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The Church of Scotland

**REPORT**

**OF THE**

**SPECIAL COMMISSION ON BAPTISM**

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**MAY 1961**

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# REPORT

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. REPORTS FROM PRESBYTERIES

The Commission gladly acknowledges that it is deeply indebted to the Presbyteries for the careful study they have been giving to its Reports, year by year, and for the detailed comments many of them have sent in. These have made a significant contribution to the thinking of the Commission and to the reaching of a common mind throughout the Church. Fifty-four Presbyteries sent in their comments on last year's Report, and only four of these were seriously opposed to the main emphases of the draft doctrinal statement. The overwhelming majority of Presbyteries have clearly drawn more closely together in a deepened understanding of the Biblical and Reformed doctrine of Baptism. This does not mean that none of them were critical on points of detail or matters of expression. For these criticisms the Commission has been particularly grateful, and wishes to point to the present revision of the doctrinal statement as the measure of its agreement with them.

Presbyteries have not always agreed with each other in their criticisms and comments, but the Commission has tried to weigh up all the comments carefully, and where these conflicted with each other has attempted to do justice to the various aspects of the truth different sides have sought to emphasize. The Commission regrets that it has not found it possible to reduce the length of the doctrinal statement. This is because various Presbyteries have rightly insisted that certain matters not in the previous draft must be included, and that other points require more emphasis. It has proved impossible to produce a very brief statement that would meet the demands of all the Presbyteries of the Church.

### 2. THE CHIEF DIFFICULTIES

The chief difficulties some people seem still to have with regard to Baptism appear to arise from two main sources :—

(a) *The attempt to find the meaning of Baptism in the external rite, instead of in Christ alone*

When the New Testament speaks of Baptism, it does not speak primarily of the rite but of what lies behind it—namely, of what Christ has already done for us and continues to do in us through His Spirit. This does not mean that the New Testament regards the rite with indifference, but that it points us through the rite to Christ Himself and His saving acts, for it is there only that the meaning of Baptism is to be found. It follows that faith is not directed to the rite : it is directed *through* the rite to the Lord Himself. Once this is seen, the Biblical teaching about Baptism falls into its true perspective. The root of the Roman error lies in attempting to find the meaning of Baptism in the due performance of the external rite. This false approach must be entirely rejected by the Church of Scotland if we are to be faithful to the teaching of the New Testament.

(b) *The lack of discipline and instruction*

Many serious practical problems regarding Baptism appear to rise from laxity of discipline in the Church, both in regard to instruction and in regard to administration. Baptism has its proper place within the context of the ongoing instruction of the Church and the faithful discipleship of its members. Outside this context it loses its meaning and tends to become only a sentimental rite.

Dr John Kennedy in his recent book, '*Presbyterian Authority and Discipline*,' has called the attention of the Church to a widespread laxity and "an irrational prejudice against Church discipline," and pleads for a recovery of the Reformed doctrine of the Church as under the authority of the Word of God. The Commission is in full agreement with Dr Kennedy's challenge to the Church to accept responsibility for its authority and discipline. Christian Baptism and costly discipleship belong together, and have nothing in common with the easy complacent religion which Dietrich Bonhoeffer denounced as "cheap grace" or "Baptism without discipline, Communion without confession, and repentance without contrition."

### 3. 'ONE LORD, ONE BAPTISM'

The Commission would like to call the attention of the Church to the extremely helpful and valuable account of Baptism published by the Faith and Order Department of the World Council of Churches in the book, '*One Lord, One Baptism*' (S.C.M. Press, 1960). This account of the doctrine was written by a representative body of Churchmen from all over the world and many different denominations. It received the commendation of the World Commission of Faith and Order in 1960, and therefore represents as far as possible the common mind of the Evangelical Churches as to the Biblical teaching about Baptism. It is highly significant that the doctrinal statement we now set before the Assembly is in full and substantial agreement with this ecumenical account of Baptism.

### 4. THE NATURE OF THE PRESENT REPORT

(a) Since it has always been the intention of the Assembly that the work of this Commission should result in an agreed and authoritative doctrinal statement which can take its place alongside our existing subordinate standards, it will be necessary for this statement to go down to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act. That Act, however, makes no provision for amendments but only for a choice between acceptance and rejection. A number of Presbyteries have therefore asked that they might be given one further opportunity to examine the statement, and if need be to suggest emendations to it, before it goes down under the Barrier Act. The Commission therefore asks the Assembly to accede to this request, and to transmit the present Report to Presbyteries with the instruction that any comments and suggested emendations be sent to the Commission not later than 30th November. The Commission hopes to present its final Report to next Assembly, asking that the doctrinal statement be then sent down under the Barrier Act, and that the Commission be discharged.

(b) It will be noted that this year's Report does not contain "A Form of Instruction about Baptism" which appeared as Part II. of our Report last year. This is because the Commission regards the statement of the Biblical doctrine as the thing that really matters, and also because the statement in last year's Report about the two languages proved confusing in many quarters. The intention of the Commission was simply that the Form of Instruction might be taken as a guide to the substance that might be included, in simpler form, in popular manuals of instruction.

(c) Some Presbyteries have expressed a desire to have some indication of the practical consequences that are likely to follow from the doctrinal statement. The Commission has therefore included in the present Report suggestions of the sort of implications which the doctrinal statement ought to have for our liturgical practice, instruction of the young, &c., and administrative procedure. It asks the Assembly to remit these matters to the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion, the Committee on the Religious Instruction of Youth, and the General Administration Committee for their consideration in consultation with the Commission during the coming year.

## THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM

### PREAMBLE

Throughout the New Testament preaching and baptizing are closely bound together. The proclamation of the Gospel is the primary task of the Church, but conjoined to it is the commandment of Christ to baptize in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Proclamation of the Word can sometimes stand alone, but the administration of Baptism cannot, for it is dependent upon the promises of Christ in His Word. In its administration the Church acts only as the servant of the Word of God.

In the Church's proclamation Christ Himself acts and is mighty to save: in the administration of Baptism Christ Himself acts confirming His Word and sealing His work of salvation. Baptism is both the act of Christ and the act of the Church. While these two may be distinguished, they are not to be separated, for their content is the same.

As a rite, Baptism is the divinely given ordinance which directs us and our children to the saving act of God's love which He has already fulfilled for us in Jesus Christ, and into which we enter by faith as the great inheritance offered to us in the Gospel. Baptism is to be interpreted not by looking at what we do but by looking at what God in Christ has done and will do for us. Its meaning does not lie in the external rite or in its performance, but in Christ alone.

### I. BAPTISM AND THE GOSPEL

The central fact about Baptism is its connexion with Jesus Christ and the whole course of His saving life and work—His Birth, Baptism, Ministry, Sufferings, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and the Gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus linked His Baptism in the Jordan with His death on the Cross, and at Pentecost yoked the Church together with Himself through the Baptism of the Spirit, thus making Baptism common to Himself and His Church. There is thus *One Baptism* and *One Body* through the One Spirit. Christ and the Church participate in the One Baptism in different ways—Christ actively and vicariously as Redeemer, the Church passively and receptively as the redeemed Community. "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church." (Eph. v. 25ff.)

#### (a) *The Baptism of John*

All the Evangelists, when speaking of the beginning of the Gospel, direct us to John the Baptist who was sent to prepare the way of the Lord.

(i) John stood on the boundary between the Old Testament and the New Testament, proclaiming that the Messianic Kingdom was at hand, and that the covenant promises made to Abraham were about to be fulfilled.

(ii) In his ministry the preaching of the Kingdom and Baptism were united. He sealed his preaching by a Baptism unto repentance for the remission of sins. John's preaching and Baptism looked for their fulfilment to the Messiah who would come to judge and redeem His people.

(iii) John was sent to baptize with water, but the Coming One would baptize with the Holy Spirit and thus fulfil the Messianic promise of the last days, when God would pour out His Spirit and inaugurate the new age.

(b) *The Baptism of Jesus*

(i) Jesus submitted Himself to John's Baptism. Taking His place among those who came to be baptized by John, He humbled Himself and identified Himself with sinners in obedience to His Father's will that He should thus make righteousness available for "the many."

(ii) At the Baptism of Jesus the heavens were opened and the Spirit like a dove descended upon Him. "And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark i. 11.) In this He was acknowledged by the Father as the anointed Son and the suffering Servant predicted in the Old Testament.

(iii) Jesus interpreted His whole life and ministry thereafter as the Baptism with which He was being baptized, and identified its fulfilment with His passion and death on the Cross. As this end drew near, He spoke of Himself as the Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many, and in the Last Supper solemnly inaugurated the New Covenant in His Blood for the remission of sin. Thus "His Baptism" and "His Cup" both spoke of His sacrificial life and death into which He had been consecrated at the Jordan. In His death the complete solidarity of the one Righteous One with sinners, to which His Baptism by John pointed, was fulfilled.

(iv) At His Baptism Jesus was also consecrated by the Spirit as the anointed King of the Messianic Kingdom. This was fulfilled with power in His resurrection and ascension, when the Father, by raising Him from the dead, affirmed Him anew as His beloved Son, gave Him all power in heaven and earth, and enthroned Him at His right hand. Exercising this power, Jesus Christ commissioned the Church and sent it forth to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them. (Matt. xxviii. 19f.)

(c) *The Baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost*

(i) When Jesus lived on earth the life of the obedient Son, and died in sacrifice on the Cross, it was not for His own sake but for us men and for our salvation. In our humanity He received the Baptism meant for sinners. In our humanity He received the divine judgement upon sin. In our humanity He made atonement, and in our humanity rose again from the dead. When He died and rose again for us, it was our human nature which died and rose again in Him.

(ii) Jesus was baptized in the Jordan not for His own sake but for ours. In Him our humanity was anointed by the Spirit and consecrated in sonship in God. Thus the outpouring of the Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost is the counterpart of the anointing of Christ by the Spirit at the Jordan. The same Spirit who descended upon Christ at His Baptism to abide with Him has, ever since Pentecost, been poured out upon the Church, and dwells in it as the Body of Christ.

(iii) When the Apostles were baptized by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they received the power Christ had promised them. Then in

obedience to His commission to them to preach the Gospel and baptize in the divine name, St Peter called on all men to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, saying, "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts ii. 39.) Whereupon many were baptized and God added them to the Church.

(iv) Following the Apostles, the Church has continued ever since then to fulfil the command of Christ, believing that whenever it acts in His Name, baptizing men, Christ Himself baptizes with His Spirit, for He acknowledges and blesses the action of the Church as His own. The Church cannot baptize where the Gospel is not proclaimed and believed, nor outside the community where the mighty acts of God in Christ are effectively operative through the Word and Spirit, but only where the promises of Christ and the obedience of faith are inseparably linked together.

## 2. THE BAPTISM OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The Baptism of individuals in water and the Spirit presupposes and rests upon the One Baptism common to Christ and His Church.

(a) For Jesus, Baptism meant that He was consecrated as the Messiah, and that He, the Righteous One, became one with us, taking upon Himself our unrighteousness, that His righteousness might become ours. For us, Baptism means that we become one with Him, sharing in His righteousness, and that we are consecrated in Him as members of the Messianic People of God.

(b) The Baptism of an individual, child or adult, is not a new Baptism, but an initiation into and a sharing in the One Baptism common to Christ and His Church. This was wrought out in Christ alone, but is bestowed upon the Church as it is united with Him through the Baptism of the Spirit. Therefore the application of Baptism to an individual does not do anything for him in addition to what Christ has already done for him. It makes him share in the fruit of His finished work.

(c) Because we are united to Christ, and are members of His Body, what happened to Him as Head of the Body has happened to us also as members of the Body. In Baptism it is Christ Himself who acts, uniting us to Himself, who once and for all united Himself to us when He became man.

Through this union we share in His life and in all that He has done for us. Through His birth we have a new birth and are made members of the new humanity. Through His obedient life and death our sins are forgiven and we are clothed with a new righteousness. Through His resurrection and triumph over the powers of darkness we are freed from the dominion of evil. Through His ascension the Kingdom of Heaven is opened for us, and we wait for His coming again to fulfil in us the new creation. Through sharing in His Spirit we are made members of His Body and are admitted into the visible fellowship of His Church.

(d) Baptism, then, sets forth not what the individual does, nor what the Church does to the individual, but what God has already done in Christ, and through His Spirit continues to do in and to the individual. "Not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit poured out upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus iii. 5ff.)

We are baptized. Baptism is administered to us in the Name of the Triune God, and we receive it passively, for we cannot add to Christ's finished work. Whatever our age may be, we must receive it "as little

children," and "as little children" enter into His Kingdom of Grace. It is God's work. He has set His love upon us and adopted us into His family. We are ingrafted into Christ and made members of His Body. We are therefore no longer our own, but must live a life of faith and love in Him.

(e) In the teaching of Jesus the Kingdom of God, the sphere of divine blessing and forgiveness into which we are incorporated in Baptism, belongs in a special way to little children. When children were brought to Him, He did not refuse them. He received and blessed them. By His reception of them into the Kingdom, Jesus teaches us that unless we become like little children, being born from above of water and the Spirit, we shall not enter into His Kingdom. As a condition of entrance into the Kingdom of God we must be born from above of water and of the Spirit. Therefore, in obedience to His example and command, we suffer little children to come to Him and forbid them not. We receive them in His Name, in reliance upon the promise that **belongs** to them as well as to us, and in expectation that He will bless them now as He did then. We bring our children to Him through Baptism in the divine Name, assured that He takes them in His arms and makes them His own.

(f) In the teaching of the Apostles, children belong to the household of faith, and are members of Christ in the corporate unity of the Christian family. They too participate in forgiveness and sanctification through the Spirit, by whose power they grow up to call God their Father, and to confess Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Therefore, when they come to years of understanding and responsibility they should desire to draw near to the Lord's Table. They are then admitted to full Communion on profession of their faith, with the prayer that the God of all Grace, who gave them His Spirit in Baptism, may establish them in His Covenant and confirm them by the same Spirit, that, being nourished through Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ at His Table, they may serve Him faithfully and joyfully in His Church, and be blameless in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(g) As the Baptism of Jesus included in itself all that was to follow, and was accomplished only in His death and resurrection, so our Baptism anticipates our entire life, death, and resurrection.

Through Baptism we are made disciples of Christ, and are therefore called to a life of discipleship, in obedience to Him who has gone ahead of us, but who summons us to confess His Name while we wait for His return.

Baptism stands therefore at the beginning of our life in Christ. It directs us to Him as the one source of our whole Christian life on earth, and offers us the solemn pledge of what will be fulfilled and revealed in the Day of the Resurrection, when Christ will come again, and "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

### 3. BAPTISM AND NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Baptism, along with the Lord's Supper, sets forth our participation in the New Covenant, our sharing together in "the mystery of Christ and His Church." For this reason Baptism and the Lord's Supper came to be called (in Greek) *mysteria*, and (in Latin) *sacraments*, as the appointed ordinances of our union with Christ in His Church.

As in the Incarnation God took hold of our human nature in order to redeem and remake it, so in Baptism He takes hold of each of us in order to draw us within His redeeming and re-creating power. As in the Incarnation God adapted Himself to our creaturely existence in order to lift us up to share in His divine Life and Love, so in Baptism God in His Grace condescends to make Himself accessible to us in our frailty and weakness. Therefore in the administration of Baptism He comes to us under the sign of water, appointed by Him to represent His cleansing and quickening

power, and sanctified by Him as the instrument of His saving operation in which He adopts us into His family and Kingdom.

(a) *In Baptism God relates us to Himself as children to a Father.*

(i) The mission of Jesus took place within the Covenant God made with Abraham, for He is the Seed of Abraham, the Heir of the Old Covenant, who brings it to its fulfilment in the New. The Church of Jesus Christ, baptized into His name, is the people of the New Covenant—the New Israel, and to it belong in Christ all the promises of the Old Covenant and of the New Covenant. “The promise is unto you, and to your children.” (Acts ii. 39.)

(ii) In the New Covenant established in Jesus Christ, God wills to be the Father of all men, providing a means of its fulfilment in the sacrificial life and death of the Mediator. Thus God adopts us and our children to be His own, and through His Spirit makes us brothers and co-heirs of Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, that we, like Him, may cry “Abba, Father.”

(iii) The sign of the Covenant in the old form was Circumcision, which was a seal of promise. With the New Covenant a new sign was given, which was the seal of the fulfilment of the promise. This sign was Baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The outward form which the New Covenant takes is the community of the baptized: the inward form is the Communion of the Spirit.

Into this inheritance we are initiated in Baptism. In continual renewal of our participation in it we partake of the Lord’s Supper.

(b) *In Baptism Christ relates us to Himself as members of His Body*

(i) Through the Spirit given in Baptism we participate in Jesus Christ. We share in His birth from above, His obedient life, His sacrificial death, and triumphant resurrection. We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.

(ii) This participation is twofold: Christ identifies Himself with us, and through the Spirit we are so united to Him that we become members of His Body. Our union with Him depends upon and grows out of His union with us.

(iii) Our participation in Christ is not confined to the moment when the rite is administered, for the promise of Baptism and its fulfilment cannot be tied down to the enactment of a ceremony or be exhausted in this life. Therefore “baptismal regeneration” is a false doctrine since it looks for the meaning and reality of Baptism in the performance of the external rite rather than in Christ, and at the same time identifies the external rite with its future fulfilment.

The act of Christ in Baptism is one which avails for the whole of our life, and reaches out beyond into the resurrection and the new creation. Therefore in Baptism we are united to Christ in a relationship in which we are made to grow in union with Him as we feed on Him through faith by the power of His Word and Spirit, and find our life not in ourselves but wholly in Him.

(c) *In Baptism the Holy Spirit brings us into the Communion of Saints*

(i) In Baptism God, in the freedom of His Spirit, makes Himself present to us and binds us creatively to Himself. Through the power of the Spirit the reconciliation with God wrought out in Christ operates within us, and we are lifted up to share in the very life and love of God, in the communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

(ii) Through the communion of the Spirit we are not only made members of Christ but members of one another, being baptized by one Spirit into one

Body, sharing together in all the blessings and gifts of God's Grace, and enjoying union and communion with the saints in heaven and earth.

(iii) The act of God upon the individual in Baptism is not a solitary event apart from the fellowship of the Church, but takes place within it. Thus a child born within the Church is, through Baptism, placed within the corporate union of the faithful with Christ, and shares with them in the Communion of the Spirit. In this baptized fellowship, gathered into His Name, Christ dwells by His Spirit, and here the life of the baptized is nourished and formed until he grows up into the full stature of the manhood of Christ.

(iv) The Spirit is also at work outside the immediate fellowship of the Church, convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and the promise of the Spirit is extended wherever the Gospel is preached and men and women repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Baptism is administered to such converts only upon the obedience of faith, and as an act of witness and confession on their part. None the less it is not administered as a seal of the believers' decision of faith, but only as a seal of the promises of Christ, and as a proclamation that before they chose God He had already chosen them and wrought out their salvation in Jesus Christ. Therefore in submitting to Baptism the convert renounces reliance upon his own decision, or response, and takes refuge in the covenant mercies and faithfulness of God alone.

#### 4. BAPTISM AND FAITH.

Baptism and faith belong inseparably together.

(a) In being baptized into Christ we are united with Him in His faithfulness and obedience to the Father. In Christ God has bound Himself to us, and bound us to Himself before ever we could bind ourselves to Him. As an act done to us, Baptism tells us that it is not upon our faith or our own faithfulness that we rely, but upon Christ alone and upon His faithfulness. Therefore Baptism directs us to the solid and unshakable foundation on which we are summoned to build our faith, and are given genuine freedom to believe and make our own personal decision for Christ; for it is God's own great act which not only creates and inspires our faith but undergirds and upholds it, and encloses it within His own faithfulness.

(b) Baptism and faith are related as God's election and our responsibility, God's adoption of us and our entry into obedient sonship. God's decision for man and man's decision for God are related to one another in the Gospel through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

Through Baptism into Him we are initiated into the new life of sonship, in which we are committed to God, and in which we commit ourselves fully to God relying utterly on His faithfulness. Through sheer grace Baptism covenants us to a life of faith and obedience to the Father in Jesus Christ, and calls us to faith and obedience as long as we live.

The necessity of faith for the baptized is in no way set aside or diminished by Baptism, but on the contrary is made even more urgent. To be without faith would be to repudiate God by refusing to rely on His faithfulness in Christ.

(c) The New Testament teaches us that faith is the gift of the Spirit, but it also teaches us that it is through faith that we may continue to receive the Spirit. Although the Spirit is also at work apart from Baptism, Baptism is our initiation into a mutual relation between the Spirit and faith. In accordance with the promise of Christ we are given the Spirit who acts creatively upon us begetting in us new life and faith. Only through this faith may we enter into full possession of the new life, for only by faith do we respond to God's Word, and receive His grace.

(d) The baptized are free to love and trust God, and to find in that love and trust the way to grow continually in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ. This does not mean that the baptized lead a sinless life. That would be to confuse Baptism with its future fulfilment. Rather are they to lead a life of penitence and ever renewed forgiveness, of watching and praying and waiting upon God.

#### 5. BAPTISM—IN TIME AND FOR ETERNITY

Baptized into Christ we become heirs of all the promises of God. Thus Baptism embraces the whole of life.

(a) Baptized into Christ we are severed from the old stock of unregenerate human nature and grafted into Christ in order to share in His new human nature: we are translated out of the bondage and dominion of guilt and placed under the Lordship of the crucified and risen Christ: we are cut off from the inheritance of the old Adam and become instead joint heirs with Christ, the King and Head of the new creation. From being children of darkness and citizens of the world we are made children of light and citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven in which sin is forgiven and grace abounds.

(b) Baptized into Christ we are buried with Him in His death, and our life in sin finds its judgement and its end. Therefore Baptism is administered only once, as an irrevocable seal of that finished work of Christ which sets our life on a wholly new foundation.

(c) From this new beginning the baptized look forward to the End. We are sealed as the property of Christ, as members of the covenant people, unto the day of redemption. For us, then, the final judgement has already been anticipated in justification, since we have received, in the gift of the Spirit, the earnest and pledge of the resurrection into the New Creation.

(d) Baptism rests upon the finished work of Christ. Because God does not go back upon the Cross, Baptism cannot be annulled by sin: because God will not go back upon His promises, Baptism remains the pledge of God's forgiveness to all who seek it by faith.

(e) While Baptism does not allow the baptized to fall into despair, it does not allow the baptized to become complacent regarding his state of salvation. He may quench the Holy Spirit: he may become hardened in sin: he may reject the gift of life. Therefore what is given may become a judgement: what is grafted may wither: what is generated may never grow.

(f) When Baptism is repudiated, it becomes the sign of judgement to the unrepentant. The seal which identifies him as a soldier of Christ then serves to convict him as a deserter, although it still avails for him if he turns again and in conversion finds refuge in the Name of Christ sealed upon him at Baptism.

#### 6. THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM

Baptism is to be administered in a form which accords with its Biblical institution and meaning.

(a) Baptism is to be administered with water (by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion) in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to accompany, follow, and seal the preaching of the Gospel.

(b) Baptism is to be administered only within the life and discipline of the Church. The Baptism of the individual presupposes the One Baptism common to Christ and His Church, and therefore takes place only within the fellowship of the baptized membership of the Church, where Christ acts and rules through the proclamation of His Word, and gives communion with Himself in His Body and Blood.

(c) Baptism has its proper place in the midst of the worshipping people of God, where the mighty acts of Christ are proclaimed, and where, through the Word, the Spirit is effectively at work. As a seal of the Gospel it is properly given after the Sermon. Its ministration includes an act of thanksgiving on the part of the Church for God's gift of new life, an act of prayer for the preservation and sanctification of the baptized, and an act of confession of faith in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

(d) Because the preaching of the Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper are bound together in the authoritative commands of Christ to His Apostles, only those who are lawfully ordained to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments are authorized to administer Baptism or the Lord's Supper. The ministry alone has the authority of Christ to baptize: Christ alone has the power to make Baptism effective through His Word and Spirit.

(e) Because in Baptism God has bound Himself to us and us to Himself before we could bind ourselves to Him, and because we receive it passively "as little children," it is appropriate to people of all ages. Whether it is administered to children or adults, it is administered with the same doctrine and in the same essential form, for it is only "as little children" that we enter into this inheritance freely bestowed upon us in the New Covenant.

The subjects of Baptism are, therefore, children born of parents (one or both) within the Church, or adopted into a Christian family, for the promise belongs to them as well as to their parents; or else those who have responded to the offer of salvation in Christ and (with their children) seek baptismal incorporation into the people of God upon profession of faith.

(f) Because Baptism is bound up not only with preaching but with teaching, it is to be administered only where there is provision, promise, and assurance that the baptized will be brought up in the family of God and instructed in the Christian faith.

(g) "Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it; or, that, all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated." (West Conf. xxviii. 5.)

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

### I

#### BAPTISM AND THE BOOK OF COMMON ORDER

In its Report last year the Commission indicated its intention "to submit to the General Assembly . . . suggestions which, if the Assembly so desire, may be passed to the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion, regarding a revised preamble for the Orders for the Administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, and regarding the revision of the Orders themselves." In preparing such suggestions, which have been asked for by many Presbyteries, the Commission seeks only to indicate the places where *The Book of Common Order* (1940: reprinted with corrections 1952) seems to require revision in the light of our draft doctrinal statement. It is the view of the Commission that the actual rewording of these passages ought to be done by the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion.

It will be convenient to set out the suggestions in the order in which the items appear in the forms of service under discussion. This, of course, does not imply any order of relative importance. Quotations from *The Book of Common Order* are taken from the "Reprint with Corrections" of 1952.

(A) *Heading or Title*

It is suggested that we should return to the simpler form found, e.g., in *Euchologion*—"The Order for the Administration of Holy Baptism."

(B) *The Rubrics*

It is suggested that the rubrics should give more detailed and definite direction. Modification of the existing rubrics seems to be called for at the following specific points:—

(i) The introductory rubric should state clearly that the Sacrament of Baptism is not to be administered apart from the preaching of the Word.

(ii) When the Minister calls on the Congregation to stand, it should be in some form of words that declares them to be associated with the vows being made.

(iii) There should be express instruction that an adequate amount of water should be used, but that additional elements which have no warrant in Scripture should on no account be intruded into the Service.

(iv) The Minister should be instructed when to take the child in his arms.

(C) *The Preamble*

Much of the language in this is drawn from the Larger Catechism, and has appeared over many years in successive books (*Euchologion, Prayers for Divine Service, The Book of Common Order* 1940 and 1952). It may therefore be said to have passed into the liturgical tradition of the Church, and any proposal to alter it would have to be very carefully considered. On the other hand there is evidence that many Ministers do not, in fact, use this form.

As it stands, the Preamble seems incomplete, and at one point possibly a little misleading. The Commission suggests that two additions and one modification might be made.

(i) The Preamble should speak of the Baptism of Christ—*i.e.*, the event at the Jordan *and* the whole sequence that followed until His Baptism was accomplished in the Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension.

(ii) The Preamble should define more clearly the transference which is effected—*i.e.*, it should refer to the "breaking off from the old stock of nature" as well as to the "ingrafting into Christ."

(iii) The sentence which begins, "Though little children do not understand these things . . ." (p. 89, last paragraph), could be read by any who had an interest in doing so, as a concession to the view that infant Baptism is secondary to adult Baptism. The Preamble should make it unambiguously clear that *the norm of Baptism is infant Baptism*, as in John Knox's *Book of Common Order* (1564).

The Commission further suggests that the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion be asked to consider the possibility of providing a number of short "homilies," for use at the Minister's discretion, expounding the meaning of one or other of the classic expressions used in the Preamble.

(D) *Confession of Faith and Parental Vows*

The Commission wishes to avoid any suggestion that the action of the parents in bringing their child is the most important element in the Service, for this would make Baptism merely an act of dedication, yet it feels strongly that the parents must be impressed with the solemn responsibility laid upon them in the Baptism of their child.

With regard to the first question, the Commission recommends that the use of the Apostles' Creed should become universal, as it was from the Reformation until 1690, but would prefer that the Creed should not be

used as a question, but rather as a profession of faith by the parents along with the whole Congregation.

The responsibility of the Congregation towards the child baptized might be given more specific expression. The Commission does not favour the putting of a question to the Congregation but thinks that it would be good to have a bidding such as is suggested above under B (ii).

It is suggested that after the Baptism the Minister should read the Words of our Lord recorded in St Matthew xviii. 2-6, 10.

At the moment of baptizing the child the Minister ought to address him only by his Christian name or names, but at some point the full name of the child should be announced to the Congregation. This might most appropriately be done by inserting the name into the statement that the child is now received into the membership of the holy Catholic Church, &c.

## 2

## TEACHING ON THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

The Commission has had under consideration the question of the best ways of ensuring that the Church provides suitable teaching about the meaning of Baptism for such groups as children of various ages, first communicants and parents, and asks the Assembly to remit these matters to the Youth Committee in consultation with the Commission. **In all material prepared by the Youth Committee the teaching on Baptism should be in line with the doctrine which the Assembly approves.**

(A) *Sunday School*

It is realized that at the present time the matter of including teaching about the meaning of their Baptism in the Sunday School Schemes of Lessons is complicated by the fact that these are prepared by the Scottish Sunday School Union. However the Youth Committee is strongly represented on the Lessons Committee of the S.S.U., and the Commission feels that the Assembly should instruct the Youth Committee to ensure that teaching approved by the Assembly on the meaning of Baptism is given to all the children in our Sunday Schools.

(B) *Bible Class*

It is understood that the Four Years' Scheme for Bible Classes is no longer being widely used, and that the whole question of the curriculum for Bible Classes is before the Youth Committee. The Commission hopes that the need for teaching on Baptism will be remembered in any new curriculum that may be prepared.

(C) *The Boys' Brigade*

The Church is not represented directly on the body preparing material for Boys' Brigade Bible Classes, but the Minister and Kirk Session are in the case of every Company of the Brigade responsible for the religious instruction given in B.B. Bible Classes. It rests with them to ensure that the meaning of Baptism is given its due place in the syllabus. The Youth Committee might, in consultation with the B.B., consider the provision of suitable material for such lessons.

(D) *Youth Fellowships*

The Commission hopes that in preparing study guides for Youth Fellowships the need for teaching on the meaning of Baptism will be recognized.

It is considered that when young people have reached Youth Fellowship age the "right pictures" or pictorial concepts of Baptism should be in their minds, even if they have no very deep theological understanding. They should know that what happens at the font is directly related to the whole saving purpose of God: to the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, to His Baptism in blood on the Cross, and to the Baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost. They should therefore understand that Baptism has to do with their relation to Christ and His Church, and that it is because of their Baptism that they belong to the Christian family and are able to pray, "Our Father . . .".

(E) *Manual for Ministers*

The Commission considers that some kind of manual ought to be prepared for the use of *Ministers* in the instruction of parents, and for other teaching purposes. This might be prepared by the Youth Committee on the basis of this Report of the Commission, the Form of Instruction about Baptism published in last year's Report, and the study document *The Biblical Doctrine of Baptism*. It ought to be clearly and simply written, so that the salient matters are given due attention.

(F) *Material for Parents*

The Commission considers that there ought to be a simple document which can be given to parents before the Baptism of their children. This should state in a few clear sentences what Baptism is and what it is not (e.g., merely the giving of a name, or "something that ought to be done"). This paper might explain what happens in the rite, so far as parents are concerned, and give practical details of administration.

After the Baptism of a child help ought to be given to parents in the fulfilling of their vows. This might be done by "Papers for Parents," giving a list of suitable books, &c.

(G) *First Communicants*

Long and careful teaching ought to be given to all first communicants, either directly in First Communicants' Classes or in Sunday School, Bible Class, &c. This should make clear all that the One Baptism of Christ means, and what the Church is.

(H) *Pastoral Care of Baptized Children*

The Commission wishes to emphasize that the Church has a special pastoral duty to all children who have been baptized. Their names should be on Ministers' and Elders' visiting lists, and when baptized persons not yet communicants move to another parish the fact should be intimated to the Minister of the parish concerned. Transference Certificates might well have a place for the names of baptized children.

The Baptismal Certificate should be carefully considered. It might have a design, or designs, on the front representing pictorially something of the meaning of Baptism, and have within it some such wording as ". . . is now received into the membership of the Holy Catholic Church, and is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and to be His faithful soldier and servant unto his/her life's end."

## SUGGESTED SUBSTANCE FOR ACT OF ASSEMBLY

## I. Baptism may be administered to a child—

- (1) whose parents, one or both, have themselves been baptized, are in full communion with the Church, and undertake the Christian upbringing of the child ;
- (2) whose parents, one or both, have themselves been baptized but not admitted to full communion. In all such cases the Kirk Session shall appoint the Elder of the District in which the parents reside, or some other person, to act as sponsor at the Baptism along with the parents. Such sponsors shall share in the responsibility of the parents for the Christian upbringing of the child, and help to shepherd the parents to full communion ;
- (3) whose parents, one or both, having been baptized but not in full communion, are such that the Kirk Session is satisfied that he or she is an adherent permanently connected with the congregation and supporting the work and worship of the Church ;
- (4) who, being of unknown parentage, or otherwise separated from its parents, is under Christian care and guardianship.

II. (1) Baptism shall normally be administered in public, in face of the Congregation to which the parents are attached or of the parish in which they reside. Exceptions in the case of sickness or other special circumstances should be made only with the approval of the Kirk Session.

(2) Baptisms administered by Ministers or Chaplains in hospitals or other institutions shall be reported to the Kirk Session of the Congregation to which the parents are attached, or to the Minister of the parish in which they normally reside, and be engrossed in the Baptismal Register.

(3) Baptism is administered only by lawfully ordained Ministers of the Word and Sacraments. The Church does not allow Baptisms to be administered by other persons.

(4) No Minister shall baptize, without the consent of the Presbytery, where another Minister has refused Baptism or made stipulations.

III. Baptisms shall be administered only after such instruction of the parents in its meaning as the Minister shall deem necessary.

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Suggested questions which Ministers should put to those who make application for the Baptism of children, if the applicants are not known to them :—

Have you been baptized ?

Are you a communicant member of the Church ?

Are you the parent (or parents) of this child ?

Have you approached any other Minister ?

Are you willing to receive instruction in the meaning of Baptism ?

*In Name of the Commission,*

THOMAS F. TORRANCE, *Convener.*  
JOHN HERON, *Secretary.*

*Deliverance of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland  
on the foregoing Report.*

At Edinburgh, the thirtieth day of May, One thousand nine hundred and sixty-one years,—

1. The General Assembly receive the Report of the Commission, and thank its members, and especially the Convener and the Secretary, for their diligence.

2. The General Assembly instruct that a copy of the Report be sent to all Ministers and Presbytery Elders, and copies as may be desired to the four Theological Colleges. The General Assembly also direct that sufficient copies of the Report be made available for sale through the Church of Scotland bookshops.

3. The General Assembly instruct Presbyteries to study the Report and to send any suggestions for the emendation of its statement of "The Doctrine of Baptism" and of its statement regarding practical suggestions to the Secretary of the Commission by 30th November 1961.

4. The General Assembly remit the section of the Report entitled "Baptism and the Book of Common Order" to the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion for their consideration in consultation with the Commission, and appropriate action.

5. The General Assembly remit the section of the Report entitled "Teaching on the Meaning of Baptism" to the Committee on Religious Instruction of Youth for their consideration in consultation with the Commission, and appropriate action.

6. The General Assembly remit the section of the Report entitled "Suggested Substance for Act of Assembly" to the General Administration Committee for their consideration in consultation with the Commission, and appropriate action.

7. The General Assembly commend the Commission to the guidance of Almighty God in their further labours.

J. B. LONGMUIR,  
*Cl. Eccl. Scot.*



# OVERTURES SENT DOWN UNDER THE BARRIER ACT

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## (1) OVERTURE ANENT THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM

*Edinburgh, 29th May 1962. Sess. 11.*

The General Assembly adopt the Overture, the tenor whereof follows, and transmit the same to Presbyteries for their consideration under the Barrier Act, directing that returns be sent in not later than 31st December 1962.

Whereas it has been found desirable to formulate an authoritative interpretation of the doctrine of Baptism.

The General Assembly, with the consent of a majority of Presbyteries, enact, declare and ordain that "The Doctrine of Baptism" hereinafter contained is now an authoritative interpretation of the Biblical and Reformed doctrine of Baptism as contained in the primary and subordinate standards of the Church.

### THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM

#### PREAMBLE

Throughout the New Testament preaching and baptizing are closely bound together. The proclamation of the Gospel is the primary task of the Church, but conjoined to it is the commandment of Christ to baptize in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Proclamation of the Word can stand alone, but the administration of Baptism cannot, for it is dependent upon the promises of Christ. In administering Baptism the Church acts only as the servant of the Word of God.

In the Church's proclamation Christ Himself acts and is mighty to save: in the administration of Baptism Christ Himself acts confirming His Word and sealing His work of salvation. Baptism is both the act of Christ and the act of the Church. While these two may be distinguished, they are not to be separated, for their content is the same.

The rite of Baptism directs us and our children to the saving act of God's love which He has already fulfilled for us in Jesus Christ. This is the great inheritance, offered to us in the Gospel, into which we enter by faith. Baptism is to be interpreted by looking through what we do to what God in Christ has done, is doing, and will do for us. Its meaning lies in Christ Himself, and not simply in the performance of the external rite.

## 1. BAPTISM AND THE GOSPEL

The central fact about Baptism is its connexion with Jesus Christ and the whole course of His saving life and work—His Birth, Baptism, Ministry, Sufferings, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and the Gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus linked His Baptism in the Jordan with His death on the Cross, and at Pentecost united the Church with Himself through the Baptism of the Spirit, so making Baptism common to Himself and His Church. There is thus *One Baptism* and *One Body* through the One Spirit. Christ and the Church participate in the One Baptism in different ways—Christ actively and vicariously as Redeemer, the Church passively and receptively as the redeemed Community. “Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church.” (Ephesians v. 25 ff.)

*(a) The Baptism of John*

All the Evangelists, when speaking of the beginning of the Gospel, direct us to John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare the way of the Lord.

(i) John stood on the boundary between the Old Testament and the New Testament, proclaiming that the Messianic Kingdom was at hand, and that the covenant promises made to Abraham were about to be fulfilled.

(ii) In his ministry John united the preaching of the Kingdom and an act of Baptism unto repentance for the remission of sins. He looked for their fulfilment to the Messiah who would come to judge and redeem His people.

(iii) John was sent to baptize with water, but the Coming One would baptize with the Holy Spirit and thus fulfil the Messianic promise of the last days, when God would pour out His Spirit and inaugurate the new age.

*(b) The Baptism of Jesus*

(i) Jesus submitted Himself to John's Baptism. Taking His place among those who came to be baptized by John, He humbled Himself and identified Himself with sinners in obedience to His Father's will that He should thus make righteousness available for “the many.”

(ii) At His Baptism Jesus “saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mark i. 10 f.) In this He was acknowledged by the Father as the anointed Son and the suffering Servant predicted in the Old Testament.

(iii) Jesus interpreted His whole life and ministry as the Baptism with which He was being baptized, and identified its fulfilment with His passion and death on the Cross. As this end drew near, He spoke of Himself as the Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as ransom for many, and in the Last Supper solemnly inaugurated the New Covenant in His Blood for the remission of sin. Thus His "Baptism" and His "Cup" both spoke of His sacrificial life and death into which He had been consecrated at the Jordan. In his death the complete solidarity of the one Righteous One with sinners, to which His Baptism by John pointed, was fulfilled.

(iv) At His Baptism Jesus was also consecrated by the Spirit as the anointed King of the Messianic Kingdom. This consecration was fulfilled with power in His Resurrection and Ascension, when the Father affirmed Him anew as His Beloved Son, gave Him all power in heaven and earth, and enthroned Him at His right hand. Exercising this power, Jesus Christ commissioned the Church and sent it forth to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them. (Matthew xxviii. 19 f.)

### *(c) The Baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost*

(i) When Jesus lived on earth the life of the obedient Son, and died in sacrifice on the Cross, this was a Baptism not for His own sake but for us men and for our salvation. He thus received the "Baptism" meant for sinners. In our human nature He received the divine judgement upon sin. In our human nature He made atonement, and in our human nature rose again from the dead. When He died and rose again for us, it was our human nature which died and rose again in Him.

(ii) Jesus was baptized in the Jordan not for His own sake but for ours. In Him our humanity was anointed by the Spirit and consecrated in sonship to God. Thus the outpouring of the Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost is the counterpart of the anointing of Christ by the Spirit at the Jordan. The same Spirit who descended upon Christ at His Baptism to abide with Him has, ever since Pentecost, been poured out upon the Church, and dwells in it as the Body of Christ.

(iii) When the Apostles were baptized by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they received the power Christ had promised them. Then in obedience to His commission to them to preach the Gospel and baptize in the divine name, St Peter called on all men to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, saying, "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as

the Lord our God shall call." (Acts ii. 39.) Whereupon many were baptized and God added them to the Church.

(iv) Following the Apostles, the Church has continued to fulfil the command of Christ, believing that when it acts in His Name, baptizing men, Christ Himself baptizes with His Spirit, acknowledging and blessing the action of the Church as His own. The Church may baptize only where the Gospel is proclaimed and believed, only within the community where the mighty acts of God in Christ are effectively operative through the World and Spirit.

## 2. THE BAPTISM OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The Baptism of individuals in water and the Spirit presupposes and rests upon the One Baptism common to Christ and His Church.

(a) For Jesus, Baptism meant that He was consecrated as the Messiah, and that He, the Righteous One, became one with us, taking upon Himself our unrighteousness, that His righteousness might become ours. For us, Baptism means that we become one with Him, sharing in His righteousness, and that we are consecrated in Him as members of the Messianic People of God.

(b) The Baptism of an individual is an initiation into and a sharing in the One Baptism common to Christ and His Church. This was wrought out in Christ alone, but is bestowed upon the Church as it is united with Him through the Baptism of the Spirit. Therefore the application of Baptism to an individual proclaims anew what Christ has already done for him, and makes him share in the fruit of Christ's finished work.

(c) Because the baptized are united to Christ, and are members of His Body, what happened to Him as Head of the Body has happened to them also as members of the Body. In Baptism it is Christ Himself who acts, uniting the baptized to Himself, who once and for all united Himself to mankind in His incarnation.

Through this union we share in His life and in all that He has done for us. Through His birth we have a new birth and are made members of the new humanity. Through His obedient life and death our sins are forgiven and we are clothed with a new righteousness. Through His resurrection and triumph over the powers of darkness we are freed from the dominion of evil. Through His ascension the Kingdom of Heaven is opened for us, and we wait for His coming again to fulfil in us the new creation. Through sharing in His Spirit we are made members of His body and are admitted into the visible fellowship of His Church.

(d) Baptism, then, sets forth not what the individual does, nor what the Church does to the individual, but what God

has already done in Christ, and through His Spirit continues to do in and to the individual. "Not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit poured out upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus iii. 5 ff.)

*We are baptized.* Baptism is administered to us in the Name of the Triune God, and our part is only to receive it, for we cannot add to Christ's finished work. Whatever our age may be, we must receive it "as little children," and "as little children" enter into His Kingdom of Grace. It is God's work. He has set His love upon us and adopted us into His family. We are ingrafted into Christ and made members of His Body. We are therefore no longer our own, and are pledged to live a life of faith and love in Him.

(e) In the teaching of Jesus the Kingdom of God, the sphere of divine blessing and forgiveness into which we are incorporated in Baptism, belongs in a special way to little children. When children were brought to Him, He did not refuse them. He received and blessed them. By His reception of them into the Kingdom, Jesus teaches us that unless we become like little children we shall not enter into His Kingdom. As a condition of entrance into the Kingdom of God we must be born from above of water and of the Spirit. Therefore, in obedience to His example and command, we suffer little children to come to Him and forbid them not. We receive them in His Name, in reliance upon the promise that belongs to them as well as to us, and in expectation that He will bless them now as He did then. We bring our children to Him through Baptism in the divine Name, assured that He takes them in His arms and makes them His own.

(f) In the teaching of the Apostles, children belong to the household of faith, and are members of Christ in the corporate unity of the Christian family. They too participate in forgiveness and sanctification through the Spirit, by whose power they are enabled to grow up to call God their Father, and to confess Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Therefore, when they come to years of understanding and responsibility they should desire to draw near to the Lord's Table. They are then admitted to full Communion on profession of their faith, with the prayer that the God of all Grace, who promised them His Spirit in Baptism, may establish them in His Covenant and confirm them by the same Spirit, that, being nourished through Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ at His Table, they may serve Him faithfully and joyfully in His Church, and be blameless in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(g) As the Baptism of Jesus included in itself all that was to follow, and was accomplished only in His death and resurrection, so our Baptism anticipates our entire life, death, and resurrection.

Through Baptism we are made disciples of Christ, and are therefore called to a life of discipleship, in obedience to Him who has gone ahead of us, but who summons us to confess His Name while we wait for His return.

Baptism stands therefore at the beginning of our life in Christ. It directs us to Him as the one source of our whole Christian life on earth, and offers us the solemn pledge of what will be fulfilled and revealed in the Day of the Resurrection, when Christ will come again, and "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

### 3. BAPTISM AND NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Baptism, along with the Lord's Supper, sets forth our participation in the New Covenant, our sharing together in "the *mystery* of Christ and His Church." (From the middle of the second century, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as the appointed ordinances of our union with Christ and His Church, came to be called *mysterics* from the Greek word *mysterion*. The word used as the Latin equivalent of *mysterion* in this sense was *sacramentum*. Hence our word sacraments.)

As in the Incarnation, God took hold of our human nature in order to redeem and remake it, so in Baptism He takes hold of each of us in order to draw us within His redeeming and re-creating power. As in the Incarnation God adapted Himself to our creaturely existence in order to lift us up to share in His divine Life and Love, so in Baptism God in His Grace condescends to make Himself accessible to us in our frailty and weakness. Accordingly, in the administration of Baptism He comes to us under the sign of water, appointed by Him to represent His cleansing and quickening power, and sanctified by Him as the instrument of His saving operation in which He adopts us into His family and Kingdom.

(a) *In Baptism God relates us to Himself as children to a Father*

(i) The mission of Jesus took place within the Covenant God made with Abraham, for He is the Seed of Abraham, the Heir of the Old Covenant, who brings it to its fulfilment in the New. The Church of Jesus Christ, baptized into His Name, is the people of the New Covenant—the New Israel. To it belong in Christ all the promises of the Old Covenant, and of the New Covenant. "The promise is unto you, and to your children." (Acts ii. 39.)

(ii) In the New Covenant established in Jesus Christ, God wills to be the Father of all men, providing a means of its

fulfilment in the sacrificial life and death of the Mediator. In this way God adopts us and our children to be His own, and through His Spirit makes us brothers of Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, that we, with Him, may cry "Abba, Father," and share in His inheritance.

(iii) The sign of the Covenant in the old form was Circumcision, which was the seal of promise. With the New Covenant a new sign was given, which is the seal of the fulfilment of the promise. This sign is Baptism in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The outward form which the New Covenant takes is the community of the baptized: the inward form is the Communion of the Spirit.

Into this inheritance we are initiated in Baptism. In continual renewal of our participation in it we partake of the Lord's Supper.

*(b) In Baptism Christ relates us to Himself as members of His Body*

(i) Through the Spirit given in Baptism we participate in Jesus Christ. We share in His birth from above, His obedient life, His sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection. We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.

(ii) This participation is twofold: Christ identifies Himself with us, and through the Spirit we are so united to Him that we become members of His body. Our union with Him depends upon and grows out of His union with us.

(iii) Our participation in Christ is not confined to the moment when the rite is administered, for the promise of Baptism and its fulfilment cannot be tied down to the enactment of a ceremony or be exhausted in this life. Therefore baptismal regeneration *ex opere operato* is a false doctrine since it looks for the meaning and reality of Baptism in the performance of the external rite rather than in Christ, and at the same time confuses the external rite with its future fulfilment.

The act of Christ in Baptism is one which avails for the whole of our life, and reaches out beyond into the resurrection and the new creation. Therefore in Baptism we are united to Christ as members of His Body in a relationship in which we are made to grow in union with Him as we feed on Him through faith by the power of His Word and Spirit, and find our life not in ourselves but wholly in Him.

*(c) In Baptism the Holy Spirit brings us into the Communion of Saints*

(i) In Baptism God, in the freedom of His Spirit, makes Himself present to us and binds us creatively to Himself. Through the power of the Spirit the reconciliation with God

wrought out in Christ operates within us, and we are lifted up to share in the very life and love of God, in the communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

(ii) Through the communion of the Spirit we are not only made members of Christ but members of one another, being baptized by one Spirit into one Body, sharing together in all the blessings and gifts of God's Grace, and enjoying union and communion with all the saints in heaven and earth.

(iii) The act of God upon the individual in Baptism is not a solitary event. It takes place within the fellowship of the Church. Thus a child born of Christian parents is, through Baptism, placed within the corporate union of the faithful with Christ, and shares with them in the Communion of the Spirit. In this baptized fellowship, gathered into His Name, Christ dwells by His Spirit, and here the life of the baptized is to be formed and nourished until he grows up into the full stature of the manhood of Christ.

(iv) The Spirit is also at work outside the fellowship of the Church, convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgement; and the promise of the Spirit is extended wherever the Gospel is preached and men and women repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Baptism is administered to such converts only upon the obedience of faith, and as an act of witness and confession on their part. None the less it is not administered as a seal of the believers' decision of faith, but only as a seal of the promises of Christ, and as a proclamation that, before they chose God, He had already chosen them and wrought out their salvation in Jesus Christ. Therefore in submitting to Baptism the convert renounces reliance upon his own decision or response, and takes refuge in the covenant mercies and faithfulness of God alone.

#### 4. BAPTISM AND FAITH

Baptism and faith belong inseparably together.

(a) In being baptized into Christ we are united with Him in His faithfulness and obedience to the Father. In Christ God has bound Himself to us, and bound us to Himself, before ever we could bind ourselves to Him. As an act done to us, Baptism tells us that it is not upon our faith or our own faithfulness that we rely, but upon Christ alone and upon His faithfulness. Therefore Baptism directs us to the solid and unshakeable foundation on which we are summoned to build our faith in genuine freedom and personal decision for Christ; for it is God's own great act in Christ which not only creates and inspires our faith, but undergirds and upholds it, and encloses it within His own faithfulness.

(b) Baptism is related to faith as God's election is to our response, and as God's adoption of us is to our obedient sonship.

God's decision for man and man's decision for God are related to one another in the Gospel through the mediation of Jesus Christ. Through Baptism into Him we are initiated into the new life of sonship, in which we are committed to God, and in which we commit ourselves fully to God relying utterly on His faithfulness. Through sheer grace Baptism covenants us to a life of faith and obedience to the Father in Jesus Christ, and calls us to faith and obedience as long as we live.

The necessity of faith for the baptized is in no way set aside or diminished by Baptism, but on the contrary is made more urgent. To be without faith would be to repudiate God by refusing to rely on His faithfulness in Christ.

(c) The New Testament teaches us that faith is the gift of the Spirit, but it also teaches us that it is through faith that we may continue to receive the Spirit. Although the Spirit is also at work apart from Baptism, Baptism is our initiation into a mutual relation between the act of the Spirit and the response of faith. In accordance with the promise of Christ, we are given the Spirit, who acts creatively upon us begetting in us new life and faith. Only through this faith may we enter into full possession of the new life, for only by faith do we respond to God's Word, and receive His grace.

(d) The baptized are freed and enabled to love and trust God, and to find in that love and trust the way to grow continually in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ. This does not mean that the baptized lead a sinless life. That would be to confuse Baptism with its future fulfilment. Rather are they to lead a life of penitence and ever-renewed forgiveness, of watching and praying and waiting upon God.

## 5. BAPTISM—IN TIME AND FOR ETERNITY

Baptized into Christ we become heirs of all the promises of God. Thus Baptism embraces the whole of life.

(a) Baptized into Christ we are severed from the old stock of unregenerate human nature and grafted into Christ in order to share in His new human nature: we are translated out of the bondage and dominion of guilt and placed under the Lordship of the crucified and risen Christ: we are cut off from the inheritance of the old Adam and become instead joint-heirs with Christ, the King and Head of the New Creation. From being children of darkness we are made children of light; no longer aliens and strangers but citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven in which sin is forgiven and grace abounds.

(b) Baptized into Christ we are buried with Him in His death, and our life in sin finds its judgement and its end. Therefore Baptism is administered only once, as in irrevocable

seal of that finished work of Christ which sets our life on a wholly new foundation.

(e) From this new beginning the baptized look forward to the End. We are sealed as the property of Christ, as members of the covenant people, unto the day of redemption. For us, then, the final judgement has already been anticipated. We know that we are justified since we have received, in the gift of the Spirit, the earnest and pledge of the resurrection into the New Creation.

(d) Baptism rests upon the finished work of Christ. Because God does not go back upon the Cross, Baptism cannot be annulled by sin: because God will not go back upon His promises, Baptism remains the pledge of God's forgiveness to all who seek it by faith.

(e) While the promises of Christ in Baptism are such that none need ever fall into despair, the obligations involved in Baptism are such that none dare become complacent regarding his state of salvation. He may quench the Holy Spirit: he may become hardened in sin: he may reject the gift of life. Therefore what is given may become a judgement: what is grafted may wither: what is generated may never grow.

(f) Because God in His grace adopts the baptized as His child and binds him to a life of obedience and holiness, he is constantly to look back to his Baptism in thankful assurance of God's deliverance and love; he is to go on to embrace its gift, to own its obligations, to claim its privileges, and to live as one who has given up his name to Christ.

(g) While Baptism, rightly used, is a seal of our being the Lord's, when it is despised by neglect of its blessings, or repudiated by unbelief, it becomes the sign of judgement to the unrepentant. The seal which identifies him as a soldier of Christ then serves to convict him of being a deserter; but if he turns again in repentance he can still find refuge in the Name of Christ that was sealed upon him at his Baptism.

## 6. THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM

Baptism is to be administered in a form which accords with its Biblical institution and meaning.

(a) Baptism is to be administered with water (by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion) in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to accompany and seal the proclamation of the Gospel.

(b) Baptism is to be administered only within the life and discipline of the Church. The Baptism of an individual presupposes the One Baptism common to Christ and His Church, and therefore takes place only within the fellowship of the baptized membership of the Church, where Christ acts and

rules through the proclamation of His Word, and gives communion with Himself in His Body and Blood.

(c) Baptism has its proper place in the midst of the worshipping people of God, where the mighty acts of Christ are proclaimed, and where, through the Word, the Spirit is effectively at work. As a seal of the Gospel it is properly administered after the declaration of the Word. This ministration includes an act of thanksgiving on the part of the Church for God's gift of new life, an act of prayer for the consecration of the element and for the preservation and sanctification of the baptized, and an act of confession of faith in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

(d) Because the preaching of the Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper are bound together in the authoritative commands of Christ to His Apostles, only those who are lawfully ordained to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments are authorized to administer Baptism or the Lord's Supper. Christ alone has the power to make Baptism effective.

(e) Because in Baptism God has bound Himself to us, and us to Himself, before we could bind ourselves to Him, and because we receive it "as little children," it is appropriate to people of all ages. Whether it is administered to children or adults, it is administered with the same doctrine and in the same essential form, for it is only "as little children" that we enter into the inheritance freely bestowed upon us in the New Covenant.

(f) Because Baptism is bound up not only with preaching but with teaching, it is to be administered only where there is provision, promise, and assurance that the baptized will be brought up in the family of God and instructed in the Christian faith.

(g) Because the promise belongs to believers and their children, the subjects of Baptism are children whose parents or guardians are within the life and discipline of the Church, and adults who have responded to the offer of salvation in Christ and (with their children) seek baptismal incorporation into the people of God upon profession of faith.

(h) "Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated." (West. Conf. xxviii. 5.)

## (2) OVERTURE ANENT THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM TO INFANTS

*Edinburgh, 29th May 1962. Sess. 11.*

The General Assembly adopt the Overture, the tenor whereof follows, and transmit the same to Presbyteries for their consideration under the Barrier Act, directing that returns be sent in not later than 31st December 1962.

WHEREAS it is expedient of new to declare the law of the Church concerning the admission of infants to Baptism, the General Assembly with the consent of a majority of Presbyteries declare, enact and ordain as follows :—

### 1. Baptism may be administered to a child—

- (1) whose parents, one or both, have themselves been baptized, are in full communion with the Church, and undertake the Christian upbringing of the child ;
- (2) whose parents, one or both, having been baptized but not in full communion, are such that the Kirk Session is satisfied that he or she is an adherent permanently connected with the congregation and supporting the work and worship of the Church and will undertake the Christian upbringing of the child ;
- (3) Whose parents, one or both, have themselves been baptised, profess the Christian faith, undertake to ensure that such child grows up in the life and worship and express the desire to seek admission to full membership in the Church. In such cases the Kirk Session shall appoint the Elder of the District in which the parents reside, or some other person, to shepherd them into full communion and to exercise pastoral care of the child concerned.
- (4) who, being of unknown parentage, or otherwise separated from his or her parents, is in view of the Kirk Session under Christian care and guardianship.

2. Baptism may be administered only by Ministers authorised by the General Assembly to dispense the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

3. Baptism may be administered only after the parents or guardians have received such instruction in its meaning as the Minister shall deem necessary.

4. No Minister shall baptize a child resident outwith his own Parish, whose parents are not members or adherents of his congregation, without consent of the Minister of that Parish or of the Presbytery.

5. Without the consent of the Presbytery, no Minister may administer Baptism in a case where to his knowledge another Minister has declined to do so.

6. Baptism shall normally be administered at a Diet of public worship of the congregation of which the parents or guardians are members or adherents, or of the congregation of the Parish in which they normally reside. In exceptional circumstances Baptism may be administered elsewhere (*e.g.*, at home, in hospitals or institutions). In every case an entry shall be made in the Register of Baptism kept by the Kirk Session of the congregation of which the parents or guardians are members or adherents, or in that of the Parish in which they normally reside, as the case may be.

7. Baptism shall be administered in the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, with water, by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Other elements may not be used.

8. Act IV of 1712, Act XVII of 1951 and Section (1) of Act XXI of 1956 are hereby repealed.

9. Nothing in this Act shall be taken to mean that the Church of Scotland rejects Baptism in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost duly administered in accordance with the law and discipline of other Churches.

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