

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Grace Theological Journal* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_grace-theological-journal.php

THE FOCUS OF BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

RICHARD E. AVERBECK

An investigation into the ideology of water lustration and/or baptism in the Hebrew OT, the LXX, the Mishnah and Talmud, the Qumran Manual of Discipline, and NT passages relating to the baptism of John the Baptist and Christian baptism leads to the conclusion that Christian baptism should be understood as being oriented toward commitment. More than being a means by which the initiate declared that he had trusted in Christ for eternal salvation, it was particularly associated with repentance and discipleship. In the apostolic age, to be baptized into Jesus the Christ was to make a commitment to Him as Lord and Master and to declare that one would adhere faithfully to the lifestyle expected of Christ's disciples.

* * *

Baptism is an issue around which many discussions have taken place. There are conflicts concerning mode (immersion versus sprinkling, etc.). Some are concerned with the issue of adult versus infant baptism. Another issue concerns the efficacy of the act itself (i.e., whether it is the occasion for the work of God in regenerating a person or a testimony of the fact that this regeneration has already taken place, etc.). Certain groups within ecclesiastical circles deal with it on an altogether different level. They are concerned about the issue of baptism because of the difficulties that it presents for their ecumenical efforts. How can groups that disagree on external form as well as the meaning of the rite itself be meaningfully united?¹

It is self-evident that the issues which are crystallized and discussed in relation to baptism within any given circle depend upon the

*All biblical passages quoted in this article are taken from the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) unless otherwise stated.

¹See for example the articles in *Rev Exp* 77:1 (1980) 3-108, wherein contributions are made from various perspectives. The collection as a whole is put into the context of a search for common ecumenical ground.

overall theological framework, ecclesiastical tradition, and/or contemporary concerns of that specific circle or group of believers. There tends to be a certain vested concern with which the particular person or group becomes preoccupied. This is natural and not necessarily wrong. However, sometimes these vested concerns have the effect of misdirecting our attention.

The goal of this article is to make an effort to understand the essential thrust of Christian baptism in the context of the day in which it was instituted. This does not mean that the writer has no interest in such issues as mode. But such concerns could be approached with more finesse if founded upon a proper understanding of the background and implications of the rite at its foundation.

There are many avenues of influence that preconditioned or informed the essential meaning and implications of Christian baptism. Thus, we begin with the OT and move from there to mainline Judaism (as reflected in the Mishnah and Talmud). Next comes Qumran and finally John the Baptist. Before this, however, it is necessary to give a general summary of the NT words around which this issue revolves and their patterns of usage

THE ROOT βαπ- IN THE N.T.

There are five different words found in the NT which are built on this root: two verbs and three nouns. The two verbs are βάπτω (3 occurrences) and βαπτίζω (77 occurrences). The -ρίζω ending of the latter stands out. Oepke² calls it "intensive." Moulton refers to these types of verbs as intensive or iterative.³

It is significant that the three occurrences of βάπτω in the NT mean to "dip" in a literal sense (Luke 16:24; John 13:26; Rev 19:13; this last reference may mean "to dye").⁴ On the other hand, βαπτίζω is used always or almost always in the cultic sense of Jewish washings (Mark 7:4; Luke 11:38), the baptism of John (26 times in the gospels and 3 times in Acts), the baptism which Jesus and/or his disciples performed during his public ministry (John 3:22, 26; 4:1, 2) and Christian baptism whether with (?)⁵ the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11, 14; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16) or with (?) water (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:16;⁶ 1 Cor 1:13, 14, 15, 16 [twice], 17; 15:29 [twice]; and 15 times in Acts). There are certain passages that are

²A. Oepke, "βάπτω, βαπτίζω," *TDNT* 1 (1964) 530.

³J. H. Moulton, W. F. Howard, and N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (4 vols; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 2. 408.

⁴Oepke, *TDNT* 1. 530.

⁵There is a question concerning the handling of the preposition here.

⁶My reference to this passage does not mean that I am sure of its authenticity.

debated as to whether they refer to the baptism of the Holy Spirit or that of water (Rom 6:3 [twice]; Gal 3:27). The author of this article has come to the conclusion that these later passages refer primarily to water baptism, and these texts will be discussed in depth below.

There are a few occurrences of the verb which cannot be called strictly cultic. These are the metaphorical usages found in Mark 10:38, 39, and Luke 12:50. However, it may well be that the metaphor was derived from the ritual of water baptism as it was performed by John and our Lord during their days of ministry. This could explain why βαπτίζω was used in these contexts. Particularly interesting for other reasons is the use of the verb in 1 Cor 10:2. This will be taken up later.

There has been much ado about the combination of βαπτίζω with the preposition εἰς. They occur together twice in reference to the baptism of John (Matt 3:11 "for repentance" and Mark 1:9 "in the Jordan"). The references to Christian baptism in which this verb/preposition combination is used are eight in number (Matt 28:19 "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"; Acts 2:38 "for the forgiveness of your sins"; Acts 8:16 and 19:5 "in the name of the Lord Jesus"; Rom 6:3 (twice) ". . . all of us who have been baptized *into* Christ Jesus have been baptized *into* His death"; Gal 3:27 "*into* Christ"; 1 Cor 12:13 "*into* one body"). There are four other occurrences of this combination (Acts 19:3; 1 Cor 1:13, 15; 1 Cor 10:2). These references are significant and bear directly upon the NT baptismal ideology but will be dealt with later on in this article. It is sufficient here to point out that this construction apparently became somewhat standard as part of the Christian baptismal formula (Matt 28:19; Acts 8:16; 19:5; probably also *reflected* in Rom 6:3 and Gal 3:27). Yet, there are indications that in many cases εἰς is actually equivalent to ἐν in the locative sense (compare for example εἰς for "in the name of the Lord Jesus" with Acts 10:48 where ἐν is used). Nigel Turner has stated the point well:

The Pauline and Johannine epistles and Rev (in spite of its Semitic character) do not often confuse local ἐν and εἰς. This is important for the exegete, because in Mt, the epistles, and Rev we can always presume that εἰς has its full sense even where one might suspect that it stood for ἐν (e.g. Mt 28:19 baptism *into* the name, i.e. a relationship as the goal of baptism; . . .).⁷

Thus, Turner would say that εἰς in Matt 28:19 and Rom 6:3 has special implications which ἐν could not have carried. A. T. Robertson, on the other hand, seems to differ on this point. He says that the

⁷Moulton, Howard, and Turner, *Grammar*, 3. 255.

idea of motion "into" or "unto" comes in the association of εἰς with verbs of motion.⁸ He goes on to say that with regard to Matt 28:19 and Rom 6:3 "the notion of sphere is the true one."⁹ His conclusion is that sometimes εἰς appears in a context which indicates that it is being used to indicate purpose or aim. However, according to him, this is more a matter for the interpreter than for the grammarian to decide.¹⁰ Blass and Debrunner seem to be saying that βαπτίζω uses εἰς τὸ ὄνομα the same as ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι.¹¹

It is apparent that there is no hard and fast conclusion on this issue, but its significance for the development of the thesis in this article is great. Though the full impact of the arguments themselves cannot be felt until later on in the discussion, some writers have reasoned like Turner and by that route have come to see βαπτίζω εἰς as pointing forward to discipleship¹² rather than backward to the salvation experience. I agree with this emphasis upon the forward look but am not sure about the degree to which it should be based upon this verb/preposition combination.

The three nouns built on this root are βάπτισμα (19 occurrences, unless Col 2:12 be included, which would make it 20), βαπτισμός (4 occurrences, unless Col 2:12 be excluded, which would make it 3), and Βαπτιστής (12 occurrences).

βαπτιστής is used only in the synoptic gospels ("John the *baptist*"). Oepke writes:

. . . this description, specially coined for the precursor of Jesus and used only of him, shows that his appearing was felt to be new and unique, especially as he did not baptise himself but, contrary to all Jewish tradition, baptised others.¹³

⁸A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 591.

⁹Ibid., 592.

¹⁰Ibid., 594-95.

¹¹F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (trans. and rev. by R. W. Funk; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961) 112.

¹²For example: J. Murray (*The Epistle to the Romans* [2 vols; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959], I. 214) writes: "Baptism 'into Christ Jesus' means baptism into union with Christ. To be baptized 'into Moses' (I Cor 10:2) is to be baptized into the discipleship of Moses or into the participation of the privileges which the Mosaic economy entailed. To be baptized 'into the name of Paul' (I Cor 1:13) is to be baptized into the discipleship of Paul, a suggestion which Paul violently rejects. To be baptized 'into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost' (Matt 28:12) is to be baptized into the fellowship of the three persons of the Godhead. Hence baptism into Christ signifies simply union with Him and participation of all the privileges which he as Christ Jesus embodies." I would add that we are not only given privileges in this union, but also obligations.

¹³Oepke, *TDNT* I. 545.

Thus, this title was particularly significant.

The two remaining nouns are used only in reference to cultic washings, whether Jewish or Christian. βαπτισμός is thought of as "signifying the act alone" while βάπτισμα refers to "the act with the result, and therefore the institution."¹⁴ The latter of the two has not been found anywhere outside of the NT. Within the NT it is used of the ministry of John thirteen times (four of these are in the combination "*baptism* of repentance"; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4). Three times it is used metaphorically (Mark 10:38, 39; Luke 12:50). In four passages (and maybe just three, if Col 2:12 be excluded on text-critical grounds) it is used in reference to Christian baptism (Rom 6:4; Eph 4:5; 1 Pet 3:21). It may well be that this word arose as a nominal counterpart to βαπτίζω in its NT context and was in fact coined because of the unique ministry of John the Baptist.¹⁵

Much along the same line as his remark on βαπτιστής quoted above, Oepke writes concerning βάπτισμα:

Since the NT either coins or reserves for Christian baptism (and its precursor) a word which is not used elsewhere and has no cultic connections, and since it always uses it in the sing. and never substitutes the term employed elsewhere, we can see that, in spite of all apparent or relative analogies, it understands the Christian action to be something new and unique.¹⁶

Though his statement is essentially correct, there is one necessary alteration to be made. It would be more correct to say that *John's* baptism was seen as "something new and unique" and the Christian perpetuation of the act simply reflects that both the nature of John's baptism and the implications of it *retained their pertinence even in the new age*. This alteration is important if we are to understand the background and essential thrust of Christian baptism in the apostolic age.

The word βαπτισμός, on the other hand, is used three times of Jewish washings (Mark 7:4; Heb 6:2; 9:10). There is dispute over whether Heb 6:2 refers to Jewish washings or not. The view of this writer is that it probably *does* refer to Jewish practices. There will be more discussion below. Col 2:12 presents an altogether different kind of problem. The editors of the third edition of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament have opted for the more difficult reading (βαπτισμῶ) as opposed to the word that would be expected

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

on the basis of usage elsewhere in the NT (βαπτίσματι).¹⁷ It is obviously precarious to depend too heavily upon either choice here in developing an understanding of baptism in the NT.

This survey of word usage has been made simply for purposes of exposure to the material available in the NT itself. There will be an extended discussion of some of these issues and passages below. However, before such a task can be undertaken, it is important to look back into the biblical, religious, and cultural context within which the rite arose.

BACKGROUND

The cultural and religious context at the time of our Lord's earthly ministry requires that a number of factors be considered in the study of baptism. The LXX, in which βάπτω, βαπτίζω, and βαπτός are used, will be considered first, followed by a survey of the Mishnaic and Talmudic sources on the subject, and a discussion of the issue of baptism (or cleansings) at Qumran. With this background in the OT, Judaism, and Qumran clearly in mind we will take a close look at the ministry and ministrations of John the Baptist. The Hellenistic use of βαπτίζω will not be discussed in this section but will be mentioned in connection with the exegesis of certain NT passages in the next major section.

LXX

The verb βάπτω occurs sixteen times in the LXX and twice in the Theodotionic version of Daniel (Dan 4:30 and 5:21 according to the versification of the Aramaic text). In both of the Daniel texts the word is used to render Aramaic ܒܫܝܒܝܢܐ (Hithpaal of ܒܫܝܒܝܢܐ, translated "was drenched") in the clause "his body was drenched with the dew of heaven."

Thirteen of the sixteen times in which βάπτω is used in the LXX it is a translation of Hebrew ִבַּטַּל, which normally means "to dip." It is used of "dipping" hyssop into blood (Exod 12:22) or water (Num 19:18). On several occasions a priestly procedure requires that the priest "dip" his finger and/or other materials into the blood of a slaughtered animal as part of a ritual (Lev 4:6, 17; 9:9 as part of the sin offering ritual; Lev 14:6, 16, 51 as part of the ritual dealing with leprosy). It is also used of dipping a foot into oil (Deut 33:24), the feet into the edge of the Jordan River (Josh 3:15), food into vinegar (Ruth 2:14), a staff into honey (1 Sam 14:27), and a garment into

¹⁷B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1971) 623.

water (2 Kgs 8:15). Of particular interest is Lev 11:32 where the Hebrew **וַיִּבֶן בְּמַיִם** (Hophal of **בָּרָא**: lit. "it shall be brought into the water") is rendered by εἰς ὕδωρ βαφήσεται.

It is obvious from this survey that the verb **βάπτω** means basically "to dip" into some specified liquid. The usage in Daniel is no obstacle to this since the logic of the passage is that the king became as wet as if he had been dipped into a pool of water. Such is the reasoning behind the rendering "drenched." **βάπτω** is used poetically in Job 9:31. Ps 68:23 is textually problematic.

Greek **βαπτός** occurs once in the LXX in Ezek 23:15 where it might be considered an incorrect translation.¹⁸ **βαπτίζω** is used twice in the canonical OT (2 Kgs 5:14 and Isa 21:2) and twice in the Apocrypha (Jdt 12:7 and Greek Sir 31 [34]: 25). The translator(s) of Isa 21:4 rendered the Hebrew **פְּלִצִית בְּעֵתִי הִנֵּי** "horror *overwhelms* me" by ἡ ἀνομία με βαπτίζει "lawlessness *overwhelms* me."¹⁹ The significance of this passage is that it may reflect a usage similar to the metaphorical use of **βαπτίζω** in the NT (Mark 10:38, 39 and Luke 12:50).

Jdt 12:7 and Sir 31 (34): 25 are interesting in that **βαπτίζω** is used in reference to cleansing from levitical impurity. The passages and relevant context are quoted from *The New English Bible*:

Jdt 12:5-9

Holophernes' attendants brought her into the tent; and she slept until midnight. Shortly before the morning watch she got up and sent this message to Holophernes: 'My lord, will you give orders for me to be allowed to go out and pray?' Holophernes ordered his bodyguard to let her pass. She remained in the camp for three days, going out each night into the valley of Bethulia and *bathing* in the spring. When she came up from the spring, she prayed the Lord, the God of Israel, to prosper her undertaking to restore her people. Then she returned to the camp purified, and remained in the tent until she took her meal towards evening.

¹⁸The translator could have mistaken **טְבוּלִים** "turbans" in the phrase **קְרָוּהֵי טְבוּלִים בְּרִאשֵׁיהֶם** "flowing turbans on their heads" for a form of BDB I **טָבַל** "to dip." On the other hand, **טְבוּלִים** may refer to colored cloth and be derived from **טָבַל** "to dip" used in the sense of to dip into dye (cf. C. F. Keil, *biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel* [2 vols., reprinted; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 1. 325-26). This would then make the LXX use of **βαπτός** appropriate since it can mean "dipped, dyed; bright-coloured" (LSJ, p. 306). The real question here has to do more with the Hebrew word and its relationship or lack of it than with the Greek rendering.

¹⁹Symmachus rendered it ἡ ἀνομία με καὶ ἡ ἀμαρτία με βαπτίζει "lawlessness and sin *overwhelm* me." Both the LXX and Symmachus use **βαπτίζω** to translate the Piel stem of the verb **בָּעַת** which means "to fall upon, overwhelm, terrify."

Sir 31(34): 25-26

Wash after touching a corpse and then touch it again, and what have you gained by your washing? So it is with the man who fasts for his sins and goes and does the same again; who will listen to his prayer? what has he gained by his penance?

Therefore, though βαπτίζω is not used in the canonical OT for cleansing from levitical impurity, it seems clear from these two texts that such was not the case later on. The association of this verb with this type of impurity may well have made itself felt in certain passages in the NT (for example, Acts 22:16).

The story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5 is well-known. V 14 reads:

So he went down and *dipped* [ἐβαπτίσατο] himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean [נִיטָהָר].

The implications of this text for the issue of mode are obvious. However, there is another important point here. The verb טָהַר “to be clean” is regularly used to describe levitical purity and purification (see Lev 14:20 and many other examples there and elsewhere). In fact, There is no instance where the Qal stem of this verb is used in the sense of physical cleanliness. Thus, it seems that its use in 2 Kgs 5:14 must indicate some kind of socio-religious purity. Again, the significance of such an observation can only be appreciated when the NT text is approached with this in mind.

After all of this, it is clear that baptism as an initiatory rite is not found in the OT or apocrypha, though ritual cleansing by immersion is present.

Early Judaism

John the Baptist and our Lord lived and ministered within the milieu of early Judaism. Thus, it would be no surprise to find that the rite of Christian baptism had its prototype within Judaism. This is indeed the case. Yet, the level at which that prototype is to be discerned and understanding exactly how it was adopted in the NT are not simple matters.

The earliest references to proselyte baptism in mainline Judaism are to be found in the Mishnah.²⁰ There are two such passages which, though found in two separate places,²¹ are verbally identical:

The School of Shammai say: If a man became a proselyte on the day before Passover, he may immerse himself and consume his Passover-

²⁰K. G. Kuhn, “προσήλυτος,” *TDNT* 6 (1968) 738.

²¹*m. Pesah* 8:8 and *m. °Ed.* 5:2.

offering in the evening. And the School of Hillel say: He that separates himself from his circumcision is as one that separates himself from the grave.²²

The statements are attributed to the Schools of Shammai and Hillel (dated to ca. A.D. 10-80²³). It is unfortunate that this controversy cannot be dated more precisely. Be that as it may, there is no way to be absolutely certain when the Jews began to use baptism as part of their ceremony for the initiation of proselytes,²⁴ and this matter has been the subject of much discussion.

Solomon Zeitlin, for example, saw proselyte baptism as arising after the year A.D. 65. He wrote:

Immersion for proselytes was not instituted as a ritual *per se* for converts to Judaism. It became a requirement for proselytes for another reason. At the Conclave in the year 65 C.E. it was decreed that all gentiles are *ipso facto* unclean, in the category of a *zab*.²⁵ In consequence of this decree any gentile who wished to enter the Jewish community had to undergo the ritual of immersion. This was the underlying reason for the institution of baptism for proselytes and was introduced after the year 65 C.E. . . .

Prior to the year 65 C.E. pagans were not deemed susceptible to the laws of impurity and were never subject to the the laws of impurity and purity. Many statements to this effect are found in the Tannaitic literature. . . . Therefore a pagan, not being considered unclean, was not obliged to be baptised upon becoming a proselyte. Hence baptism with regard to proselytes is not mentioned in the apocryphal literature nor in the writings of Josephus when reference is made to converts to Judaism. According to the Tannaitic literature a proselyte, besides undergoing the rituals of circumcision and baptism, had to offer a sacrifice. This sacrifice consisted of two doves. Such a sacrifice was brought by a *zab*. Hence the sacrifice which had to be brought by a

²²H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (London: Oxford University, 1933) 148, 431.

²³*Ibid.*, 799.

²⁴L. F. Badia, *The Qumran Baptism and John the Baptist's Baptism* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1980) 12. Badia states: ". . . it is still disputed among authorities of Judaism whether baptism was practiced as an initiatory rite to Judaism prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D." Again he says on p. 36 of his book: "From the evidence at hand, it seems to me that it is impossible to determine whether or not John modeled, adapted, or innovated his baptism on the Jewish proselyte baptism, since it is impossible to establish that the latter was in existence prior to John's ministry. Even if one assumes Jewish proselyte baptisms were in existence, it is almost impossible to determine how widespread they were or if John himself knew about them."

²⁵For the background to this term see biblical Hebrew זָבַח ("to flow, gush") especially as it is used in Leviticus 15. The *zab* is the person with the flow and is therefore ritually (and physically?) unclean. There is an entire tractate (entitled *Zabim*) in the Mishnah dealing with Leviticus 15.

proselyte was not because he embraced Judaism but because he was no longer in the status of a *zab*. The rituals of baptism and sacrifice were introduced for proselytes because they were no longer considered *zabim* and had the right to enter the Jewish community. The rituals of baptism and sacrifice for proselytes were introduced after the year 65 C.E.²⁶

Thus Zeitlin would not have supported the notion that Jewish proselyte baptism provided the pattern for John the Baptist's ministration. On the other side of this issue, Edersheim was clearly convinced that the Mishnaic statement quoted above and the logical need of purification for the heathen upon entering the services of the sanctuary are conclusive proof that the proselyte baptism of Judaism was instituted before John the Baptist.²⁷

There seems to be no certainty in this matter. However, today it seems to be popular among scholars to regard Jewish proselyte baptism as instituted prior to the work of John the Baptist though on somewhat different grounds than those of Edersheim. Oepke states:

. . . it is hardly conceivable that the Jewish ritual should be adopted at a time when baptism had become an established religious practice in Christianity. After A.D. 70 at least the opposition to Christians was too sharp to allow the rise of a Christian custom among the Jews. Proselyte baptism must have preceded Christian baptism.²⁸

Rowley²⁹ and many other scholars³⁰ have agreed with the logic of Oepke's statement, and truly, there is much in favor of this view. Yet, to base a synthesis of the evidence on baptism on this tentative conclusion would be precarious.

There is another aspect of Zeitlin's statement that requires scrutiny, namely, the relationship between proselyte baptism and the general levitical cleansings of Judaism. He argues that baptism became necessary only because the gentiles became "*ipso facto* unclean" via the decisions made by the so-called "conclave" of A.D. 65. Thus, from that point on it was necessary for the proselyte to go through the process of immersion for levitical cleansing. Many writers, in addition to Zeitlin himself, have pointed out that rabbinic literature views levitical purity and impurity as categories applicable to Jews

²⁶S. Zeitlin, *Studies in the Early History of Judaism* (3 vols.; New York: KTAV, 1974), 2. 877-78.

²⁷A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (2 vols.; reprinted, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 2. 747.

²⁸Oepke, 535.

²⁹H. H. Rowley "Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John," *From Moses to Qumran* (New York: Association, 1963) 211, 212.

³⁰*Ibid*, 212 n. 5. Rowley refers to many who have become convinced of this.

only.³¹ In other words, it is a non-sequitor to think of a levitically impure gentile. They (the gentiles) had no way of becoming pure or impure in relation to the levitical system since they were not within the realm of that system. On Zeitlin's view, then, the decision of A.D. 65 reversed this.

If this be so, then the essential background of Jewish proselyte baptism as well as NT baptism may go back to the ideology of quasi-physical cleansing. In that case it becomes irrelevant to become involved in the discussion of the origin of proselyte baptism in Judaism as opposed to its use in the NT. If they go back to a common background (i.e., levitical cleansings), then why consider one as being dependent upon another? There is no need for it.

Rowley³² vehemently disagrees with such an approach. He proceeds on what he thinks to be a safe assumption that Jewish proselyte baptism was antecedent to John the Baptist. His argument is that there was a fundamental distinction between ritual lustration and proselyte baptism within Judaism:

That this baptism of proselytes is different from the ritual lustrations prescribed in the law is already quite clear and while it might be antecedently assumed that lustration would be required of every proselyte by a people that required the frequent lustration of its members, and readily agreed that the baptism of proselytes is a special development from the general ritual lustration, it must be recognized that it is something that goes fundamentally beyond mere lustration.³³

He thus argues that proselyte baptism was both purificatory and initiatory. This he bases mainly upon the fact that the normal lustrations of Judaism were private affairs while proselyte baptism required witnesses (more specifically, elders of the synagogue who

³¹See for example D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (reprinted, New York: Arno, 1973) 107. "Proselyte baptism, however, was essentially quite outside the levitical uncleanness, so in principle there was simply no room for purification." One of the passages he quotes in support of this statement is *m. Neg.* 7:1, "These Bright Spots are clean: any that were on a man before the Law was given, or that were on a gentile when he became a proselyte or that were on a child when it was born, or that were in a crease and were later laid bare. . . ." (Danby, *Mishnah*, 684).

³²Rowley, "Jewish Proselyte Baptism," 225-30. See likewise Daube (*Rabbinic Judaism*, 106-13) who is clearly convinced that the purely purificatory understanding of proselyte baptism is in error. He writes: ". . . the decisive moment in proselyte baptism was the 'going up' or 'coming up'—no doubt because of its symbolical value. The relevant Tannaitic provision—which, we shall see presently, is alluded to in the New Testament—runs: 'When he has undergone baptism and come up, *tabhal we'ala*, he is like an Israelite in all respects' (p. 111). Thus, he, like Rowley, associates the essence of proselyte baptism with the looking forward unto a new life and lifestyle; but he arrives at this by a route somewhat different than that of Rowley.

³³Rowley, "Jewish Proselyte Baptism," 225.

interrogate and/or instruct the initiate). The most pertinent Talmudic passage in this regard (*b. Yebam.* 47 a-b) is quoted here for the reader's convenience:

The Rabbis say: If anyone comes nowadays, and desires to become a proselyte, they say to him: 'Why do you want to become a proselyte? Do you not know that the Israelites nowadays are harried, driven about, persecuted and harassed, and that sufferings befall them?' If he says, 'I know it, and I am not worthy,' they receive him at once, and they explain to him some of the lighter and some of the heavier commandments, and they tell him the sins connected with the laws of gleaning, the forgotten sheaf, the corner of the field and the tithe for the poor; and they tell him the punishments for the transgressions of the commandments, and they say to him, 'Know that up till now you could eat forbidden fat without being liable to the punishment of "being cut off" (Lev. VII,23); you could violate the Sabbath without being liable to the punishment of death by stoning; but from now you will be liable.' And even as they tell him of the punishments, they tell him also of the rewards, and they say to him, 'Know that the world to come has been created only for the righteous.' They do not, however, tell him too much, or enter into too many details. If he assents to all, they circumcise him at once, and when he is healed, they baptise him, and two scholars stand by, and tell him of some of the light and of some of the heavy laws. When he has been baptised, he is regarded in all respects as an Israelite.³⁴

Though many have agreed with Rowley, his methodology and logic seem faulty to this writer. In the context of the Talmudic statement itself, the "witnesses" were to be there for the purpose of instructing and/or interrogating the initiate concerning the law and his or her willingness to accept that law. This does not in any way affect a change in the essential idea behind immersion.

It seems unthinkable that there could be any clear-cut dissociation of proselyte baptism from the common levitical immersions. The Jewish people of the day would surely have had difficulty making such a distinction. Their familiarity with the many rules of cleansing and the obvious similarity if not identity of those rites with what took place in the case of proselyte baptism clearly demonstrate this. The Mishnah contains an entire tractate on the issues surrounding "immersion-pools" (*Mikwaoth*). Furthermore, in spite of Daube's objections to the use of this evidence,³⁵ the fact that in *m. Pesah.* 8:8 (wherein is found the statement quoted earlier) proselyte baptism is

³⁴C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken, 1974) 578-79.

³⁵Daube, *Rabbinic Judaism*; 107-11.

spoken of in the context of levitical cleansing in preparation for the Passover seems to indicate that it was not separate and distinct from levitical cleansing. In addition, the statement of the school of Hillel, "He that separates himself from his uncircumcision is as one that separates himself from a grave," though again understood differently by Daube,³⁶ is commonly taken to relate to the issue of levitical uncleanness.³⁷ Thus, it seems artificial to see a substantial difference between the common immersions of the Jews and the immersion of a proselyte.

There is another important point to be made on the basis of the Talmudic statement quoted above. Daube has developed his whole discussion of proselyte baptism around that passage and the catechism which is reflected therein.³⁸ It is clear that the rite as a whole (the instruction and immersion, etc.) was initiatory to a new life and lifestyle.³⁹ As Moore writes:

In the whole ritual there is no suggestion that baptism was a real or symbolical purification; the assistants rehearse select commandments of both kinds as an appropriate accompaniment to the proselyte's assumption of all and sundry the obligations of the law, "the yoke of the commandment." It is essentially an initiatory rite, with a forward and not a backward look.⁴⁰

The initiation did not just bestow benefits ("When he has been baptised, he is regarded in all respects as an Israelite") but it required a commitment to the lifestyle of Judaism ("If he assents to all"). To be sure, it would be prejudicial to assume that there could be no repentance associated with the initiatory rites of the proselyte,⁴¹ but this subject will be dealt with more thoroughly in the next section.

The investigation here has not yielded any conclusion as to the chronological relationship between the proselyte baptism of Judaism and NT baptism. In fact, the most important point in the discussion has been to suggest that both might actually go back to a common

³⁶Ibid., 109-10.

³⁷Danby (*Mishnah*, 148 n. 4) states that such a person "... needs to be sprinkled ... on the third and seventh days following, before he becomes clean." In support of this statement he points to Num 19:19 and context.

³⁸Daube, *Rabbinic Judaism*, 113-38.

³⁹E. R. Hardy ("Jewish and Christian Baptism: Some Notes and Queries," *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus*, ed. R. H. Fischer [Chicago: Lutheran School of Theology, 1977] 317) recognizes this: "The Jewish convert, ancient or modern, is in principle accepting the yoke of the Torah, whatever that (joyful) obligation may mean in a particular Jewish tradition."

⁴⁰G. F. Moore, *Judaism* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1962), I. 334.

⁴¹Daube, *Rabbinic Judaism*, 106-7.

background, the common ritual immersions of the Jews. To anticipate the future discussion here, if proselyte baptism did antedate John the Baptist, it would appear that the cultural context into which his baptism fits remains essentially that of the *Jewish lustrations* simply because he did not baptize gentiles, but *Jews*. Thus, in that case, it is obviously not the same as proselyte baptism which had to do with bringing gentiles into the covenant relationship. His was a baptism of repentance for those within the covenant nation. This leads to a discussion of the Qumran evidence.

Baptism at Qumran

The critical study of baptism has been particularly influenced by some relatively new data from Qumran. There have been numerous studies on the relationship between the baptism of John the Baptist (and ultimately Christian baptism) and the lustrations spoken of in the Manual of Discipline (IQS).⁴²

One of the issues that receives much attention is the identity of the sect with which the Qumran community was associated. The views range from Pharisees or Sadducees to Zealots or Essenes. That they were Essenes is the most commonly accepted conclusion but it is probably safest to follow Badia and call them "the people of Qumran or Qumranians."⁴³

There has been a considerable amount of speculation on the amount and type of contact John the Baptist may or may not have had with the Qumran community and/or members of that community. Some writers have even gone so far as to suggest that he was a member of the community.⁴⁴ Such discussions are, of course, filled with speculation and are based mainly upon the following factors: 1) John's ministry was carried out in an area quite close to the community of Qumran; 2) John was the son of a priest (the Qumran community was partially ruled by priests)⁴⁵; 3) John's baptism and teachings seem to have a certain affinity with those of the Qumranians. This latter point leads us to reproduce here (for the convenience of the reader) certain key passages from Brownlee's translation of the Manual of Discipline (as cited by Badia⁴⁶):

⁴²For a good compendium of the research on this subject and the views held by scholars as well as an extensive bibliography, see L. F. Badia, *The Qumran Baptism and John the Baptist's Baptism* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1980).

⁴³Ibid., 1-2.

⁴⁴Ibid., 3-8. We know that one of the periods in which the Qumran site was occupied was 4 B.C. to A.D. 68. This would make such contact possible at least on chronological grounds.

⁴⁵Ibid., 6.

⁴⁶Ibid., 52-53.

A. IQS 3:4-9

While in iniquity, he cannot be reckoned perfect
 He cannot purify himself by atonement
 Nor cleanse himself with water-for-impurity,
 Nor sanctify himself with seas or rivers,
 Nor cleanse himself with any water for washing!

Unclean? Unclean? shall he be as long as he rejects God's laws so as not to be instructed by the Community of His counsel. For it is through the spirit of God's true counsel in regard to a man's ways that all his iniquities will be atoned so that he may look upon the life-giving light, and through a holy spirit disposed toward Unity in His Truth that he will be cleansed of all his iniquities, and through an upright and humble spirit that his sin will be atoned, and through the submission of his soul to all God's ordinances that his flesh will be cleansed so that he may purify himself with water-for-impurity and sanctify himself with rippling water.

These may not enter into water to be permitted to touch the Purity of the holy men, for they will not be cleansed unless they have turned from their wickedness, for uncleanness clings to all transgressors of His word.

C. IQS 6:14-23

And everyone from Israel who dedicates himself to join the Council of the Community—the man who is Overseer at the head of the Many shall examine him as to his understanding and his deeds. And if he grasps instruction, he shall bring him into the covenant to turn to the truth and to turn away from all perversity, and he shall enlighten him in all the laws of the Community. Afterward, when he comes to stand before the Many, the whole group will be asked concerning his affairs; and however it is decided under God in accordance with the counsel of the Many, he will either draw near or draw away. But when he draws near the Council of the Community, he must not touch the Purity of the Many until they investigate him as to his spirit and his deeds, until the completion of a full year by him. Neither shall he share in the prosperity of the Many; but upon his completion of a year in the midst of the Community, the Many shall be asked concerning his affairs with reference to his understanding and his deeds in the Torah; and if it is decided under God that he should draw near or, nearer the Conclave of the Community, according to the judgment of the priests and the majority of the men of their covenant, his wealth and his property shall be conveyed to the man who is Custodian of the property of the Many, and he shall enter it to his credit, but shall not spend of it for the Many. He the neophyte shall not touch the drink of the Many until his completion of a second year among the men of the Community. But upon his completion of a second year, he the Overseer shall examine him under the direction of the Many; and if it is decided under God to admit him into the Community, he shall enroll him in the order of his assigned position among his brethren for Torah, and for judgment and

for Purity, and to pool his property; and his counsel shall belong to the Community, also his judgment.

The Qumran community (according to the *Manual of Discipline*) was particularly concerned with the struggle between truth and falsehood in this life.⁴⁷ They felt this dichotomy and directed all of their community organization and functions as well as the initiation of those who entered the community toward the end of keeping themselves separated from the "spirit of falsehood." Passages A and B above are found within contexts that are concerned directly with this struggle. The point being made is that there can be no purity or sanctity where there is rejection of the law of God (as taught within the Qumran community). Thus, it is against the principles of the community to allow anyone to be initiated into the community who is not completely dedicated to the law of God and rules of the community. In other words, he must *repent* of any ways of falsehood and commit himself to the ways of truth before lustration(s) (initiatory or otherwise) can be of any value.

This fact may be particularly significant for our understanding of John the Baptist. John's "baptism of repentance" seems to have had affinities with the ideology surrounding the (initiatory) lustration(s) at Qumran. In the first place, the very idea of "repentance" involves a change of lifestyle. Furthermore, John himself made this same connection in his own preaching, as for example in Matt 3:7-8:

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with [ἄξιός] your repentance;"

Yet another point needs to be made here. The Qumran community was at least in part eschatologically motivated. Concerning the purpose of the baptisms Badia states:

. . . the *Manual of Discipline* suggests that baptism marked entry into an eschatological community. Eschatology is the doctrine of the last

⁴⁷See IQS 4:23ff. according to G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1968) 78. "Until now the spirits of truth and falsehood struggle in the hearts of men and they walk in both wisdom and folly. According to his portion of truth so does a man hate falsehood, and according to his inheritance in the realm of falsehood so is he wicked and so hates truth. For God has established the two spirits in equal measure until the determined end, and until the Renewal, and He knows the reward of their deeds from all eternity. He has allotted them to the children of men that they may know good (and evil, and) that the destiny of all the living may be according to the spirit within (them at the time) of the visitation."

days of the world. It was an important belief of the Qumran community. They believed that the prophets spoke of the last days and that God had raised up a priestly teacher among them, who revealed the mysteries which had been committed to the prophets and to the community. They were conscious of living in expectation of the end of the world. This belief, that the end was at hand, guided their common life especially in their baptism rites.⁴⁸

This is particularly significant when one takes notice of some statements made by John. Consider for example Matt 3:2 ("Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand") and Matt 3:11-12:

As for me, I baptize you in water for repentance; but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not even fit to remove His sandals; He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Thus, the eschatological outlook comes to the forefront in both Qumran and John the Baptist. It is not surprising, therefore, that some writers think of John as being a member or associate of the community, albeit, possibly an individualistic member or associate who became convinced of an urgent need to prepare the nation as a whole for an immediate visitation. Even many who do not see him as directly associated with the Qumranians are convinced that he was in some special sense familiar with them, their teachings, and their practices. This may be so. Surely the multitudes (Matt 3:5) understood at least the essence of John's message and the implications of his baptism. If this were not so, then how and why would he become popular enough to be a threat to the authority and/or popularity of the mainline religious leaders (Matt 21:23-27)? John was undoubtedly an innovative figure but his innovations were based upon what was common knowledge to the people of that day. They were familiar with the baptisms of mainline Judaism (see the previous section of this article). Some of them may have even been generally familiar with the lustrations of sects like that at Qumran. At any rate, John's baptism and the teachings that he espoused along with the baptism were not altogether innovative in and of themselves.

There were, however, some apparent differences between John's baptism and that of the sect at Qumran. John apparently *administered* his baptism (though this is debatable) while the supposed initiatory lustration at Qumran was apparently *self-administered*. This may or may not be why he was called "the Baptist" (βαπτιστής).

⁴⁸Badia, *Qumran Baptism*, 50.

It is interesting that he is the only individual for whom this word is used. In fact, some think of it as his "nickname."⁴⁹

B. E. Thiering's⁵⁰ analysis of IQS 3:6-7 is intriguing, though in the estimation of this writer not completely convincing. Thiering sees this text as locating primary sin in the inner man and secondary sin in the flesh. Likewise, then, there are two rites of purification:

The inner atonement is marked by a rite of cleansing with the Spirit of holiness. As this spirit comes through joining the community, the rite is closely associated with the initiation. There is also . . . a washing of the outer man with water, a ritual ablution. This rite is an inferior one, to show that the outer defilement is only a secondary location of sin.⁵¹

Therefore, where Brownlee translates "and through a *holy spirit* disposed toward Unity" Thiering seems to see a technical term and translates "In the *Spirit of holiness* (which is given) to the community." It is admitted that there appears to be no evidence as to how this rite of the "Spirit of holiness" was administered but it is seen as the *ritual* counterpart (having to do with inner cleansing) to water lustration (having to do with outer cleansing).⁵²

The major problem with this evaluation of the text at hand is that the point of the whole text and context has to do with the insufficiency of ritual. There is a need for something to happen within the person in order to make the person eligible for the initiatory rite which, by the very nature of things, can be only external. Thiering takes something that seems to stand in contrast to ritual as a whole and assigns it again to the realm of ritual, though seeing it as a rite having to do with inner (non-ritual) cleansing. It seems to me that the text is saying that it is water lustration which, by the standards of this community, is not somehow magically effective. The inner change is a non-externally observable phenomenon which gives validity to the external lustration. Thus, I prefer the older and more traditional understanding of the text. Yet, I hold no particular antagonism toward the view herein criticized and am willing to admit change at this point if more and convincing evidence is presented in its favor.

Passage C from the *Manual of Discipline* is particularly helpful in understanding the overall initiatory process. It is found within a context where the order within the community is the central concern. Part of that order has to do with how a neophyte is brought into the

⁴⁹Oepke, *TDNT*, I. 545.

⁵⁰B. E. Thiering, "Inner and Outer Cleansing at Qumran as a Background to New Testament Baptism" *NTS* 26 (1980) 266-77.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 270.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 276.

full circle of the community. They took great pains to ensure that the initiate was sincere about following God's law as administered by the leaders and community members as a whole. In fact, there was what amounts to a two-year and two-stage probationary period as a safeguard against defilement of the congregation by an insincere initiate.

It is not altogether clear when the initiatory lustration took place, whether at the beginning of the two years or at the end. It is not even certain whether or not there was any significant difference between the first and initiatory lustrations as opposed to the regular lustrations of community members.⁵³ But it *is* clear that the concern associated with initiation had to do with the *commitment of the initiate to a new lifestyle*. Furthermore, it would seem that the ritual of water cleansing was undertaken so that the person could take part in the community religious/social functions which required purity. Thus, there was a forward look within the basic concern of such lustrations as well as in their association with initiation which is commitment oriented.

It is clear from John 3:22-4:2 that these ideas were not absent from the NT. In this passage John's baptism (3:23) had given rise to a dispute over issues of "purification" (3:25, καθαρισμός). The connection with Jewish procedures in the Torah and Mishnah is self-evident. Obviously, John's practice of baptizing was directly connected with purification in the minds of the people to whom he was ministering. In addition, both Jesus (3:22; 4:2) and John (3:25) had disciples, and the connection between making disciples and baptizing is indisputable (4:1). John 4:1b reads in Greek Ἰησοῦς πλείονας μαθητὰς ποιεῖ καὶ βαπτίζει ἢ Ἰωάννης and is translated in English "Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John." πλείονας μαθητὰς ("more disciples") is the object of both ποιεῖ ("making") and βαπτίζει ("baptizing"). As Bultmann has already said: ". . . being baptized by the baptist and becoming his disciple are one and the same!"⁵⁴ Thus, even though John's baptism (and that of Jesus during his earthly ministry) was not necessarily for the purpose of initiation into a community of believers (and in that sense it differed from that at

⁵³H. H. Rowley ("Jewish Proselyte Baptism," 230 n. 1) rejected the idea that there was in fact any water rite of initiation at Qumran. This is indeed possible. Still, this does not eliminate the relevance of the Qumran statements often discussed in relation to baptism unless one completely dissociates baptism from cleansing and purification (as Rowley essentially does). It is still pertinent to argue that the Qumranians saw no magical efficacy in water lustration. A certain correspondence can then be drawn between the teachings at Qumran and those of John the Baptist.

⁵⁴R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (transl. by G. R. Beasley-Murray *et al.*; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 176 n. 5.

Qumran), it does retain the effect of being associated with a change in orientation of life. One became the disciple of the person with whom one's baptism was associated, whether that person was the one who administered the baptism (as with John the Baptist) or someone else in whose name the baptizer baptized (Matt 28:19). This is the ideology that lies behind the statement of Paul in 1 Cor 1:13-15.

Josephus

There remains a passage in Josephus which speaks of John the Baptist, and in quite a good light. Though not corroborating in detail the NT account of John's death (Matt 14:12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 9:7-9), Josephus does assign his assassination to Herod. John's tremendous popularity is said to be the reason that Herod became suspicious of him and had him put to death. The people of the day, being convinced of John's righteousness, saw Herod's defeat at the hands of Aretas, the King of Arabia, as being from God because Herod had murdered John the Baptist.

The passage from Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* (18:5:2)⁵⁵ reads as follows:

Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards god, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing (with water) would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away, (or the remission) of some sins (only) but for the purification of the body: supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now, when (many) others came to crowd about him, for they were greatly moved (or pleased) by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest this great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it should be too late. Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure against him.

⁵⁵W. Whiston, translator, *Josephus: Complete Works* (reprinted, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1960) 382.

Josephus' remarks clearly show that two primary principles stood out in John's preaching and baptismal ministrations. First, there was a certain purification of the body accomplished by the water. This is reminiscent of the purificatory lustrations of mainline Judaism and Qumran. Second, his baptism was not taught as being efficacious in and of itself. There was a need for righteous repentance in terms of "righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God." The purity of the soul was seen as a prerequisite to the efficacy of the baptism for "purification of the body." This is reminiscent especially of the attitude reflected in the *Manual of Discipline* at Qumran.

Hill, in his commentary on Matthew,⁵⁶ has argued that baptism actually had no ritual significance for John. His point is that John the Baptist's affinities were with Qumran rather than the mainline Judaism of the day since, obviously, the Qumran texts stand out in their emphasis upon the lack of inherent efficacy in ritual. Thus he considers Josephus' statement as a reinterpretation of John's baptism in the light of Judaism.

It seems to me that Hill's view has the effect of seeing far too much of a dichotomy between external ritual and internal reality in the Judaism of the day. As mentioned earlier, some writers are convinced that even mainline Judaism had already sublimated its understanding of ritual so that it was not conceived of as purely mechanical. If this be so, then Hill's statement actually manifests a misunderstanding of Judaism. Furthermore, it seems that Josephus clearly thought of John the Baptist as teaching the same need for inner cleansing as did the Qumranians. This may reflect the fact that the same need had been recognized within mainline Judaism, that is, if Josephus can be seen as speaking from the perspective of mainline Judaism.

THE PRACTICE OF BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The purpose of this section is to see the manner in which the practice of baptism and the understanding of its meaning was incorporated into the NT. The ordinance and its meaning had roots in the cleansings and baptisms discussed above. This amalgam of ideas that surrounded and was associated with water lustrations and baptisms was all part of one whole to the people of that day. Yet, a

⁵⁶D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1972) 91-92. Similarly, F. F. Bruce (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 115-16 n. 22) thinks of Josephus' account as being colored by the historian's knowledge of the Essenes and their baptismal practices and doctrines.

certain association may rise to the surface in one passage while another rises to the surface in another. Here we approach the realm of connotation versus denotation, association versus direct connection, cultural/religious background versus doctrine, etc.

The discussion will be carried on in three stages. These three stages correspond to the three subsections which follow immediately below. First, there will be a discussion of the basic ideology lying behind baptism in the NT. It is in this portion of the article that the effects of the previous background discussions will be felt most predominantly. Second, what are viewed as being secondary developments which arose in connection with baptism will be investigated. By the term "secondary developments" I do not mean to imply that somehow the NT passages discussed therein are not inspired of God. Rather, the fact is that the connection between these passages and the meaning of baptism as discerned from the background studies does not seem to be as close. Third, certain analogical developments within the NT will be considered. There are at least two passages in the NT (1 Cor 10:2 and 1 Pet 3:21) which seem to use baptism as the basis for "typological" or "analogical" understanding of OT passages. These will be discussed last of all.

The Basic Ideology of Baptism

At the end of the section on Qumran, John 3:22-4:2 was discussed. It is clear from the language and structure of 4:1 that a direct connection is to be seen between baptism and discipleship. This same viewpoint is manifestly clear in certain other NT passages as well.

Matt 28:19 clearly reflects that baptism and teaching were partners in the process of making disciples. "Make disciples" (aorist imperative; μαθητεῦσατε) is the mandate. "Baptizing" (present participial; βαπτίζοντες) and "teaching" (present participial; διδάσκοντες) are the two procedures associated with the accomplishment of that mandate.⁵⁷ Thus, here as in John 3:22-4:2, baptism is directly connected with discipleship.

Again, 1 Cor 1:10-17 (along with 3:4-9) reflects the fact that to baptize someone has implications for making him part of one's group of loyal disciples. Paul argues from the fact that he had not baptized any of the Corinthians (except Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanus, vv 14 and 16). His point is that since he had not baptized them, they should not be considering themselves as his

⁵⁷W. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973) 1000-1 and W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1971) 362.

disciples, thus creating different sects within the church. The believers there had been lining up behind various Christian teachers; Paul, Apollos, Cephas (Peter) along with Christ (the master teacher) whose name was included in the list (v 12). He then says in vv 13-15:

Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you was he? Or were you baptized in (εἰς) the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius, that no man should say you were baptized in (εἰς) my name.

Essentially, his argument that they should not consider themselves to be *his* disciples is based upon the fact that *he* did not baptize them and neither were they baptized in *his* name.

These passages show clearly that the association of baptism (by a specific teacher or in the name of that teacher) with becoming a disciple was well-known within the Corinthian cultural/religious milieu. The fact that this is reflected and not postulated within the NT would seem to indicate that the association between baptism and discipleship did not arise as part of the NT revelation, but instead was already present for our God to use in his revelation and implementation of salvation. It is only when the full thrust of this latter point is brought to bear upon the issue of baptism that certain other questions can be answered.

For example, how did this connection between baptism and discipleship come into being? Part of the answer, in my opinion, is to be found in understanding that the lustrations at Qumran (and possibly also, to a certain extent, in mainline Judaism) were necessarily efficacious, according to their teachings, only if they were associated with genuine repentance from sin and commitment to the law of God. Thus, a new or renewed commitment to God was implicit in the rite itself. Another part of the answer is discerned by recognizing the fact that the regular levitical water cleansings in Judaism removed impurities. Yet, as reflected in *m. Pesah* 8:8 (quoted earlier), the concern for removal of impurity often had to do with the need for ritual purity as a prerequisite for taking part in the religious activities of the community (in this case, the Passover). This is also reflected in IQS 6:14-23 (also quoted above). Again, the baptism/lustration is done in anticipation of some other activity which is to follow. It has a forward look. Yet another part of the answer has to do with the fact that the Qumran baptism, whether considered part of the initiation or just a necessary part of the initiate's newly acquired regulations, had to do with one's entrance into a community. The same is true of the proselyte baptism of Judaism. Whether or not proselyte baptism was part of the repertoire of Judaism before the rise of Christianity makes little difference. In either case, it was meant to mark the initiate's

entrance into a religious community, both local (the local synagogue) and international (Judaism, with its center at Jerusalem).⁵⁸

This latter point is particularly important when we come to the book of Acts. John used baptism in his preaching as a means of facilitating confession of sins and repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus perpetuated that baptism during his earthly ministry as a means of bringing repentant ones into *his* circle of disciples (John 3:22). The same rite was carried from there into the local church as its rite of initiation for those trusting Christ and thus entering the local church as Christ's disciples. But if the rite was carried over, so were its implications. As part of a new believer's incorporation into the Christian community he or she must be baptized. It would not occur to them that there could be a Christian in the local church who had not been baptized.⁵⁹ In effect, the initiate, by his submission to baptism, declared himself a disciple of Christ and committed himself to the kind of lifestyle pertinent to that declaration. More than that, the fact of the close proximity, timewise, between trusting in Christ and being baptized (cf. Acts 2:38; 10:47 etc.) is significant. It implies that they could not conceive of a true Christian who was not willing to express commitment to our Lord. That was not one of the options given to the person being evangelized. He either trusted Christ and was baptized, knowing the implications in terms of commitment and lifestyle, or he rejected the truth.

John's was a "baptism of repentance." Since the Christian rite was based upon John's baptism, repentance was legitimately associated with conversion. Thus we find such texts as Luke 24:27, Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 20:21; 26:20; etc. John the Baptist was the avenue through which all, or at least many, of the implications attached to baptism, lustration, and cleansing were brought into the church. There is a certain continuity from one age into the next. His baptism

⁵⁸If Jewish proselyte baptism began before the church, it simply demonstrates that baptism by its very nature had implications for initiation into a religious community. Even if the Jews did not begin baptizing proselytes until after the church had been established, as Zeitlin and others have proposed, either the same basic implications of baptism are reflected in its adoption as an initiatory rite, or it is patterned after Christian baptism which in turn adopted it and its implications from the levitical cleansings of Judaism and/or the lustrations at Qumran. Thus, the chronological relationship between Jewish proselyte baptism and Johannine and Christian baptism is not central to the thesis of this paper.

⁵⁹The fact that sometimes water baptism is not expressly stated as taking place at conversion does not mean that such was in fact the case. It is clear from Acts 2:38 and many other passages and the general tone of the New Testament that the normal procedure was for baptism to follow immediately upon conversion. Corresponding to this, Acts 8:36 demonstrates that it was normal for the convert himself to expect that baptism be administered immediately subsequent to conversion.

of repentance had as its purpose the preparation of a people ready to meet the Messiah. This it did. In fact, many of John's disciples apparently, in turn, became Christ's disciples. This was a natural process. It happened while both of them were carrying on their ministries (John 1:35-51). It probably happened *en masse* after John's death, though it is not as clearly stated (Matt 14:12: "And *his disciples* came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and *reported to Jesus*"). It also happened after the church had been established (Acts 19:1-7).

The Acts 19 passage is particularly interesting. Prerequisite to a proper understanding of this text is the understanding of the message which John preached in connection with his baptism. There is a considerable amount of disagreement on the meaning of "fire" in the statement ". . . He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt 3:11 and Luke 3:16).⁶⁰ However, it is clear from these passages as well as Mark 1:8 and John 1:33 when they are combined with Acts 1:5 that the reference had to do with the day of Pentecost. This was what John was pointing forward to and it was this that Paul was referring back to in Acts 19:2-4. Apollos had been teaching about the Messiah but he had only been familiar with John's baptism and teachings (Acts 18:24-28). Thus, when Paul came to Ephesus he found a group which was essentially a "pocket" of disciples of John the Baptist.⁶¹ Paul, therefore, baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus, thus making them disciples of Christ instead of disciples of John. Furthermore, he saw to it that they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit as anticipated by John in his preaching about the Messiah ("He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit").

⁶⁰R. C. H. Lenski (*The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* [Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1943] 117), Albright and Mann (*Matthew*, 26) and Hill (*Matthew*, 94-95) all see the fire as hendiadys with Holy Spirit and, therefore, connected with the purificatory use of fire. W. C. Allen (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew* [ICC; New York: Scribner's, 1925] 24) and A. W. Argyle (*The Gospel According to Matthew* [The Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1963] 36) suggest that the fire is to be seen in connection with the following verse. All agree that the following verse has to do with judgment. Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 209) concludes that "fire" here refers to both Pentecost (the tongues of fire in Acts 2:3) and the final judgment.

⁶¹J. Munck (*The Acts of the Apostles* [AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1967] 187) believes that this passage has reference only to Christians, not disciples of John the Baptist. This seems untenable to me. The text indicates that they were anticipating the coming of the Messiah (as all followers of John the Baptist did) but had not yet become aware of and adjusted to the dawning of the new age. Thus they had not yet become disciples of Christ through baptism in (εἰς) his name (v 5) and neither had they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (vv 2, 6). Thus, they were manifestly in a pre-Pentecost condition.

Thus, water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism were closely associated. The repentance and commitment implicit within the NT concept of water baptism came to correspond, after Pentecost, to the endowment with and empowerment by the Holy Spirit for the life and lifestyle demanded by the commitment made in water baptism.

Another important aspect of the background to NT baptism has to do with the concept of cleansing. It is likely that at the foundation the meaning of water rites had to do with washing away impurity, in particular, ritual impurity. This concept was probably *never* far from the mind of participants and observers. Surely it became sublimated to the concept of inner purity and repentance/ discipleship, but the basic character of the act (washing in water) could easily rise to the surface of a text and stand out.

For example, in Acts 22:16 Paul was speaking to the mob in Jerusalem and recounting the story of his conversion to Christ. Part of Ananias' message is said to have been: "And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." Our background studies have shown that it was not uncommon to think of such rites as dependent upon an inner reality for their efficacy. This was clearly the case at Qumran. Certain scholars are convinced that the washings and immersions of mainline Judaism were likewise more than just physical.

It is significant, I think, that in the context in which this verse is found, cleansing for purification stands out in a special way (Acts 21:17-40). Paul was in the temple, doing the necessary rituals for *Jewish purification* (vv 24-26), when he was waylaid by "the Jews from Asia" (v 27). The message that he preached in Acts 22 was his defense before this angry mob. Is it not possible that since he was set upon within the temple complex and was making his defense there that he put his argument into terms particularly relevant to that setting? Paul is known to have taken a similar approach on other occasions (for example, see Acts 17:22-25). In any case, it is certainly neither exegetically necessary nor theologically cogent to see baptism as actually accomplishing the washing away of sins on the basis of this or similar passages. In fact, even within the system of Judaism, water accomplished only ritual purification, not the actual cleansing from sin. For the latter, sacrifice was generally necessary. This is clear enough even within the context of the scene in Acts 21 (cf. especially v 26).⁶²

⁶²This is an important point which cannot be fully treated here. The distinction between ritual impurity and sin is not always clearly delineated in the Torah and in later Judaism, but it is relatively clear that sin and sinfulness required blood atonement.

It is likely that Heb 6:2 and 9:10 reflect a similar idea. The word used in both places is βαπτισμός. Scholars are agreed that 9:10 should be interpreted as referring to the lustrations of Judaism.⁶³ However, there is disagreement on 6:2. Many writers⁶⁴ think of the reference to "instruction about washings" as having to do with Jewish lustrations which were continued by Jewish Christians after their conversion to Christ. This view has a number of arguments in its favor: 1) the two other certain occurrences of βαπτισμός in the NT (Mark 7:4 and Heb 9:10) have to do with the levitical cleansings of Judaism; 2) to judge by the content of the book, the group to which this epistle was written was most certainly a predominantly Jewish Christian community of believers; 3) the decree set down by the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) suggests that it was normal for *Jewish* Christians to continue following all of the levitical regulations found in the law; 4) Paul is clearly adhering to Judaistic regulations in Acts 21:17-26 (see the discussion above).

On the other hand, there are other commentators⁶⁵ who think of Heb 6:2 as referring to instructions about *Christian* baptism. In support of this position there are such arguments as: 1) the more general term, βαπτισμός, is used because the instruction had to do with the need to distinguish between the washings of Judaism and Christian baptism; 2) Acts 19:1-5 shows how there was confusion about the relationship between John's baptism and the Christian rite.

The issue is not a simple one. There are good arguments on both sides. In fact, the error may be in trying to limit oneself to accepting one view or the other. The "instruction about washings" could easily refer to all of the various water rites which would have found a place in the repertoire of Jewish Christians. Obviously, if they were going to continue in their relationship to Judaism (as Paul did in Acts 21), they would need to understand all of the regulations pertaining to it. In the same way, it would have become important for them as *Christian* Jews to be instructed about Christian baptism.

⁶³H. A. Kent, Jr., *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Winona Lake: BMH, 1972) 169; B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (3d ed.; New York: MacMillan, 1906) 256; H. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (HNTC; New York: Harper and Row, 1964) 150.

⁶⁴G. W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1972) 104; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 114-16; T. Hewitt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Tyndale; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960) 105; K. S. Wuest, *Hebrews in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 112.

⁶⁵Kent, *Hebrews*, 106; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 105-6; N. R. Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today: A Commentary on the Book of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 121-22; F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (2 vols; transl. by T. L. Kingsbury; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), 1. 274-75.

Once the connection between baptism and repentance/discipleship is clearly understood, certain passages are no longer problematic. For example, in Acts 2:38 εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν ("for the forgiveness of your sins") is connected with both βαπτισθήτω ("be baptized") and μετανοήσατε ("repent"). The Qumran emphasis upon repentance as the key to real efficacy in water informs us concerning the intent of this type of statement. As mentioned previously, even John, in his preaching, made it clear that his baptism was only valid if accompanied by genuine repentance (Matt 3:5-8; Luke 3:7-8). This association of baptism with repentance was carried directly into the church. The rite, as far as the NT canon is concerned, found its formative and ideological base in John the Baptist. Neither John the Baptist nor the apostolic church would have conceived of the rite as being efficacious⁶⁶ in the absence of genuine repentance.

Secondary Developments

There are two passages in the NT that have often been mistakenly understood to give the basic logic and meaning of baptism. They are Rom 6:1-11 and Col 2:8-15. Rom 6:1-7 makes use of the analogy between the believer's baptismal immersion (going down into the water and coming up again) and the death and resurrection of Christ. The believer is said to have died with Christ and thereby is dead to

⁶⁶I am using the term "efficacious" in the sense of "accomplishing the purpose for which it is intended." The reader is not to understand the use of this word as indicating any leanings toward baptismal regeneration. On the contrary, baptism was not thought of as being effective on the level of regeneration.

When used of John's baptism, it refers to the effectiveness of the rite in accomplishing the purposes which he had for it, i.e., the implementation of his ministry in calling people to genuine repentance (Matt 3:2, 7-8) and gathering disciples around himself (John 4:1: "more disciples than *John*"). When referring to Christian baptism the "efficacy" of the rite has to do with concerns quite similar to those of John. It was intended to be used in the *implementation* of expressions of repentance and discipleship commitment in the context of initiation of new believers. It is quite clear both extrabiblically (see the discussion of Qumran) and biblically (see the discussion on John's rebuke of those who would be baptized and not repent, Matt 3:7-8 and Luke 3:7-14) that baptism's "efficacy" was dependent upon the reality and genuineness of the repentance. At the risk of being redundant, it can be stated in this way: an implement can not be "efficacious" if it is not implementing that which it was intended to implement.

The point is that baptism was not the means of obtaining regeneration. Rather, it was an *instrument* adopted by the apostles and the apostolic church (under the direction of our Lord) for the purpose of *implementing* the *expression* of the repentance necessarily associated with regeneration as well as the discipleship commitment that was inherent within that repentance. If the repentant mind-set and discipleship commitment did not in reality exist in a particular instance, then, in that instance, the efficacy of the baptism was short circuited since it (baptism) was intended to be the means of implementing the expression of *genuine* repentance and commitment.

sin and self (vv 6-7). Likewise, one is said to have the prospect of coming to new life with Christ and is thereby exhorted to live in the light of that prospect (vv 4 and 11).⁶⁷

Whereas Romans 6 is often used in support of the immersion mode, Colossians 2 is often used to support a direct connection between OT circumcision and NT baptism. Surely, "having been buried with Him in baptism" (v 12) is reminiscent of Romans 6. But the reference to circumcision here adds a new dimension to the discussion. On the basis of this reference to circumcision, baptism is thought, by some, to be the covenant seal of the church just as circumcision was the covenant seal of Israel.⁶⁸

It is not within the purview of this paper to discuss the exegesis of these passages in great detail. Yet, some remarks are necessary.

There are some who think that Romans 6 refers to Holy Spirit baptism and has no direct reference to water baptism.⁶⁹ This does not, however, seem likely in light of the imagery being used. Surely, the empowerment for the new life is initiated by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but there is no dichotomy or antagonism between water and spirit baptism in the early church. They were seen as complementary. This is why they were so closely linked in their administration (Acts 10:44-48; 19:1-7). It is not likely that the people of that day would have read Romans 6 and reasoned that it could not be referring to water baptism because there is no real efficacy in water baptism. Rather, they came to this passage already knowing that the implications of water baptism had to do with repentance/discipleship and the lifestyle befitting such a commitment. That is why this reference to baptism fits well in a context where the point has to do with sanctification. Consider the context before and after the direct reference to baptism:

Rom 6:1-2

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Rom 6:12

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts,

⁶⁷J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Revised; New York: MacMillan, 1879) 184.

⁶⁸H. M. Carson, *Colossians and Philemon* (Tyndale; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960) 67; H. C. G. Moule, *Colossians and Philemon Studies* (Westwood: Revell, n.d.) 153.

⁶⁹H. A. Kent, Jr., *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Colossians and Philemon* (Winona Lake: BMH, 1978) 86.

Rom 6:15

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?
May it never be!

Daube⁷⁰ has suggested that the idea of new life associated with coming up out of the baptismal waters is found in Jewish proselyte baptism. He therefore assumes that it is on the basis of Paul's Jewish background that he used the identical imagery here. Though this interpretation is not impossible, it is still not at all certain that Jewish proselyte baptism had been instituted at the time of the writing of the epistle to the Romans. Furthermore, the fact that this supposed allusion is based upon a reference in the Talmud, which, though it may reflect earlier traditions, is relatively late, is not in Daube's favor.

Other writers such as Lohse,⁷¹ Käsemann,⁷² and Bornkamm,⁷³ think that the background to Romans 6 comes from the Hellenistic mystery cults. The idea of dying and rising with the god(s) was used by the apostle Paul since his readers would have been familiar with such doctrines. According to these scholars, that is why Paul writes "... do you not know" in Rom 6:3.

In any case, Romans 6 must not be taken to be a statement of the basic meaning of baptism. The statement here is actually a secondary development based upon either the cultural/religious background of the people to whom Paul was writing or the nature of the baptismal act (used metaphorically). The primary implications of baptism, however, are clearly reflected in the text. The whole point of the passage and the use of baptism within the passage have to do with sanctification/discipleship. Paul is exhorting the Roman Christians to live in accordance with their baptismal commitment.

Col 2:8-15 has affinities with Romans 6 but is in a context where the polemical nature of the argument is even more pronounced. Paul's concern has to do with the Colossian heresy. Though difficult to define, this heresy seems to have been heavily oriented toward Hellenistic religious philosophy (perhaps an incipient gnosticism).⁷⁴ Certain elements from Judaism may have been combined with this alien religious philosophy.

⁷⁰See n. 32.

⁷¹E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress 1971) 101-6.

⁷²E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (transl. and ed. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 160-61. His discussion is confusing but he does seem to question the awareness of those who would deny Hellenistic background here.

⁷³G. Bornkamm, "Baptism and New Life in Paul (Romans 6)" *Early Christian Experience* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1969) 85 n. 5.

⁷⁴Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 2-3.

"Circumcision" here may refer directly to the OT rite instituted in Genesis 17. If so, then "a circumcision made without hands" (v 11) is reminiscent of passages like Deut 10:16. Thus, "the circumcision of Christ" (v 11) refers to Christ as the one who performs the "circumcision made without hands." In other words, Christ is the one who has brought us into the covenant relationship with God by means of regeneration.⁷⁵

Lohse offers another explanation. He thinks this circumcision should be understood in terms of syncretistic practices in mystery cults. After rejecting this as a reference to the sign of the OT covenant between Israel and Yahweh he writes:

"Circumcision" is rather understood as a sacramental rite by which a person entered the community and gained access to salvation. The reference to the phrase "putting off the body of flesh" . . . suggests the practices of mystery cults. In the initiation rites the devotee had to lay aside what previously had served him as clothing so that he could be filled with divine power. Jewish terminology, in this case, would clearly function as a means of giving greater authority and appeal to the sacramental rite of initiation.⁷⁶

Thus, Paul's point here would be that the removal of the sinful flesh, as taught by the syncretistic mystery religions, was really accomplished by Christ. The Colossians need not adhere to the teachings of those cults. They have been freed from any need to be concerned with such things (vv 16-20).

Though Lohse would like to deny any direct connection with OT circumcision, he does allow for an allusion to it, though veiled by the associated ideas from the mystery religions. According to the more common view given previously, the reference to circumcision has to do with the OT rite understood metaphorically as in Rom 2:29. The point, in either case, has to do with the metaphorical implications of baptism.⁷⁷ Their baptism pointed toward the removal of fleshly sinfulness and the judgment of God because of it (vv 12-15). Thus, since they were made alive together with Him (v 13) they were to "keep seeking the things above" (Col 3:1).

Bornkamm⁷⁸ has analyzed Romans 6 and come to the conclusion that Paul does not offer a new doctrine of baptism here. Instead, Paul

⁷⁵Kent, *Colossians and Philemon*, 85-86.

⁷⁶Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 102.

⁷⁷H. A. Kent (*Colossians and Philemon*, 86) thinks the baptism here refers to Spirit baptism. Most other commentators assume, as I do, that the reference is to water baptism, which is closely associated with Spirit baptism in the book of Acts (see above).

⁷⁸Bornkamm, "Baptism and New Life," 71-86.

followed "the understanding of baptism already disseminated in the Hellenistic congregations."⁷⁹ Though I would not necessarily agree that the argument of Romans 6 is based upon Hellenistic background, it is certain that neither Romans 6 nor Colossians 2 actually present a doctrine of baptism. This is clear from the study of the background and basic meaning of baptism in the NT as explained in the previous sections of this article. Further evidence of this is found in the texts themselves. For example, in Rom 6:5, 8 the rising with Christ is spoken of as future, whereas, in Col 2:12-13 it is an event already completed in baptism.⁸⁰ This is no problem once one recognizes that Paul is using the rite of baptism in these texts in an illustrative or metaphorical manner.

Another passage in which baptism is used metaphorically is Gal 3:27. Burton suggests two possible interpretations of "you . . . have clothed yourselves" (ἐνεδύσασθε):

This may have been that in baptism one was, as it were clothed with the water, or, possibly, that the initiate was accustomed to wear a special garment.⁸¹

In either case, again, the passage is metaphorical or, at least, not intended to give the basic logic behind baptism.

Romans 6, Colossians 2, and Galatians 3 all refer to water baptism. They refer to it in such a way as to make a point in the context. Baptism was common to the experience of all Christians and therefore was something Paul could use in parenetically or polemically oriented contexts. This he did. Yet, it is clear from 1 Cor 1:10-17 that he knew the basic implications of baptism to be related to discipleship. This discipleship orientation was not far removed from his arguments in these passages.

Analogical Developments

There are two particularly unusual references to baptism in the NT. 1 Cor 10:2 speaks of the Israelites being "baptized into Moses" when they came out of Egypt. 1 Pet 3:21 refers to Christian baptism as "corresponding to" (ἀντίτυπον) the salvation of Noah and his party by means of the ark.

⁷⁹Ibid, 85 n. 5.

⁸⁰Ibid, 77. See also H. D. Betz (*Galatians* [Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979] 186) who says: "The phrase 'baptized into Christ' can be and actually was interpreted in different ways, even by Paul himself." In n. 44 he points to Romans 6 and Colossians 2 along with other passages.

⁸¹E. D. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921) 206.

The context of 1 Corinthians 9-10 is important. Toward the end of chap. 9 Paul is speaking about his desire to "do all things for the sake of the gospel" so that he might become "a fellow-partaker of it" (9:23). He concludes the chapter with a statement of his determination to keep on pursuing the prize "lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (9:27).

That these are valid concerns is then made clear by historical references back to the time of the exodus from Egypt under Moses. He refers to the cloud that led them by day (Exod 13:21) and the deliverance through the sea (Exod 14:22). Then, he summarizes these references by saying: "and all were *baptized into Moses* in the cloud in the sea." This and other historical occurrences are referred to as "examples (τύποι) for us" (1 Cor 10:6). The apostle Paul used these references to exhort, yea, to warn the Corinthians: "therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12). The Israelites who came out of Egypt and experienced those initial blessings with Moses were not guaranteed constant favor before the Lord aside from continued obedience to his desires (1 Cor 10:5, 9-11). Neither should the Corinthians expect that their baptism (1 Cor 10:2) and their participation in the Lord's supper (1 Cor 10:3-4) would guarantee them favor before the Lord apart from continued obedience.

Burton, in his fine commentary on Galatians, has suggested that here again Paul is arguing against the mystery religions:

1 Cor 10:1-2 makes it probable that the Corinthians were putting upon their Christian baptism the interpretation suggested by the mystery religions, viz., that it secured their salvation. Against this view Paul protests, using the case of the Israelites passing through the Red Sea, which he calls a baptism into Moses to show that baptism without righteousness does not render one acceptable to God. This may, of course, signify only that he conceived that the effect of baptism was not necessarily permanent, or that to baptism it is necessary to add a righteous life. But it is most naturally interpreted as a protest against precisely that doctrine of the magical efficiency of physical rites which the mystery religions had made current.⁸²

Burton is surely correct in his evaluation of the point that Paul was making, though he has possibly put too much emphasis on it being a polemic against the mystery religions. Even within the circles of Judaism it was necessary to point out that baptisms and/or lustrations were efficacious only if accompanied by repentance (see the discussion on Qumran and John the Baptist). At any rate, it is clear

⁸²ibid., 205.

that, to be "baptized into Moses" was to be brought into a relationship with Moses which was to have an effect upon one's lifestyle from that point and onward. If that lifestyle commitment should be aborted, so will the position of favor.

Therefore, 1 Cor 10:2 is reminiscent of our earlier discussions on the necessity of inner cleansing by means of genuine repentance before any lustration/baptism can be efficacious. Baptism is not a guarantee of one's permanent acceptance before God.

It has been in vogue to conceive of 1 Peter as a "baptismal tract" with 1 Pet 3:21 and other supposed allusions to baptism in the book being considered of the utmost importance.⁸³ In my opinion, David Hill,⁸⁴ has delivered the *coup de grâce* to these ingenious theories. He is correct when he writes:

All theories about the pervasiveness of the baptismal theme in 1 Peter are embarrassed by the fact that the word 'baptism' occurs only once in the letter, and that in a statement which is virtually parenthetical (3:21).⁸⁵

The First Epistle of Peter is clearly concerned about the suffering of believers. This is clear from the beginning (1 Pet 1:6-7), to the middle (1 Pet 3:13-18), to the end (1 Pet 5:10). Thus, there have been numerous attempts to comprehend a link between baptism and suffering that would explain such an emphasis upon suffering in what has been thought of as a baptismal tract. Some of these attempts have been reviewed by Brooks and Hill. Hill, himself, offers an altogether different understanding of the link between baptism and suffering:

The link between baptism and suffering (such as would befall Christians in a hostile environment) may be accounted for simply and adequately by assuming that, since baptism was the occasion and the sign of voluntary self-commitment to the Christian way, those who offered themselves for the rite were aware, through their knowledge of what Christians endured, that this way on which they were embarking would inevitably involve suffering. Acceptance of the *consequences* of becoming and being known as a Christian was implied in the acceptance of baptism. In short, a Christian's suffering and his baptism are linked because, in accepting baptism, he is affirming willingness to share in the known experience of baptised persons who were commonly, if not constantly treated with suspicion and hostility.⁸⁶

⁸³O. S. Brooks, "1 Peter 3:21—The Clue to the Literary Structure of the Epistle" *NovT* 16 (1974) 290-305.

⁸⁴D. Hill, "On Suffering and Baptism in 1 Peter" *NovT* 18 (1976) 181-89.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 186.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 184-85.

This statement reflects an understanding of the emphasis upon discipleship which was an intrinsic part of baptism in the apostolic age. As far as the effects of this view on the cherished idea that I Peter is a baptismal liturgy or tract are concerned, Hill goes on to say:

The consequences of this view (and its simplicity is its strength) are to make the baptismal theme quite subsidiary, almost incidental, to the main purpose and meaning of I Peter.⁸⁷

The Greek of I Pet 3:21 is difficult, but Wuest offered a reasonable explanation.⁸⁸ He points out that the relative pronoun (δ) is neuter. Thus, it refers back to the "water" ($\ddot{\upsilon}\delta\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$, neuter) and not the "ark" ($\kappa\iota\beta\omega\tau\omicron\upsilon$, feminine) in v 20. Therefore, he translates "which (water) as a counterpart now saves you, (namely) baptism." Consequently the water of Noah's day is made to correspond with the water of baptism. Obviously, the ark would correspond more adequately to salvation, but this does not fit with the imagery of water in the context. Peter was not concerned about exact correspondence ($\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\tau\upsilon\pi\omicron\nu$, v 20) in all details. Rather, he was centering upon the issue of water in order to use baptism as an analogy to Noah's deliverance through the suffering and judgment of his day.

Peter went on to insure that his use of baptism would not be misunderstood. We read, "not the removal of dirt from the flesh." This recalls the need to keep in mind that the external washing involved in Christian baptism was not the key issue. The association of water baptism with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, whether anticipated by John the Baptist ("I baptize you in water for repentance; but He who is coming after me . . . will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire," Matt 3:11) or administered as such in the early church (for example, Acts 10:44-48), makes it clear that the water rite could not be rightly thought of in isolation from a divinely oriented and empowered lifestyle.

There is also a positively stated element within this qualification of baptism. It is translated, "but an appeal ($\acute{\epsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho\acute{\omega}\tau\eta\mu\alpha$) to God for a good conscience." There are three possible meanings for the word $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho\acute{\omega}\tau\eta\mu\alpha$:⁸⁹ 1) "question," "inquiry," "interrogation," which does not seem to fit in this context, 2) "prayer," "appeal," which is the translation given in NASB, and 3) "pledge," "undertaking," which is

⁸⁷Ibid., 185.

⁸⁸K. S. Wuest, *First Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942) 108-9.

⁸⁹Hill, "I Peter," 187.

supported by papyrological evidence. If the third meaning is accepted, the translation would be something like "but is a pledge of good will to God."⁹⁰ Hill concludes:

. . . ἐπερώτημα will be interpreted as a response or assent to a covenant obligation, an agreement to maintain righteousness, through obedience, in the future. . . . The characterisation of baptism in 3:21 would then be as follows: not so much the abandonment of the moral failures of the pre-Christian life as a firm response to God, a commitment to maintain before the world an upright life of which one need not be ashamed.⁹¹

This discussion of 1 Pet 3:21 provides a fitting conclusion to our analysis of the NT doctrine of baptism. Even in passages which are based upon the analogical use of baptism, the purpose for referring to baptism is to reinforce the demand for the kind of lifestyle that is appropriate for one who is a disciple of Christ.

SUMMARY

The background of water lustrations in general, and baptism, in particular, has been studied. This has been done in order to attempt to recreate the ideological framework for a better understanding of baptism's meaning, implications, and associations during the days of John the Baptist, our Lord, and the beginnings of the church age.

Baptism had affinities with the quasi-physical cleansings of Judaism and retained the impact of that. Yet, that cleansings and baptisms were not to be considered effective before God without the accompanying genuine repentance was taught by the Qumranians and John the Baptist. Furthermore, it is manifestly clear that baptism was inextricably bound to discipleship. It did not just point to the washing away of sins (Acts 22:16) and repentance (Acts 2:38), but it forcefully demonstrated that the person undergoing the baptism was willing to stand for Christ and live for him (John 4:1, Matt 28:19, etc.). Baptism had a forward look. It was a rite of commitment and dedication. It was not only a demonstration of faith but a promise of faithfulness.

Since baptism was naturally a part of every Christian's initiation, it was common to all. Therefore, it could be referred to in illustrative, metaphorical, or analogical ways. In this manner, it was used by the apostles Paul and Peter in parenetically and polemically oriented

⁹⁰B. Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1964) 106.

⁹¹Hill, "1 Peter," 188-89.

situations. These passages, however, still tend to reflect the fact that the basic idea behind baptism as a Christian initiatory rite had to do with its implications for discipleship.

CONCLUSION

There is nothing more important in this life than one's relationship to the Lord. It was Christ who said "no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Luke 14:33). Christ must occupy first place if one is to be properly called a "disciple." What, then, are the implications of the fact that baptism was both part of the initiation of every believer and directly connected with discipleship commitment? Obviously, they did not, and in fact, could not conceive of someone expressing saving faith in Christ without a corresponding commitment of faithfulness toward him as one of his disciples.

The contemporary church might do well to recognize that the early church in the book of Acts associated baptism with commitment. Surely, salvation was by grace through faith. But the kind of faith that saved was not passive. It was active and drove a person toward commitment and faithfulness. The true (universal) church was made up of people with that kind of faith. The local church strove for that kind of membership as is demonstrated by the ideology behind water baptism and the association of water baptism with Spirit baptism.

God wants local churches that are committed to doing his will. Such a church can only exist when it is made up of *believers* that are *committed* to doing his will. A proper understanding and administration of water baptism can be useful as a means of demonstrating the central importance of discipleship commitment in salvation and local church membership.