

The Second Adam and the New Birth;

or,
The Doctrine of Baptism as Contained in Holy Scripture

by the
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"Adam, who is the figure of Him that was to come."

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

"The second man is the Lord from heaven."

"The last Adam was made a quickening spirit."

"We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."

"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ!"

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Introduction



*M.F. Sadler's The Second Adam and the New Birth:
Looking at Salvation through the Lens of the Covenant*

By Rich Lusk

Classic Reformed theology has always maintained that the divine-human relationship may be looked at from two perspectives.¹ On the one hand, we can look at things from the perspective of God's sovereignty. God has planned and controls whatsoever comes to pass. Every event in history is simply the outworking of his eternal decree, according to his irresistible purpose. God has graciously predestinated a great multitude for eternal life in Christ, while others have been justly foreordained for eternal destruction because of their sin. Of course, the identity of the elect and reprobate are known only unto God in an ultimate sense.

On the other hand, we have the covenantal perspective (for lack of a better term). We come to know God's decree of election and reprobation (in a creaturely way) through his administration of the covenant. God makes promises and gives commands to a visible, publicly identifiable community. These people must reciprocate his love. Humans, after all, are responsible agents. They make choices. While salvation is entirely a work of God's grace, it is also true that we must work (Phil. 2:12–13). We must believe. We must repent. We must obey. We must persevere. We must participate in the life of the covenant community, with its signs and seals. Of course, our faithful participation in the covenant is itself a gift of grace (including our faith—Eph. 2:8–10), but it is also something we are responsible for. Reformed theology has always upheld both the sovereignty of God as well as the creaturely freedom of humanity (cf. Westminster Confession of Faith, chapters 3 and 9),

1. For a contemporary exposition of these two perspectives, see John Frame's excellent book, *No Other God*, especially pp. 95ff.

though at times, there has been a severe imbalance in favor of emphasizing God's control at the expense of human agency.

The book you hold in your hands is perhaps the finest treatment ever written of the "covenantal" side of salvation. It is a look at our salvation from the bottom up. This book does not say everything that could be said about God's covenantal administration, of course. Nor does it say everything that needs to be said about divine sovereignty or human responsibility. It is not a comprehensive theology of salvation by any stretch.

But what M.F. Sadler does say, he says very well. Sadler's book concisely unpacks the covenantal side of salvation primarily in terms of baptism and the Church. In baptism, we enter formally and publicly into a covenant relationship with the Triune God through Jesus Christ. We enter into the Church, which is Christ's kingdom, body, and bride. This covenant relationship is gracious. And yet it is also conditional. The baptismal covenant bestows new life and forgiveness, but it also requires persevering faith and repentance. In baptism, we are united to Christ and his people, and offered all the promises of the gospel, but we must respond accordingly.

As Sadler convincingly demonstrates, this baptismal grace belongs to the entire covenant community. The baptismal indicative precedes and grounds the covenant's moral imperatives. This objective covenant standing is used repeatedly in Scripture as an incentive to holiness (Col. 3:12ff.) and a challenge to perseverance (1 Cor. 9:24–10:13). In light of this covenant objectivity, those who apostatize are said to have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4) and cut themselves off from Christ (John. 15:1–8). Sadler's book unfolds this covenant theology in simple, straightforward terms.²

This is not to say Sadler views the Church as a reservoir of grace. Rather, his point is that the Church is the sign and seed form of the new order of things Christ came to establish. The Church is both the instrument and agent of applying Christ's salvation, as well as the form that salvation takes in the world.

2. Acknowledging the two-sidedness of God's covenant administration is virtually inescapable in any orthodox system of theology because it is the only alternative to either legalism or antinomianism. On the one hand, the covenant counters the presumptuous professor by demanding faith and repentance from the heart. The covenant chides the lethargic and disobedient within the church by reminding them that they are sinning in the face of grace. On the other hand, the covenant answers the anxious believer's uncertainties by giving him direct, personalized promises of God's love and favor. The poor, doubting Christian is pointed to the covenant ordinances as tangible proof that he is in a state of grace. Both the covenant demands and promises point us to Jesus as the one in whom and through whom the covenant is kept.

Sadler writes from within the Anglican tradition, but he is perhaps best regarded as an Augustinian Christian, or a Reformed Catholic.³ The hallmark of Augustinianism is a theological combination of sovereign grace with a high doctrine of sacramental efficacy (see chapters 16, 19–20, and Appendices B and C). Since the Reformation, these two aspects of biblical teaching have appeared to be in tension, with Romanists choosing the sacraments and Calvinists choosing predestination. But in reality, predestination and sacramental efficacy are fully compatible, as Sadler argues.⁴ There is no need to choose, even if we cannot fully explain their relationship. Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Bucer, and so on, held to both the sovereignty of God in salvation and to the sacraments as effectual means of salvation.

Sadler represents classical Calvinism and neo-Augustinianism in their purest form, uncorrupted by American revivalism or individualism. Calvin's view of the structure of the covenant is identical to that set

3. Sadler's theology is basically that of Thomas Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer*. Cranmer, of course, was regarded as one the leading Reformers of the sixteenth century, along with Martin Luther and John Calvin. The theology of his prayer book was heavily shaped by Martin Bucer, who spent time in England working alongside Cranmer. While the prayer book eventually became very controversial, it is part of a common liturgical and theological heritage, shared by Presbyterians and other British-American Reformed churches. We should note that the *BCP* predates the widescale break up of British Protestants into various denominations and factions. See Julius Melton, *Presbyterian Worship in America: Changing Patterns Since 1787*, for insight into Anglican-Presbyterian interaction over liturgical and sacramental issues. For a thorough examination of the prayer book's theology, see another excellent work by Sadler, *Church Doctrine—Bible Truth*.

4. Rejecting this Augustinian synthesis was B.B. Warfield's mistake in his essay, "Augustine," found in volume 4 of his *Works*. (See pages 127–131 of this work.) Unfortunately, the paradigm Warfield suggested has become commonplace. Warfield writes, "Two children were struggling in the womb of his mind . . . The problem which Augustine bequeathed to the Church for solution, the Church required a thousand years to solve." But the problem is really no problem at all, unless we have already assumed that predestination and sacramental grace are incompatible. The early Reformers identified no such problem, as a close reading of Calvin's *Institutes* bears out. Thus, we must strongly disagree with Warfield's conclusion: "For the Reformation, inwardly considered, was just the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the Church." In reality, it was the Anabaptists, not Calvin or Luther, who felt pressure to pit Augustine's ecclesiology against his soteriology. Calvin, Luther, Bucer, Cranmer, and the other leading Reformers, unlike Warfield, did not think a high doctrine of the church and sacraments presented "great obstacles" to a doctrine of salvation by sovereign grace. We need the "whole Augustine," so to speak – his teaching on both predestination and sacramental efficacy.

forth by Sadler. Calvin knew there was a sense in which the visible Church had to be identified as the elect people. In his sermons on Deuteronomy, he says,

Now then it is of God's free election that we have his Word preached unto us and that we have his Gospel and Sacraments. And therein, we have reason to confess that he has shown himself generous to us . . . but for all that [love shown to us by God in the covenant administration of Word and Sacrament], in the meantime he holds to himself those he so wishes in order that people should not trust the outward signs except by faith and obedience, knowing that although we have been chosen to be of the Body of Christ, yet if we do not make that election to our profit, God can well enough cut us off again, and reserve a final number to himself.

Calvin saw the sacraments as "badges of his fatherly election." Calvin and Sadler are agreed on the objectivity and graciousness of God's covenant. (Calvin's sermons on Deuteronomy should be compared to chapter five and Appendix A of Sadler's work, which articulate a doctrine of election from the Hebrew Scriptures.)

In addition, Calvin and Sadler both held to a form of baptismal regeneration, though they used this language quite differently than evangelicals do today when they reject it. In his answer to the Council of Trent, Calvin wrote:

That this may be more clear, let my readers call to mind that there is a two-fold grace in baptism, for therein both remission of sins and regeneration are offered to us. We teach that full remission is made, but that regeneration is only begun, and goes on making progress during the whole of life.

Calvin and Sadler, in line with the historic Catholic Church, taught that God worked through baptism as his instrument in granting new life. But baptism is only a beginning, as Calvin notes; it is not a complete salvation in itself, apart from ongoing faith and repentance. There is no place for presumption or a barren formalism. In fact, Sadler, like Calvin, strongly emphasizes that baptism must be followed up by Christian education, including covenant nurture and discipleship (pp. 226ff).

Sadler did not use baptismal regeneration to cancel out the need for conversion; indeed baptismal regeneration is considered the corollary of and basis for conversion (pp. 19ff). Baptism puts us in Christ's kingdom, to be sure, but by itself does not guarantee final glorification. In baptism, we are united to Christ and his people. But this grace offered and given in baptism must be received and maintained by faith. We must live up to and live out of our baptismal status (or, to put it in the lan-

guage of the Westminster Larger Catechism, we must “improve” our baptisms).

Because baptism comes with a promise, genuine faith may draw assurance from the sacrament. Sadler, like Calvin, is deeply concerned with pastoral practice, not just theoretical theological questions. Calvin wrote, “Thus, you see that our baptism becomes precious to us when we use it as a shield to deflect all assailing doubt.” Baptism is a shield against doubt precisely because it brings with it God’s sure word of forgiveness:

We must realize that at whatever time we are baptized, we are once for all washed and purged for our whole life. Therefore, as often as we fall away, we ought to recall the memory of our baptism and fortify our mind with it, that we may always be sure and confident of the forgiveness of sins.

Sadler echoes this teaching of Calvin throughout his work.

The same cluster of covenantal truths is found in the teaching of the Westminster Standards as well, though it has not always been faithfully maintained in the Westminsterian tradition. In Westminster Shorter Catechism 85, three things are required of us for salvation: faith, repentance, and diligent use of the outward means of grace. In other words, we are ordinarily bound to the external means of Word and sacrament because these are the instruments through which God has promised to give us Christ and his benefits. Question 91 refers to the sacraments as “effectual means of salvation.”

Of course, this close linkage of covenant, Church, and salvation has unquestionable biblical support, which Sadler is at pains to demonstrate with bountiful biblical quotations. Note, for example, the nexus found in Acts 2:14-47: The people *believed* what Peter *preached* to them, *repented* of their sin, and were *baptized*. This package of blessings is coordinated with entrance into the *Church* and is called *salvation* (2:47). Acts 2 affirms the means of grace and church membership are ordinarily necessary to receive eternal life -- not because these means are efficacious in themselves to produce salvation, but because Christ communicates, or bestows, his redemptive mercy through them. In other words, life in the Church is the *way* to final redemption. Salvation is found in the context of the covenant because God’s design is ultimately a restored, recreated humanity.

Indeed, it is the ordained practices of the Church (Word, sacraments, prayer) that Christ’s promise to be with his people is most directly manifest (Matt. 18:20). Faith seeks Christ where he has promised to be found. Faith receives Christ in his appointed means. Faith unites us to Christ by the work of the Spirit in these ordinances. The means of

grace are objective instruments through which salvation is offered; faith is the subjective instrument by which that salvation becomes ours.

Sadler shows with copious biblical quotations that this doctrine of covenantal salvation is pervasive in Scripture. The people of God are addressed as recipients of grace—and this is so, even in the case of very corrupt and nearly apostate churches like Corinth and Galatia. Those who break the covenant are never excused on the ground that grace was withheld or that their baptisms were defective. Sadler's extensive quotations from great saints through history show that he is not peddling a novel, idiosyncratic doctrine either, but a view that has had widespread acceptance in the history of the Church.

Some Reformed readers may be troubled by Sadler's occasional harsh words about Calvin. Sadler says Calvin was clear headed but cold hearted (p. 278). This is a common but unfortunate misconception. Nevertheless, Sadler still shows an appreciation for Calvin's sacramental theology. If anything, Sadler's problem with Calvin is that he didn't go as far as the English Reformers in integrating predestination and sacramental efficacy into a total package. But a good case could be made that Calvin was more like Sadler than Sadler was aware. After all, they both trace their theological heritage back to Augustine. And Sadler's *real* beef is with later Calvinists who degenerated from Calvin's more holistic position.⁵ At several points, he makes clear his quarrel is with *modern* Calvinists (pp. 79, 127), particularly their bifurcation of the Church and salvation, and their denial of sacramental grace.

Sadler is an astute biblical theologian. He grasps the two-Adam architecture of the biblical narrative. Union with Adam is the root of original sin; regeneration into Christ, the Second Adam, is the answer. Regeneration is understood by Sadler primarily as an objective, redemptive-historical reality, synonymous with the kingdom of God. Like Calvin, Sadler focuses soteriology on union with Christ, rather than discrete particles of an *ordo salutis*. And like Calvin, he views Israel's covenant as a typological forerunner of the Church's new covenant. The structure of the covenant, in terms of promise/demand and blessing/curse, remains the same, even though these things have been intensified in the new age. The movement from old covenant to new does not entail a movement away from communal concerns to purely individualistic concerns. Both Calvin and Sadler pay careful attention to the language with which inspired authors address the visible covenant

5. To put this point another way, Sadler's problem is with those extreme Calvinists within neo-Puritanism who reduced the full orb'd system of Calvinism to predestination (or to the "TULIP," the acronym for total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints). In reality, classical Calvinism is about the church, sacraments, and covenant every bit as much as it is about predestination.

community. Both Calvin and Sadler emphasize that salvation takes covenantal shape—which is to say, it takes shape in the Church.

Sadler situates his understanding of election within a larger doctrine of union with Christ, since Christ himself is preeminently the Elect One. Sadler clearly has a doctrine of individual election (pp. 141, 208f., 269f.)—he is no Arminian—but like Calvin and Augustine, he also emphasizes Scripture’s teaching on corporate election (pp. 94f., 209). Individual election in Christ is realized and fulfilled in the context of the corporately elect community. Of course, this is also the point made by the final statement of the 17th Article of Sadler’s Anglican confession of faith: “Furthermore, we must receive God’s promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture: and, in our doings, that Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God.” In other words, we evaluate the status of ourselves and others in terms of God’s revealed Word (the covenant), not in terms of guesses about the eternal decree (Deut. 29:29). Election is a comfort because in looking to Christ we come to know our own election in him.

Why has the perspective set forth by Sadler been largely ignored? Reformed Catholics have always been misfits on the American religious scene. They simply don’t fit into the predominantly (ana)baptistic theological mix that has come to characterize American Protestantism. Evangelicals hold many truths in common, such as the inspiration and authority of Scripture, salvation by grace, justification by faith, and so on. These are no doubt central, core doctrines. But evangelicals are also amazingly uninterested in the sacraments. Sacraments play almost no role in evangelicalism’s self-definition, devotional praxis, counseling on assurance, and so forth. The sacraments are not part of evangelicalism’s demarcation of orthodoxy, over against liberalism. In fact, if evangelicals and liberals have any one thing in common it’s that neither side sees the sacraments as central to the gospel.

The danger of downgrading the sacraments is that biblical religion will be turned into a quasi-Gnostic system of truth, as Sadler recognized long ago (pp. 169–170). Our asacramental theology is bound up in our individualism and radically privatized view of religion. Propositions are privileged over rites, turning biblical faith into an ideology, or a philosophy of life, or a worldview. Of course, Christianity *includes* ideas, a philosophy of life, and a worldview. But it cannot be *reduced* to these things. Christianity, after all, is a religion built around the incarnation of the Son of God. We aren’t saved by ideas; we are saved by (Christ’s) embodied actions. Word and deed always go together in Scripture. The sacraments must be understood as actions *of God* through

creaturely means.⁶ Without efficacious sacraments, God's only access to us is through the intellect. But this turns Christian faith into a new rationalism (or Socinianism, as Sadler shows; p. 145).

Thus, the sacraments are integral to the gospel, even though they do not guarantee salvation apart from faith any more preaching does. God is free to work when and how and where he pleases, to be sure, but *ordinarily* he chooses to apply salvation to us through his appointed means of grace (preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper) in the context of the covenant community. Sadler's book will help us understand what we mean when we corporately confess in the Nicene Creed "one baptism for the remission of sins." Sadler's book will help us recover the "churchly" nature of salvation and the sacramental aspects of Christian piety.

Sadler's book is not a perfect remedy to our ills. As might be expected, the work partakes of the philosophical weaknesses of the late nineteenth century. Occasionally, Sadler lapses into a nature/grace schema. At several points his exegesis could be significantly refined. But Sadler's treatise is important because it reminds us that God's salvation comes to us through the Church and through his external means. He refocuses our attention on the macrocosm of the biblical narrative, rather than the microcosm of our individual experience. This book is well worth reading, despite the archaic syntax and overly formal style.⁷

Sadly, Sadler has largely been forgotten by history. Even within his native Anglicanism, he is overlooked. Other nineteenth century British and American theologians continue to have their works reprinted and read (J.C. Ryle, Robert Dabney, and Charles Hodge). Sadler should be a part of that group simply because he has something so distinctive and so classically Christian to say to us. His voice should be heard in contemporary discussion, for it is the voice of the Church fathers, such as Augustine, and the great Reformers, including Calvin and Cranmer.

I have been tremendously blessed by reading this work from Sadler as well as several others. I providentially stumbled across Sadler a few years ago when I was reading through old issues of the *Mercersburg Review*. The Mercersburg movement, led by the likes of John Williamson

6. Sadler points out that no one baptizes himself. Baptism is done by another and received passively. In other words, a proper understanding of baptismal efficacy is actually a powerful safe guard to *sola gratia*. In reinforces Luther's word of counsel to Melancthon, "The whole gospel is outside of you." We can add the further observation that no one is baptized alone. In other words baptism is done in a communal context. It is inescapably public, and therefore political (since it inducts one into the kingdom of Jesus Christ and obligates one to loyal service under his lordship).

7. In this reprint the majority of Sadler's original syntax, spelling, and punctuation have been preserved.

Nevin, Philip Schaff, and Emanuel Gerhart, represented a short-lived attempt to establish Reformed Catholicism on American soil. For all its brilliance, the movement flamed out rather quickly. But as I was working through the old Mercersburg material, I came across a glowing review of the second edition of Sadler's *The Second Adam* in the January 1868 issue. J.W. Santee's synopsis made it quickly evident to me that Sadler's biblical-theological handbook on baptism could be just the kind of thing the today's evangelical Church needs. Perhaps God will choose to revive a Reformed Catholic movement in America thanks in part to a rediscovery of Sadler's work.

Athanasius Press has done Christendom a great service by re-typesetting this forgotten classic and making it available to the modern reader. Sadler's book is far more than an antique or an historical curiosity. To be sure, we still need biblical-theological studies of baptism and the covenant written in our time and more in line with our own language. But Sadler's fine piece can go a long way towards helping us recover the rich, full orbbed Reformed and Catholic faith that has been largely eclipsed in American evangelicalism.



Preface



The object of this short treatise is to give, in as plain terms as possible, the Scripture testimony to the doctrine of the Initial Sacrament.

To this end the reader's attention is called to the position assigned to Baptism by Christ and His Apostles. The more prominent places of Scripture which teach us any truth respecting it are examined, and their plain meaning vindicated from interpretations falsely called spiritual.

The analogy between the two Adams, as implying the transmission of the nature of each respectively, is considered with reference to its bearing on Sacramental doctrine.

The terms used by the inspired writers in addressing the whole body of the Church are also carefully examined with the view of ascertaining in what state, whether of grace or otherwise, the persons they speak to are presumed to be.

As the limits which the writer has prescribed to himself preclude his noticing a number of minor objections to the doctrine contained in the following pages, he desires to refer to a former publication on the same subject entitled "The Sacrament of Responsibility, or, the Testimony of Scripture to the Teaching of the Church on Holy Baptism," where the reader will find a multitude of misconceptions met and answered.

The writer has endeavoured to make his work a handbook of Scripture reference on the subject of Baptismal Doctrine. To this end he has reviewed at some length the teaching of the Apostolical Epistles, especially those of St. Paul to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and Hebrews, and also that of our Lord's parables, and has shown how, both by express statement and general coincidence of thought and expression, they uphold the doctrine of the Church.

He has devoted a chapter to showing the harmony of the Church's doctrine of Regeneration with the most unreserved preaching of Conversion or Renewal; and another to the Scripture statements respecting Election and Final Perseverance, and their bearing on the question of Baptismal grace.

Three Appendices¹ complete the work: the first (A) bringing before the reader how full the Old Testament Prophets are of a mode of addressing the visible Church of their day, anticipatory of, and answering to, that adopted by the Apostles and by the Church in her formularies; the second (B) giving the testimony of the great leaders of the Reformation, as well as that of such divines as Mede, Jeremy Taylor, Pearson, and Beveridge; the third (C) exhibiting, side by side, the opinions of St. Augustine on Election and on Baptismal Regeneration, and their influence on our Reformers.

He must beg the critical reader to remember that he has attempted to adapt his treatise to the wants and the habits of thought of those who are only acquainted with our English translation of the Bible, and that it has been written under the manifold interruptions and distractions attending the ministry of a large parish in a populous town.

The more he thinks of the present state of the controversy, the more he is convinced that it must be treated as a Bible rather than a Church question.

It involves no less than the one principle on which the hortatory teaching of God's Word can be applied, in its entirety, to the present visible Church.

We are asked for a revision of the Prayer-book, with the view of modifying or omitting those statements in the Baptismal Service and Catechism which assert that the present Kingdom of God's grace is designed by its Divine Founder for all infants, and that at Baptism they are in very deed born into it and made partakers of its distinguishing grace.²

The writer has abundantly shown in the following pages that this language of the Prayer-book, taken in its most liberal sense, is the mere echo of the language of God's Word. The expressions which include the whole Church in the net of Divine grace are more absolute in the New Testament than in the Prayer-book.

May God in His infinite mercy grant that this appeal to His Word may be to His glory, the sanctification of His people, and the peace of His Church, for Jesus Christ's sake!

1. [This reprint also includes an Appendix D, *An Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:17.*]

2. In a pamphlet published by the writer of this work, entitled "Doctrinal Revision of the Liturgy" (Bell and Daldy), he has shown at some length that the Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration so pervades our formularies that no "slight modification," or "alteration, or omission of a few words," or "bracketing of a sentence or two" would satisfy the scruples of those who desire alteration on Puritan grounds. It would not be honest to erase some few words and yet, virtually, to retain the obnoxious doctrine in every part of the service.

Contents



<i>Chapter One</i>	
Position Assigned to Baptism by Christ and His Apostles.	1
<i>Chapter Two</i>	
Analogy of the Two Adams.	7
<i>Chapter Three</i>	
Section One—Regeneration, a Birth of Water and of the Spirit.	17
Section Two—Examination of Interpretation of John 3:3–5.	33
<i>Chapter Four</i>	
Regeneration of Infants in Holy Baptism.	43
<i>Chapter Five</i>	
The Old Testament Anticipates the Sacramental Teaching of the Apostles.	55
<i>Chapter Six</i>	
The Apostles Hold All Baptized Christians to be Members of Christ	
Section One—Examination of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.	65
Section Two—Examination of the Epistles to the Romans and the Colossians.	73
<i>Chapter Seven</i>	
Baptismal Grace, as set Forth in the Epistle to the Galatians.	81
<i>Chapter Eight</i>	
Saints and Believers.	87
<i>Chapter Nine</i>	
Baptismal Grace—Epistle to the Ephesians.	93

<i>Chapter Ten</i>	
Further Examination of the Apostolical Epistles.	103
<i>Chapter Eleven</i>	
Baptismal Grace—General Review of the Teaching of the Epistles. . .	111
<i>Chapter Twelve</i>	
Baptismal Grace—The Parables of our Lord.	119
<i>Chapter Thirteen</i>	
The Visible Church.	127
<i>Chapter Fourteen</i>	
Certain Objections Considered.	131
<i>Chapter Fifteen</i>	
Examination of Passages in the Epistles of St. John and St. Peter. . . .	147
<i>Chapter Sixteen</i>	
Objections Arising from the Doctrines of Predestination and Justification.	161
<i>Chapter Seventeen</i>	
Baptismal Grace, as Bearing on the Preaching of Conversion.	171
<i>Chapter Eighteen</i>	
The Effects of Baptismal Grace, and the Practical Results of Holding the Truth Respecting It.	179
<i>Chapter Nineteen</i>	
On Election and Final Perseverance, and their Bearing on Baptismal Regeneration.	191
<i>Chapter Twenty</i>	
Recapitulation of the Argument, and Conclusion.	215
Appendix A.	231
Appendix B.	245
Appendix C.	269
Appendix D.	281
Index.	285



One

Position Assigned to Baptism by Christ and His Apostles

THE SON of the MOST HIGH GOD, the Eternal WORD, was made flesh and came among us, to be our Second Adam.

To this end He was born without sin, and having lived without sin, He died for sinful man, as his atonement.

To this end the fulness of the Spirit was committed to Him, for the sanctification of His brethren.

The religion which He taught is, as might have been expected, a spiritual religion.

He had said of God, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"; and so the religion which He brought in requires a faith of the heart, an obedience of love, a reasonable service.

But, lo! In the very first demand of this spiritual religion, on its very front, the Incarnate Wisdom ordains an act or rite not purely spiritual, for it touches our bodies as well as our souls.

He, the Son of God and Wisdom of God, in laying down the terms of admission into His kingdom, not only says, "He that believeth," but adds, "and is baptized." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

And under what circumstances did He say this?

Under the most solemn possible—on the eve of His Ascension, just before He left this scene of His humiliation.

Reader, have you ever thought it incumbent upon you to realize why the Incarnate Word should, in His last words on earth, thus join together two things so diverse as "believing" and "being baptized"?

One, the conscious act of the immortal spirit recognizing its Saviour and embracing His promises; the other, to all outward appearance, but a paltry washing of the perishable body.

He came to set aside a religion of types and figures, and to bring in a religion of realities. Why should He ordain a type, if a type it be, on the front of a spiritual system?

Some time before this, a ruler of His nation had come to inquire of Him the nature of His religion; and to this man the Saviour vouchsafed to make known the first mystery of His kingdom—the new birth.

And in what terms does He set forth this first truth? Does He so declare it as to leave no room for misconception about *such* a thing, so that every child of the kingdom should know that the new birth is a purely spiritual thing, i.e., an act of God's Spirit on our spirit, independent of, and unconnected with, any form, any rite, any element of this outward creation; identical in fact with that conversion unto life by which the ungodly becomes the godly, and the nominal Christian the true?

Marvellous to relate, He connects this new birth with water—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Again, we find the rite of Baptism expressly included in the few words of that parting commission, whereby the Apostles were empowered to set up His kingdom: "Go ye, and make disciples of (μαθητευσατε) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19).

Then He ascended into heaven and sent down the Holy Ghost to gather His Church out of the world and to guide it into all truth.

His coming was seen in the cloven tongues of fire, and His power manifested in the gift of languages, and in the conviction with which the testimony of Jesus came home to the hearts of an immense multitude. "Men and brethren," asked three thousand anxious inquirers, "what shall we do?"

Marvellous to relate, again Baptism, again "*the water*," in the answer of the Holy Ghost, directing them what to do to be saved. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

But further, a new era in God's dealing was about to commence. The salvation of God was not to be confined to one race but was to be preached to all nations for the obedience of faith.

To this end it pleased God to raise up a new instrument—Saul of Tarsus. He was converted by the vision of Christ in glory and sent by Him to Damascus, there to be told what he must do.

And again we have the “water,” again Baptism, in the message sent to the man raised up to contend for the fulness of Christian liberty, as opposed to a ceremonial way of access to God. “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Again, it pleased God to make this man the instrument of conveying to His Church the only outlines which we find in His Word of a *system* of Divine truth. In his epistolary writings alone have we anything like a *scheme* of Christian doctrine.

In the Epistle to the Romans, for instance, we have the great outlines of the work of salvation. First (in the first five chapters), it is looked upon as all of God’s free grace; then (chapters 8–11), as of God’s eternal purpose; then (chapters 12–14), as working by love: but, in the very midst of this Divine scheme, we have Baptism and the grace God has annexed to it. We have it introduced for a most important practical purpose—to prevent a man from abusing to his own destruction the doctrine of God’s free grace.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
(Rom. 6:1–4)

But more, as if to mark with greater emphasis the importance of this aspect of the grace of Baptism, we have the same view of it in almost the same words in another Epistle. “Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen, with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead” (Col. 2:12).

The exposition and practical bearing of these texts I shall give more fully further on. I only now advert to them as indicating the high place which Baptismal doctrine occupied in the mind of the Apostle.

Again, the same Apostle is inspired to write another Epistle—that to the Ephesians—also containing, though in fewer words than in that to the Romans, a systematic sketch of Divine truth.

In this Epistle we have the initial sacrament twice alluded to.

The first mention of it occurs in an exhortation to unity (Eph. 4:1):

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

The Apostle, in these words, beseeches the members of an (apparently) most advanced and spiritual Church to abide in unity.

He adjures them by their oneness in the Divine Persons in Whom they believed, and the greatness of the divine and spiritual bonds which united them.

One Father from Whom all grace flowed, One Lord their Redeemer, One Sanctifying Spirit, one body the Church, one animating hope, one faith professed throughout the world; and in the midst of such as these, "one Baptism," as a reason why they should be "one."

Surely he must have thought that God worked some great thing by that (mean though it be in the eyes of some) which he thus joins with the one faith, the one hope, the one elect body!

In another place in this Epistle he mentions it as the means whereby God cleanses His Church—"that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26).

Again, in another Epistle, that to Titus, he speaks of God having "by His mercy saved us by the washing (or as it is literally, bath) of regeneration"; evidently referring to Baptism and its attendant spiritual grace.¹

1. This place has been ignorantly and unfairly tortured with the view of eliminating it from any reference to the outward rite—so as to make St. Paul say, "He saved us by the spiritual regeneration independent of any outward washing." The use by the Apostle of the word (*λουτρον*) fixes the meaning as referring to Baptism. As Dean Alford explains it, "By means of the lavers (not "*washing*," as English version: see the Lexx: but always a vessel or pool in which washing takes place). Here the Baptismal font." So also Bishop Ellicott. That the Church's meaning is the true one is also evident from internal considerations—for the principle of those who deny Baptismal Regeneration (in order, as they wrongly think, to exalt spiritual religion). Regeneration is not a washing, but a change of heart wrought by the Spirit. Now it does seem a most forced and violent figure to ex-

No wonder then that in another Epistle—that to the Hebrews—the doctrine of Baptism is included among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, the foundations of divine truth: “The foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms,² and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment” (Heb. 6).

But again, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write another Epistle—that to the Galatians—to assert Christian liberty against the claims of a ceremonial system; and in this also we have another testimony to the important position of Baptism. “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

From these places but one inference can be drawn—that no matter how spiritual the Christian system be, that spirituality is coincident with the most wondrous grace being attached, in God’s infinite wisdom, to a rite not purely spiritual, in which not only the *soul* but the *body* has its part.

We must reverently search and see whether God has given any clue to the understanding of this mystery.

But, before doing so, let us turn for a moment from the words to the life and example of Christ.

When the fulness of time arrived for Christ to enter upon His public ministry, a remarkable person—miraculously born and full of God’s Holy Spirit—was sent before Him to prepare His way.

This he did by exercising a ministry, the leading feature of which was a Baptism in water. Christ submitted to receive this Baptism at the hands of His servant, and God honoured His submission by accompanying it with His first testimony to Christ’s Eternal Sonship. Then, too, He was anointed with the fulness of the Spirit for the work of His Messiahship.

Now consider the prominence given in the Word of God to this submission of our Lord.

It is recorded in full by two out of the four Evangelists; another (St. Mark) begins his Gospel with the notice of it; and the remaining one (St. John), in the first chapter of his Gospel, makes the first testimony to Christ’s Messiahship to be that of John the Baptist wit-

press a change of heart by such a term as the *bath* of new birth. This passage is understood as alluding to the grace of Baptism by every early Christian writer who cites it; and among the moderns by Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Jewel, Hooker, Mede, Taylor, Barrow, Bishop Hall, Beveridge, Wesley; and amongst living writers by Alford, Wordsworth, and Ellicott.

2. Augustine understands this of Baptism. See *De Fide et Operibus*, page 52, Oxford Translation.

nessing to the descent of the Holy Ghost on Jesus at His Baptism. By each of the four it is implied to be the gate by which our Lord entered on His Ministry.

And why was all this written? Why was such honour put upon the Baptism of John—the Baptism of water only, the imperfect Baptism which had to be repeated? (Acts 1:5; 19:4–5). Why, but for our sakes; that if such was the honour put upon the Baptism of the servant, how should we regard our Baptism—the Baptism of the Master!³ How should we reverently acknowledge the *One Baptism!* How should we believe in, confess, uphold its place in Christ's kingdom, its divine reality?

From these considerations, then, one thing is abundantly plain—that the deeper the spirituality of the Christian scheme, the more reason for us to consider why Christ should have exalted to such a place in it an ordinance not purely spiritual.

No truly spiritual man can ignore the place which Christ has assigned to Baptism; for the first element of Christian spirituality must be a submission of the whole inner man to all that God reveals—and this because *He* reveals it whose weakness is stronger and whose foolishness is wiser than men.

Let us remember that St. Paul would have the Corinthians test their spirituality by their submission to God's revealed will: "If any man think himself to be a Prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).

3. Not for any other purpose was the office of Baptizing given to John, than that our Lord who gave it to him might, in not disdaining to accept the Baptism of a servant, commend the path of humility, and declare how much His own Baptism was to be valued (Augustine, *De. Bapt. cont. Don.*, lib. 4, chap. 23).