhaps we could reverently suggest — and it is only a suggestion — a reason why God has commanded that we should undergo this apparently strange ceremony.

It is a simple fact of human nature that we remember relatively little of what we hear. We remember rather more of what we hear and see. We remember even more of what we

hear and see and take part in. Now in baptism, we do not merely hear that we are dead, but we see and take part in our own burial service! God wants us to know that we are dead to sin and alive to him. He wants us to count on it. He wants us to remember it. So he gets us to act out our identification with Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

Whenever I see another Christian baptised I remember my own baptism. I remember that I too have been buried with Christ, that I too am dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I am reminded that I ought to be living for Jesus.

The mode of baptism

As we saw when we considered the meaning of the word 'baptism', the dictionary says that a person may be baptised by either immersion or sprinkling. But apart from the fact that the Greek word baptizo simply means 'immerse' and not 'sprinkle', the Bible itself makes it perfectly clear that in New Testament times baptism was always by immersion.

For one thing, as we saw from Romans 6, baptism is a picture of burial. If baptism had been by sprinkling in the days of the apostle Paul, his readers would have found the symbolism of such passages completely meaningless. We do not sprinkle people with earth when we bury them. We cover them.

It was because baptism was always by immersion in the New Testament that John baptised 'in the River Jordan' (Matthew 3:6, Mark 1:5, 9). If he had merely sprinkled those he baptised, he would presumably have done so on the banks of Jordan and not in it. This is why he baptised at Aenon, because there was plenty of water (John 3:23). You don't need plenty of water to sprinkle people!

In Matthew 3:16 we are told that Jesus went up out of the water after his baptism, clearly implying that he had gone down into it. Similarly in Acts 8:38 we are told that when Philip baptised the eunuch, both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and that they came up out of the water. Again this shows that baptism was by immersion.

Of course there are occasions in scripture when baptism is not described so fully as in the passages we have just mentioned. So those who practise sprinkling argue that for all we know such people may have been sprinkled! However, in the absence of any positive statement to this effect in the New Testament, it would be foolish to base our doctrines on so doubtful an assumption. And, of course, we do know how these people were baptised, for in being told that they were 'baptised' at all we are told that they were immersed, for that is the meaning of the word baptizo. Indeed, there is no doubt whatsoever that in the light of holy scripture we may confidently reassert that if a person has only been sprinkled, they have not really been baptised.

The moment of baptism

Having now shown very clearly that the biblical mode of baptism was by immersion, we must turn our attention to the subject of the moment of baptism. In other words, when should a person be baptised?

The Bible is quite clear on this point too. Although no statement is made as to how old a person ought to be before they are baptised, we are told that baptism should happen after repentance and faith. Preaching to the crowd on the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared, Repent and be baptised (Acts 2:38).

First repentance, then — and only then — baptism.

When giving the disciples the Great Commission, Jesus told them Whoever believes and is baptised shall be saved (Mark, 16:16). Belief must precede baptism. They were to make disciples of all nations, baptising them... (Matthew 28:19). That is why when the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip if he might be baptised, Philip replied, If you believe with all your heart, you may (Acts 8:36-37).

The scriptural conditions for baptism, then, are repentance, faith, and discipleship. This clearly, rules out the possibility of babies being baptised, especially when we bear in mind that there is not one case of infant baptism to be found anywhere in the Bible. This leads us very understandably to ask the question, 'Then how did such an unscriptural practice ever come into existence, and why do those who claim to believe in the Bible persist in it today?'

Misunderstandings and the misuse of baptism

In seeking to answer this question we need to remember that the church of Jesus Christ has been in existence for nearly two thousand years and that during that time there has been plenty of opportunity for misunderstandings to arise and for unscriptural practices to creep in. In recent centuries God has been gradually drawing Christians back to the pattern of the early church and to the teachings of the scriptures. Yet for many there has been an unwillingness to abandon what has in some cases been the tradition of centuries, however unscriptural that tradition may be. Rather, such people have attempted to show that their traditions are scriptural, and as a result have read into the New Testament much that is not there. Such is unfortunately the case with the subject of infant baptism.

It seems that very early in the history of the church there arose the heresy of 'baptismal regeneration'. This theory taught that if you were not baptised you could not go to heaven, and that conversely if you were baptised you would go to heaven - or that you would at least stand a chance of getting there eventually! Now as Bible-believing Christians we know, of course, that it is by faith that we are saved (Galatians 2:16), and not by baptism. Baptism is an act of obedience because we are saved. It is not a ceremony to save us. Two cases in scripture make this point clear. In Acts 8 Simon the sorcerer was baptised (v.13) although his heart was not right before God (v.21), and in Luke 23:42-43 the repentant thief was obviously saved although he had no opportunity to be baptised.

Such scriptures conclusively demonstrate the error of the doctrine of 'baptismal regeneration', but it was from this error that the practice of infant baptism arose. Babies often died at an early age and the belief arose that if they were baptised they would go to heaven. That such an idea should be taken seriously is almost laughable to those who are familiar with the pages of the New Testament! It is utterly unthinkable that God would keep a baby out of heaven just because its parents didn't have it sprinkled! Jesus said concerning little children, Of such is the kingdom of heaven, and this is surely sufficient grounds for believing that babies (whether sprinkled or not) go straight to heaven when they die.

Finally, we should mention the question of household baptisms. Those who practise infant baptism usually try to justify it on the grounds that there are occasions in the Bible when whole households were baptised. It is probable, they say, that there were babies in those households. However, there is no evidence whatever that this was the case. There are

five cases of household baptism in the New Testament, and not only are babies never mentioned, but if we look at each passage carefully we see that it is in fact highly unlikely that there were any in the households concerned.

In Acts 10:24-48 we read of the circumstances in which Cornelius and his household were baptised. In verse 24 we are told that he had called together his relatives and close friends. These people gathered to listen to what Peter had to say (v.33), were converted and received the Holy Spirit, speaking in other tongues (v.46). In verse 48 Peter commanded them to be baptised. It is possible that there were young children present, for young children may be saved and received the Holy Spirit, and for that matter may be baptised. But the circumstances described clearly rule out any possibility that tiny babies, who are incapable of repentance and faith, were converted, received the Holy Spirit, and were accordingly baptised in water.

Lydia and her household were baptised in Acts 16:14-15, but since she was probably single, having her own business, it seems unlikely that there were any babies in the home. The Philippian jailor and his household were baptised in Acts 16:32-34, but verse 34 tells us that the whole family believed, so clearly there were no babies present there, as babies are incapable of believing. The same is true of the household of Crispus (Acts 18:8). Paul baptised the household of Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:16) but they are described as having devoted themselves to the service of the saints (1 Corinthians 16:15), a phrase which is hardly applicable to infants!

So we see that, far from strengthening the case of those who would seek to justify infant baptism, the examples of household baptism in the New Testament simply serve to show to what lengths people will go in an attempt to find in

the scriptures a warrant for their unscriptural traditions and practices. A simple reading of the New Testament will leave us in no doubt that those who have repented of their sin and put their trust in Christ as Saviour, so becoming his disciples, are commanded to be immersed in water in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Christians who have not been baptised in this way should seek to obey the Lord Jesus in this matter immediately.

Ceremony of Water Baptism

Cornwall, J., *Back to Basics*, Brentwood, Sharon Press, 1994, (*The Ceremony of Water Baptism*, pp85-90).

Even a person entering a service organization has an initiation. There is some form of public ceremony that states "He is one of us." Water baptism is an initiation into the Body of Christ. It has a far deeper meaning than mere church membership, for it is scripturally commanded, Biblically illustrated, and historically consistent. In the Old Testament it was part of the proselyte ceremony that enabled a Gentile to enter Judaism. It signified the washing away of the old religion and rising into the new. The proselyte entered into a new family and embraced the covenants of God.

In the New Testament, we do not build Christian fellowship on creed; but on Christ. It is not common likes that bring us together, but a common life. We are not bound by friendship, but by family. We don't even pick and choose those with whom we fellowship; we accept those whom God has chosen and learn to love them.

Being a Christian is not based on a change of mind; it is based upon a change of heart and inner life. Jesus spoke of it as being "born again" (John 3:7). No other descriptive term explains it better. Salvation is a drastic and radical change

produced by the life of Christ in the new convert. Much as birth is a passing from one form of life in the womb to another form of life outside of it, conversion is a birth of a person's spirit into a totally new realm. Both the natural and the spiritual birth processes involve passing from the water. The natural infant passes through the water in the mother's placenta to the air of the birthing room. Similarly, the spiritual infant passes through the waters of baptism. In the Old Testament after Moses led Israel out of Egypt (a type of our salvation), this new nation passed through the Red Sea. The New Testament explains: They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. (1 Corinthians 10:2). Consistently the Bible puts conversion and water baptism together. It is not the water experience that produces the conversion, but the conversion requires the outward confession of the inward change.

This is not baptismal regeneration, that is, being saved by the act of water baptism. Still we must acknowledge that the Bible puts conversion and water baptism together like bread and butter. They belong together. The one is substance; the other is demonstration. Conversion is God's inner work; water baptism is man's outer demonstration of that inner work. Before Jesus entered His public ministry He went from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John (Matthew 3:13). When John first refused, saying that he needed to be baptized by Jesus, the Lord explained that this request was an act of obedience, so John accommodated Jesus. If the sinless Jesus obeyed the Word by submitting to water baptism, why do we transformed sinners find this act of obedience so distasteful and difficult?

On the day of Pentecost, Peter set the tone that the Church followed for succeeding generations when he said: Repent

and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38). After his sermon, his altar call produced 3,000 conversions, and we read, Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day (Acts 2:41). That must have been some baptismal service!

When Philip entered the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch emit taught Christ to him, faith changed his heart and he exclaimed to Philip: Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptised? (Acts 8:36). They stopped the chariot and baptised him. The conversion and baptism were almost simultaneous.

Similarly Peter obediently went to the house of Cornelius and preached Jesus to his household. When the Holy Spirit fell them, to the amazement of both Peter and those who had accompanied him to Caesarea, Peter's immediate response was: "Can anyone keep these people from being baptised with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 10:47-48).

Water baptism is an obedient response to a clear command in the Bible. It is the initiation ceremony into the family of God. In the New Testament the ritual was clearly immersion. They went "down into the water" and "came up out of the water". The convenience of sprinkling does not answer either of these actions.

Most Evangelical, Charismatic, and Pentecostal churches practice full immersion baptisms. Many churches have built baptismal tanks in their sanctuaries to make this more convenient. In the days of my father's ministry, I remember him taking persons to the ocean and rivers. In warm climates some groups use swimming pools as baptismal tanks. The

people gather at someone's swimming pool and have a beautiful worship service as they watch persons allow their old life to be symbolically buried and rise to a newness of life in Christ Jesus. Where we are baptised is far less important than that we are baptized. God commands it; we must submit to it.

Most ministers do not preach that it is impossible to be saved if a person has not been water baptized, for the baptism is subsequent to that salvation, not the producer of it. We have no record of the thief on the cross being baptized, but Jesus assured him that I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43). Still, the disobedience of refusing water baptism puts the believer in a dangerous spiritual condition.

Even satan views water baptism as the final loss of a person. In India a person may attend a Christian school or church, and he or she may become an active participant in either program, without penalty. But once he or she submits to water baptism, each is cut off from their families and the government removes their names from the registration rolls. Technically, they no longer exist. The devil knows God's initiation rites better than we do. He also knows the rite of commemoration, and he hates it.

Ordinances - Water Baptism

Lancaster, J, *The Ordinances*, Pentecostal Doctrine (Ed. Brewster, P.S.), 1976, (*Water Baptism*, pp82-85).

Christ's commission to the apostles clearly set forth the necessity for baptism (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). It is equally clear that baptism was accepted as the normal, outward response for those who were converted through the evangelism of the Early Church (Acts 2:38; 8:12, 36-38; 9:18;

10:47,48; 16:33; 19:5). If any man hesitated over obeying this command, he could be reminded that the Lord who gave it had Himself submitted to it, though He had no need of repentance, declaring that "thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3 : 15).

While Gentile converts to Judaism were required to undergo baptism, it is in the baptism of John that the real roots of Christian baptism are to be found. G.R. Beasley-Murray has suggested that John's baptism had "two focal points: it marked the 'turn' (repentance means conversion) of a Jew to God, associating him with the penitent people and assuring him of forgiveness and cleansing, and it anticipated the Messianic baptism with Spirit and fire, assuring him a place in the kingdom" (Dictionary of New Testament Theology, page 146). In submitting to this rite, Christ was publicly identifying Himself with sinful men and acknowledging their need for repentance before they could be restored to fellowship with God. The voice from heaven and the descending Spirit marked not only Christ's identity as the Son and God's approval of His perfect obedience expressed in baptism, but also gave "official" recognition to Him as the Lamb of God, the divinely- appointed means of salvation (Matthew 3:13-16, cf. John 1: 29-36).

The baptism of Jesus, therefore, not only sets us an example in obedience, but also provides us with clues as to the meaning of baptism. It not only points to the necessity of repentance, but also sets forth Jesus as the focal point of the saving activity of God and in this way anticipates Paul's definition of the true response to the gospel as "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). This is why baptism in the name of Jesus was required of those who had already been subject to John's baptism (Acts

19:3-5). It represents not only repentance, but also looks in faith towards Jesus as the Son of God, the Saviour from sin and the Baptiser in the Holy Spirit. Thus, while the "baptismal formula" of Matthew 28:19 is set out in the threefold name of the Trinity, the reference to baptism in the Book of Acts are almost always "in the name of Jesus", not because of any essential distinction between the members of the Trinity, but because it is only through faith in Christ and His redeeming work that the sinner can enter into fellowship with the triune God. As Christ's baptism speaks of His identification with us as sinners, so our baptism speaks of our identification with Him in His perfect obedience. No man can come to the Father but by Him.

Repentance and faith are basic to baptism, which is at once the acknowledgement of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the declaration of surrender to Christ as Lord and Saviour. In it, the sinner repudiates the sinful way of life that has dishonoured God and brought the wrath of God upon him, at the same time gratefully confessing that he is now a follower of Jesus Christ. While, therefore, baptism expresses and may well consummate the act of repentance, it does not of itself constitute repentance and, while it may in the same way express and consummate conversion to Christ, it does not of itself either constitute conversion or convey the regenerating grace of God. Though there has been much controversy over the exact meaning of Romans 6:1-11 and 1 Corinthians 12:13, it seems clear to the writer that the "baptism" in view here is not the outward rite but the inward work of the Spirit for which the outward rite is a symbol. We are thus baptised or immersed into Christ, united with Him in His death and resurrection by faith and the operation of the Holy Spirit, not merely in a technical sense, but in a real,

moral, spiritual sense, in which the implications of His atoning work are not only imputed to us but also reproduced within us. In the same way, we are "baptised into one body" not merely by undergoing a rite, but by the regenerating work of the Spirit, which incorporates us spiritually but actually into Christ and His Church. A man may therefore be baptised in water without either truly repenting or receiving new life in Christ; by the same token baptism itself does not make a man a real member of the Church. Unless water baptism points to an inner event which has either preceded it or is taking place simultaneously it has no validity. Being baptised "into Christ" means "putting on" Christ (Galatians 3:27), but this is possible only to those who have become sons of God through faith (v. 26), those, that is, who have been born again (John 1:12, 13; 3:3-8).

Baptism outwardly expresses the inward cleansing effected by the Word and the Spirit (Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5) and the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. It is a "sign and seal" of a transaction that has taken place in which God's grace and man's faith have committed themselves to each other. For this reason, Pentecostals cannot accept the implications of infant baptism. In the New Testament records, baptism is invariably associated with receiving the Word (Acts 2:41), believing on Christ (Acts 8:12,37) and repentance (Acts 2:38), responses which an uncomprehending infant cannot make. There is no direct evidence whatever in "household baptisms" that children were included, indeed in Acts 18:8 it is expressly stated that Crispus "believed . . . together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptised" (RSV), so that belief and baptism are clearly linked, even in a "household" context.

It seems clear from 1 Corinthians 7:14 that the children of believers are made holy by their parents' faith until such times as they are old enough to become responsible before God, but this is a different thing from saying that they are regenerate and made members of Christ's Church through the administration of a sacrament in which they have no sensible part. For this reason, Pentecostals along with others have preferred the service of Infant Dedication. They have never pretended this to be a "sacrament", nor have they claimed for it any binding Scriptural warrant. Relating it to the action of Hannah (1 Samuel 1:24-28) and that of the mothers in bringing their children to Christ (Matthew 19:13-15), they see it rather as an act of thanksgiving to God in which Christian parents, desiring to acknowledge Christ in all things, have brought their children to Him, seeking His blessing upon themselves as parents and upon the life entrusted to their care.

There is little doubt, as George Beasley-Murray has shown in his book *Baptism in the New Testament*, that the words for baptism ("bapto" and "baptizo") mean "to dip" or "to immerse". Certainly baptism by total immersion expresses far more accurately from the visual point of view the idea for which it stands, i.e. the "burial" and "resurrection" of the believer in union with His Lord. It is interesting to note that Rudolf Bultmann points out that baptism "was normally consummated as a bath in which the one receiving baptism completely submerged" (*Theology of the New Testament* 1, page 133).

While we have stressed that baptism does not constitute conversion or convey regeneration, it would be wrong to minimise its importance as an act required by God. It is a command of Jesus (Matthew 28:19) and it was required by the

Early Church as an important part of the response made by men to the gospel (Acts 2:38). While baptism is not essential to salvation, it is essential to full Christian obedience. In the waters of baptism, the believer ratifies His commitment to Christ and God confirms through the inner witness of the Spirit His acceptance and approval of that faith. In this it becomes a means of grace and a source of great joy to those who meet its demands sincerely.

Water Baptism of Believers

Baptism

The word Baptism is not an English word but the translators of the Bible “transliterated” it from the Greek word βάπτισμα (βαπτίζω |) meaning to dip, immerse or saturate. Thus the use of the word “baptism” has changed from an everyday verb meaning to get wet into a religious ceremony.

Water Baptism is a spiritual Funeral Service, where a Christian is totally submerged in water, (depicting their burial in a grave) and then rises up out of the water, (depicting their resurrection to new life in Jesus). Baptism always follows belief in Jesus, never precedes faith. Without faith in Jesus Christ, baptism is only a religious bath or shower! In the Bible, only Believers were water baptised, not babies!

Why?

Baptism is Jesus command and acknowledges that God’s way is right:

*Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

Matthew 3:15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." Then John consented.

Who?

Believers were baptised:

Faith in Jesus Christ is a pre-requisite to baptism because it is a symbol or dramatical statement about the change that has previously occurred in the person's life – the spiritual birth called conversion

Acts 16:32-34 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptised. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women.

Acts 8:36-37 As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptised?" Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

(For vs 37 see footnote in some versions)

How?

In water (remember baptism means to be saturated not sprinkled):

Mark 1:9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan.

Acts 8:38-39 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly

took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

When?

As soon as you believe:

Acts 2:41 Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 16:33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptised.

Purpose?

The forgiveness of sins and a good conscience:

Acts 2:38-39 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

1 Peter 3:21 and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Acts 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'

Col. 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Romans 6:3-5 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

Stop rejecting God's purposes for your life now.

Luke 7:29-30 (All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had

been baptised by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptised by John.)

If you are not water baptised as a Believer, why not? See your Pastor and make arrangements to be baptised: It is the pledge of a good conscience.

Baptism as a “Sacrament?”

The traditional definition of sacrament is “an act (usually a formal religious ceremony) that confers specific grace on those who receive it”.

A sacrament, as defined in Hexam's Concise Dictionary of Religion is "a Rite in which God is uniquely active."

Augustine of Hippo defined a Christian sacrament as "a visible sign of an invisible reality." The Anglican Book of Common Prayer speaks of them as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible Grace." Examples of sacraments would be Baptism and the Mass." Therefore a sacrament is a religious symbol or often a rite which conveys divine grace, blessing, or sanctity upon the believer who participates in it, or a tangible symbol which represents an intangible reality. As defined above, an example would be baptism in water, representing (and conveying) the grace of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Forgiveness of Sins, and membership into the Church. Anointing with holy anointing oil is another example which is often synonymous with receiving the Holy Spirit and salvation as mentioned in James 5:14. Another way of looking at Sacraments is that they are an external and physical sign of the conferral of Sanctifying Grace. Throughout the Christian faith views concerning which rites are sacramental, that is conferring sanctifying grace, and what it means for an external act to be sacramental vary widely.

Other religious traditions also have what might be called "sacraments" in a sense, though not necessarily according to the Christian meaning of the term.

In the majority of Western Christianity, the generally accepted definition of a sacrament is that it is an outward sign that conveys an inward, spiritual grace through Christ. Christian churches, denominations, and sects are divided regarding the number and operation of the sacraments. Sacraments are generally held to have been instituted by Jesus Christ, although in some cases this point is debated. They are usually administered by the clergy to a recipient or recipients, and are generally understood to involve visible and invisible components. The invisible component (manifested inwardly) is understood to be brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit, God's grace working in the sacrament's participants, while the visible (or outward) component entails the use of such things as water, oil, and bread and wine that is blessed or consecrated; the laying-on-of-hands; or a particularly significant covenant that is marked by a public benediction (such as with marriage or absolution of sin in the reconciliation of a penitent).

The two most widely accepted sacraments are Baptism and the Eucharist (or Lord's Supper). However the traditional Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church or divine mysteries are listed as the following:

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation (Chrismation in the Orthodox tradition)
3. Holy Orders or Ordination
4. The Eucharist, Mass or Lord's Supper
5. Reconciliation of a Penitent (Confession)
6. Anointing of the Sick or Extreme Unction
7. Matrimony

In the Anglican tradition, the sacerdotal function (administration of the Sacraments) is assigned to clergy in the three orders of ministry: bishops, priests and deacons. Anglicans hold to the principle of *ex opere operato* with respect to the efficacy of the sacraments *vis-a-vis* the presider and his or her administration thereof. Article XXVI of the Thirty-nine Articles (entitled Of the unworthiness of ministers which hinders not the effect of the Sacrament) states that the "ministration of the Word and Sacraments" is not done in the name of the one performing the sacerdotal function, "neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness," since the sacraments have their effect "because of Christ's intention and promise, although they be ministered by evil men."

Baptists and Pentecostals, among other Christian denominations, use the word ordinance, rather than sacrament because of certain sacerdotal ideas connected, in their view, with the word sacrament. These churches argue that the word ordinance points to the ordaining authority of Christ which lies behind the practice.

Although many churches accept baptism as a Sacrament, the Bible is clear that it is only faith which can convey an inward, spiritual grace:

Romans 4:3 *What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

It is not the ritual of "baptism" but faith expressed in the act of obedience that imparts the spiritual "credit" or value. The New Covenant is a heart issue not a legal document like the Old Covenant

Baptism in Paul's letter to the Ephesians

2001 – 2006 Andrew Corbett Legana, Tasmania, Australia
to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's word.
Ephesians 5:26

The New Living Translation renders this verse quite controversially. Most other English translations render this passage as the Church being washed by the Word of God. The NLT renders it as being washed by baptism and God's Word. Does baptism wash the Church thereby making it clean? If it doesn't, why is it such an important New Testament rite included in the Great Commission as fundamental to discipleship?

I regard water baptism as sacramental. A sacrament is a rite that touches all three time zones and makes visible an "invisible" truth. It is rooted in the past by drawing upon its origin. It has present relevance in both its act and its spiritual impact. And it has future implications as a foreshadow (Col. 2:17). Marriage is a sacrament. It looks back to the Garden of Eden when God instituted marriage. It has a present relevance in the covenant ceremony, and spiritually bringing two people together to become one flesh. It is a shadow of the future uniting of Christ and the Church. (Holy Communion is also a sacrament.)

Water baptism as a sacrament is rooted in the past through following the example of Christ and identifying with His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:2-5). It is a present reality in that it publicly seals our covenant with Christ (Col. 2:11-12, in the same way that circumcision sealed the Older Covenant), and it spiritually affects us as well. It's future implication is in the hope of the resurrection since it foreshadows our own resurrection to complete newness.

But does the New Testament consistently identify water baptism as cleansing or washing the Church? No. The rendering by the NLT translators here is hermeneutical licence. Theologically there is dubious case to be made for water baptism cleansing the believer (refer to Acts 22:16). All New Testament references to being washed, cleansed, or purified have more to do with the Holy Spirit's outworking of the blood of Christ in the life of the believer. In the Old Testament it was the blood of the animal sacrifices that "cleansed" Israel (Lev. 16:19). The New Testament is consistent however that it is the blood of Christ that cleanses us from sin (Rom. 5:9; Heb. 9:13-14; 10:29).

Under the Older Covenant animals were sacrifices repeated to atone for Israel's sins. But the priests were also required to look into the Bronze Washbasin (other translations include: Sea, large basin, bowl, laver) and wash themselves clean from dirt and dust.

"Make a large bronze washbasin with a bronze pedestal. Put it between the Tabernacle and the altar, and fill it with water. Aaron and his sons will wash their hands and feet there before they go into the Tabernacle to appear before the LORD and before they approach the altar to burn offerings to the LORD. They must always wash before ministering in these ways, or they will die." Exodus 30:18-20

It is generally agreed that the washbasin, made of bronze mirrors, was typological of the Word of God and both its mirror and washing qualities (James 1:23). Whether or not the NLT is simply trying to be consistent in its hermeneutics or not I don't know, but curiously they render John 15:3 where Christ says that His word cleanses His followers, as being Christ's words pruning His vine-like people.

You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ^(NIV)
You have already been pruned for greater fruitfulness by the message I have given you. ^(NLT) John 15:3

Just as the priest was required to daily wash from the washbasin to be cleansed from the grime of the day, the believer is required to regularly check into the washbasin of the Word of God and “wash” themselves with the words of God. As the Church lives out the Word of God it is being washed and separated from the grime of the world.

He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. Ephesians 5:27

Some see this verse as only referring to the glorified (heavenly) state of the Church. But the context of the previous verse shows that the means of cleansing, glorifying, de-spotting, de-wrinkling and de-blemishing to make the Church holy and without fault, is the washing of water by the Word of God. The problem for those who regard this verse as only applying to the Heavenly Church is that the Church in Heaven isn't really going to need to be cleansed by the Word of God. As unlikely as it sounds, this verse forecasts a last days Church that is thoroughly immersed and applying the Word of God that it is without wrinkle or blemish. As a student of Church history I can see the Word of God maturing the Church throughout the ages. We now take for granted the deity of Christ; the nature of the Godhead; salvation by faith in Christ; the priesthood of all believers; and the recognition of the various ministry gifts that Christ has given to the Church. But all of these doctrinal positions came about at distinct points in Church History. If Christ can be seen to direct the affairs of His Church throughout history, He can most definitely do it in the present and future.

Christ is going to present to Himself a holy and faultless Church. If being washed by the Word looks like a Church living and applying the Word of God corporately, we can expect a holy and faultless Church to look like a Church that is pure in doctrine, united in spirit, each individual part doing its part, and engaging the powers of darkness by spreading the Gospel to every nation, tribe and tongue. Jesus Himself alluded to this when He said

And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then, finally, the end will come. Matthew 24:14

While some Christians have previously looked to the happenings in the nation of Israel as the indicator of what God is doing according to His prophetic fulfilment agenda, the New Testament clearly points the Christian toward seeing what God is doing in the Church. Historically the Church has grappled with holiness and aloofness from the world. For the Church to be genuinely holy it must be in the world and therefore relevant, but not of the world and therefore corrupted. The last Church will be a relevant, respected but righteous Church.

Baptism History

The rite of baptism has its origin in the OT. Converts to Judaism underwent a “baptism” ceremony. Priests were “baptised” as a cleansing ceremony before they could minister. John baptised to prepare people for the Messiah *John 1:31-34* *I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, "The man on whom you see*

the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

Temple Worship

Edersheim A, *The Temple*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, reprinted 1980, (chap.6 Offerings, pp148-149)

Each guard consisted of ten men; so that in all two hundred and forty Levites and thirty priests were on duty every night. The Temple guards were relieved by day, but not during the night, which the Romans divided into four, but the Jews, properly, into three watches, the fourth being really the morning watch.¹ Hence, when the Lord saith, *'Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching,'* He expressly refers to the second and third watches as those of deepest sleep.²

During the night the 'captain of the Temple' made his rounds. On his approach the guards had to rise and salute him in a particular manner. Any guard found asleep when on duty was beaten, or his garments were set on fire—a punishment, as we know, actually awarded. Hence the admonition to us who, as it were, are here on Temple guard, *Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.*³ But, indeed, there could have been little inclination to sleep within the Temple, even had the deep emotion natural in the circumstances allowed it. True, the chief of the course and the heads of families' reclined on couches along that part of the Beth-Moked in which it was lawful to sit down,⁴ and the older priests might lie on the floor, having wrapped their priestly garments beside them,

¹ Compare Matt.14:25

² Luke 12:38

³ Rev.16:15

⁴ The part built out on the Chel; for it was not lawful for any but the king to sit down anywhere within the enclosure of the 'Priests' Court.'

while the younger men kept watch. But then the preparations for the service of the morning required each to be early astir. The priest whose duty it was to superintend the arrangements might any moment knock at the door and demand entrance. He came suddenly and unexpectedly, no one knew when. The Rabbis use almost the very words in which Scripture describes the unexpected coming of the Master,⁵ when they say, *Sometimes he came at the cock-crowing, sometimes a little earlier, sometimes a little later.* He came and knocked, and they opened to him. Then said he unto them, *All ye who have washed, come and cast lots.*⁶ For the customary bath required to have been taken before the superintending priest came round, since it was a principle that none might go into the court to serve, although he were clean, unless he had bathed. A subterranean passage, lit on both sides, led to the well-appointed bath-rooms where the priests immersed themselves. After that they needed not⁷ all that day to wash again, save their hands and feet, which they had to do each time, however often, they came for service into the Temple. It was, no doubt, to this that our Lord referred in His reply to Peter: *He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.*⁸

⁵ Mark 13:35

⁶ Mishnah, Tamid. i. 1, 2.

⁷ Except under one circumstance

⁸ John 13:10. The peculiarities of our Lord's washing the feet of the disciples are pointed out in Lightfoot, Hor. Heb. p. 1094

Johns' Baptism

Edersheim A, *The Life & Times Of Jesus The Messiah Vol.1*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, Vol.1, Book 2, Chap.11. "*In The Fifteenth Year Of Tiberius Caesar And Under The Pontificate Of Annas And Caiaphas — A Voice In The Wilderness*".

What John preached, that he also symbolized by a rite which, though not in itself, yet in its application, was wholly new. Hitherto the Law had it, that those who had contracted Levitical defilement were to immerse before offering sacrifice. Again, it was prescribed that such Gentiles as became 'proselytes of righteousness,' or 'proselytes of the Covenant' (Gerey hatstsedeq or Gerey habberith), were to be admitted to full participation in the privileges of Israel by the threefold rites of circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice, the immersion being, as it were, the acknowledgment and symbolic removal of moral defilement, corresponding to that of Levitical uncleanness. But never before had it been proposed that Israel should undergo a 'baptism of repentance,' although there are indications of a deeper insight into the meaning of Levitical baptisms.

Was it intended, that the hearers of John should give this as evidence of their repentance, that, like persons defiled, they sought purification, and, like strangers, they sought admission among the people who took on themselves the Rule of God? These two ideas would, indeed, have made it truly a 'baptism of repentance.' But it seems difficult to suppose, that the people would have been prepared for such admissions; or, at least, that there should have been no record of the mode in which a change so deeply spiritual was brought about. May it not rather have been that as, when the first Covenant was made, Moses was directed to prepare Israel by symbolic baptism of their persons and their garments, (Exodus 19:10,

14.) so the initiation of the new Covenant, by which the people were to enter into the Kingdom of God, was preceded by another general symbolic baptism of those who would be the true Israel, and receive, or take on themselves, the Law from God?

In that case the rite would have acquired not only a new significance, but be deeply and truly the answer to John's call. In such case also, no special explanation would have been needed on the part of the Baptist, nor yet such spiritual insight on that of the people as we can scarcely suppose them to have possessed at that stage. Lastly, in that case nothing could have been more suitable, nor more solemn, than Israel in waiting for the Messiah and the Rule of God, preparing as their fathers had done at the foot of Mount Sinai.

Edersheim A, *The Life & Times Of Jesus The Messiah Vol.1*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, Book 2, Chap.11.

The Baptism Of Proselytes

Edersheim A, *The Life & Times Of Jesus The Messiah Vol.2*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, Appendix 12 The Baptism Of Proselytes

Only those who have made study of it can have any idea how large, and sometimes bewildering, is the literature on the subject of Jewish Proselytes and their Baptism. Our present remarks will be confined to the Baptism of Proselytes.

1. Generally, as regards proselytes (Gerim) we have to distinguish between the Ger ha-Shaar (proselyte of the gate) and Ger Toshabh ('sojourner,' settled among Israel), and again the Ger hatstsedeq (proselyte of righteousness) and Ger habberith (proselyte of the covenant). The former are referred to by Josephus (Ant. 14:7. 2), and frequently in the New Testament, in the Authorised Version under the designation of those who 'fear God,' (Acts 13:16, 26); are 'religious,' (Acts

13:43); ‘devout,’ (Acts 13:50; 17:4, 17); ‘worship God,’ (Acts 16:14; 18:7).

Whether the expression ‘devout’ and ‘feared God’ in Acts 10:2, 7 refers to proselytes of the gates is doubtful. As the ‘proselytes of the gate’ only professed their faith in the God of Israel, and merely bound themselves to the observance of the so-called seven Noachic commandments (on which in another place), the question of ‘baptism’ need not be discussed in connection with them, since they did not even undergo circumcision.

2. It was otherwise with ‘the proselytes of righteousness,’ who became ‘children of the covenant,’ ‘perfect Israelites,’ Israelites in every respect, both as regarded duties and privileges. All writers are agreed that three things were required for the admission of such proselytes: Circumcision (Milah), Baptism (Tebhilah), and a Sacrifice (Qorban, in the case of women: baptism and sacrifice) — the latter consisting of a burnt-offering of a heifer, or of a pair of turtle doves or of young doves (Maimonides, Hilkh. Iss. Biah 13:5). After the destruction of the Temple, promise had to be made of a such sacrifice when the services of the Sanctuary were restored. On this and the ordinances about circumcision it is not necessary to enter further. That baptism was absolutely necessary to make a proselyte is so frequently stated as not to be disputed (See Maimonides, u.s.; the tractate Masseketh Gerim in Kirchheim’s *Septem Libri Talm. Parvi*, pp. 38-44 [which, however, adds little to our knowledge]; Targum on Exodus 12:44; Ber. 47 b; Kerith. 9 a; Jer. Yebam. p. 8 d; Yebam. 45 b, 46 a and b, 48 b, 76 a; Ab. Sar. 57 a, 59 a, and other passages). There was, indeed a difference between Rabbis Joshua and Eliezer, the former maintaining that baptism alone without circumcision, the latter that circumcision alone without

baptism, sufficed to make a proselyte, but the sages decided in favor of the necessity of both rites (Yebam. 46 a and b).

The baptism was to be performed in the presence of three witnesses, ordinarily Sanhedrists (Yebam. 47 b), but in case of necessity others might act. The person to be baptized, having cut his hair and nails, undressed completely, made fresh profession of his faith before what were 'the fathers of the baptism' (our Godfathers, Kethub. 11 a; Erub. 15 a), and then immersed completely, so that every part of the body was touched by the water. The rite would, of course, be accompanied by exhortations and benedictions (Maimonides, Hilkh. Milah 3:4; Hilkh. Iss. Biah 14:6).

Baptism was not to be administered at night, nor on a Sabbath or feast-day (Yebam. 46 b). Women were attended by those of their own sex, the Rabbis standing at the door outside. Yet unborn children of proselytes did not require to be baptized, because they were born 'in holiness' (Yebam. 78 a). In regard to the little children of proselytes opinions differed. A person under age was indeed received, but not regarded as properly an Israelite till he had attained majority. Secret baptism, or where only the mother brought a child, was not acknowledged. In general, the statements of a proselyte about his baptism required attestation by witnesses. But the children of a Jewess or of a proselyte were regarded as Jews, even if the baptism of the father was doubtful.

It was indeed a great thing when, in the words of Maimonides, a stranger sought shelter under the wings of the Shekhinah, and the change of condition which he underwent was regarded as complete. The waters of baptism were to him in very truth, though in a far different from the Christian sense, the 'bath of regeneration' (Titus 3:5). As he stepped out of these waters he was considered as 'born anew' — in the

language of the Rabbis, as if he were ‘a little child just born’ (Yeb. 22 a; 48 b, as ‘a child of one day’ (Mass. Ger. c. 2.). But this new birth was not ‘a birth from above’ in the sense of moral or spiritual renovation, but only as implying a new relationship to God, to Israel, and to his own past, present, and future. It was expressly enjoined that all the difficulties of his new citizenship should first be set before him, and if, after that, he took upon himself the yoke of the law, he should be told how all those sorrows and persecutions were intended to convey a greater blessing, and all those commandments to redound to greater merit. More especially was he to regard himself as a new man in reference to his past. Country, home, habits, friends, and relation were all changed. The past, with all that had belonged to it, was past, and he was a new man — the old, with its defilements, was buried in the waters of baptism. This was carried out with such pitiless logic as not only to determine such questions as those of inheritance, but that it was declared that, except, for the sake of not bringing proselytism into contempt, as a proselyte might have wedded his own mother or sister (comp. Yeb. 22 a; Sanh. 58 b). It is a curious circumstance that marriage with a female proselyte was apparently very popular (Horay. 13 a, line 5 from bottom; see also Shem. R. 27), and the Talmud names at least three celebrated doctors who were the offspring of such unions (comp. Derenbourg, *Hist. de la Palest.*, p. 223, note 2). The praises of proselytism are also sung in Vayy. R. 1.

If anything could have further enhanced the value of such proselytism, it would have been its supposed anitquity.

Tradition traced it up to Abraham and Sarah, and the expression (Genesis 12:5) ‘the souls that they had gotten’ was explained as referring to their proselytes, since ‘every one that makes a proselyte is as if he made (created) him’ (Ber. R. 39,

comp also the Targums Pseudo-Jon. and Jerus. and Midr. on Song of Solomon 1:3). The Talmud, differing in this from the Targumim, finds in Exodus 2:5 a reference to the baptism of Pharaoh's daughter (Sotah 12 b, line 3; Megill. 13 a, line 11). In Shem. R. 27 Jethro is proved to have been a convert, from the circumstances that his original name had been Jether (Exodus 4:18), an additional letter (Jethro), as in the case of Abraham, having been added to his name when became a proselyte (comp. Also Zebhach. 116 a and Targum Ps.-Jon. on Exodus 18:6, 27, Numbers 24:21. To pass over other instances, we are pointed to Ruth (Targum on Ruth 1:10, 15), and to Nebuzaradan — who is also described as a proselyte (Sanh. 96 b, line 19 from the bottom). But it is said that in the days of David and Solomon proselytes were not admitted by the Sanhedrin because their motives were suspected (Yeb. 76 a), or that at least they were closely watched.

But although the baptism of proselytes seems thus far beyond doubt, Christian theologians have discussed the question, whether the rite was practised at the time of Christ, or only introduced after the destruction of the Temple and its Services, to take the place of the Sacrifice previously offered. The controversy, which owed its origin chiefly to dogmatic prejudices on the part of Lutherans, Calvinists, and Baptists, has since been continued on historical or quasi-historical grounds. The silence of Josephus and Philo can scarcely be quoted in favour of the later origin of the rite. On the other hand, it may be urged that, as Baptism did not take the place of sacrifices in any other instance, it would be difficult to account for the origin of such a rite in connection with the admission of proselytes.

Again, if a Jew who had become Levitically defiled, required immersion, it is difficult to suppose that a heathen would

have been admitted to all the services of the Sanctuary without a similar purification. But we have also positive testimony (which the objections of Winer, Keil, and Leyrer, in my opinion do not invalidate), that the baptism of proselytes existed in the time of Hillel and Shammai. For, whereas the school of Shammai is said to have allowed a proselyte who was circumcised on the eve of the Passover, to partake after baptism of the Passover, the school of Hillel forbade it. This controversy must be regarded as providing that at that time (previous to Christ) the baptism of proselytes was customary (Pes. 8:8, Eduy.5:2).

Jewish Baptism

Furneaux, Philip, and Jennings, D., *Jewish Antiquities*, W. Baynes & son, 1823, Digitized 2007

As to the form and manner of admitting proselytes, the Rabbis make it to consist of three articles, circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice.

1st To the scripture account of the requirement of circumcision, in this case, they add, that though the proselyte was a Samaritan, or of any other nation who used that rite, some blood must, nevertheless, be drawn afresh from the part which had been circumcised.

2nd The proselyte, whether male or female, must be baptized by the immersion of the whole body into water; and this must be performed in a river, fountain, or pond, not in a vessel. Some ground this proselyte baptism on the instruction which Jacob gave to his "*household and all that were with him*," when they were to make a new consecration of themselves to God, "*Put away the strange gods from amongst you, and be clean*," Gen.32:2. Where, by "*being clean*," they understand their being baptized, or their bodies being washed with water. They further suppose, that the Israelites "*being baptized into Moses in*

the cloud and in the sea," mentioned by St. Paul, 1Cor.10:2, means their entering into the Mosaic covenant by the rite of baptism ; and that when, therefore, in after-ages, any became proselytes, or entered into this covenant, they also were baptized.

Godwin seems to think John's baptism was of this sort. But, it is certain, that could not properly be proselyte baptism because he administered it to such as were Jews already, and he had no commission to set up a new dispensation, to which people should be admitted by this or any other rite. He only gave notice, that the kingdom of God, or the gospel dispensation, was at hand; but it did not commence till after his death, namely, at our Saviour's resurrection: and proselyte baptism was a form of professing a new religion, at least new to the person professing it, and of his being admitted a member of a church of which he was not one before.

It was therefore, I say, of a very different nature from John's baptism. His is rather to be considered as one of those "*divers washings,*" in use among the Jews on many occasions; for he did not attempt to make any alteration in the Jewish religion as settled by the Mosaic law, any more than to erect a new dispensation. And as these washings were intended, not only for "*the purifying of the flesh,*" but to be signs and symbols of moral purity; so the rite of baptism was, in this view, very suitable to the doctrine of repentance, which John preached. It is a further supposition of Godwin's, that our Saviour converted this Jewish proselyte baptism into a Christian sacrament. Upon this notion Dr. Wall hath founded an argument for baptizing children as well as adult persons; because, when a parent was proselyted, all his children were baptized, as well as all his male children circumcised. But as baptism was administered, according to the Jewish doctors,

only to the children born before his proselytism, not to any born afterwards, nor to his more distant posterity, who were esteemed holy branches, in virtue of springing from an holy root; some infer, that under the Christian dispensation baptism is only to be administered to converts from Judaism, Mahometanism, Paganism, or some other religion, and to their descendants born before their conversion and baptism, but to none born after. Mr. Emlyn, in particular, insists upon this argument against the constant and universal obligation of infant baptism.

World news Tribe recognised as Jews after 2,700 years

Foster, Peter, *Daily Telegraph* Saturday September 17th 2005 page 17. With a cry of "Mazeltov" and a Rabbi's congratulatory handshake, hundreds of tribal people from India's north-east were formally converted to Judaism this week after being recognised as descendants of the 10 Lost Tribes exiled from Israel 2,700 years ago.

A rabbinical court, dispatched with the blessing of Israel's Chief Rabbi, travelled 3,500 miles to Mizoram on India's border with Burma to perform the conversions using a Mikvah - ritual bath - built specially for the purpose.

There were emotional scenes as the Oriental-looking hill people professed their faith, repeating the oath from Deuteronomy: "*Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.*" ...Later, after all the male converts had shown they were properly circumcised, the families immersed themselves, naked, in the Mikvah constructed with the help of detailed plans sent from Israel.

Twice they dipped beneath the ice-cold water, each time receiving the blessing of Rabbi Moshe Klein, a senior member of the conversion authority attached to the office of the

Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon. The recognition of the Bnei Menashe by the Chief Rabbinate was achieved...

The Baptist

When did Baptists first emerge?

Hoad, J., *The Baptist*, Grace Publications, London, 1986.

There are some who assert categorically that all first century churches were 'baptist'. This seemingly arrogant claim might well be permissible in the sense that the faith and order of those churches plainly witnessed to their entire submission to those biblical distinctives which today are called 'baptist'.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon took his stand for such a view, saying, 'We have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves. We have always existed from the days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river which travels underground for a season, have always had honest and holy adherents,' He returns to this subject later, saying, 'Long before Protestants were heard of...anabaptists were protesting for the One Lord, one faith, one baptism.'

As stated in our Introduction, many American baptists claim John, the Forerunner of Jesus Christ, as the first 'baptist' and trace their beginnings from him. In doing so, they advance a continuity which claims to trace their churches' history through various separatist movements, such as the Montanists, Novatianists, Donatists, Cathari, Paulicians, Petrobrussians. Waldenses and Anabaptists. down to the baptist churches of today. This presents a dogma approaching the classical catholic doctrine of apostolic succession'. The reader will find the case presented in 'A History of Baptists' by Dr J. T. Christian, which is an official publication of the Southern Baptist Convention of America dated 1922, or in the published lectures of Dr J. M. Carroll, a Texan Baptist, to

which reference was made in the Introduction. More recently, this case has been argued in "The Baptist Heritage" by Halliday, published in 1974, which book gives an extensive bibliography on the subject.

A contrary view is found in Thomas Armitage's "History of Baptists" 1890. In the introductory chapter, he says, 'Little perception is required to discover the fallacy of visible apostolic succession in the ministry-, but visible church succession is precisely as fallacious and for exactly the same reasons... Such evidence cannot be traced by any church on earth, and would be utterly worthless if it could, because real legitimacy of christianity must be found in the New Testament and nowhere else.'

This theory has not made much headway in the United Kingdom. Recent English historians have tended to ridicule the hypothesis, as does Dr A. C. Underwood in his 'History of the English Baptists': or to ignore it entirely, as does Dr H. Wheeler Robinson in his 'Life and Faith of the Baptists' and Dr W. T. Whitley in his 'History of British Baptists'. Such writers tend to date the commencement of baptist churches from the Reformation, and in Britain. from the return to London of a small group of joint Smythe's émigré church in Amsterdam under the pastoral care of Thomas Helwys in 1612.

It is much easier to find the baptist's ancestry among the later Waldenses and Anabaptists but we must not ignore the fact that the unsympathetic catholic prelate, Cardinal Stanilaus Hosius, said in 1524 that 'the baptists have been tormented...during the past twelve hundred years.' His unprejudiced judgement substantiates the contintion 'baptist' presence and protest throughout the centuries from Constantine's day, that is, from the fourth century onward."

Verdttin states that the anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century was a 'resurgence, a reiteration, a restatement precipitated by Luther's Theses but essentially older than 1517.

From Pentecost and New Testament apostolic times, the Christian churches wherever established, bear the same biblical and simple characteristics which were to mark out those churches later described as 'baptist'. Those early churches were called 'christian', a descriptive much to be preferred. The reformation of today's churches by the scriptures to conform to the same primitive submission to God's Word in everything accompanied by the shedding of all else, would again make possible its use, honestly and with great joy to believers. It was the 'church of Christ' which was redeemed at Calvary and it will be the 'church of Christ' which will be glorified with him eternally. Who could desire a better name?'

This chapter must note those marks in mainline Christianity which are characteristic expressions of apostasy against which those early baptist christians raised their protest. Whilst there is little to mar the first century of christianity, soon afterwards the urge to protect its genius, by hedging it around with a hierarchical authority and structure, was apparent.

Authoritarianism was the first departure from New Testament simplicity. The 'spiritual' eldership of the churches took to themselves an overruling authority that is absent from the scriptures. From this developed a structured hierarchy.

Baptismal regeneration was the next departure. The ordinance of believers' baptism was made to become the instrument of salvation instead of a witness to it, so placing in the priest's (!) hand the communication of grace.

Infant-baptism inevitably followed. It was the natural outcome of making baptism the means of salvation. Parents felt the need to baptise their newborn infants immediately lest they died unsaved. It is not possible to establish beyond doubt whether this was a conscious conformity to pagan rites of initiation then prevalent but that is what infant baptism achieved.

The union of church and state achieved under the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century with the connivance of the church's perverted hierarchy, bound christianity to the secular world. The opportunism of the Emperor opened the gates for the 'church' to be identified with the nation and made citizenship and church membership to be coextensive and ultimately identical.

The coercion of consciences and the denial of Freedom to Worship according to an individual's own convictions, followed. This was the sacralist's substitute for christian evangelism, the winning by force of conforming citizens rather than converted Christians. Inevitably, its corollary was the persecution of non-conforming christian believers and the forceful suppression of their churches.

The baptistic movements of protest, which arose during the first fifteen centuries of the christian era, invariably set the standards of the Word of God over against the innovations and heresies of institutionalised religion. Those upsurges of protest rebuked constantly and rejected everything not explicit in the scriptures. There emerged among these movements distinctive marks of a 'baptistic' nature in the pre-Reformation period by which the Holy Spirit witnessed against the apostatising trends in catholic christianity of both the east and the west. These can be summarised as follows:

1. **The requirement of evidence of regeneracy prior to church membership.** This has been noted in the Ancient British churches, Montanists, Donatists. Petrobrussians and Waldenses. The anabaptists of the sixteenth century adhered to this principle tenaciously.
2. **The requirement of faith before baptism.** It was insisted upon by the same groupings. It ruled out in practice the baptism of infants. Tattler, the catholic reformer of Strassburg, preached this requirement and was excommunicated for it. The Friends of God, The Brethren of the Common Life, the Swiss Brethren and the anabaptists all demanded it. as did most of the Pre-Reformation Waldenses.
3. **The universal priesthood of all believers** was taught by the Donatists and Paulicians, the latter also strictly enforced the quality of ministry of all. The Waldenses and the Anabaptists held to this position, including the administration of the ordinances by those not ordained to the ministry of the Word.
4. **The necessity of a godly life to validate christian profession** was the most prominent protestation of all the separatists which we have considered because of the blatant failure of catholicism, both east and west. Catholic priests and bishops were constantly being rebuked for their godlessness and immorality. The Anabaptists made the same protest against Luther because of his seeming sterile teaching of 'Justification by Faith Alone' which implied that 'Good Works' were not necessary at all. Both parties agreed that works did not provide any part of the basis of salvation but the Anabaptists insisted that 'faith without works was dead', with the apostle James, whose divinely-inspired letter Luther once called an 'epistle of straw'!

5. The sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for faith and practice was generally held by all the separatist groups. They stood by the Word of God as the final court of appeal and insisted that nothing should be demanded of the believer which is not explicitly found in the scriptures.

6. The obligation of the churches to preach the gospel everywhere. This missionary commitment is a prime baptist principle and was evidenced in a variable degree among the early separatists but was characteristic of the Albigenses, Waldenses and Anabaptists particularly.

Wyclif taught all these principles, though he did not translate them into practice. The same is true of Hus, except that he did not insist on faith before baptism. The Czech Hussites thrived on baptist doctrine without the vital element which would have made them baptist churches in the fullest sense. Those baptist type protests of the separatists of earlier generations stir the sympathy of twentieth century evangelicals and rightly so. The stands then made were bravely made, against all odds, regardless of the cost to the protester and they were made against errors which we can see as apostasy from our perspective better than those involved in the issues of those times. Yet we must remind ourselves that several of these protest movements were guilty of espousing grave errors themselves. Catholic historians have dominated church recording and have given us perverted pictures of these 'heretics', as they call them, over-emphasising the faults of the persecuted christians. Some of those faults were grave. Catholic historians have highlighted deviations from the doctrine of the Godhead, particularly of the Person of Jesus Christ. Doubtless, the catholic church did this to mitigate the force of the protests of the separatists against the widespread evils in the catholic institutions. Indeed, they took every

opportunity to destroy the separatists' literature, causing totally false pictures of those striving for a biblical church. Making a full allowance for the failures of those early baptistic witnesses for the truth, we conclude that the Holy Spirit has continually raised up a biblical witness against apostasy and to a surprising extent these upsurges have borne a common testimony, majoring on those principles of faith and order which are characteristically baptist, or what is even more important, the marks of true apostolic christianity.

Early Baptist Ancestry from the Apostles to Constantine

The reader will be familiar with the first century christian churches and their story recorded in the New Testament. Let Robert D. Linder assess their characteristics in the recent Lion Handbook of Christian History. He says, 'The hallmarks of apostolic christianity were simplicity, community, evangelism and love'. The deterioration of christianity thereafter can be seen by fastening attention on those four factors and watching them being eroded steadily throughout the early centuries of our era. Equally well, the presence, or otherwise, of those hallmarks will test adequately the biblicity of those repeated upsurges of evangelical protest which mark the early separatists to whose story we now address ourselves. Before doing this, it will help greatly to note that the departure of the early churches from their initial New Testament character was not a sudden apostasy but a slow drift away from its living spontaneity and simplicity to preserving the genius of the christian movement by enclosing it in an elaborate hierarchical system. In attempting this, they transformed it into an inflexible, architected order of vast uniformity, very startlingly unlike the New Testament original, as G. O. Griffith says. His little known work provides an

excellent analysis of the pre-Constantine centuries of the early church, the study of which well repays its reader. He further says that the replacement of apostles by bishops gradually led to a hierarchical order with regional bishops, through those of the cities, then metropolitans and, at the top, those of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Rome. It was a 'natural step' for the latter to become the 'father-in-chief. In this way, he says, the Roman Imperial Empire was reproduced in the structure of the churches. He summarizes helpfully the drift under the following four heads:

1. Simplicity and spontaneity replaced by despotic institutionalism
2. Salvation by faith was replaced by a standard mechanical rite;
3. Sacraments became magical mysteries;
4. Life in Christ was replaced by submission to priestly authority.

In this, the vital, organic life of the New Testament churches was replaced by an organisation in which christianity became a 'system' and the imposition of its domain the only 'evangelisation' it knew: As this process progressed and baptism, the sign of regeneracy, became its means, the supper became sacrifice and the presbyter a priest and 'The Church,' no longer 'the churches,' is prepared as an Old Testament bride for marriage to the Empire and no more is the 'Bride adorned for her Husband'. Again, quoting Griffith, 'the early stream of evangelical faith passed out of sight and became an underflow, now and then, gushing- upward in various movements of protest - upbursts in which earthy elements mingled with the pure springs'.

The gospel had reached all provinces of the Roman Empire, from Britain to the Persian Gulf, from the Danube to the

Lybian Desert, by 180AD. Justin Martyr wrote that there was no race, Greek or Barbarian, that either wandered or dwelt in tents, which did not offer praise to the Crucified. In his 'Apology to the Emperor' Tertullian wrote, 'We are but of yesterday, yet we have filled your empire, your cities, your corporate towns, your assemblies, your very camps, your tribes, your companies, your palace, your senate, your forum: your temples alone are left to you. So great are our numbers that we might successfully contend with you in open warfare: but were we only to withdraw ourselves from you, and remove by common consent to some remote corner of the globe, our secession from you would be sufficient to accomplish your destruction and avenge our cause'. Among the christians at the close of the apostolic period, there were five leaders known to us by their writings, Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, Ignatius and Polycarp. All these lived during the lifetime of the apostles. Clement was pastor at Rome 91-100AD. He was an administrator and left to us his 'Epistle to the Corinthians' in which he rebukes the church for abusing its elders. Hermas wrote an absurd work called 'The Shepherd'. Ignatius, the venerable pastor at Antioch, was martyred in Rome by Trajan in front of 80,000 spectators. Polycarp, the disciple of John of the Apocalypse and pastor at Smyrna (modern Izmir on Turkey's Aegean coast) lived a consistent, godly life and was burned at the stake at the age of 90 in 166AD. Almost his dying words were, 'Eighty and six years have I served my King and Saviour and he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme him now?' Shortly afterwards, Meander writes of the simple church order practised by the elders, chosen from amongst themselves.' Both he and the Lutheran historian, Mosheim speak of the independency of the individual churches and of their loving

care for each other, treating one another as equals.' This reflects the New Testament standards and the hallmarks we have already set. It was in the following generation that destructive errors crept into churches. Useless ceremonies were added to baptism, such as anointing the candidate with oil after immersion, giving milk and honey to symbolise his spiritual food, the milk of the Word, and the making of baptism the means of regeneration. Decline in godly standards of conduct of Christian leaders also set in at this time. Hippolytus, the godly bishop of Pontus by Rome, is frequently heard rebuking the bishop of Rome and his clerical circle for worldly living. Protesting voices were to be heard again and again throughout the succeeding centuries of the Christian era, just as G. O. Griffith said in the passage quoted above.

As has been noted, the declension of the early churches of the pre-Constantine period was a slow drift away from Paul's 'simplicity in Christ,' It moved the emphasis back to a legalistic concentration on external ritual, 'away from grace to the works of the law.'" The transformation of the christianity, which could 'turn the world upside down', into a manageable organisation made possible its marriage to the state which was the undoing of its witness and the occasion of its malaise for centuries to come. Constantine accomplished the apostasy of christianity in two stages, first by the recognition of it as a religion among others permitted to be practised through the Empire. In this stage, persecution of christians was halted and the right to propagate itself given. Again, the transition of the churches to the 'The Church' stands out. The final step was the adoption by the State of this apostate ecclesiastical organisation as an imperial institution. The apostolic age of the christian churches was at an end. From this fourth century

calamity', the interests and decisions of the Empire would determine their life and course. Even when the Empire was forgotten, other national powers would sponsor 'The Church' and control its life and work. As we shall find later, even the reformed churches of the sixteenth century and, even more surprisingly, the independent puritans of the seventeenth century, would perpetuate this enervating heresy of the submission of church to state.

Turning away from the Middle East to consider the birth of christianity in Britain, we must 'notice firstly the **Ancient British or Welsh** churches, commonly known as the Celtic church. The Romans invaded Britain in 56BC in the reign of the Celtic king, Cassibellan. Failing to master the Welsh, they made peace and lived among them, intermarrying so that many Celts visited Rome in those mixed race families. Among them, some who went to Rome in 63AD, appear to have lived in Caesar's household and became christians, possibly under the ministry of Paul, who was at Rome at that time. It has been claimed that these, and other converted Welsh people, carried the gospel back to their homeland in the hills and valleys of Wales. Indeed Paul speaks of such christians in 2 Timothy 4:21 and makes the general observation in Philippians 4:22. 'All the saints salute you. chiefly they that are of Caesar's household'. Archbishop Usher names those saints as 'Pomponia, the wife of Aulus Plautus, the first governor of Britain, and Claudia Ruffina. the daughter of Caractacus, the British king held prisoner in Rome and whose husband was Pudens, a believer in Christ'. Dr John Gill, minister of the Southwark baptist church, now called the Metropolitan Tabernacle, in his commentary on Genesis 10:2 states that 'the Welsh people descended from Gomer, son of Japhet, from whom all the Gallic nations came', and in

support he quotes Josephus, Pliny and Herodotus. Tertullian also added to the traditions concerning the entry of christianity into Britain.' Paul is credited with bringing the gospel to this land during his freedom between his first and second Roman imprisonments." Joseph of Arimathea is said to have lived and preached Christ in a wicker chapel at Glastonbury.' Much use has been made of these early traditions but little hard evidence exists for their support. Both the Anglo-Canadian Dr Cramp and the American Dr Armitage, victorian baptist historians, dismiss them out of hand." However, this much has been granted by the eminent historian, Professor G. M. Trevelvan, that of the three benefits which the Romans left in Britain, the first was Welsh christianity which, he says, survived among the Welsh when every other Roman institution disappeared. Faganus and Damicanus, two Welsh born christian ministers, were sent from Rome to preach the gospel to their fellow-countrymen in I 80AD and a Welsh king is said to have embraced the faith. The christian religion spread throughout the land from Anglesey to Thanet. In 300AD, Welsh christians suffered great persecution during the reign of Diocletian. Alban is said to have been the first British martyr. Others also died for their faith, such as, Aaron and Julius of Caerleon in 285AD and persecution continued until Constantine gave status to christianity throughout the Empire. The Welsh baptist historian, J. Davis claims that Constantine was born of a Welsh mother, Ellen of Gloucester, who became known universally as the benefactor of christendom, building many church buildings, including that of the Nativity at Bethlehem, and to whom sainthood was duly accorded... Saint Helena!' However, evidence is sparse and Schaff- Herzog, for instance, calls the Lucius story

'fabulous.' When all these traditions and hazy records are collated and perhaps deposed as history, the hard historical fact remains that there were well-organised christian churches in Britain by the fourth century. At the Synod of Arles in 316AD, three bishops, an elder and a deacon from York, Lincoln, Caerleon and Colchester were present and a representation is also documented at the Synod of Rimini in 359AD.

Returning to the eastern Mediterranean arena, we discover separatists in Phrygia in 158AD, known as **Montanists**. Their founder, from whom they are named, was Montanus who 'spoke with tongues' when he was converted and began to prophesy declaring that the Holy Spirit was speaking through him. They demanded a return to primitive piety in the light of the near return of Jesus Christ. They pleaded for a high standard of holy living, advocating fasting, celibacy and community of goods and they were characteristically 'puritans'. Not all separatists, who have been called Montanists, derived their origin from Montanus or came from the Phrygian movement. Broadbent says, 'Montanists constantly pressed for definite evidences of christianity in the lives of all applicants for church membership'. Neander goes even further in highlighting their 'baptistic' characteristics when he says that they demanded conscious personal faith for baptism. Montanists were 'charismatic' christians in the contemporary use of that word. They held a high view of marriage as christian ordinance and were practical 'millenialists', living in the expectation of the early return of the Lord." Their most famous member was Tertullian, who was born of wealthy pagan parents in Carthage, North Africa, in the middle of the second century. He was well read in philosophy and history, says Latourette, knew Greek well and

practised law in Rome. Converted early, he spent most of the rest of his life in his native city, becoming an elder of the church there. He was the first to write extensively on christian subjects in Latin, his style being vigorous, systematic and aggressively polemical, not unlike Calvin with whom he shared a common legal background. Among his voluminous works, that on 'baptism' will be quoted later. His specification of the seven deadly sins as being 'idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, fornication, false-witness and fraud' is frequently quoted.'

Novatianists were a third century group of separatists making a strong protest against the same moral laxity and the weak, almost non-existent disciplinary standards in the churches, which had aroused the Montanists a little earlier. Their leader was Novatian who was a presbyter in the church at Rome and a capable theologian of impeccable orthodoxy. Appointed a bishop, he ordained new bishops for the separatist churches which responded to his call for godly living. Novatianists flourished in North Africa and in Constantinople and Rome, until their suppression in the fifth century, after which they met as underground gatherings. Ultimately they were reabsorbed into the catholic churches.

Early Baptist Ancestry from Constantine to the Conqueror

The unholy union of church and state under Constantine provoked further apostasy in the christian churches, removed the biblical separation of believers from the world and progressively secularized christianity. Inevitably the Holy Spirit's testimony against this evil was expressed in the testimony of a new wave of protest. The **Donatists** were the strongest and most widespread of the early christian separatist church movements, arising initially in North Africa

in 311 AD as a witness against laxity in morals of the clergy and the lack of discipline in the churches. It was not long before their protest acquired a further dimension and they refused to surrender their local churches' independency when Constantine united church and state. They viewed all clerics working for the 'union' as evil priests, working hand in glove with the 'kings of this earth', and who, by their conduct, declared that there is 'no king but Caesar.' They viewed the church as a small body of the saved surrounded by the unregenerate mass. When Rome's soldiers were sent to suppress them, they were not surprised nor were easily put down. Mosheim says that they had over four hundred bishops or pastors in Africa alone.' The Donatists resisted Constantine and his subservient church and the first christian blood shed by fellow christians occurred in a disgraceful contest among themselves.

Donatus, whose name attached to these separatists, was appointed bishop of Carthage under Theodosius (379- 3. 95AD) whose successor in office, Honorius (395-432) issued an edict in 415AD forbidding the Donatists to meet on pain of death, reducing them to extreme poverty and obliging their leaders to flee into the deserts. Their bishop, Petelian refused to entertain any difference between those persecutions staged by pagan governments and those in his own time suffered at the hands of a supposedly christian regime.

In considering whether these Donatists bore any of the marks of being 'baptist', the following four characteristics should be considered: They believed in the separation of church and state, a regenerate church membership, in the necessity for a moral, godly life in all christians, especially the ministers of the churches, and they appear to have practised re-baptism, as their critics called it, by immersing all new converts despite

their having been 'baptised' as infants. The accusations made against them, and the war waged for their extinction, indicate clearly that most of those convictions were stubbornly held. Diogenes, a fourth century contemporary of the early Donatists, said that 'They believe that christians are separate from the rest of men... they dwell in hellenic or barbaric cities, as each man's lot is, following the customs of the country in dress and food and the rest of life; the manner of the conduct which they display is wonderful and confessedly beyond belief... they live on earth but their citizenship is in heaven'. " When Theodosius ordered that all men should be called 'catholic christians' and the rest be reproached as heretic', the Donatists refused to conform and insisted on calling themselves simply 'christians'. They would not use the word 'catholic', not even in the Apostles' Creed, just as their sixteenth century successors, the anabaptists, were to refuse to do in their day. As a movement, Donatism was put down but wave after wave of dissent against medieval sacralism revived its testimony right down to Luther's day.' As Augustine of Hippo sneered at the Donatists. calling them 'spotless saints', so did the reformer despise the anabaptist in his day with similar jibes."

The **Paulicians** arose in the south of Armenia about 650AD as a virile group of churches practising a prioritise form of christianity and calling themselves simply 'christians' just as the Donatists had done. Their leader was Constantine-Silvanus, who was set on fire by reading the Gospels and the Letters of Paul. So large a place did the teachings of Paul occupy among them, that they were called by that apostle's name. Some of them were 'Dualists', that is, they held that this world of sin and the flesh is a creation of an evil power, the 'imperfect God' of the Old Testament, whilst the spirit

and souls of men are the work of the 'good God'. They rejected infant baptism and, taking Jesus as their model, they were baptised at the age of thirty in a river. They also rejected Mary-worship, prayers to the saints, candles, icons, incense and all material symbols. They taught that Jesus derived nothing material from being born of Mary, as the sixteenth century Hoffmanites and early English General Baptists were to do. They proved themselves good citizens and soldiers. One emperor moved colonies of Paulicians into Bulgaria, rather like the Stuarts moved Scottish presbyterians into Ireland, in order to establish good husbandry and moral citizenship. There were other migrations into the Balkans where they came to be called '**Bogils**'. There is reason for believing that the Cathari or Puritans may have had their origin from among the Bogils. The Cathari prospered in northern Italy, southern France and northern Spain in the twelfth century. Their emphasis was that constantly observed feature of all the previous separatist movements we have considered, the need for a godly life before the world to validate any christian profession, particularly that of the leaders. Like their predecessors, they were often 'Dualist' as to creation and God, but they went further in rejecting the Roman church and its orders entirely. They were ardent missionaries and extended their influence into northern Europe.' They were also called '**Albigenses**' from the name of their centre at Albi in southern France. They published scriptures in several vernacular translations. Returning to Britain, where 'The Church' had become the favourite of the state, as throughout the Empire, and that church adopting rites and practices of pagan origin as it adapted itself to its new role, the Celtic christians resolutely adhered to their simple biblical forms. Gildas preached

against the degeneracy of the age, demanding holy living, in which he was supported by Dyfrig and Dynawt. The latter was principal of Bangor College and chief debater with Augustine of Canterbury when he came from Pope Gregory to impose Roman conformity by force in 596AD. Teilo, Padarn, Pawlin, Daniel, Cadog and Dewi were others whose names are preserved. Dr Richard Davis, Bishop of Monmouth, said, 'there was a vast difference between the christianity of the ancient British churches and the mockery introduced by Augustine'. The Britons kept their christianity largely pure, without admixture of human traditions, just as they received it from the disciples of Jesus and from the church of Rome when she was pure, strictly enforcing the Word of God in their churches.

However, as so often happened with christian churches striving to withstand the apostatising pressure of Rome, they themselves fell into error whilst strenuously opposing the errors of the catholic church. Two hundred years earlier, the British monk Pelagius had vigorously rebuked the loose living tolerated by the Roman church. In the course of pleading for the exercise of man's will in resisting immorality, and choosing and living a godly life, he asserted that man's will was free to do so if he would. Progressing from there, he declared that man was not 'born in sin', that is, born guilty before God of the original sin of his forefather, Adam. This roused the opposition of Augustine of Hippo, who in his 'Confessions' had expressed the contrary view. Pelagius protested that 'man had sufficient free will to perform his duty to God and should exert himself to do so. This Pelagian heresy arose frequently in the successive upsurges of evangelical protest against immorality which repeatedly

marred Christian witness and this same blot is to be found in some of the sixteenth century anabaptist movements.

The action of Augustine of Canterbury, begun in 596AD, almost extinguished the old British churches and stamped a tight Roman, or western catholic grip on Christianity in this land. Thereafter little of interest for the student of baptist history arises until that critical period date 1066AD.

Early Baptist Ancestry from 1066 to Jan Hus.

When William of Normandy conquered England, it was necessary for his Archbishop Lanfranc to publish a treatise against 'Waldensian' views which had permeated the country. One hundred years later in 1166 a group of German peasants, led by Gerhardt of Mainz, refused to conform to Roman teaching in respect of purgatory, which they denied existed, nor would they baptise their infants or attend Mass. They were condemned as 'heretics' at Oxford, branded on their foreheads, stripped naked to the waist, ferociously beaten and driven out into the snow-covered countryside to perish. The public were forbidden to aid them in any way on pain of death. Such 'Bible-men', as they were often called, roamed the country reading and preaching the Word of God to any who would hear. In the reign of Henry II, a group of Waldensian believers settled at Darenth in Kent. In Edwards III's time, colonies of such 'Bible-men' established themselves in the county of Norfolk. Indeed, there is evidence of such groups of simple christians gathering for worship in many parts of East Anglia and in the south-east prior to the Reformation, but this brings us to the time of John Wyclif and his Lollard preachers prematurely and at this point the story of baptist witness in Britain must be set aside until later and an account be given of 'baptist' testimony on the

mainland of Europe down to Wyclif's time. Throughout that period, as Latourette says, 'small groups of believers broke from the catholic church, in part or in entirety, in protest against what they held to be too great leniency of the latter towards moral lapses, especially apostasy.' Among these were the Albigenses, of whom we have already spoken, the Petrobrussians, Henricians, Arnoldists, Waldenses and some outstanding individual witnesses to truth.

The **Petrobrussians**, or followers of **Peter of Bruys**, arose about 1115.AD and practised an ascetic way of life, rejected infant-baptism, re-baptising those who joined them upon a profession of faith, and for this reason, were called 'anabaptists'. They also rejected all the rites and ceremonies of the church of Rome and destroyed altars and many church buildings. Peter of Bruys was a prominent teacher within the Roman communion and is described as 'an able and diligent preacher who for twenty years braved all dangers, travelled throughout Dauphiny,

Provence, Languedoc and Gascony, that is throughout southern France, drawing multitudes from the superstitions in which they had been reared and bringing them back to the teaching of the Bible. He was burned at St. Gilles, near Nimes, in 1126. He taught that none should be baptised until they attained to the full use of their reason; that it was useless to build churches, as God accepts sincere worship wherever it is offered; that crucifixes should not be venerated; that at the Supper the bread and wine are not changed into the body and blood of Christ, but are but symbols commemorative of his death; and that the prayers and good works of the living cannot benefit the dead."

The **Henricians** were followers of Henri of Lausanne who despite his name, was born in Paris. He was a monk of Cluny

in deacon's orders, whose striking appearance, powerful voice and great gift of oratory compelled attention. His convincing expositions of the scriptures, with his zeal and his devotion, turned many to repentance and faith, among whom were notorious sinners whose changed lives validated their conversions. Peter and Henri, with their followers, were so successful with their evangelism that the regular catholic churches were emptied and an urgent appeal was made to Bernard of Clairvaux, probably the strongest man in Europe at that time, to intervene and suppress these movements. Henri escaped for a time but was ultimately arrested by the clergy and imprisoned. He either died in prison, or was put to death quietly to avoid public riots about 1140AD.

The **Arnoldists**, or disciples of Arnold of Brescia, were roughly contemporary with the Frenchmen, Peter and Henri. Arnold was an Italian, born in the city of northern Italy which gave him his name. Ordained as a priest, he practised a life of purity and poverty, gathering around him a community of canons-regular striving for the reformation of the catholic churches. Arnold attacked the bishops for their cupidity, dishonest gains and irregularity of life urging them to renounce all ambition for political or physical power and all property. He was executed by hanging in 1155AD at the instance of Bernard of Clairvaux who obtained his condemnation at the Council of Sens in 1140AD.' Bernard was not always true to his reputed saintly character which his hymns have given him! The three groups of separatists, the followers of Peter, Henri and Arnold, are often confused with the Cathari, whose campaign for reform of the church across southern France has been mentioned previously. Not being dualists but totally orthodox on the doctrine of the Godhead, they ought not to be called 'heretics' by church historians.

Their ministries were characteristically 'baptist' in that they pressed for reform of the churches by the Word of God, which they preached faithfully to the masses in the vernacular with considerable success.

The **Waldenses**, or Vaudois, outnumbered the separatist groups mentioned above and were different in that they provided real and lasting church fellowship for their large congregations. Their name may have been derived from the 'Valleys' (vaux) where they dwelt, or from one of their leaders, **Peter Waldo** (Valdez). Companies of believers had remained apart from the east and west apostasies of so-called 'Orthodox' and 'Catholic' churches, maintaining a simple form of bible-based worship and had endeavoured to hold fast to primitive Christianity. Constantly persecuted, they found little shelter except in the high valleys of the Alps and Taurus mountains. In no sense were they 'reformers' of the catholic churches, as were most of the other separatists. They were churches in their own right independent of Rome and Constantinople. Marco Aurelio Rorencio, an Italian catholic writer in 1630 said that the Waldenses 'are so ancient as to afford no absolute certainty as to the precise time of their origin, but that in the ninth and tenth centuries they were not a new sect.' Claudius of Turin was a Waldensian who plainly taught 'justification by Faith'. Moreland's History of the Evangelical Churches of the Piedmont Valleys gives a copy of an extant Confession of Faith dated 1120 containing fourteen articles showing them to be totally orthodox in doctrine. When they made representations to the catholic princes of Savoy and to Francis, king of France, as well as when later they negotiated with the Genevan reformers for intercommunion, they always claimed the continuity of their congregations and teachings from the apostles, saving, 'from

the very days of the apostles we have ever been consistent respecting the faith.' On the return of the Waldenses to their valleys in 1689, their leader said that their religion was as primitive as their name is venerable as their adversaries had always attested. Many Waldensians joined the main reformed movement under the persuasion of Farel and Beza. Unlike their earlier Confession, that of 1653 is clearly calvinistic. More recently, they have emigrated in large numbers to South America where they now have more adherents than in their native Italy.

Peter Waldo was a wealthy merchant of Lyons, probably born a little before 1150AD and converted in 1176. When seeking spiritual peace, he was given the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:21, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go, and sell that thou hast and give it to the poor.' Waldo did that literally. Selling his possessions, he provided adequately for his wife and family, paid all his debts and distributed the rest to the destitute. He lived by begging bread and gave himself to the study of the scriptures in his native French. Afterwards, dressed simply and carrying no purse, he preached the gospel in city and countryside, just as Jesus had commanded. He attracted many followers, who were called, '**The Poor Men of Lyons**'. In 1174, the Pope excommunicated them in an attempt to silence their acutely embarrassing witness. Believing that 'they ought to obey God rather than man', they continued to preach, quoting whole passages of memorised scriptures in the vernacular, just as the Collards were to do in England. They taught that Christ alone was the Head of the Church, that the mass was without biblical warrant and that all believers had equal access to God at all times and places, not just in churches. They observed the Supper but taught that a lay person could administer it.

The Poor Men of Lyons spread rapidly and were soon to be found in Spain, Italy, Germany and Bohemia, as well as throughout their native France. They rejected the rites and rituals of Rome, saying that any believer could preach, pray, lead the Supper and hear confessions. They prayed extemporaneously except for the use of the Lord's Prayer and the Grace. They were bitterly persecuted between 1150 and 1250AD, finding refuge in the high Alps and the Piedmont valleys where they can still be found.

A remarkable movement of catholic mystics must not be overlooked entirely because some bore striking resemblances to the anabaptists who were to follow in the succeeding centuries. **Johannes Tauler** (1291-1361) was a native of Strassburg and later a prominent priest in the city, noted for practical godliness, Christlike sympathy and self-sacrificing ministry to the dying during the Black Death. Whilst most other clergy fled from the diseased community, he remained to tend the sick. His sermons were widely read and he was called the 'Protestant before Protestantism' because of his emphasis on the simple gospel of God's all-sufficient grace and the need for a godly life. His followers were known as '**The Friends of God**' or, as in the Netherlands, '**The Brethren of the Common Life**'.

Thomas a Kempis (c1379-1471), whose simple manual of pious living entitled, *The Imitation of Christ* is still in print today, was one of these godly preachers. Tauler taught that those who trusted in the church and its rites would find no peace for their souls unless the Word of the Heavenly Father should inwardly renew and make a new creation of them. Tauler's sermons were instrumental in bringing Luther to grasp the inwardness of true religion and that saving faith was

the gift of God. Luther said of Tauler's writings, 'I have nowhere found a sounder or more evangelical theology.' John Wyclif (1320-84) was born at Spreswell. on the Yorkshire-Durham border.' His family were of Saxon extraction and lived in that district from the Norman Conquest up to the seventeenth century and remained roman catholics throughout. John was educated at Oxford University, receiving Master of Arts and Doctor of Divinity' degrees and became Master of Baliol. He was one of the greatest scholars of his day. a many-sided man far in advance of his age, a prophet and a powerful personality. He displayed warm patriotism, a glowing zeal for the dignity of the crown, for the honour and well being of his countrymen and for the rights and constitutional liberty of the people. In 1366, Wyclif stood against the Pope on the separation of church and state. As a Member of Parliament, he was party to, and some say, the prime mover in, the dismissal of clerics from political office under the crown. He wrote many tracts against the claims of Rome and her English neophytes. He declared that the Pope was fallible and insisted that he ought to be seen to be the humble disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus. Wyclif argued constantly for the supremacy and sufficiency of scripture as the sole guide and standard of truth and conduct. He exposed the unscriptural and base character of most preaching in his own day, saying. 'This practice comes from nothing less than the pride of man, every one seeking his own honour, every one preaching only himself and not Jesus Christ (cf 2 Corinthians 4:5). He added, 'such is a dead word and not the Word of eternal life.' In all his arguments, he employs the scriptures as the sole standard of truth." Wyclif trained a corps of itinerant preachers to read and preach the unadorned Word of God. The Archbishop of Canterbury

condemned this missionary enterprise as heretical but Wyclif redoubled his efforts both from Oxford and, after enforced retirement, from Lutterworth. His preachers were called 'Lollards', a term of reproach, meaning 'weeds' as distinct from 'wheat', Wyclif commanded his preachers to 'Cry aloud and spare not, the sin of the people is great but the sin of the prelates is greatest..' (cf Isaiah 58: I)."

'I am inclined to believe that Wyclif was a baptist' says Dr J. M. Crosby in his excellent first of the Baptists' and others have come to the same conclusion. Crosby gives this reason, 'some men of great note and learning in the Church of Rome have left it on record that Wyclif denied infant-baptism.' He supports his case with quotations, adding the names of some protestant writers as well, such as, Jan van Braght and Henry D'Anvers. However, his conclusion rests on weak foundations and Wyclif remained a catholic until his death even though he so often expressed his convictions in 'baptist' terms. He laboured ceaselessly for the reform of" the church in England and gave his countrymen the Bible in their own tongue." He demanded regeneration, repentance and faith for real church membership and almost reached Luther's position on justification by Faith. He was typically 'baptist' in demanding a life consistent with rightness with God, backed by good works, bearing evidence to the reality of the christian's profession. Similarly he was 'baptist' in demanding the separation of church and state, and in his doctrine of church, simple worship and rule of scripture. Though pre-dating Calvin by twenty years, he was Pauline in the doctrine of grace and sovereignty of God. Wyclif, the 'Morning Star of the Reformation' died 31 December 1384.

This pre-Reformation chapter cannot close without reference to the remarkable **Hussite movement** in central Europe,

chiefly in Bohemia, now part of Czechoslovakia. Waldensian preachers penetrated Bohemia but it is their own **Jan Hus** to whom its people owe their most effective reform witness. The personal piety and commitment to the gospel of the devout and godly Bohemian Princess Anne bore much fruit in both Britain and her native land. Marrying the English king, Richard II, she came under the influence of John Wyclif and was responsible for spreading his teaching and literature, especially the scriptures, throughout both nations.

Jan Hus (1373-1415) was born of peasant stock in Husinecz from which place he derived his patronym. A scholar in arts and divinity, he became Rector of Prague University in 1402. He began preaching reform in the catholic city in line with Wyclifs teaching, and gained immense popularity through his fiery, fearless sermons in the common tongue. Immediately Archbishop Zbneck of Prague sought to silence Hus and stamp out all Wycliffite activity in the land. Hus protested and was excommunicated forthwith. Although his popularity grew, yet he was persuaded by King Wenceslaus to retire to the country. Two hundred of the English reformer's books were publicly burnt in Prague on 13 July 1409. Hus continued to preach with indefatigable zeal, making full use of the forbidden writings. Ultimately, he was persuaded to attend the Council in Constance to defend his position and the king gave him a royal safe conduct guaranteeing his return home. Despite the regal promise, Hus was seized by his ecclesiastical enemies, condemned and burnt at the stake on 6 July 1415 in Constance. His Bohemian colleague, **Jerome of Prague** (c. 1375-1416), who had studied for a year (1398) at Oxford under Wyclif, was executed the next year. The accusation against them was that 'they preached Waldensian and

Wycliffite heresies', so giving official catholic evidence for the 'near-baptist' nature of their witness.

After his death, the Hussite movement split into two parties. The Taborites repudiated all church practices for which express biblical warrant was not found. The Ultraquists allowed all practices not expressly forbidden, a division that still troubles the churches today! In some sense Hus was less 'baptistic' than Wyclif but his life and work bore clear hallmarks of biblical christianity. Though the Laborites represented his views more closely, it was the other faction that triumphed unhappily on the battlefield of Lipan in 1434. The Laborite remnants, were absorbed into a new fellowship known as **Unitas Fratrum**, the spiritual ancestors of the **Bohemian** and **Moravian Brethren** who adopted anabaptist pacificism. For a time the Hussite churches enjoyed religious freedom and liberty of conscience. However, a civil war in 1620, was won by catholic noblemen and the old faith was re-imposed within a year. The greater part of Bohemians and Moravians emigrated to the north and east, carrying their biblical faith with them and so fortified the growth and development of the anabaptist movement throughout Germany and eastern Europe.