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The Origin and Meaning of Baptism.

FROM the New Testament we learn that John the Baptist came baptizing in Jordan and that from him our Lord received baptism, and that later a specifically Christian baptism, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was practised amongst Christians, while the baptism of John continued to be practised amongst the disciples of John. But the New Testament offers us no evidence as to any sources of this rite before the time of John the Baptist.

There has been much discussion as to whether the Jewish rite of the baptism of proselytes was observed before the time of John, and whether it was from this source that John copied it. Our only Jewish sources of information were compiled later than the New Testament, and though they contain traditions which profess to come from an older time, some Christian scholars have refused to credit them. Indeed, a large number of scholars during the nineteenth century held the view that there was no Jewish proselyte baptism until after the establishment of Christian baptism, when the Jewish rite was copied from the Christian. To-day, however, it is generally held to be improbable that the Jews would have copied the Christian rite in the age when there was so much conflict between the Church and the Synagogue. For the Jewish sources state that for the male proselyte there were three requirements, circumcision, baptism, and a sacrifice; while for a female proselyte baptism and a sacrifice necessarily sufficed. Since the requirement to offer a sacrifice lapsed with the destruction of the Temple in the year 70 of our era, it would appear probable that the requirements were originally fixed before the destruction of the Temple. That the Jews should have copied the Christians between the Crucifixion and A.D. 70 is extremely unlikely. While, therefore, there is no clear and direct evidence, it is generally believed to-day that Jewish proselyte baptism is older than the baptism of John.

Sometimes it is argued that this is more than probable, and that since we know that the Jews practised ritual baptism on a great variety of occasions, to wash away various forms of impurity, we may be quite certain that they must have practised such baptism on conversion to the Jewish faith. This argument rests on some confusion of thought. It is true that the same word is used for the normal bath of purification and for the immersion of the proselyte, but if the immersion of the proselyte is thought of in terms of the ordinary ritual bath of purification, then it is fundamentally different from the baptism of John and from Christian baptism. In truth, however, the two things were entirely different. For the ordinary bath of purification was a purely

private ceremony, whereas the immersion of the proselyte was witnessed by representatives of the Synagogue, who administered the rite in the sense that they explained to the proselyte the significance of what he was doing, catechised him as to his motives, and pronounced a blessing upon him in the moment of his immersion. We cannot argue that because the Jews frequently practised private ritual baptism, therefore they practised a witnessed and administered initiation rite of baptism for proselytes before the time of John the Baptist. Where real evidence is lacking, it is vain to claim a greater certainty than can be established, and all we are justified in saying is that it is probable that the rite that appears in later Jewish sources had come into use at some unknown time prior to the ministry of John the Baptist. We may perhaps add that it is probable that it developed out of the ordinary bath of purification, and that to mark the breach with heathenism and the acceptance of the faith of Judaism, the proselyte was required to undergo a special bath of purification, witnessed and administered, and made into an initiation rite. There was a measure of similarity of form in that both were complete immersions, but the essential character and significance of the two rites were quite different.

In any discussion of Christian baptism it is necessary to begin from Jewish baptism, because false arguments are so often based upon it. It is commonly supposed that Jewish ideas and Jewish practices governed the Christian observance of baptism. Thus, it is frequently said that in Jewish proselyte baptism children were baptized with their parents, and therefore it is probable that in Christian baptism children were baptized with their parents. Jewish ideas of the solidarity of the family meant that the faith of the parents was held to embrace their children, and therefore they were baptized with the parents. That there is a measure of cogency in this argument must be recognised, but that it is completely irrelevant to Christian baptism of infants is soon obvious.

For the Jewish rule was that while children born before their parents became proselytes were circumcised and baptized along with their parents, children who were born after the conversion of their mother did not need to be baptized (T.B. Ketuboth 11 a, Yebamoth 78 a). Clearly the Jewish rite was purely a conversion rite, cleansing from the impurity of heathenism, and children who were born subsequently, even if they had already been conceived prior to their mother's conversion, were regarded as clean from birth. If, then, the Church had accepted Jewish practice as regulative for its own life, it would not have baptized children born to Christian parents. Yet that is the practice which is supposed to be justified by this wholly false and irrelevant analogy. It will be observed that it is not here affirmed or denied that the

Church followed Jewish practice in this matter, but merely affirmed that if it did, its practice was wholly different from what is meant by Infant Baptism to-day, and it is a wholly fallacious argument to pretend that the one is a copying from the other. Not seldom, indeed, modern defenders of Infant Baptism hold that it should be administered only to the children of Christian parents—that is, to precisely those corresponding to the children who did not receive the Jewish baptismal rite.

It is further common to reinforce this argument with another equally fallacious one. Christian baptism is connected with circumcision, and it is said that just as the Jew circumcised all male children in infancy, so the Christians would naturally baptize their babies. For circumcision was the covenant rite of Judaism, and baptism was the covenant rite of Christianity. It will be observed that here Christian baptism is not connected with Jewish proselyte baptism, but with the wholly different rite of circumcision. No Jew could possibly have confused the two. Their significance was quite different. The one was a conversion rite, used only in the case of persons who were not born Jews, but who embraced Judaism instead of another faith; the other was a rite practised on all male members of the Jewish community, whether they became members by birth or by conversion. The clear distinction between them has already appeared in what has been said above. For children born after the conversion of their mother did not need to be baptized, but did need to be circumcised.

When this argument from circumcision began to be employed is not clear. In the second century A.D., Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*, said: "We, who have drawn nigh to God through Him (i.e. Christ), have received not this fleshly circumcision, but spiritual circumcision, which Enoch and his like observed. And by the grace of God we received it through baptism, since we were sinners" (chap. xliii.). It is clear that Justin is not here connecting the baptism of infants with the circumcision of infants, but saying that for Christians there is no necessity for circumcision, since they have approached God through Christ, and have been saved by divine mercy from their sins, and received grace through the sacrament of baptism. This is a thought which finds frequent expression in the New Testament. In Phil. iii. 2f, Paul says: "Beware of the concision; for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," while in the Epistle to the Galatians he argues that circumcision is done away in Christ, so that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love" (v. 6). What matters is not an external act, but an inner spirit. Such a thought, whether in Paul or in Justin, cannot for a

moment suggest that laving, as an external act, performed upon a child, any more than a cutting rite, can of itself profit, since what really matters is "faith working through love," or such "spiritual circumcision" as Enoch manifested.

And when, in his *First Apology*, Justin writes of baptism, he offers no suggestion that it is parallel to circumcision, and says no word that is relevant to the baptism of infants. Instead he says: "As many as are persuaded and believe that the things we teach and say are true, and promise that they can live conformably thereto, are taught to pray and to entreat from God with fasting for the remission of their former sins, while we join them in prayer and fasting. Then are they brought by us where water is, and are born again by the same mode of regeneration whereby we ourselves were born again" (chap. lxi.).

In the third century A.D. we find Cyprian, in his *Epistle to Fidus*, showing why it is wrong to make the Christian rite of baptism parallel with the Jewish rite of circumcision. It is clear that by this time there were some who regarded the baptism of infants as parallel with the Jewish circumcision of infants, and there can be no doubt that the practice of Infant Baptism had been in vogue for some time. Cyprian, indeed, strongly supported Infant Baptism. But he resisted the analogy with circumcision. Those who upheld the analogy thought that baptism should take place on the eighth day. But Cyprian held that an infant might be baptized at the earliest possible moment. Yet he equally made it clear that such baptism represented no cleansing from sin. For he denied that a new-born child is in any sense unclean, and said that to kiss a new-born babe is to kiss the hands of God the Creator.

In the fourth century Gregory Nazianzen, in his *Oration on Holy Baptism*, advised that children should not ordinarily be baptized until they were about three years old, and able to understand at least the rudiments of the faith, though if they were in any danger he counselled earlier baptism, on the ground that it was better that they should be unconsciously sanctified than that they should die without the seal of baptism on them. And in support of this latter observation he adduces circumcision on the eighth day, which he regards as a sort of typical seal. This is in no sense to equate circumcision with baptism, any more than the Crossing of the Red Sea is equated with baptism, when the Fathers, on the basis of 1 Corinthians x. 2, declare it to have been a type and prophecy of baptism. Clearly Gregory distinguished baptism from circumcision, since whereas the latter was normally administered in unconsciousness, he desired baptism to be normally administered in consciousness, and with a conscious, though incipient, faith.

Many others, however, linked baptism and circumcision

together to justify the administering of the one rite in infancy from the administering of the other in infancy. Calvin adopted this idea, and expressed it with the utmost emphasis, and it is commonly found in modern writers of various schools, who prefer repetition to analysis of the ideas involved.

Not seldom is it claimed, and has for long been claimed, that Paul is on the side of this view. For in Col. ii. 11 ff. he says: "In whom (i.e. in Christ) ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you did He quicken together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses." But this expresses no more than the normal Pauline view, that union with Christ does away with the necessity for circumcision, and is therefore our initiation into the covenant of Christ. That baptism for the Christian has replaced circumcision does not make it in all respects parallel, and certainly does not for one moment suggest that its subjects are the same. For this very passage calls for faith, which circumcision did not ask of its subjects, and is concerned with those who were dead in sins and have found in the experience described the forgiveness of their sins.

Let it not be forgotten that in Ephesians ii. Paul writes again of precisely the experiences he is describing in this Colossian passage, though he does not mention baptism. He says: "And you did He quicken, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein aforetime ye walked according to the course of this world. . . . But God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ . . . and raised us up with Him." And in the same passage he goes on to speak of circumcised and uncircumcised being reconciled in one body in Christ. Clearly he thought of the Christian experience as something that transcended circumcision, not as something that in any full sense paralleled it. And in neither of these passages is he thinking of infants, but of men who had had experience of life, and who were conscious of the lusts and iniquities that had marked that experience.

It is interesting to note that whereas the Acts of the Apostles represents Christian baptism as having been practised right from the start, it knows nothing of the idea that baptism is the substitute for circumcision, either in its subjects or in its significance. At the Council of Jerusalem the question whether circumcision was binding on Christians was solemnly discussed. There is no reason

whatever to suppose that Christian baptism was questioned, and therefore none to suppose that any one conceived the idea that baptism was a parallel or substitute rite for circumcision. The only question at issue was whether circumcision should be binding on Gentiles in addition to baptism, and there does not then seem to have been any question but that Jews should continue to practise circumcision as well as Christian baptism. And for long there were Jewish Christians who practised both rites. In their minds the two rites were completely disparate, and the mere fact that Paul or Justin Martyr drew a parallel in one respect between the two rites in no way warrants the conclusion that they are to be treated as parallel in another respect. The only thing that could justify the view that Paul supports Infant Baptism by a parallel with circumcision would be some clear word that can be culled from his writings to show that the subjects for the two rites rendered them parallel. But such a word none has yet adduced.

In truth both circumcision and Jewish proselyte baptism are completely irrelevant to the significance, and therefore to the subjects of baptism. Jewish proselyte baptism is relevant to the mode of the rite, but only to the mode. For Christian baptism sprang out of the baptism of John, which was quite different from Jewish proselyte baptism. The latter signified a change of creed, and admitted Gentiles to the fellowship and the practices of Jewish society. The baptism of John was to prepare men for a new age, an age which had not yet dawned. It signified a change of life, and Jews and non-Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, alike were baptized. It was completely unrelated to circumcision and to the worship of the Temple, with both of which Jewish proselyte baptism was related. Yet neither did it claim to be a substitute for these. It had nothing whatever in common with infant circumcision, but had this much in common with proselyte baptism that it involved repentance for the past and self-dedication for the future. But it differed from Jewish proselyte baptism most notably in its eschatological reference. For John believed that the existing order was passing away, that the axe was laid at the root of the tree, and that a new age was about to dawn, to which none could be admitted but the children of that age.

Christian baptism differed from John's baptism in being a symbol not alone of repentance, but of union with Christ, and in being in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In being baptism in the threefold name, it is clear that it was conceived of as being baptism by water and by the Spirit, and this is made clear by the account of Paul's dealings with the disciples of Apollos at Ephesus (Acts xix.). These had been baptized with John's baptism of repentance, but to Paul this was insufficient because it was unrelated to the Holy Spirit. But when Paul baptized them

in the name of the Lord Jesus, this was accompanied by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And all true Christian baptism must be more than a mere water rite; it must be accompanied by the baptism of the Spirit. And what baptism of the Spirit was is made clear in the New Testament. For it sprang out of the other specifically Christian element of the significance of baptism.

Baptists frequently appeal to Romans vi. for evidence of the New Testament mode of baptism, and rightly argue that since Paul interprets it in terms of death and resurrection, it is clear that immersion is meant, since no other form could be a comparable symbol of death and resurrection. On this there is little dispute amongst informed writers of whatever school. But far more important is this passage for the significance than for the form of baptism. The baptism of Jewish proselytes could be a symbol of death to the old life and rebirth to the new; the baptism of John could be a symbol of renunciation of the perishing world, and entry upon the life of the age that was to be. But Christian baptism meant more than this. Paul speaks of it as being not merely comparable with Christ's death and resurrection, but as being a spiritual sharing of that experience. He speaks of being baptized "into Christ," and says: "For if we have become united with Him by the likeness of His death, we shall be also by the likeness of His resurrection" (vi. 5). Baptism is therefore less a symbol of repentance than of union with Christ. We not merely die to the old life, but we die with Him that we may be raised with Him, that henceforth He may be the spring of all our life. "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (vi. 11), or, as Goodspeed puts it, "alive to God, through union with Christ Jesus." And this is what is meant by the baptism of the Spirit. It brings about not merely a walking in newness of life, but a walking in that newness of life which springs from union with Christ.

There is another great passage, where baptism is not specifically mentioned, but where Paul is writing of precisely the same profound experience which he here in Romans vi. declares to be symbolised by baptism, and to be of the essence of true baptism. In Galatians ii. 20, he says: "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me." Or again, in Philipians iii. 8 ff, he says: "That I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the

fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death." It is this experience of dying with Christ, and of rising to newness of life, whose essence springs from union with Christ, which is fundamental to Paul's interpretation of the Gospel. It appears in the passages which have been quoted above from Ephesians and Colossians, and in a number of other passages, and both the passage from Colossians, and that from Romans vi. make it clear that it is in terms of this experience that Paul interpreted baptism. He regarded it as not merely symbolising this profound experience, but as having meaning only when it was linked with this experience. And it is an experience which no unconscious infant can possibly have.

It is here, from the New Testament significance of baptism, rather than from any assumed but unrecorded practice of the New Testament Church, or from any false analogies with circumcision or Jewish proselyte baptism, that our practice must find its warrant. How early the Church began to treat baptism as parallel with the Jewish circumcision of infants may not be known. But however early it was, it was a departure from the inherent significance of baptism, as set forth by Paul. For we must beware of arguing that the practice of the Early Church is regulative for us. If it could be proved conclusively that in the first century A.D. infants were baptized, that would not justify a practice that does not accord with the New Testament teaching of the meaning of baptism; and if it could be conclusively proved that in the first century A.D. infants were not baptized, that would not of itself rule out the practice, if it accorded with the New Testament teaching of its essential significance. It is not because we are persuaded that Infant Baptism was not practised in the Early Church that we reject it; and similarly it is not because we believe that the earliest mode of baptism was by immersion that we adhere to that mode. It is because only believers' baptism by immersion accords with the New Testament teaching of the meaning of baptism.

Let it not be forgotten that no modern Church administers the rite in all particulars as they did in the Early Church. There are some churches which have open-air baptisteries, as being closer to the New Testament practice, but most recognise that no essential sacrifice of the significance of the rite is involved in administering it indoors. Most churches that baptize by immersion prefer to immerse in tepid water. Some years ago the writer had to conduct a baptismal service in a pastorless church on a winter's morning. The water was icy cold, and the chill struck through to his bones, so that it was not for several hours that he got warm again. But he was more concerned for the candidates, who were all women, and who stood in the water in a way he did not. He asked the

deacons afterwards why the water was not warmed, and they replied that their late Minister would have been horrified at anything so contrary to New Testament practice. He could only ask whether their late Minister was equally horrified at wearing a baptismal gown which kept the water from himself, when such a garment was equally certainly unknown to the New Testament Church.

For Jewish proselyte baptism complete nudity was essential. It is laid down in the Talmud that nothing whatever must interpose between the flesh of the proselyte and the water (T.B. Yebamoth 47 b), and even a knot in the hair was held by some of the rabbis to invalidate the rite (T. B. Erubin 4 b). Taylor observes that "a ring on the finger, a band confining the hair, or anything that in the least degree broke the continuity of contact with the water, was held to invalidate the act." (*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, 1886, p. 52). No modern upholder of the analogy of Jewish proselyte baptism suggests that this should be regulative for Christian baptism, and few trouble to note that there is definite evidence that the Early Church did copy the synagogue in this respect. In the fourth century A.D. Cyril of Jerusalem observes that in their nakedness the candidates for baptism repeated the nakedness of Christ on the Cross (*Catechesis* XX. Myst ii. 2), while later in the same century Chrysostom compared it with the nakedness of Adam in the Garden of Eden (*Homilies on the Epistle to the Colossians*, vi. 4). There can be no doubt, therefore, that in the fourth century complete nudity was the Christian practice. So far as the Jewish rite is concerned, nudity did not involve any immodesty, for though the rite was administered to women by men in the sense that they catechised the proselyte and interpreted the meaning of the rite, they did so from a position where she was not visible to them, and only women were present with her. Something similar may well have been the practice of the Church, and it is quite certain that any immodesty would have been as repugnant to the Church as to the Synagogue. Chrysostom does record one shocking incident, in his *Epistle to Innocent*, when he describes how some women were stripped ready for baptism and some soldiers broke into the church, causing the women to flee in terror outside in their nude state. But all of this is unmeaning to us, and we are quite unconcerned to have broken with the Early Church practice in this matter, just because nothing really vital to the significance of baptism hung on the nudity.

It is there, and there alone, on the significance of the rite, that we must stand fast. If baptism is a symbol of death with Christ and resurrection to newness of life in Him, then no change of mode or subject should be allowed to destroy that meaning. For

in destroying that, the whole essence of the rite is changed. And whatever interpretation is put on Infant Baptism, it cannot seriously be interpreted in terms of Romans vi. and Galatians ii. 20, and the other passages that have been quoted. Where the doctrine of original sin is held, it is commonly supposed that by the vicarious faith of the god-parents baptism may wash away the original sin, but the New Testament does not call for a vicarious faith, and if baptism stands for the living union with Christ, it is more than a washing. And where Infant Baptism is practised it is commonly regarded as a potential entry on the life in Christ Jesus, requiring the personal self-commitment to Christ and confirmation to give it full validity. And here again resort is often had to the practice of Judaism. For while a Jewish boy by his circumcision in infancy enters potentially into the Covenant of Abraham, when he is thirteen years of age he requires the Bar-Mitsvah ceremony before he is fully recognised as a loyal child of Judaism, taking its vows and obligations upon himself and entering of his own volition into its privileges and responsibilities. It is surely passing strange that Christian writers should set aside the New Testament in favour of Jewish analogy, and especially when the analogy is not really analogous. Yet once they have made the false equation of baptism with circumcision, they have abandoned the New Testament, and turned Christian baptism into a mere modification of the Jewish rite, and hence tread with Judaism the road to confirmation.

In the study of the origins of Christian baptism, then, five separate and distinct rites must be examined, of which one is completely irrelevant and the others relevant to widely varying degrees. Circumcision is represented in the New Testament as superseded in Christianity, and not as integrated into Christianity in a modified form. In Judaism it was a rite administered in infancy to all male children of Jewish parents, or administered to male converts of whatever age at the time of their conversion, and to their male children born before their conversion and still minors. Jewish ritual lustrations were practised by Jews of both sexes on a great variety of occasions, and could be repeated as often as the conditions which called for them were repeated. Jewish proselyte baptism was administered only to converts of either sex who came over to Judaism from paganism, and to their minor children born before their conversion. It was the child of the ordinary bath of purification, but different from the latter in its significance and in its subjects. The baptism of John was probably the child of Jewish proselyte baptism, but again it was different in its significance and in its subjects. It was administered to Jew and Gentile alike, with no sort of association with circumcision, and it had a strongly eschatological meaning. Christian baptism was again the

child of John's baptism, but again it was different from that out of which it historically sprang. It signified the entry on the life that was hid with Christ in God, through the mystical sharing of the experience of His crucifixion, whereby the old self was crucified with Him and the new self, born of Him and united indissolubly with Him, came into being. Why, in discussing the appropriate subjects for this fourth baptismal rite of the historical sequence, writers should suddenly hark back, not to that baptism of John which was its immediate predecessor, nor to any of the baptismal rites of the series, but to Jewish circumcision, which stands right outside the series, is one of the unsolved mysteries of Christian scholarship.

Nevertheless, a merely negative attitude on the question of Infant Baptism is not enough. It is easy for Baptists to point to the superstition which has gathered round it, and which it too often fosters, but it is improbable that it was born merely of superstition, and certain that it is not merely superstition which has maintained it for so long. We should rather recognise the truth it has striven to preserve. For there is room for a sacrament, fraught with grace for the child, in its infancy. But this is something quite different from New Testament baptism, and it is a great pity to throw away the true sacrament of baptism for it. Our Lord was presented in the Temple in His infancy, and in Baptist Churches there is an increasing tendency for Christian parents to bring their children to the House of God, to thank Him for His gifts, to present their children before Him, and to dedicate them to His service. But something more than a dedication service is called for. The child does not, and cannot, repent or make any vows for himself, and these are acts that no other can do for him. But the parents can and should undertake in solemn vows to bring up their child in the nurture and fear of the Lord. If such vows are made and kept, the child will indeed be blessed. For it is, and ought to be, an unspeakable blessing to be reared in a Christian home. This is something much more than the dedication of the child, and we should cease to speak of it as an Infant Dedication service. It should be a service when the parents dedicate themselves to the sacred obligations of parenthood.

Yet it should be more than that. It should be a service in which the Church is more than a witness of the parents' vows, but a sharer in those vows and in the responsibility for their fulfilment. For this should be more than a private sacrament, administered in the presence of a few Christian friends. It should be a sacrament of the Church, and the Church in sharing in it should recognise the child as the child of its fellowship, in whom it henceforth will take an interest. It should be as satisfied that the parents seriously mean their vows as it is that a candidate for

Church membership understands and means what he is doing. It is therefore highly anomalous for parents who have not definitely committed themselves to the Christian way, and entered on the life that is hid with Christ in God, to promise to rear their children in the faith they have been unwilling to profess for themselves. If this service is regarded as a Christian sacrament, it should be a sacrament for Christians. And the Church should keep a register of the children who are thus recognised as the children of its fellowship, and feel that it is involved in the fulfilment of the vows.

The steps that Baptists have taken in recent years have been in the right direction, but only as a beginning. The services at which infants are brought to the House of God are still too sporadic and casual, and are commonly given too shallow and too private a meaning. In many churches they are never held, and even where they are held they are regarded as a sort of optional extra for the few. They are not regarded as a part of our denominational witness and practice, normal throughout the denomination. And while the form of service which is widely used to-day is a great advance on that formerly used, in that it is more specifically a sacrament of parenthood, and involves definite vows on the part of the parents, it is still thought of and spoken of as a mere dedication of the children. The denomination is interested in knowing the statistics of baptisms and membership and Sunday School scholars, but it has no interest in knowing how many children of its widespread fellowship have been thus brought to the House of God by Christian parents who have solemnly undertaken to give them Christian training. Yet actually there should be more significance for the Church in the numbers of the children whose Christian parents have thus pledged themselves in the fellowship of the Church to rear them in the faith of Christ than in the mere numbers of children on the Sunday School books.

If Baptists can make this service normal throughout their fellowship, and can fill it with richer meaning, and ensure that it shall be taken seriously by parents and Church alike, they can make of their witness something more than the anti-paedobaptism with which they are too commonly associated. To say that Infant Baptism is not what the New Testament understands by baptism is not enough. To say that it is not baptism in the New Testament sense is to offer good reason why it should not be called baptism, but not necessarily to abolish it altogether. If its true worth and meaning can be preserved in another way, then let them be preserved. But Baptists will never persuade the other Christian denominations that they find any really vital meaning and worth in any ceremony where infants are concerned so long as the observance of such a ceremony is sporadic.

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