

Ketcherside on baptism

From "In the beginning"

[The Campbells]...contributed much by their discovery that the blessings of God were contingent upon His ordinances. Thus they recaptured from error the place, nature, purpose and design of baptism, as well as the relationship of the Lord's Supper to the community of the saints. They also began a work of rescue for some of the terms used by the Holy Spirit which had been much abused in the sectarian jargon of the day. Indeed, in his Synopsis of Reformation Campbell gives this first place, as well he might. We can never be too grateful to these pioneers who blazed the trail across the untrammelled wilderness of sectarianism. They did a noble job and made all of us their debtors.

The congregations are filled with many who were converted to water baptism but were never converted to the Lord Jesus Christ. They have confused the physician with his prescription, the captain with his orders, and the sower with his seed. Immersion in water is essential. But we should be immersed not because we believe in baptism but because we believe in Jesus. We have but one Savior. It is not a rite, ritual or ordinance, but entrance into a divine person.

Sectarianism, division, party strife and schism must be dethroned. They cannot be tolerated in a heart in which the Lord is sanctified. Let us seek the one Lord, the one faith, the one body. Let us come unto Him through the one baptism He has appointed.

If such a believer has submitted to immersion on the basis of his faith in Jesus, he is my brother in reality, a child of God, and a member of His family. He may not have understood all of the blessings accruing from baptism into Christ, and he may have been mistaken as to the time of the bestowal of some of them, but his ignorance of effect or time will not nullify God's grace or promise, if he surrenders his will to that of the Messiah. Since his birth, he may be in error about many things pertaining to his responsibility, worship or service, and he may require a tremendous amount of teaching and adjustment, but he is still my brother, and I will teach him as a brother, and not count him as a pagan or an infidel.

Not all believers have been immersed. Some are still in the womb of the new covenant, the Jerusalem that is from above. What shall be my attitude toward these who are in that state? It will be the same as that of a family toward an unborn child. We do not revile, castigate or belittle a child in the womb. We rejoice that it has been conceived and with an air of expectancy prepare for its arrival. So I shall labor to aid those who have been conceived by faith, to come to birth and full delivery into the glorious fellowship of the sons of God. If they die

before delivery I shall mourn our loss; if they are born again I shall seek to nurture, strengthen and support them until they can walk alone. To this I am dedicated, believing it is the will of him whose slave I have become.

From "According to the Pattern"

Baptism, as a demonstration of our trust in Jesus, is simply a direct participation in "the passion play" drama of the ages. By faith we look back to the cross and are crucified with him. Through hope we look forward to justification in his presence. In love we are raised to walk in new life, the life of love. As Jesus died for us and was raised but one time, so we need to die and be raised only once. Death brings a cessation of all past relationships and their consequences and results. Resurrection introduces us to a new relationship with all of its blessings and privileges, whether we understand them all at the time or not. Baptism is an initiatory act. It is not to be multiplied. One may be born again because he should sustain a relationship to both flesh and spirit, but since these are the only two relationships into which he can come he should not be born again and again.

As for now, I am content to be in him and to try in my weak way to be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven me. I consider every sincere, conscientious believer in the Messiahship and divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth, who has validated his faith in this sublime proposition by obedience to our Lord in baptism, as being born again. He is a part of the new humanity. He is a child of God. He is in the church of God, the church of Christ. He has been added to the one body. He may not be in "The Church of Christ" listed among the other denominations in the United States census.

What were the constituent factors of the gospel? There were seven of these as follows: the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, coronation and glorification of Jesus of Nazareth. All of these are facts centered around the person of Jesus. All are designed to bring joy to suffering humanity through faith in Him. Jesus is the gospel. He is the good news. To preach the gospel is to announce Jesus. Thus the apostle says, "We proclaim Christ--yes, Christ nailed to the cross" (1 Cor. 1:23). Again, "I resolved that while I was with you I would think of nothing but Jesus Christ--Christ nailed to the cross" (1 Cor. 2:2). It was by this message God chose to save those who believe and those who believe these facts and demonstrate the lordship of Jesus over their lives by obedience in baptism are saved.

From "The death of the custodian"

It is true that our relationship to God is a covenantal relationship. There is a great deal of difference, however, between the covenant or agreement and the letters written to the covenant people. The covenant is entered by faith in Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of God. It results from a response to the good news that Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). The gospel was fully proclaimed on

Pentecost. Not another word was ever added to it. Those who responded to it, by reformation of life and baptism, entered into the covenant with God, even though they never saw an apostolic letter and certainly never saw a copy of the New Covenant Scriptures.