

Dead to Sin, Alive to God Pt 2

Romans 6:1–6

Romans 6:1–6 (NKJV)

6 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Introduction:

Last time we looked at this passage, we pointed out that there is a very clear distinction between the believer and the unbeliever in relation to Sin.

The Believer is a new Creation in Christ and old things are past away and all things become new.

This is not due to a change of the will, but rather a change of the nature.

The Believer is not just white knuckling it an determining to be a better person by sheer force of the will.

He is different because his nature has changed. He has a new mind, a new heart, eyes that see, ears that hear. His passion has changed, his wants are different and what he hates is different. His attitude toward is not love but rather repentance.

He is a Jesus indicates in Matthew 5

Matthew 5:2–10 (ESV)

The Beatitudes

2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Believer is not a reformed person, but rather a renewed person. He is not dead, but alive to God.

The N.T. Teaches that regeneration brings radical change. And it brings Permanent Change.

However, there are those that do not affirm this. They believe that you can live in constance unrepentant sin and still be a believer. That you can trust Jesus as Savior and NOT Lord.

OR

You can trust Jesus as Savior and defer till later to submit to him as Lord.

For those who affirm this position, many believe in a doctrine called

“The Carnal Christian”

This is the belief that the person is a believer who has trusted Jesus as Savior but may have only temporarily repented of sin or not at all, and is living in sinful disobedience.

He is different that the the obedient Christian
He is the Carnal Christian.

RC Sproul stated it like this,

“The Holy Spirit can come into a person and save a person without changing that person. The change could be second stage where the Christ is placed on the throne of the soul.”

- John MacArthur,

Contemporary theologians have fabricated an entire category for this type of person – the “carnal Christian.” Who knows how many unregenerate persons have been lulled into a false sense of spiritual security by the suggestion that they are merely carnal? Christians can and do behave in carnal ways, but nothing in Scripture

suggests that a real Christian might pursue a life-style of unbroken indifference or antagonism toward the things of God. Christians do not masquerade as children of the devil. The very reverse is true; Satan pretends to be an angel of light, and his servants imitate the children of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

The Gospel According to Jesus p. 129.

John MacArthur

There was a definition of a Christian as a Carnal Christian, as if that was a permanent condition. The people in the Church used to teach that there were three kinds of people, Natural, Carnal, and Spiritual. And they would define the Natural person as unregenerate, unsaved, self on the throne, life in chaos, and sin everywhere.

Then there is the Carnal person. What's that? That's the Christian who still has self on the throne. Christ is still in there somewhere, running around, but He is not in charge, and the life is still in chaos. So the only difference between a natural and a carnal person is that Christ is in there somewhere, but the life hasn't changed.

And then thirdly, there is the Spiritual Christian. Self is off the throne, Christ is on it, and the life is all in order. And so people came up with the idea that you could be either a Carnal Christian or a Spiritual

Christian. You know, once you are saved you could say, "Well, I am going to stay a Carnal Christian, I like it better."

1 Corinthians 3:1–4 (NKJV)

3 And I, brethren, could not speak to you **as** to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to **babes** in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; ³ for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I *am* of Apollos," are you not carnal?

as 5613. ὡς hōs; adv. from 3739; *as, like as, even as, when, since, as long as*:—about(20), according(2), affected(1), after(2), **appear*(1), appeared(1)**

Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

babes 3516. νήπιος nēpios; of unc. or.; *an infant, fig. a simple-minded or immature person*:—child(5), childish(1), children(2), immature(1), infant(1), infants(4)

Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

1 Corinthians 3:1–4 (ESV)

3 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. **2** I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, **3** for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? **4** For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?

Review:

6 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

I. The Anticipated Question

II. The Absolute Answer.

I. The Anticipated Question

6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτία, ἵνα ἡ χάρις πλεονάσῃ;

6:1 What shall we say then?

Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν FAI 3S

What then shall we be saying

What shall we say then? (τι οὖν ἐροῦμεν; [*ti oun eroumen?*]). “A debater’s phrase” (Morison). Yes, and an echo of the rabbinical method of question and answer, but also an expression of exultant victory of grace versus sin. But Paul sees the possible perversion of this glorious grace

Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Ro 6:1). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

Shall we continue in sin
ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτία,

epimenó: to stay on PAS 3S

Original Word: ἐπιμένω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: epimenó

Phonetic Spelling: (ep-ee-men'-o)

Usage: (a) I remain, tarry, (b) I remain in, persist in.

1961 **epiménō** (from 1909 /ἐπί, "on, fitting," which intensifies 3306 /ménō, "remain, persist") – properly, continue on with persistence that suits the objective.

John 9:41 (NKJV)

⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.

John 8:31 (NKJV)

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

Present active deliberative subjunctive of ἐπιμενω [*epimenō*], **old verb to tarry as in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8)** with locative case. The practice of sin as a habit (present tense) is here raised.

Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Ro 6:1). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

Acts 12:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Now Peter **continued** knocking; and when they opened *the door* and saw him, they were astonished.

Colossians 1:23 (NKJV)

²³ if indeed you **continue** in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

1 Timothy 4:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. **Continue** in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin **that grace may**
abound?

Romans 5:20–21 (NKJV)

²⁰ Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where **sin abounded, grace abounded much more,.....**

grace abounded much more,

hyperperisseuó: to abound more exceedingly

Original Word: ὑπερπερισσεύω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: hyperperisseuó

Phonetic Spelling: (hoop-er-per-is-syoo'-o)

Definition: to abound more exceedingly

Usage: (a) intrans: I abound exceedingly, (b) dep: I overflow.

5248 hyperperisseuó (from 5228 /hypér, "beyond" and 4052 /perisseuó, "abundantly, exceeding") – properly, beyond what already exceeds," i.e. ultra (super) abounds. See 5249 (hyperperissōs).

6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin **that grace may abound?**

abound?

pleonazó:, to make to abound

Original Word: πλεονάζω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: pleonazó

Phonetic Spelling: (pleh-on-ad'-zo)

Definition: , to make to abound

Usage: I have more than enough; I abound, increase.

4121 pleonázō (from 4119 /pleiōn, "greater in number") – properly, abounding in number (quantity

We would not sin to make it just abound, not even superabound

² **Certainly not!** How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

² **Certainly not!**

μὴ γένοιτο

Aorist Middle Optative - unreal action
may it not become.

ginomai: to come into being, to happen, to become

Original Word: γίνομαι

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: ginomai

Phonetic Spelling: (ghin'-om-ahee)

Definition: to come into being, to happen, to become

Usage: I come into being, am born, become, come about, happen.

1096 gínomai – properly, to emerge, become, transitioning from one point (realm, condition) to another. **1096** (gínomai) fundamentally means "become" (becoming, became) so it is not an exact equivalent to the ordinary equative verb "to be" (is, was, will be) as with **1510** /eimí (**1511** /éinai, **2258** /ēn).

1096 (ginomai) means "to become, and signifies a change of condition, state or place" (Vine, Unger, White, NT, 109).

M. Vincent, "**1096** (gínomai) means to come into being/manifestation implying motion, movement, or growth" (at 2 Pet 1:4). Thus it is used for God's actions as emerging from eternity and becoming (showing themselves) in time (physical space).

Not at all (*mē genoito*, "Let it not be," a frequent exclamation by Paul; cf. vv. 6, 31; 6:1, 15; 7:7, 13; 11:1, 11)

Witmer, J. A. (1985). [Romans](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 448). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

who

compound of ὅς and τίς, hence, properly, anyone who; i. e.:

1. whoever, everyone who

who died **Aorist Active Ind.**

The Greek aorist (past) tense for "died" suggests a specific point when the action occurred,

Witmer, J. A. (1985). [Romans](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 461). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

599 apothnέskō (from **575** /apó, "**away from,**" which intensifies **2348** /thnéskō, "**to die**") – properly, die off (away from), focusing on the separation that goes with the "**dying off (away from).**" **599** /apothnέskō ("die off, from") occurs 111 times in the NT. **It stresses the significance of the separation that always**

comes with divine closure. 599 (apothnéskō) stresses the ending of what is "former" – to bring what (naturally) follows.

to be apathetic ⇔ be dead v. — to be completely indifferent toward (in feeling, reaction, or response); conceived of as being dead with respect to something.

² Certainly not! How shall we who died **to sin** live any longer in it?

to sin

In what way do we die to sin.

1. we Die to sins rule

Romans 5:21 (NKJV)

²¹ so that as **sin reigned** in death, even so grace might **reign** through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:11–14 (NKJV)

¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be **dead indeed to sin**, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹² Therefore **do not let sin reign** in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

¹⁴ **For sin shall not have dominion over you**, for you are not under law but under grace.

2. we die to sins right

Romans 6:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should **no longer be slaves of sin.** ⁷ For he who has died has been **freed from sin.**

² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin **live any longer in it?**

live **F.A.I**

zaó: to live

Original Word: ζάω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: zaó

Phonetic Spelling: (dzah'-o)

Definition: to live

Usage: I live, am alive.

to live v. — to lead a certain kind of life; live in a certain manner.

any longer

eti: still, yet

Original Word: ἔτι

Part of Speech: Adverb

Transliteration: eti

Phonetic Spelling: (et'-ee)

Definition: still, yet

Usage: (a) of time: still, yet, even now, (b) of degree: even, further, more, in addition.

2089 éti (an adverb) – properly, continue (remain).

1 John 3:9 (NKJV)

9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

Romans 6:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Galatians 2:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no

longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Galatians 6:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Colossians 3:3 (NKJV)

³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

1 Peter 2:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

2 Corinthians 5:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

1 Peter 4:1–3 (NKJV)

4 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. ³ For we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

Romans 6:1–6 (NKJV)

6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

WHEN and HOW?

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus** were **baptized into His death?**

4 Therefore we were **buried with Him** through **baptism into death**, that **just as Christ** was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, **even so we** also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if **we have been united together in the likeness of His death**, certainly **we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection**,

6 knowing this, that our **old man was crucified with Him**, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

8 Now **if we died with Christ**, we believe that **we shall also live with Him**,

3 Or **do you not know** that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus** were **baptized into His death?**

3 η **αγνοείτε** οτι οσοι εβαπτισθημεν εις Χριστον Ιησουν εις τον θανατον αυτου εβαπτισθημεν

Newberry, T., & Berry, G. R. (2004). *The interlinear literal translation of the Greek New Testament* (Ro 6:3). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

do you not know Present Act Indicative
agnoeó: to be ignorant, not to know

Original Word: ἀγνοέω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: agnoeó

Phonetic Spelling: (ag-no-eh'-o)

Definition: to be ignorant, not to know

Usage: I do not know, am ignorant of (a person, thing, or fact), sometimes with the **idea of willful ignorance**.

3 Or do you not know that **as many of us as were baptized** into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

What is Paul talking about?

To understand this we have to understand 2 things

1. We need to know what Paul is NOT talking about

2. What does the Word Mean?

“**were baptized**”

1. This is a dry verse, This is not talking about Water Baptism

There is nothing in this verse that remotely refers to water.

were baptized into Christ Jesus

were baptized into His death?

were buried with Him through baptism into death

we have been united together in the likeness of His death,

in the likeness of His resurrection,

⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*,
⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin.
⁸ Now if we died with Christ,
¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead
indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is alot about being in his death, His
burial, His Resurrection
Being dead, being alive
but no water, It has nothing to do
with water baptism.

2. This is not discussing the Mode of
Baptism i.e. Immersion, sprinkling, or
pouring.

Paul is not arguing for a mode of baptism. If he were, it
would help my position on Baptism by Immersion
immensely. But the best we could do is argue it by
inference,

To read Baptism by immersion into this text or any other mode of baptism is at best eisegesis.
(To be clear, I am convince of the NT Baptism by immersion)

3. This is not teaching Baptismal Regeneration. Or Salvation thru Water Baptism.

Requiring anything in addition to faith in Jesus Christ for salvation is a works-based salvation.

To add anything to the gospel is to say that Jesus' death on the cross was not sufficient to purchase our salvation.

To say that baptism is necessary for salvation is to say we must add our own good works and obedience to Christ's death in order to make it sufficient for salvation.

1. Jesus' death alone paid for our sins

Romans 5:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified

by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

2 Corinthians 5:19–21 (NKJV)

¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2. Jesus' payment for our sins is appropriated to our "account" by faith alone

John 3:16–18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36 (NKJV)

³⁶ He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Acts 16:30–34 (NKJV)

³⁰ And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹ So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

³⁴ Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

Ephesians 2:8–10 (NKJV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,

which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Titus 3:4–7 (NKJV)

⁴ But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

3. Do Some text indicate that Baptism is required for Salvation

Mark 16:15–16 (NKJV)

¹⁵ And He said to them, **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.**

Acts 2:38–41 (NKJV)

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for** the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of

the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.

for better understood as “Because of”

example

Take two aspirin for a headache.

Does not mean

Take two aspirin in order to get a headache

Rather

Take two aspirin because of a headache.

1 Peter 3:18–21 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,
¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,

²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

²¹ There is also an antitype which now saves us—
baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God),
 through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

The Carnal Christian Doctrine

BY JOHN REISINGER

Introduction

Many who regularly occupy church pews, fill church rolls, and are intellectually acquainted with the facts of the gospel never strike one blow for Christ. They seem to be at peace with his enemies. They have no quarrel with sin and, apart from a few sentimental expressions about Christ, there is no biblical evidence that they have experienced anything of the power of the gospel in their lives. Yet in spite of the evidence against them, they consider themselves to be just what their teachers teach them -- that they are 'Carnal Christians'. And as carnal Christians they believe they will go to heaven, though perhaps not first-class, and with few rewards. That something is seriously wrong in lives which reveal such features will readily be admitted by most readers of these pages; no argument is needed to prove it. But the most serious aspect of this situation is too often not recognized at all. The chief mistake is not the carelessness of these church-goers, it is the error of their teachers who, by preaching the theory of 'the carnal Christian', have led them to believe that there are three groups of men, -- the unconverted man, the 'carnal Christian' and the 'spiritual Christian'.

My purpose in this booklet is to argue that this classification is wrong and to set out the positive, historic, and biblical answer to this 'carnal Christian' teaching. The argument from Church history is not unimportant, for it is a fact that less than two- hundred years ago this teaching was unknown in the churches of North America, but I am concerned to rest my case on an honest statement of the teaching of the Bible. I have written after study, private meditation and prayer, and after using many of the old respected commentaries of another day, but my appeal is to the Word of God and it is in the light of that authority that I ask the reader to consider all that follows.

I must also confess that I am writing as one who, for many years, held and taught the teaching which I am now convinced is erroneous and which has many dangerous implications. As one who has deep respect for many who hold this position, I am not going to attack personalities, but to deal with principles, and with the interpretation of the particular passages of Scripture on which the teaching is built.

In matters of controversy it must ever be kept in mind that a Christian's experience may be genuine even though his understanding of divine truth is tainted with error or ignorance. The opposite is also possible -- a man's intellectual understanding may be good and his experience poor. I pray that if I am in error on this or any other doctrine I shall be corrected before I leave this world. I trust I am willing ever to be a learner of divine truth.

I know that one of my motives is the same as that of many who hold this erroneous view, namely, to advance biblical holiness and to seek to 'adorn the doctrine of God our Savior'.

To accomplish my purpose it is of the greatest importance that the whole subject should be set on a proper foundation. I do not want to make a caricature of the view of others and then demonstrate success by tearing it apart. I shall also seek to avoid disproportionate and one-sided statements. The danger that we may 'darken counsel by words without knowledge' is still with us. I pray that this effort will elicit truth and that the existence of varied opinions will lead us all to search the Scriptures more, to pray more, and to be diligent in our endeavors to learn what is 'the mind of the Spirit'.

My greatest difficulty will be to achieve brevity because this subject is so closely related to, and interwoven with the main doctrine of the Bible, particularly with justification and sanctification, the chief blessings of the new covenant. The subject therefore involves a right understanding of what the gospel really is and what it does to a person when applied efficaciously by the Spirit. Our view of this matter will also affect our judgment of the relationship of the Ten Commandments to the Christian in the area of sanctification, and of the biblical doctrine of assurance.

Some of the fundamental questions which need to be faced are these:

1. Are we sanctified passively, that is, 'by faith' only, without obedience to the law of God and Christ? If sanctification is passive -- a view represented by the slogan 'Let go and let God' -- then how do we understand such apostolic statements as 'I fight', 'I run', 'I keep under my body', 'let us cleanse ourselves', 'let us labor', 'let us lay aside every weight'? Surely these statements do not express a passive condition, nor do they indicate that by one single act we may possess the experience of 'victory' and thus become spiritual and mature Christians.
2. Does an appeal to the so-called 'carnal Christian' to become a 'spiritual Christian' minimize the real conversion experience by magnifying a supposed second experience, by whatever name it may be called -- 'higher life', 'deeper life', 'Spirit-filled life', 'triumphant living', 'receiving Christ as Lord, and not merely as Savior', and so on? The words we read in 2 Corinthians 5:17, 'Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new', do not refer to a second experience but rather to what happens when any real conversion occurs.
3. Has the 'spiritual Christian' finished growing in grace? If not, what is he to be called as he continues to grow in grace? Do we need to make yet another class whose members are the 'super-spiritual Christians'?
4. Who is to decide who the carnal Christians are, and exactly what standard is to be used in determining this? Do the 'spiritual Christians' decide who the 'carnal Christians' are? Does a church or preacher decide where the line is to be drawn that divides the two classes or categories? Since all Christians have sin remaining in them, and since they sin every day, what degree of sin or what particular sins classify a person as a 'carnal Christian'?
5. Do not all Christians sometimes act like natural men in some area of their lives?

6. Do not the inward sins, such as envy, malice, covetousness, lasciviousness (which includes immorality on the mental level) demonstrate carnality as much as do the outward and visible manifestations of certain other sins?

In Romans 8:1-9 there is a division stated, but it is not between carnal and spiritual Christians. It is a division between those who walk after the flesh (the unregenerate) and those who walk after the Spirit (they that are Christ's). There is no third category.

Again, in Galatians 5:17-24 we have only two classes or categories -- those that do the works of the flesh and those that are led by the Spirit. There is no third or fourth class or group.

My purpose, then, in these pages is to contend that the division of Christians into two groups or classes is unbiblical. I want also to show the dangerous implications and present-day results of this teaching.

The interpretation that I will seek to establish is a result of studying the proven and respected commentators of former days, such as, Matthew Henry, Matthew Poole, John Gill, and John Calvin; and theologians such as Charles Hodge (of the old Princeton Seminary), James P. Boyce (founder of the first Southern Baptist Seminary), Robert L. Dabney (the great theologian of old Union Seminary, Virginia) and James H. Thornwell (distinguished Southern theologian who was Professor of Theology at Columbia, South Carolina). I have also examined the writings of John Bunyan and searched the old Confessions and Catechisms, such as The Heidelberg Catechism, and Westminster Confession (that mother of all Confessions), the Baptist Confession of 1689 (The London Confession, later known as the Philadelphia Confession), and the Declaration of Faith of the Southern Baptist Church.

In all these sources there is not one trace of the belief that there are three classes of men. All of them have much to say about carnality in Christians, and about the biblical doctrine of sanctification and its relationship to justification, but there is no hint of the possibility of dividing men into 'unregenerate', 'carnal' and 'spiritual' categories. If the sources I have named had come across the 'carnal Christian' theory, I believe that with one voice they would have warned their readers, 'Be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines' (Hebrews 13: 9).

I confess that I take up my pen in this controversy with deep sorrow. Although the teaching that I wish to expose is so relatively new in the church, it is held by so many fine Christians, and taught by so many able and respected schools of the present day, that I can only approach my present undertaking with caution and anxiety.

We live in a day when there are so many books and such a variety of teaching on the subject of the Christian life that Christians are 'tossed to and fro', and liable to be 'carried about by every wind of doctrine' (Ephesians 4:14). There is also the Athenian love of novelty and a distaste for the old, well-tested, and beaten paths of our forefathers. This excessive love of the new leads to an insatiable craving after any teaching which is sensational and exciting, especially to the feelings. But the old paths lead to a 'meek and quiet spirit' which the apostle Peter commends: 'But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price' (1 Peter 3: 4).

The Issue in Controversy

At a church service that I attended recently, the preacher, a sincere minister, was expounding 1 Corinthians chapter 3, and he said to a large congregation, 'Now after you become a Christian you have another choice -- either to grow in grace, follow the Lord and become a spiritual Christian, or to remain a babe in Christ and live like natural men.' He used 1 Corinthians 3: 1 -- 4 to state that there were three categories of men -- the natural man, the spiritual man, and the carnal man. He described the carnal man as being like the natural man who was unconverted. This is the essence of the 'carnal Christian' teaching. One reason why it is so widespread is that it has been popularized for many years in the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible. A statement

from these notes will indicate the precise nature of the teaching: 'Paul divides men into three classes: "Natural" i.e. the Adamic Man, unrenewed through the new birth; "Spiritual" i.e. the renewed man as Spirit-filled and walking in the Spirit in full communion with God; "Carnal", "fleshly", i.e. the renewed man who, walking "after the flesh", remains a babe in Christ.' (Scofield Reference Bible, pp. 1213, 1214.)

It is very important to observe the two main things in this Scofield note. First, the division of men into three classes; second, we are told that one of these classes of men comprises the 'carnal', the 'fleshly', 'the babe(s) in Christ', 'who walk after the flesh'. To 'walk' implies the bent of their lives; their leaning or bias is in one direction, that is, towards carnality.

We ought not to miss three very salient and important facts about the teaching:

First, we note again that it divides all men into three classes or categories. With this fact none of its proponents disagree, though they may present it differently and apply it differently.

Second, one class or category is set out as containing the 'Christian' who 'walks after the flesh'. The centre of his life is self, and he is the same as the unrenewed man as far as the bent of his life is concerned.

Third, all those who accept this view use 1 Corinthians 3: 1-4 to support it. Consequently, if it can be established that the preponderance of Scripture teaches only two classes or categories of men -- regenerate and unregenerate, converted and unconverted, those in Christ and those outside of Christ -- the 'carnal Christian' teaching would be confronted with an insurmountable objection. It would be in conflict with the whole emphasis of Scripture and of the New Testament in particular.

Before I turn to some of the errors and dangers of the 'carnal Christian' teaching it may be wise to indicate what I am not saying.

In this discussion of the 'carnal Christian' theory I am not overlooking the teaching of the Bible about sin in Christians, about babes in Christ, about growth in grace, about Christians who back-slide grievously, and about the divine chastisement which all Christians receive.

I acknowledge that there are babes in Christ. In fact there are not only babes in Christ, but there are different stages of 'babyhood' in understanding divine truth and in spiritual growth.

I also recognize that there is a sense in which Christians may be said to be carnal but I must add that there are different degrees of carnality. Every Christian is carnal in some area of his life at many times in his life. And in every Christian 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit' (Gal. 5:17).

All the marks of Christianity are not equally apparent in all Christians. Nor are any of these marks manifest to the same degree in every period of any Christian's life. Love, faith, obedience, and devotion will vary in the same Christian in different periods of his Christian experience; in other words, there are many degrees of sanctification.

The Christian's progress in growth is not constant and undisturbed. There are many hills and valleys in the process of sanctification; and there are many stumblings, falls and crooked steps in the process of growth in grace.

There are examples in the Bible of grievous falls and carnality in the lives of true believers. Thus we have the warnings and the promises of temporal judgment and of chastisement by our heavenly Father.

These truths are all acknowledged and are not the point of this present discussion. The question we have to consider is: Does the Bible divide men into three categories? This is the issue at the heart of the 'carnal Christian' teaching.

The teaching that I am opposing involves nine serious errors:

1. The misuse of 1 Corinthians 3

First: This 'carnal Christian' doctrine depends upon a wrong interpretation and application of 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, 'And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto

carnal, even as unto babes in Christ... are ye not carnal?' To understand the true meaning of these words it should be remembered that 1 Corinthians is not primarily a doctrinal epistle. Like all Scripture it contains doctrine, but it was not written -- as was the Epistle to the Romans -- to lay doctrinal foundations. Paul's immediate concern in writing this Epistle was to deal with practical problems in a young church. In the third chapter, and earlier, he is dealing with the danger of division arising out of a wrong esteem for those from whom they heard the gospel. They were looking at second causes and forgetting the God to whom alone all glory belongs. Instead of saying, 'We are Christ's disciples' and recognizing their union in him, they were forming parties and saying, 'We are Paul's for he founded the church in our city'; or 'Apollos is more eloquent than Paul and he edifies us more'; or, 'We are of Peter'. Thus opposing parties were set up.

It is important to see that the whole context is dealing principally with this one problem of unwholesome division. However, it has a common root with all the other problems in 1 Corinthians -- the defrauding of one by another, the disorder at the Lord's Table, and so on. All the problems were the result of carnality, the outcome of that remaining principle of sin in all believers which Paul describes in Romans 7:21-23: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

In endeavoring to understand how Paul thinks of those he addresses in 1 Corinthians 3 we must bear in mind the designation he gives to them in chapter 1. He says they are 'sanctified in Christ Jesus', they are recipients of 'the grace of God', enriched by Christ 'in all utterance, and in all knowledge' (1:2-5). They are rebuked in chapter 3, not for failing to attain to privileges which some Christians attain to, but for acting, despite their privileges, like babes and like the unregenerate in one area of their lives.

This is very different from saying that the Apostle here recognizes the existence of a distinct group of Christians who can be called 'carnal'. When Paul comes to speak of classes, he knows only two, as is clear in chapter 2 of this same Epistle where he divides men into 'natural' and 'spiritual', and says, 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man' (1 Cor. 2:14-15). Under the term natural the Apostle includes all those persons who are not partakers of the Spirit of God. If the Spirit of God has not given to them a new and higher nature then they remain what they are by their natural birth, namely, natural men.

The spiritual may be but babes in grace and babes in knowledge. Their faith may be weak. Their love may be in its early bud, their spiritual senses may be but little exercised, their faults may be many; but if 'the root of the matter' is in them and if they have passed from death unto life -- passed out of the region of nature into that which is beyond nature -- Paul puts them in another class. They are all spiritual men although in some aspects of their behavior they may temporarily fail to appear as such.

Certainly these Christians at Corinth were imperfectly sanctified, as indeed are all Christians to a greater or lesser degree. But Paul is not saying that they were characterized by carnality in every area of their lives. He is not expounding a general doctrine of carnality but reproofing a specific out-cropping of carnality in one certain respect. When Paul does state a foundational truth respecting the position of all Christians it is in such words as, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature', and for all who are 'in Christ' it is also true that, 'old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new' (2 Cor. 5:17). There is no place for two classes of Christians in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, and indeed no place for it anywhere in the teaching of Scripture. To interpret 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 in such a way as to divide men into three classes is to

violate a cardinal rule for the interpretation of Scripture, namely, that each single passage must be interpreted in the light of the whole. It was a wise saying of one of the church fathers, 'If you have one Scripture only on which to base an important doctrine or teaching you are most likely to find, on close examination, that you have none'.

2. New covenant blessings are separated

Second: The 'carnal Christian' teaching divides the two basic blessings of the new covenant because it denies that one of them is experienced by all true Christians. Let me point out how basic the covenant is to Christianity. Jesus was the mediator of the new covenant -- Hebrews 8:6-10: 'But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises'. The New Testament preachers were ministers of the new covenant -- 1 Corinthians 3:5, 6: 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament (A.S.V. new covenant); not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.'

Every time we come to the Lord's table we are reminded of the blessings of the new covenant -- Luke 22: 20, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood...'

These facts are enough to establish the importance of the new covenant. But what are the two blessings of the new covenant? The answer is clearly seen in many scriptural statements:

'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ... I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more'(Jeremiah 31:31-34).

'For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them' (Ezekiel. 36: 24-27).

'Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more' (Hebrews 10:15-17).

It is important to note that this is one covenant with two inseparable parts -- the forgiveness of sins and a changed heart. When a sinner is reconciled to God something happens in the record of heaven, the blood of Christ covers his sins. Thus, the first blessing is the forgiveness of sins. But at the same time something happens on earth in the heart, a new nature is given.

From the above Scriptures we also learn that Christ purchased the benefits and blessings of the new covenant. And the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that the gospel which the apostles preached as the gospel of Christ was the gospel of the new covenant. Therefore, whatever else sinners may receive when they are savingly called by the gospel, they must come into the primary blessings of the new covenant, namely, the forgiveness of sins and a new heart.

Well, what is the forgiveness of sins? It is an essential part of the justification of a man before God. And what is a new heart? It is nothing less than sanctification begun. But the 'carnal Christian' teaching appeals to those who are supposed to be justified, as though a new heart and life are optional. Sanctification is spoken of as though it can be subsequent to the forgiveness of sins and so people are led to believe that they are justified even though they are not being sanctified!

The truth is that we have no reason to believe that Christ's blood covers our sins in the record of heaven if the Spirit has not changed our hearts on earth. These two great blessings are joined together in the one covenant. The working of the Spirit and the cleansing of Christ's blood are

inseparably joined in the application of God's salvation. Hence the teaching which calls for an act of submission or surrender (or whatever else it may be called) subsequent to conversion in order that the convert may live the spiritual life, cuts the living nerve of the new covenant. It separates what God has joined together.

3. Saving faith and spurious faith are not distinguished

The third major error is that this teaching does not distinguish between true, saving belief and the spurious belief which is mentioned in the following Scriptures: 'Many believed in his name ... But Jesus did not commit himself to them' John 2:23,24. 'Many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him' John 12:42,43. 'These have no root, which for a while believe' Luke 8:13. Simon Magus 'believed' and was baptized but his heart was 'not right in the sight of God' Acts 8:12-22. In other words, it was 'belief' without a changed heart and because this was Simon's condition Peter says he would perish unless he came to true repentance: he was 'in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity' (vs. 23). And the evidence that Simon Magus was indeed unsaved can be seen in his prayer. He, like all unregenerate people, was only concerned with the consequence of sin and made no request to be pardoned and cleansed from the impurity of sin. 'Pray ye,' he says to Peter, 'to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me'. Like the so-called 'carnal Christian' he wanted Jesus as a kind of hell-insurance policy but he did not ask for deliverance from sin!

In all these scriptural instances men 'believed'; they had 'faith', but it was not saving faith. And all 'carnal Christians' profess their faith but it is not always saving faith.

Charles Hodge, following the Scriptures, makes a clear distinction between the different kinds of faith, (1) Speculative or dead faith, (2) temporary faith, (3) saving faith.' Robert Dabney differentiates, (1) Temporary faith, (2) historical faith, (3) miraculous faith, (4) saving faith.' The 'carnal Christian' teaching makes no allowance for these distinctions, it gives little or no recognition to the possibility of a spurious belief, instead it implies or assumes that all who say they 'invite Jesus into their lives' are in possession of saving faith. If these professing believers do not live and act like Christians, their teachers may well say that it is because they are not 'spiritual Christians'. The fact is they may not be true believers at all!

4. The omission of repentance

A fourth flaw in the 'carnal Christian' teaching lies in its virtual exclusion of repentance from the conversion experience. This is implied by the suggestion that the 'carnal Christian' has not changed in practice but lives and acts just like the natural man. This teaching is obviously set forth in the diagram given above where self is still on the throne in the case of those in the second group. But thus to suggest that repentance, including a changed attitude to sin, is not an essential part of conversion is a very grave error. It is to depart from the apostolic gospel. No one who so minimizes the necessity of repentance can say with Paul, 'I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 20: 20, 21).

John Cotton, one of the Puritan leaders of New England, was right when he wrote: 'There is none under a covenant of grace that dare allow himself in any sin; for if a man should negligently commit any sin, the Lord will school him thoroughly and make him sadly to apprehend how he has made bold with the treasures of the grace of God. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid: None that has a portion in the grace of God dareth therefore allow himself in sin; but if through strength of temptation he be at any time carried aside, it is his greatest burden'.

5. Wrong teaching on assurance

In the fifth place the three-class theory is prone to give assurance to those who were never really converted. When a person professes to belong to Christ and yet lives like the world, how

do we know that his profession is genuine? How do we know it is not genuine? We don't! There are always two possibilities: he may be a true Christian in a condition of back-sliding, or it is quite possible he was never savingly united to Christ. Only God knows. Therefore when we speak of a back-slider two errors must be avoided: (1) Saying unequivocally that he is not a Christian; (2) Saying unequivocally that he is a Christian. The fact is that we do not know, we cannot know

The Bible certainly teaches that to make men consider they are Christians when in reality they are not is a great evil, and insofar as the 'carnal Christian' theory allows for a whole category of 'Christians' whose hearts are not surrendered in obedience to Christ, its tendency is to promote that very evil. Nothing could be more dangerous. Lost, self-deceived souls who should be crying out to God for that supernatural change which is made known to themselves and to the world by a changed heart and life are often found hiding comfortably behind this very theory. As long as they believe it they will never seek a real salvation. Although they profess to hold evangelical truth their position is far worse than that of natural men who know that they are not converted! The 'carnal Christian' teaching ignores much biblical teaching on the doctrine of assurance, especially those Scriptures which show that Christian character and conduct have a bearing on our assurance. The short First Epistle of John was written in order that those who believe may know that they have eternal life; that is, may know that they are born of God (5:13). Throughout the Epistle John stresses the marks that accompany the new birth (3:9; 5:18). He shows that a man born again is not at home in the realm of sin, and that disobedience to God's commandments cannot be the bent of a Christian's life, as the 'carnal Christian' teaching would lead us to believe. 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (5:4). 'And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him (2:3-5).

From such texts it is clear that obedience is intimately related to assurance; if we do not live and practice righteousness we have no reason to think that we are 'born of God'.

Again, Jesus said, 'If you love me, keep my commandments,' (John 15:10) not, 'To be a spiritual Christian keep my commandments', for obedience is for all disciples. 'Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord' (Hebrews 12:14). 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him' (Hebrews 5:8, 9). 'But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy'(1 Peter 1:15, 16).

The Bible makes it crystal clear that there is a close relationship between assurance and obedience; but the 'carnal Christian' teaching gives assurance to those who are at home in the realm of sin. They are classed as Christians. Many times this is a false and damning assurance because such have no biblical reason to believe that they are Christians at all.

6. A low view of sin.

Sixth: The fruits of this teaching are not new to Christianity even though the teaching appears on the present scene under a new mask. It is the old doctrine of Antinomianism. Paul attacks this in Romans 6:1, 2 when he asks, 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid...' By implication, the answer of the three-category teaching to Paul's question is, 'Yes, you can continue in sin and be a carnal Christian'. And that is Antinomianism!

7. A second work-of-grace made necessary

Seventh: 'carnal Christian' teaching is the mother of many second work-of-grace errors in that it depreciates the biblical conversion experience by implying that the change in the converted

sinner may amount to little or nothing. It goes on to say that the important change which affects a man's character and conduct is the second step which makes him a 'spiritual Christian'.

8. A wrong view of Christ

Eighth: The 'carnal Christian' teaching is also the mother of one of the most soul-destroying teachings of our day. It suggests that you can take Jesus as your Savior and yet treat obedience to his lordship as optional. How often is the appeal made to the so-called 'carnal Christians' to put Jesus on the throne and 'make him Lord'! When they accept Jesus as Lord, they are told, they will cease to be 'carnal Christians'. But such teaching is foreign to the New Testament.

When our Lord appeared in human form in history the angel announced his coming in the words, 'For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord' (Luke 2:11). He cannot be divided. The Savior and Lord are one. When the apostles preached they proclaimed Christ to be Lord. To bow to his rule was never presented in the Bible as a second step of consecration. 'For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake' (2 Corinthians 4:5).

When sinners truly receive him they do receive him as Lord. 'As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him' (Colossians 2:6).

Matthew Henry, in his Introduction to the Gospel according to Matthew said: 'All the grace contained in this book is owing to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior; and, unless we consent to him as our Lord we cannot expect any benefit by him as our Savior.'

Charles Haddon Spurgeon warned his students: 'If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows the Lord's will but does not mean to attend to it, you are not to pamper his presumption, but it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved. Do not suppose that the Gospel is magnified or God glorified by going to the worldlings and telling them that they may be saved at this moment by simply accepting Christ as their Savior, while they are wedded to their idols, and their hearts are still in love with sin. If I do so I tell them a lie, pervert the Gospel, insult Christ, and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.'

It is vital in this connection to notice how the apostles preached the lordship of Christ. The word 'Savior' occurs only twice in the Acts of the Apostles (5:31; 13:23), on the other hand the title 'Lord' is mentioned 92 times, 'Lord Jesus' 13 times, and 'The Lord Jesus Christ' 6 times in the same book! The gospel is: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.'

It is the 'carnal Christian' teaching that has given rise to this erroneous teaching of the divided Christ. When Peter preached what we might call the first sermon after our Lord's ascension he made it abundantly clear that we do not make Christ Lord at all: 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ' (Acts 2:36). God has made him Lord! 'For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord of the dead and living' (Romans 14: 9). And the same grace which saves brings sinners to recognize this. But the three-category teaching invites 'carnal Christians' to make Christ Lord and thus become spiritual Christians. Again, we see that this is treating our acceptance of his lordship as something additional to salvation, when, in fact, recognition of him as Lord is an integral and necessary part of conversion. A. A. Hodge has written:

'You cannot take Christ for justification unless you take him for sanctification. Think of the sinner coming to Christ and saying, "I do not want to be holy;" "I do not want to be saved from sin;" "I would like to be saved in my sins;" "Do not sanctify me now, but justify me now." What would be the answer? Could he be accepted by God? You can no more separate justification from sanctification than you can separate the circulation of the blood from the inhalation of the air. Breathing and circulation are two different things, but you cannot have the one without the other; they go together, and they constitute one life. So you have justification and sanctification; they go together, and they constitute

one life. If there was ever one who attempted to receive Christ with justification and not with sanctification, he missed it, thank God! He was no more justified than he was sanctified."

9. False spirituality

Ninth: This teaching breeds Pharisaism in the so-called 'spiritual Christians' who have measured up to some man-made standard of spirituality. There ought to be no professed 'spiritual Christians', much less 'super-spiritual' ones! George Whitefield, a man who lived very close to his Savior, prayed all his days, 'Let me begin to be a Christian'. And another Christian has truly said: 'In the life of the most perfect Christian there is every day renewed occasion for self-aborrence, for repentance, for renewed application to the blood of Christ, for application of the rekindling of the Holy Spirit'.

Conclusion

The effect of believing the truth set out in these pages ought to be that we long to see more true evangelism.

The 'carnal Christian' teaching is, after all, the consequence of a shallow, man-centered evangelism in which decisions are sought at any price and with any methods. When those pronounced to be converts do not act like Christians, do not love what Christians love, and hate what Christians hate, and do not willingly serve Christ in his church, some explanation must be found other than calling upon them to 'decide' for Christ. They have already done that and have already been pronounced by the preacher or personal worker to be 'Christians'. But when they don't act like Christians something is wrong. What is it? The teaching I have sought to answer says that the trouble is that they are just 'carnal Christians'; they have not made Christ 'Lord' of their lives; they have not let him occupy the throne of their hearts. Once this explanation is seen to be unscriptural it will also be seen to be closely connected with an initial error over evangelism itself. Too often, modern evangelism has substituted a 'decision' in the place of repentance and saving faith. Forgiveness is preached without the equally important truth that the Spirit of God must change the heart. As a result decisions are treated as conversions even though there is no evidence of a supernatural work of God in the life.

Surely the best way to end this evil is to pray and labor for the restoration of New Testament evangelism! Whenever such evangelism exists it is certain that men will learn that it is not enough to profess to be a Christian, and not enough to call Jesus 'Lord, Lord' (Luke 6:46). The gospel preached in awakening power will summon men not to rest without biblical evidence that they are born of God. It will disturb those who, without good reason, have believed that they are already Christians. It will arouse backsliders by telling them that as long as they remain in that condition the possibility exists that they never were genuine believers at all. And to understand this will bring new depths of compassion and urgency to the hearts of God's people in this fallen world.

One of the greatest hindrances to the recovery of such preaching is the theory we have considered. To reject that theory is to be brought back to a new starting-point in evangelism and in the understanding of the Christian life. It is to bring God's work into the center of our thinking. It is to see afresh that there are only two alternatives -- the natural life or the spiritual life, the broad way or the narrow way, the gospel 'in word only' or the gospel 'in power and in the Holy Ghost' (1 Thessalonians 1:5), the house on the sand or the house on the rock.

There is no surer certainty than the fact that an unchanged heart and a worldly life will bring men to hell. 'Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience' (Ephesians 5: 6)

John MacArthur

The Carnal Christian – a study of 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

Sam Storms <http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/the-carnal-christian-study-of-1-corinthians-31-3/>

“But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?” (ESV)

Why is it, in view of the staggering claim of so many millions of people in America to having been born again, that so high a number are manifestly indistinguishable from their professedly non-Christian neighbors?

The answer that has come from traditional evangelical circles is that they are carnal. As carnal Christians they are truly born again, but have, are, and may well continue to live as if nothing spiritual had ever occurred in their lives. They are assured and thus they believe that heaven is their destiny, although their arrival may well be celebrated with less fanfare than the more successful Christian.

This answer to the question posed has elicited no small response among a number of concerned Christian men and women. Sensing that in reality these people are not carnal but unsaved, their concern is understandable. One such man has written:

“The Bible certainly teaches that to make men consider they are Christians when in reality they are not is a great evil, and insofar as the „carnal Christian theory allows for a whole category of „Christians” whose hearts are not surrendered in obedience to Christ, its tendency is to promote that very evil. Nothing could be more dangerous. Lost, self-deceived souls who should be crying out to God for that supernatural change which is made known to themselves and to the world by a changed heart and life are often found hiding comfortably behind this very theory” (Ernest C. Reisinger, What Should We Think of “The Carnal Christian”? [The Banner of Truth Trust], p. 17).

I share this man’s concern and his analysis of the situation may be more accurate than not, but I question the tendency among such people who, on account of the abuse to which the concept has been subjected, reject out of hand the doctrine and reality of the carnal Christian. Some have become so extreme in their reaction to what is truly a disheartening situation, that they now insist “carnal” and “Christian” are mutually exclusive terms, wholly contradictory one to the other. Such, I believe, is an over-reaction to a justified concern.

Therefore, my purpose is to ask and answer this question: “Is there such a thing as a carnal Christian?” If so, what exactly does it mean? Is it a condition in which a genuine Christian may persist throughout his/her earthly life? Is it one among several categories or classes into which Christians may be placed? Is it the answer to the inconsistency noted above, in which we see a massive profession of faith on the part of the American public together with equally massive spiritual impotence? The answer to these questions is found, at least in part, in 1 Corinthians 3:1- 3.

Some Important Distinctions

I’ll begin by noting what appears to be incontrovertible evidence that the apostle Paul recognized distinctions among Christians owing to the various stages of sanctification. For example, we read in 1 Cor. 2:6 – “Yet among the mature (teleios) we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.” Again in 1 Cor. 14:20 Paul writes of the “mature” (teleios) believer. So too in Philippians 3:15, where the idea is explicit, notwithstanding the inaccuracy of the NASB translation of teleios as “perfect”. The text reads – “Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.” Note that Paul

writes “as many (hosoi) as are mature,” implying that not all are at the same level of Christian development. A clear distinction is drawn between those who are and those who are not “mature”.

Hebrews 5:13-14 confirms Paul’s point, for there we read that solid food is for the mature (teleios), who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Thus, at minimum there is a valid biblical distinction between mature and immature Christians. This may be taken a step further by noting Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 2:14-15 – “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.” Here are contrasted the “natural” man and the “spiritual” man. All agree that the “natural” man is unsaved, but does the “spiritual” man refer to all Christians irrespective of their maturity in the faith, or is it synonymous with “mature” as found in 1 Cor. 2:6? The latter would seem to be the case, and for two reasons. First, Paul says that the “spiritual” man is characterized by profound perception and insight which he subsumes under the

idea of discernment or appraisal. A comparison with Hebrews 5:13-14 reveals that the author identifies the essence of maturity with discernment. Discernment and spiritual insight are the result of the exercise and use of spiritual faculties, such that can only come with time, growth, and experience. Second, in 1 Cor. 3:1, the babe in Christ is contrasted with the spiritual Christian, thus prohibiting their being identical.

One final text which confirms yet again the point at issue is Galatians 6:1 – “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual [here the word is pneumatikoi] should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.” Again, some believers are clearly “more spiritual”, i.e., more mature, than others.

To sum up: it seems best that we understand Paul to be saying that there are those in a Christian community who may be called, in distinction from others, “mature” or “spiritual”. Of course, in one sense all Christians are “spiritual” insofar as all are indwelt by the Spirit of God (cf. Romans 8:9). It appears, however, that Paul uses the word “spiritual” in 1 Cor. 2 and 3 in a more restrictive sense as descriptive of those Christians who manifest a decidedly higher degree of the Spirit’s working in their lives.

As we look more closely at 1 Cor. 3:1-3 several factors are to be noted.

(1) As is his usual practice Paul introduces his words of rebuke with the affectionate “brothers”.

(2) The phrase, “But I . . . could not address you as spiritual [the same Greek word as found in Gal. 6:1] people,” most likely refers to the days of his mission in Corinth when Paul first preached the gospel and remained to instruct the newly saved.

(3) He says that during the early stages of their Christian life he could not speak to them as to spiritual or mature Christians but as to “men of flesh” or “carnal” or “fleshy ones”. Note well that he does not say as to “natural” men, as if to suggest they were not saved, but as to “fleshy” men. But even the word “fleshy” or “carnal” might inadvertently seem harsh. So Paul wisely qualifies it by the phrase “babes in Christ.” As Godet put it, “The Spirit is there, but He has not yet taken a decided preponderance over the instincts of the flesh” (Commentary on 1 Corinthians, p. 165). Calvin concurs and points out that Paul “does not mean that they were completely carnal, without even a spark of the Spirit of God, but that they were still much too full of the mind of the flesh, so that the flesh prevailed over the spirit, and, as it were, extinguished His light” (The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, p. 65). A closer look at Paul’s terminology is in order. In v. 1 and again in v. 3 he speaks of the Corinthians as “of the flesh” or “carnal”, but the words are different. In v. 1 “men of

flesh” (NASB), “carnal” (KJV), “worldly” (NIV), “people of the flesh” (ESV) is the Greek word *sarkinos*. The word in v. 3 translated “fleshly” (NASB), “carnal” (KJV), “worldly” (NIV), “of the flesh” (ESV) is *sarkikos*. One can readily see that whereas the former ends in –inos the latter ends in –ikos. This may well be only a stylistic variation, on which no significant theological conclusions should be based.

Others, however, are quick to argue that something significant is in view (see Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, n. 1, p. 121; also pp. 122-27; Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 292-93; see also the discussion by Garland, p. 109). They point out that words ending in –inos generally denote a material relation, i.e., they denote the stuff of which anything is made. Thus in 2 Cor. 3:3 Paul contrasts “tablets made of stone” with “tablets made of flesh” (*sarkinos*), a reference to the heart. They suggest that we translate this word “fleshy” or “fleshen”. On the other hand, if words ending in –inos denote a material relation, words ending in –ikos denote an ethical relation and mean characterized by the flesh, actuated by low motives, and may be translated “fleshly”. If there is significance in this change of words (and I’m more than a little suspicious that there is), it is that in 3:1 Paul does not rebuke them for being “of flesh”, for as new Christians little more could be expected. But he does blame them in 3:3 for allowing the “flesh” to work actively in them as a ruling principle.

(4) It would appear that in 3:1 Paul is not finding anything amiss in the Corinthians at that stage of their Christian lives. It is normal for those who only recently converted to Christ to be “babes”. They cannot as yet be mature or spiritual. They must be carnal. There is, then, a sense in which a Christian can be called “carnal” and it not be a bad thing. It simply refers to the condition of a newly converted soul. Furthermore, it is apparent that Paul, in using the phrase “babes in Christ”, intended to teach us something from the analogy with physical growth and development, namely, that spiritual immaturity in a new believer is no more to be blamed or faulted than physical immaturity in a newly born infant. But both should grow. This helps in understanding the statement in v. 2 concerning “milk” and “meat”. Some see here a reference to the matter, or substance, of preaching while others focus on the manner, or style, of preaching. Probably both are in view. A baby is human, but we do not converse with it as we do with a college graduate. A new born (and hence, by necessity, carnal) Christian is a Christian, but Paul did not converse with him/her in the same way he would with a mature believer. What is clear is that through the first half of v. 2 Paul is not rebuking the Corinthians. This will soon change.

(5) Whereas it was very well for the Corinthians to have been in the position of babes when they actually were babes, they ought by now to have made progress. The phrase “and even now you are not yet ready” (v. 2b) is quite emphatic and changes the tone of the paragraph. Now rebuke is warranted, for they had ample time and opportunity to develop and progress out of Christian infancy and carnality but had failed to do so. That Paul still had to feed them with milk, mere baby food, is indicative of arrested development: they had failed to advance beyond a state of spiritual infancy.

An illustration might help. Most churches have tiny chairs suitable for young children. Often people stop and comment on how cute it is for the little ones to be sitting in their miniature chairs at their equally miniature tables. But for adults to be caught sitting in such chairs would be singularly inappropriate. The Corinthians were just such a people. The time has long since passed for such behavior. Paul’s point, then, is that it is understandable for new Christians, babes in Christ, to be *sarkinos* or fleshy. But *sarkikos*, or characterized and actuated by the flesh, when predicated of those who had been Christians for some time, is

blameworthy and inexcusable. The mature believer is “spiritual” (pneumatikos), characterized and actuated by the

Spirit. To be characterized by the flesh, as the Corinthians were, is the very opposite of what a Christian should be. Carnality, when present in a Christian of years, is indescribably offensive and unacceptable in the eyes of God.

The specific nature of their carnality, or the visible evidence that they were truly sarkikos, was the persistent problem of envy and strife in their congregation. Paul has in view their tendency to align themselves with one teacher or leader in a spirit of arrogance and exclusivity. This point should not be overlooked, for Paul speaks well of the Corinthians in 1:4-9. In other words, we are not to think of the Corinthians as wholly indistinguishable from their pagan neighbors, as if their lives were entirely “fleshly”. Rather, the problem of carnality focused on one specific transgression: “For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, „I follow Paul,“ and another, „I follow Apollos,“ are you not being merely human?” (vv. 3-4).

Concluding Observations

From what has been seen, we may now draw four conclusions.

First, there are two senses in which a Christian can be spoken of as “carnal”. (1) As new converts, all Christians are to varying degrees carnal. (2) Among long-time Christians, some may be. The former is expected. The latter is not. However, insofar as the word “carnal” has come to have such negative connotations, it would be wise for us to forego calling new Christians “carnal”, and do as Paul: refer to them as “babes” in Christ.

We are still left with the fact that Paul refers to the Corinthians, by way of rebuke, as carnal. The use to which Paul puts the word in v. 3 should not be rejected, for it is clearly biblical and appropriate as a descriptive term for those Christians who fall into a similar pattern of behavior. So I see no reason to be disturbed that someone would distinguish between “carnal” Christians and “spiritual” Christians, especially in view of the obvious distinction between “mature” and “immature” found elsewhere in the NT.

Second, I caution against referring to “carnal” and “spiritual” as rigid categories or classes of Christians. The idea of a distinctive class or category implies a strict line of demarcation between one group of believers and another. It suggests there are readily identifiable stages in the Christian life into which one may enter if certain things are done or out of which one may fall if other things are done. Sanctification, however, is far too fluid for such strict categorization. In other words, sanctification is a process which, because of its constantly dynamic and progressive nature, defies rigid classifications. There are “babes” in Christ, as Paul indicates, but no two Christians are ever at the same stage of spiritual infancy. There are “carnal” Christians, but again in varying degree. No two Christians manifest the same depth or degree of carnality. There are “spiritual” or “mature” believers, but all the marks or fruits of spirituality are not apparent in all Christians at the same time and to the same extent. No individual’s spiritual growth is wholly constant and undisturbed and you will rarely, if ever, find any two Christians at precisely the same stage of sanctification. There are countless hills and valleys, stumblings, falls, moments of victory and defeat in the process of our growth in grace.

Carnality, then, although ideally a condition to be found only in the newly saved, is such that may raise its ugly head at any and every stage of the Christian life. Thus, it may be more accurate to say that there are as many categories and classes of Christians as there are individual believers. The principle which bears repeating is this: carnality and spirituality, rather than being categories or classes into which one enters in the Christian life, are

characteristics or moral tendencies which one manifests in varying degree throughout the course of the Christian life. The ideal as set forth in Scripture is, of course, a progression that is always upward – away from manifestations of carnality and toward manifestations of maturity.

Third, carnality in the Christian, whenever and in whatever way it manifests itself, is a temporary condition. There is no basis in Scripture for the teaching that genuinely born again and justified Christians can persist, without great discomfort, in their sin (a discomfort, I might add, due to the promptings of the Holy Spirit or the chastisement of the Father, such as lead to repentance). Samuel Bolton put it well:

“We still have the presence of sin, nay, the stirrings and workings of corruptions. These make us to have many a sad heart and wet eye. Yet Christ has thus far freed us from sin; it shall not have dominion. There may be the turbulence, but not the prevalence of sin. There may be the stirrings of corruption. It was said of Carthage that Rome was more troubled with it when half destroyed than when whole. So a godly man may be more troubled with sin when it is conquered than when it reigned. Sin will still work, but it is checked in its workings. They are rather workings for life than from life. They are not such uncontrolled workings as formerly. Sin is under command. Indeed, it may get advantage, and may have a tyranny in the soul, but it will never more be sovereign. I say, it may get into the throne of the heart and play the tyrant in this or that particular act of sin, but shall never more be as a king there. Its reign is over; you will never yield a voluntary obedience to sin. Sin is conquered, though it still has a being within you” (The True Bounds of Christian Freedom [Banner of Truth], p. 26).

Fourth, our consideration of this issue must never result in an unbiblical separation of sanctification from justification. Holiness and a progressively changed life are not optional. “By this we know that we have come to know him,” says John, “if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3). Mere profession of faith, unattended by good works, does not guarantee the reality of faith. We would do well to remember the rebuke of Jesus to those who professed their loyalty and cited their miraculous deeds: “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness” (Mt. 7:23).

The following "Question" was asked by a member of the congregation at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, and "Answered" by their pastor, John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 70-9, titled "Questions and Answers" -- A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412 or by dialing toll free 1-800-55-GRACE. Copyright 2001 by John MacArthur Jr., All Rights Reserved.

Question

"Is there such a thing as a Carnal Christian?"

John MacArthur <http://www.biblebb.com/files/macqa/70-9-8.htm> Answer

Yes, in fact, there is no such thing as a Christian who is not at times carnal. Did you get that? And if you're saying to yourself, "I have never been carnal," then, "God have mercy on you."

But let me tell you what people mean by that. There was a definition of a Christian as a Carnal Christian, as if that was a permanent condition. The people in the Church used to teach that there were three kinds of people, Natural, Carnal, and Spiritual. And they would define the Natural person as unregenerate, unsaved, self on the throne, life in chaos, and sin everywhere.

Then there is the Carnal person. What's that? That's the Christian who still has self on the throne. Christ is still in there somewhere, running around, but He is not in charge, and the

life is still in chaos. So the only difference between a natural and a carnal person is that Christ is in there somewhere, but the life hasn't changed.

And then thirdly, there is the Spiritual Christian. Self is off the throne, Christ is on it, and the life is all in order. And so people came up with the idea that you could be either a Carnal Christian or a Spiritual Christian. You know, once you are saved you could say, "Well, I am going to stay a Carnal Christian, I like it better."

And that brings in this whole idea of Lordship, because those are the people who accepted Jesus as Savior, but not as Lord. Those are the people who said, "I don't want to go to Hell, and I want you to save me from Hell and I want you to forgive my sins, but I just don't want you to run my life."

And the old definition of a Carnal Christian was a person who believed in Jesus for salvation, but didn't let Him be Lord, and didn't let Him run his life. That's not what a Carnal Christian is.

That isn't at all what Paul had in mind in 1 Corinthians 3, not at all. Let me show you what it is.

There is only two kinds of people in the world. My grandfather use to say the "saints" and the "ain'ts," that's it, Christians and Non-Christians, Believers and Unbelievers. Now listen, the Natural man is the unregenerate. The Spiritual man is the regenerate man. Read Romans 8, the Spiritual man is the regenerate. But the Spiritual man can act in a fleshly way. Anytime you disobey the Lord, you are carnal. Anytime you obey the Lord, you are Spiritual. Anytime you do what you ought not to do, you are carnal. That means fleshly, you're operating off the principle of sin. Anytime you do what the Lord wants you to do, you honor the Word.

So carnality is not a permanent state of Christians who have not given Christ Lordship.

Carnality is simply a momentary experience of the Believer who is disobedient to God. So it is

not a state, it is simply a kind of behavior. And all Christians at any given moment, right now, this moment here, are either Carnal or Spiritual, depending on whether you functioning in the Spirit or in the flesh. If you are sitting there and the Spirit of God is teaching you, and you are enjoying what's happening, then the Spirit of God is at work, you're a Spiritual person.

If you're sitting there saying, "I don't like what he is saying, I don't buy any of this stuff. I reject all this stuff. This stuff isn't true." And you have hostility in your heart, and you may be dealing with sin, and you don't like what I said, I don't know. Your flesh is reacting, that's Carnality. Understand?

Word Study on "Baptize"

βάπτω, βαπτίζω.

A. The meaning of βάπτω and βαπτίζω.

βάπτω, “to dip in or under” (trans.): Hom. Od., 9, 392; Aesch. Prom., 863: ἐν σφαγαῖσι βάψασα ξίφος; “to dye,” used in Josephus only in this sense, Bell., 4, 563; Ant., 3, 102; βάμμα, “dyed material,” Ant., 3, 129; P. Par., 52, 10; 53, 5 (163/2 b.c.): βαπτά, “dyed or coloured clothes.”

The intens. [βαπίζω occurs in the sense of “to immerse” (trans.) from the time of Hippocrates, in Plato and esp. in later writers, a. strictly, act. βαπίζειν τὸ σκάφος, “to sink the ship,” Jos. Bell., 3, 368, ὁ κλύδων (τὰς ναῦς) ἐβάπιζεν, Bell., 3, 423; pass. “to sink”: ἐν ὕλῃ (in the mud), Plot. Enn., I, 8, 13 (I, p. 112, 6, Volkmann; → 532), “to suffer shipwreck,” “to drown,” “to perish”: Jos. Bell., 3, 525; Epict. Gnom. Stob. Fr. 47, p. 489, Schenkl; ἀβάπιστος ναῦς, schol. in Luc. Jup. Trag., 47, p. 83, Rabe). In magic a part is played by water ἀπὸ νεναυαγηκότος πλοίου or ἀπὸ πακτῶνος βεβαπισμένου, Preis. Zaub., V (London), 69 (4th cent. a.d., under Christian influence). b. figur., act. βαπίζειν τὴν πόλιν, “to bring the city to the border of destruction,” Jos. Bell., 4, 137; ἡ λύπη βαπίζουσα τὴν ψυχὴν, Lib. Or., 18, 286; of desires which destroy the soul, Philo Leg. All. III, 18; Det. Pot. Ins., 176; Migr. Abr., 204; pass. “to go under” with the same double meaning as in Eng., “to sink into” sleep, intoxication, impotence: Hippocr. Epid., 5, 63 (or meaning a.); Jos. Ant., 10, 169; “to be overwhelmed” by faults, desires, sicknesses, magical arts: Plut. Galb., 21 (I, 1265c); Philo Vit. Cont., 46; Max. Tyr., XVIII, 44; Plot. Enn., I, 4, 9 (I, p. 73, 5, Volkmann); ἰσχύειν ψυχὴν λύπη βεβαπισμένην, Lib. Or., 64, 115; also absol. without specification: βαπίζῃ “thou lettest thyself be overborne,” Lib. Or., 45, 24; opp. αἴρεσθαι Lib. Or., 18, 18.

The sense of “to bathe” or “to wash” is only occasionally found in Hellenism, Menand. Fr., 363, 4 (CAF, III, 105), usually in sacral contexts, → 531. The idea of going under or perishing is nearer the general usage.

The NT uses βάπτω only in the literal sense, in Lk. 16:24; Jn. 13:26 for “to dip in,” and in Rev. 19:13 for “to dye”; on the other hand it uses βαπίζω only in the cultic sense, infrequently of Jewish washings (Mk. 7:4 K D for ῥαντίσονται in Lk. 11:38), and otherwise in the technical sense “to baptise.” This usage shows that baptism is felt to be something new and strange. The use of → βάπτισμα, βαπτιστής is similar.

B. Religious Washings in Hellenism.

1. The General Facts.

Sacral baths are found in the Eleusinian and similar cults, in Bacchic consecrations,² in Egyptian religion and the worship of Isis outside Egypt,⁴ in the Mithras mysteries, in the Apollinarian games and in the festival of Pelusium.⁶ The *taurobolium* and *criobolium* attested in the worship of Attis and Mithras are post-Christian sacral baptisms of blood, perhaps by way of rivalry to Christianity. Hard to integrate are certain baptismal customs in the upper Jordan valley.⁸ They certainly illustrate that ancient religion, especially in the Orient, is carried beyond the circle of direct perception by lustrations in which water is used. On Mandaean baptism → 536. There are many early examples of sacral water ceremonies in Babylon, Persia¹⁰ and India. With the Ganges the Euphrates came to have a religious significance comparable with that of the Jordan among Jews and Christians.¹² It is impossible to trace all these customs to a common root.

2. βαπίζειν in Sacral and Similar Contexts.

This usage is comparatively infrequent. The most important passages are as follows.

a. P. Lond., 121, 441 (3rd cent. a.d.; app. wholly pagan): One should live in vegetarian fashion, keep silence, throw something in the river, καὶ λουσάμενος καὶ βαπτισάμενος ἀνάβα παρὰ σαυτόν. There then follows an incantation. The synon. is worth noting. Cf. also Preis. Zaub., IV, 44 (4th cent. a.d.): ἐνάλλου τῷ ποταμῷ. μεθ' ἧς ἔχεις ἐσθῆτος βαπτισάμενος ἀναποδίζων ἀνελθε.

b. Cl. Al. Strom., III, 12, 82, 6: οὐδὲ μὴν τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς κατὰ συζυγίαν κοίτης ὁμοίως ὡς πάλοι βαπτίζεσθαι καὶ νῦν προστάσσει ἡ θεία διὰ κυρίου πρόνοια. Cf. Jos. Ap., 2, 203: καὶ μετὰ τὴν νόμιμον συνουσίαν ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς ἀπο- λούσασθαι. Here, too, we have the same synon. If Clement does not regard washing as necessary after marital intercourse, it may be assumed that he is repudiating the expression of the heathen past.

c. Plut. Superst., 3 (II, 166a) censures a superstitious remedy against fear: ἀλλ' εἴτ' ἔνυπνον φάντασμα φοβεῖ χθονίας δ' Ἐκάτης κῶμον ἐδέξω, τὴν περιμάκτριαν κάλει γραῦν καὶ βάπτισον σεαυτὸν εἰς θάλασσαν καὶ καθίσας ἐν τῇ γῆ διημέρευσον. He adduces as par. exercises: πηλώσεις, καταβορβορώσεις, σαββατισμούς, ῥίψεις ἐπὶ πρόσωπον, αἰσχρὰς προκαθίσεις ἀλλοκότους προσκυνήσεις.

d. Corp. Hermet., IV, 4: All men have the *logos*, but the *nus* is an ἄθλον which God gives only to some as He causes to come down on earth a mixing vessel filled therewith and then causes to be preached to the hearts of men: βάπτισον σεαυτὴν ἢ δυναμένη εἰς τοῦτον τὸν κρατῆρα, γνωρίζουσα ἐπὶ τί γέγονας <καί> πιστεύουσα ὅτι ἀνελεύση πρὸς τὸν καταπέμψαντα τὸν κρατῆρα. ὅσοι μὲν οὖν συνῆκαν τοῦ κηρύγματος, καὶ ἐβαπτίσαντο τοῦ νοός, οὗτοι μετέσχον τῆς γνώσεως. Of these it is then said in 5: ἀθάνατοι ἀντὶ θνητῶν εἰσι.

e. P. Par., 47 == Wilcken Ptol. No. 70 (I, 330 ff.) (152/1 b.c.), however, belongs to a different context. The pap., in a letter of Apollonius to his brother, the κάτοχος → κατέχω) Ptolemy, contains the words:

<p>⁶ ὅτι ψεύδη⁷ πάντα καὶ οἱ παρὰ σε⁸ θεοὶ ὁμοίως, ὅτι ἐν-⁹ βέβληκαν ὑμᾶς (== ἡμᾶς) εἰς ῥῆγιν ¹⁰ μεγάλην καὶ οὐ δύναμε-¹¹ θα ἀποθανεῖν, κἂν ἴδῃς¹² ὅτι μέλλομεν σωθῆναι¹³ τότε βαπτίζομεθα (== βαπτίζομεθα).</p>	<p>⁶ For thou liest⁷ and the ⁸gods likewise, for they have cast us⁹ into a great morass¹⁰ wherein we may¹¹ die, and if thou hast seen in a dream¹² that we shall be saved from it,¹³ then we shall be plunged under.</p>
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Following the reading of Brunet de Presle, Reitzenstein earlier saw in the letter the complaint of a Serapis novice impatiently awaiting his calling to baptism (i.e., dedication)¹⁶ in accordance with the vision of the mystagogue. Apollonius had received news from Ptolemy that the dedication was now no longer possible and the gods had thus cast him into much ῥηγιν. He thus complains that he has been deceived and that he cannot now die (i.e., be baptised). But he adds hopefully: "If, however, thou seest in a dream that we shall be saved, then we shall let ourselves be baptised." In this case the three terms ἀποθανεῖν, σωθῆναι,

and βαπτίζεσθαι (in the sacral sense) would be essentially synon. and we should have proof of the understanding of baptism as a voluntary dying two hundred years before Paul, as a concept of the Mysteries. Yet, as Reitzenstein himself has partly admitted, this interpretation is untenable. βαπτίζεσθαι is used either in the sense of A.a. (where we also have the connection with ὕλη), or in that of A.b. In either case, its use is purely secular, as is also that of ἀποθανεῖν and σώζεσθαι.

We may thus conclude that, while βαπτίζειν, βαπτίζεσθαι are occasionally found in a religious or similar context in Hellenism, they do not acquire a technically sacral sense.

3. The Meaning of the Rites.

In two of the three examples given (a.-c.), the underlying motif is that of bathing, washing or cleansing. In Hellenism, this is to be regarded as the basic feature, as many of the rites mentioned (→ 530) show and as many critical voices recognise. If we are to understand, we must begin with the primitive notion, later spiritualised, that what is unclean before God, whether physically or morally, and without any clear distinction, may be washed away like dirt, even though it consist in blood-guiltiness (cf. Heracl. Fr., 5, Diels). Along with other means, such as the urine of cattle, blood, clay, mud and filth, water may also be used, especially from a river or the sea. On the other hand, d. seems to indicate a ritual background and thus to point in a different direction. Here it is a matter of the enhancement of life, of immortality. It is no accident that this line of thought arises in the Hermes Mystery, i.e., in Egypt, one of the great river kingdoms of the ancient world. In the other, i.e., Babylon, water, as the water of life, is regarded as a chief means of incantation.¹⁷ So in Egypt there may be distinguished an older(?) form of the baptism of kings and of the dead with a view to renewal of life, as may be seen from the accompanying hieroglyphics (life) and (health), which are perhaps used in symbolical depiction of the drops of water. In this respect there is no clear distinction between the departed vitality of the dead, which must now be replaced, the miraculous water of the Nile and the divine seed. The dead Osiris is also sprinkled, and out of his body there sprout blades of corn.¹⁹ The god is identical with the Nile, and the dead man, rightly treated, is identical with the god (Osiris N N). The thought of revivification flows into that of regeneration among all peoples. But this often rests on the idea of a dying which is only symbolical. All these lines come together in the belief in an apotheosis effected by drowning in the Nile.²¹ Herodotus tells us in II, 90: "When an Egyptian or a foreigner is dragged into the water by a crocodile and killed, or destroyed by the water itself, and it is known, then the inhabitants of the city where he comes to shore have the solemn obligation of embalming him, of arraying him in the most gorgeous robes and of placing him in a sacred sarcophagus. No one may touch him, whether relatives or friends, apart from the priests of the Nile, who must tend him with their own hands and treat him as one who is more than an ordinary being." A man drowned in this way was called one who had been "immersed" (Boh. ECIE, Gk. Ἐσιῆς, Lat. *esietus*). To link this with the *hsjj* of the Pyramid texts, which means "extolled" or "highly estimated" or "valued" (== μακάριος, "blessed"?) is materially interesting but can hardly be sustained philologically. Yet the term can be traced back to the Demotic. It has a technical meaning. Thus it serves as an address to Osiris as he is given up to the Nile. Osiris is thought of in conjunction with the river. To be drowned in the river is to enter into connection with the god and thus to be divinised. When Antinous, the favourite of Hadrian, was drowned in the Nile, there arose a cult which lasted for centuries.²⁵ In this light it thus seems possible that the baptisms of the Mysteries were understood as a voluntary dying and deification. Yet it would be rash to generalise. In Apuleius the true dedication conducted in the temple, and cultically representing dying and deification,²⁷ is preceded by another washing

which takes place in the public baths and is sacral only in its second part. Thus the thought of purification is the important one in the “baptism.” Except to the degree that the similarity of the rites favours a conjunction, there is no very close connection between purification and vivification. Apart from unimportant tendencies, both are understood, not in a moral, but in a ritual and a magically natural sense.²⁹

Within paganism itself profounder thinkers were conscious of this deficiency. Diogenes in Plut. (Aud. Poet., 4 [II, 21 f.]) says sarcastically: “Patacion the thief will enjoy a better fate after death than Epaminondas, for he has received the rites.” Cf. Plat. Resp., II, 364 f. and Ovid. Fast., II, 45 f.:

*A! nimium faciles, qui tristia crimina caedis
fluminea tolli posse putatis aqua!*

Even when it took a moralistic direction, the rationalistic protest was often feeble enough. But when it took sharper weapons from another arsenal, it presented the dominant practice in a most unfavourable light. The Jew Philo reproaches the heathen: “They remove dirt from their bodies by baths and means of purification, but they neither desire nor seek to wash away the passions of their souls by which life is soiled” (Cher., 95). In Josephus, too, there shines through the shell of rational Stoicism something of the moral earnestness of the prophets when he writes of John the Baptist (Ant., 18, 117): “Herod put him to death although he was a good man and directed the Jews to come to baptism in the exercise of virtue and righteousness towards one another and piety towards God. Thus baptism is acceptable to God when used, not for the purification of the soul, but for sanctification of life, the soul being already cleansed by righteousness.”

This brief review has shown us how little cultic significance the word βαπτίζειν has in Hellenism. Yet it has also disclosed many connections which might become significant either positively or negatively if some stronger emphasis were given from without to the term and to that which it represents.

C. טבַל and βαπτ(ί)ζειν in the OT and Judaism.

In the LXX βάπτειν (βαπτίζειν occurs only at 4 Βασ. 5:14) as a rendering of טבַל, “to dip,” is used for the dipping of the morsel in wine at Ju. 2:14, of feet in the river at Jos. 3:15, of the finger in blood in the Torah of sacrifices at Lv. 4:6, 17 etc., of the dipping of unsanctified vessels in water in the laws of purification at Lv. 11:32 (בא hiph). In the latter case, however, πλύνω (כבס) and λούσμαι (רחץ) are more common, as in Lv. 15:11, 13 etc. The sevenfold dipping of Naaman (2 K. 5:14) perhaps suggests sacramental ideas and illustrates the importance of the Jordan. In the later Jewish period טבַל (b. Ber., 2b of the bathing of priests; Joma, 3, 2ff. etc.) and βαπτίζειν become tech. terms for washings to cleanse from Levitical impurity, as already in Jdt. 12:7; Gk. Sir. 31(34):30. The טבִּילָה of proselytes belongs to this context.

Yet the origin of this special washing is hard to fix, since in the first instance it does not seem to differ from other washings and is not linked to any special ritual. On inner grounds it is likely that it was already customary in the NT period, since the purity demanded of every Jew could not be relaxed in the case of an impure Gentile. Again, 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 70 a.d. at least the opposition to Christians was too sharp to allow of the rise of a Christian custom among the Jews. Proselyte baptism must have preceded Christian baptism.

The most important external witnesses are as follows. a. Epict. Diss., II, 9, 19 ff. says that mere appearance does not make a Stoic just as mere talk does not make a Jew: ὅταν δ' ἀναλάβῃ τὸ πάθος (uncomfortable manner of life? persecution?) τὸ τοῦ βεβαμμένου καὶ ἡρημένου, τότε καὶ ἔστι τῷ ὄντι καὶ καλεῖται Ἰουδαῖος. οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς παραβαπτισταί, λόγῳ μὲν Ἰουδαῖοι, ἔργῳ δ' ἄλλο τι. b. Sib., 4, 165 (soon after 79 a.d.), in a warning to the heathen to repent in view of the threatening destruction of the world: ἐν ποταμοῖς λούσασθε ὅλον δέμας ἀενάοισιν. c. Casuistical definitions of proselyte baptism were debated in the schools of Shammai and Hillel. These controversies are attested in the Mishnah (Pes., 8, 8; Ed., 5, 2: Str.-B., I, 102 f.) and date from the 1st cent. a.d. if not from the b.c. period, d. According to b. Jeb., 46a, Str.-B., I, 106, R. Eleazer and R. Joshua (both around 90–130 a.d.) discussed the necessity of circumcision and baptism to make a full proselyte. In this discussion some part is played by the question of a baptism of the fathers prior to the covenant at Sinai. The line of argument in 1 C. 10:1 ff. is best explained if similar traditions were known to Paul. Probably even earlier than the middle of the 1st century a.d., and under the influence of the many women proselytes who could not be circumcised, the existing washing of proselytes came to have the significance of an independent rite of reception.

Genealogically the Jewish washings, including proselyte baptism, are linked with existing rites of purification. In consequence, however, of the strongly transcendental Jewish conception of God, they did not develop along the lines of sacral magic, but exclusively along legalistic lines. Their one goal was ritual purity. If the proselyte could be described as a “new-born child,”³⁵ this relates only to his theocratic and casuistic position. As a heathen he did not understand the Torah. Hence sufferings which might afflict him after his conversion are not punishments for earlier transgressions. It is from this point on that he must keep the commandments. There is no thought of any natural, let alone ethical, death and regeneration.

The meanings “to drown,” “to sink” or “to perish” seem to be quite absent from the Heb. and Aram. לבט and therefore from βαπτίζειν in Jewish Greek. If the spontaneous construction of such connections cannot be contested *a priori*, the rise of metaphors based on them has thus far seemed to be most unlikely in the purely Semitic field of speech. The usage of Josephus (→ 530) is not specifically Jewish Greek.

D. The Baptism of John.

Cf. Mk. 1:4–11 and par.; 11:27ff. and par.; Jn. 1:25–33; 3:23 ff.; 10:40; Ac. 1:5; 11:16; 13:24; 18:25; 19:4. The baptism of John introduced a powerful Messianic awakening from which Christianity sprang. This indicates its geometric position within religious history, namely, Palestinian Judaism. There is no suggestion in the Gospels that it is a child of oriental syncretism. This must be contested until every possible closer analogy has been explored.

Attempts have been made to find the original form of John's baptism in that of the Mandaeans, whose sacred writings have been made generally accessible by M. Lidzbarski. In the Mandaean ritual the thought of purification is subsidiary and the strongest emphasis rests on the sacramental or magical power of vivification. Every baptismal stream, invested with heavenly fire by incantations, counts as the Jordan. Yet in spite of their veneration of the Baptist and the Jordan, the Mandaeans probably had little dealings with the disciples of John and arose only centuries later as a Gnostic sect. In detail their baptismal ritual is dependent on that of the Nestorians, particularly in the description of the water as Jordan, and on the Peshitta. The honouring of the Baptist came into their writings only in the Islamic period.³⁸ Even from the much older practices in the upper Jordan valley (→ 531) there is no

solid bridge to the Baptist. It would be easier to suppose that syncretistic influences through the Essenes or odd individuals like Bannus⁴⁰ affected the Baptist. But the completely different attitude to ritualism, demonstrated by the daily repetition of washings on the one side and the uniqueness of baptism on the other, denotes an unbridgeable distinction.

The nearest analogies to the baptism of John are the baptisms of official Judaism, and especially proselyte baptism. John's baptism, like that of proselytes, is once and for all. It makes a great demand on the members of the elect people in ranking them with the defiled Gentiles who were apparently admitted on the same conditions (Lk. 3:14). In contrast to proselyte baptism, however, its orientation is not political or ritualistic, but distinctively ethical, with a close relation to eschatology. To be sure, proselyte baptism can also be eschatologically grounded and linked with a summons to polytheists to repent, Sib., 4, 165 (→ 535 f.). This application is native to Judaism. Yet in John the relationship is more essential and urgent. His concern is not to defer the destruction of the world, but to prepare the people for the imminent coming of Yahweh. The baptism of John is an initiatory rite for the gathering Messianic community. Linking up with prophetic passages like Is. 1:15 f.; Ez. 36:25 (cf. Is. 4:4; Jer. 2:22; 4:14; Zech. 13:1; Ps. 51:7), it is to be regarded as a new development. The very fact that in prophetic power John baptised others is striking. From now on there occurs the active, and in Christianity the predominantly passive, use of βαπτίζειν, whereas elsewhere on both Jewish and Gentile soil the mid. or refl. use is most common (though → 535, βεβαμμένος, 2nd cent. a.d.; → βαπτιστής). The basic conception is still that of the cleansing bath. Bound up with confession of sin, baptism is in the first instance an expression of repentance, i.e., of sorrow for sin and the desire to be free from it (βάπτισμα μετανοίας, Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; εἰς μετάνοιαν, Mt. 3:11). Nevertheless, the thought of a sacramental purification for the coming aeon is at least suggested (εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3). As compared with Christian baptism, of course, that of John is mere water baptism. The saying about baptism with the Spirit (Mk. 1:8 and par.; cf. Jn. 1:26; Ac. 1:5; 11:16; cf. Ac. 19:2 ff.; cf. baptism with fire, Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16; Ac. 2:3), if it arose on Palestinian soil and was not put on the lips of the Baptist later, shows, however, that in the baptism of John, if only as a picture of things to come, there is at least some influence of the idea of a life-giving inundation already familiar in Hellenism. This is not completely unknown on the soil of OT Judaism (cf. Jl. 3:1 ff.; Is. 44:3; 32:15; Ez. 47:7 ff.). The eschatological context prevents us from assuming that the individualistic notion of regeneration espoused in syncretism had penetrated the circle of ideas of the Baptist, or even given essential shape to his baptism. That John conceived of his baptism as a voluntary dying cannot be deduced from the immersions current in Judaism generally.

E. Christian Baptism.

1. Jesus allows Himself to be baptised by John but does not Himself baptise (Mk. 1:9 ff. and par.; Jn. 3:22 is uncertain, cf. also 4:2). This raises a two-sided problem. The question, acutely felt by the early Church according to Mt. 3:14 f.; Hebr. Ev. 5,⁴² whether the baptism of Jesus included a confession of sin, is solved by the suggestion that the sinlessness of Jesus was not something static and apart, that He could not exclude Himself from the wonderful awakening, and that baptism was for Him a dedication as the Messiah. It was in keeping with His conception of the Messiah, based on Deutero-Isaiah, that He should not withdraw from sinners but identify Himself with them. Thus, whether or not they are historical in the literal sense, Mt. 3:14 f. and Jn. 1:29 (→ ἄμνός, 338) rightly interpret the matter. If Jesus did not Himself baptise, we can see from Mk. 11:30 and par. and Mt. 11:7 ff. and par., in spite of Mk. 7:14 ff. and par., that this

was not due to any objections to baptism in principle as an external action. It corresponds rather to the expectant manner of Jesus in movement towards His atoning death.⁴³

According to Mk. 10:38 f.; Lk. 12:50, Jesus described His own death as a βαπτισθῆναι. It is hard to suppose that we are to see already at this point an influence of the later conception of martyrdom as baptism in blood. On the other hand, these isolated sayings hardly give us grounds for concluding that He takes as His point of departure the conception of the baptism of John (and future Christian baptism?) as a voluntary dying.⁴⁵ Indeed, this is unlikely in view of what was said on p. 536. It is not impossible, however, that in a bold and profound image, hardly understandable to the men of his day, He anticipates the results of the religious development of decades. The only alternative is that a popular expression, already used figuratively in the OT (cf. Ps. 42:7; 69:1; Is. 43:2; Cant. 8:7; though never transl. βαπτίζειν in the LXX), has here come to be associated with baptism by way of the linguistic possibilities described on p. 530—something which could only happen on Hellenistic soil (→ 536) and which cannot, then, be attributed to Jesus Himself. This would give us a point of departure for interpreting baptism in terms of the Mysteries.

2. In the Christian community baptism was undoubtedly practised from the very first (Ac. 2:38, 41; 8:12 etc.; R. 6:3; 1 C. 12:13: ἐβαπτίσθημεν, understood biographically, leads us back to something like 33 a.d.). It would be wrong to attribute this fact exclusively to an influx of the disciples of John.⁴⁸ The community must have been aware that in baptising it was fulfilling the intention of the Lord. Quite irrespective of the ceaseless critical objections to Mt. 28:18–20 and Mk. 16:16, we may conclude from the very existence and significance of the apostolate (→ ἀππόστολος, 431) that there was knowledge of a missionary command, or many such commands, of the risen Lord, and that in accordance with the new situation this command was understood as a command to baptise. The distinctive feature of Christian baptism is that it is administered εἰς Χριστόν or εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Χριστοῦ.

3. The syntactical connections of βαπτίζειν in the NT are as follows. The link with the inner object βαπτίζειν or βαπτίζεσθαι βάπτισμα occurs in Ac. 19:4; Mk. 10:38 f.; Lk. 7:29; 12:50. The means by which it is administered is expressed by the dat. instr. (ὔδατι, Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Ac. 1:5; 11:16; πνεύματι ἁγίῳ, Mk. 1:8), or more commonly by ἐν (ἐν ὔδατι, Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8 vl.; Jn. 1:26, 31, 33; ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ, Mt. 3:6; Mk. 1:5; ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ [καὶ πυρὶ], Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; Ac. 1:5; 11:16; in 1 C. 12:13, however, ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι means “embraced by one spirit”), and only once by → εἰς (Mk. 1:9; cf. Plut. Superst., 3 [II, 166a] → 532; Corp. Herm., IV, 4 → 532). Elsewhere εἰς is mostly used finally to denote the aim sought and accomplished by baptism: εἰς μετάνοιαν, Mt. 3:11; εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, Ac. 2:38; εἰς ἓν σῶμα, 1 C. 12:13. Weakened spatial notions are present where εἰς denotes the constitutive element of a form of baptism: εἰς Χριστόν, Gl. 3:27; R. 6:3 with εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ; εἰς τὸν Μωυσῆν, 1 C. 10:2; εἰς τὸ ἐβαπτίσθητε; ... εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα, Ac. 19:3. The idea of a mystically understood medium of baptism (“to be immersed in Christ etc.”) is always and in every respect wide of the mark. βαπτίζειν means technically “to baptise in water.” Hence it is unnecessary to specify a medium. Where this is done for some reason in the NT, it is hardly ever introduced by εἰς. In (Gl. 3:27 Χριστόν ἐνεδύσασθε is a heightened form of εἰς Χριστόν ἐβαπτίσθητε. The notion of being baptised in Moses would be meaningless and would clash with a second spatial indication in 1 C. 10:2 (ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ). A trinitarian name-mysticism in Mt. 28:19, hypothetically extended to Paul in 1 C. 1:13, 15, is quite out of the question. The formula εἰς τὸ ὄνομα seems rather to have been a tech. term in Hellenistic commerce (“to the account”). In both cases the use of the phrase is understandable, since the account bears the name of the one who owns it, and in baptism the name of Christ is pronounced, invoked and confessed by the one who baptises or the one baptised (Ac. 22:16) or both.

The question and answer in Ac. 19:3 have more of a legal than a mystical flavour. The thought is elucidated by the addition of → πιστεύειν εἰς. This does not mean that we are to deny pneumatic union with the crucified and risen Christ. It means that this is not basic to the expression βαπτίζειν εἰς; it is not, therefore, its primary implication (→ εἰς, → ὄνομα).

4. The Saving Significance of Baptism into Christ.

Christian baptism certainly has as its final goal new and eternal life. Yet even in this respect it is not to be understood primarily or directly in terms of the idea of vivification or regeneration. Of the passages adduced Mk. 10:38 f. may be dismissed at once (→ 538). Again, 1 Pt. 3:20 f. does not form the starting-point for the Christian view of baptism, but contains an isolated theologoumenon which is comparatively late even on the assumption that it was composed by Silvanus on the direct commission of Peter. Jn. 3:5 f. and Tt. 3:5 also belong to a younger stratum of NT tradition which was under stronger Hellenistic influence. For the most part, however, expressions used in the context (λουτρόν, οὐ σαρκὸς ἀπόθεσις ῥύπου, πιστεύειν) show even here that the new life stands in firm causal connection with purification from the guilt of sin. This is particularly clear, though often overlooked, in Paul. Because God is the only source of real life, and His holiness excludes sin, the basic conception both of Paul and of the NT generally in relation to baptism is that of the cleansing bath (1 C. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Hb. 10:22; cf. Ac. 2:38; 22:16). The significance of baptism thus depends on the fact that it is a real action of the holy God in relation to sinful man. Hence both a superstitious and also a purely symbolical understanding are excluded.

Rightly to evaluate the efficacy of baptism in the NT sense, it must be remembered that criticism of a purely external, materialistic and magical evaluation of religious objects and actions belongs to the very essence of biblical piety from the days of the prophets (Dt. 10:16; 30:6; 1 S. 15:22 f.; Am. 5:21 ff.; Hos. 6:6; Is. 1:10 ff.; Jer. 2:22; 4:4; 7:3 ff.; 9:25; 31:31ff.; Ez. 18:31; 36:26; Jl. 2:13; Ps. 51:10, 16, 17; Mk. 7:14 ff. and par.; R. 2:17–29; 1 C. 10:1–11). This does not mean that we are to depreciate the realism of references to the saving significance of baptism. Nor are detailed inconsistencies excluded. The point is that if we leave out of account this basic presupposition, we are from the very first in danger of distorting the picture. To baptism as a mere rite or realistically developed symbol no such incomparable efficacy could be ascribed in the NT world of thought. This is indicated, not merely by the relative unimportance of the action as such (cf. 1 C. 1:17; Mk. 16:16b), but also by express statements (Hb. 9:9 f.; 1 Pt. 3:21; 1 Jn. 5:6: οὐκ ἐν ὕδατι μόνον. Hb. 10:22 reminds us of Jos. Ant., 18, 117, → 535, but may be understood as a parallelism). Though mediated by men, baptism is the action of God or Christ (Eph. 5:26). Hence baptism by others rather than self-baptism, and hence also the predominance of the passive. The mid. is used of Christian baptism in the NT only in Ac. 22:16 (cf. 1 C. 6:11: ἀπελούσασθε), and the reflex. (→ 531) never. Standing in a definite and absolutely indispensable historical context, baptism derives its force from the reconciling action of God in Christ, or more exactly from the atoning death of Christ (1 C. 6:11; Eph. 5:25 f.; Tt. 3:4 f.; 1 Jn. 5:6 [→ διά, → αἷμα, 174, → ὕδωρ]; cf. Jn. 19:34; 1 Pt. 1:2; Hb. 10:22). It places us objectively in Christ, the second Adam; it thus removes us from the sphere of death of the first Adam to the δικαίωσις ζωῆς and divine sonship (Gl. 3:26 f. → ἐνδύω, cf. R. 5:18 f.).

It is characteristic, however, that the thought of imputative purity, righteousness and holiness impels us to that of effective, i.e., to the new ethical life (1 C. 6:11 as a basis of exhortation, and Eph. 5:26 ff.). In Paul there is no suggestion of cleavage between a forensic and a mystical mode of thought. Forensic justification leads to pneumatic fellowship with Christ. The *iustitia Christi extra nos posita* aims ceaselessly to become the *iustitia Christi intra nos posita*. There is here no leap, and a transition only in so far as justification is not conditioned by the new life, but the new life by justification, so that a distinction of thought is demanded. As imparted in baptism, δικαίωσις is δικαίωσις ζωῆς (R. 5:18). The new life, however, necessarily bears an ethical

character. For it is life from God, the life of Christ. Baptism implies participation in the death and resurrection of Christ (R. 6:1–14; Col. 2:11–15; 3:1 ff.; and materially Gl. 2:19 f.; 5:24; 6:14 etc., though characteristically with no mention of baptism). The break with sin is thereby accomplished and attachment to the life of the new creation effected, yet in such a way that in this aeon the translation into empirical reality of what God has posited remains, or rather becomes, a task for the baptised. In the theology of the 19th century these statements were misunderstood in terms of the almost completely dominant idealistic and symbolical conceptions of the age. Thanks to research into the history of religion, and also to other factors, this misunderstanding has now been dispelled. What is at issue is an objective process which can be fixed in time. The appeal to the will is merely a consequence. In this respect Paul seems to approximate to the Hellenistic notion of participation in the death and resurrection of the Mystery deities. Indeed, it is not improbable that his vocabulary was influenced by Hellenistic mysticism with its dying and rising gods. Perhaps there underlies his expositions a borrowed interpretation of the rite of baptism like that of the Mysteries.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the material difference must not be missed. On the one side, we have a timeless and naturalistic individualism of regeneration, on the other a spiritual historical relationship, a new creation of the totality, eschatologically understood. Baptism is the “prodromal manifestation of the coming world”; it is a “lift” not a “staircase.”⁵⁸ The close connection between the resurrection of Christ and forensic and completely non-mystical justification, as also the basic significance of this justification, is supremely safeguarded in relation to baptism by Col. 2:12 ff. Every interpretation of Paul’s view of baptism is thus mistaken which takes as its starting-point the subjective and naturalistic experience of baptism and not the objective situation in salvation history. The death and restoration of nature-gods take place again and again at the appropriate seasons. The consecration of the Mystery religions is renewed every twenty years or so. Baptism, however, shares with Christ’s death a strictly once-for-all character (ἐφάπαξ, R. 6:10, → 383). The phrase “Christ metaphysics” more correctly expresses the existential character of the Pauline statements than the unhappy “Christ mysticism.” On the other hand, a place must be found for the plenitude of pneumatic interconnections which are here felt by Paul and which may even be comprehended psychologically and empirically.⁶¹ Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that an immediate and almost magical transformation of human nature, in which sin is eradicated, is no more a part of Paul’s logic than an immediate destruction of suffering and death.

In 1 C. 10:1–13 Paul energetically combats a materialistic and superstitious estimation of baptism and the Lord’s Supper which would have it that their recipients are set free from every possibility of the divine wrath—a view which differs essentially from the objective and genuinely sacramental understanding. There is no contradiction in 1 C. 15:29 as Paul sees it (cf. R. 2:28), even though this refer to a groping attempt, unconditionally accepted by him, to apply salvation in Christ to the unbaptised dead. It is more likely, however, that the argument is purely tactical; Paul is referring ironically to the inconsistency of the Corinthians. Indeed, he may even be alluding to a non-Christian practice of the Mysteries.

Many Gnostic sects are reported to have held vicarious baptisms. It is thus legitimate to seek a pagan origin (cf. even 2 Macc. 12:39–45). Plat. Resp., II, 364bce; 365a, contains reference to expiations for the dead. Orph. Fr. (Kern), 232, p. 245, Kern (ὄργια τ’ ἐκτελέσουσι, λύσιν προγόνων ἀθεμίστων μαιόμενοι) also seems to speak of substitutionary dedications. In the same connection we may mention the oriental inscription: Μεγάλη Μήτηρ Ἀναεΐτις. Ἀπολλώνιος Μηνωδῶρου ὑπὲρ Διονυσίου τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ, ἐπεὶ, κατελούσετο καὶ οὐκ ἐτήρησε τὴν προθεσμίαν τῆς θεοῦ, ἀπετελέσετο αὐτόν (163 a.d.). After the death of Scyllos, severely punished by the gods for perjury, his daughter Tatias redeems the vow.⁶⁷ It may be presumed that baptisms were linked with such

consecrations. Wild speculations concerning substitutionary baptisms of angels for men are to be found in Cl. Al. Exc. Theod., 22.

We cannot know how far Paul is the author of the line of thought concerning dying and rising again with Christ, or how far he keeps to the common stock of Christian thinking. It is beyond question, however, that the close interrelating of baptism and the reception of the Spirit is both general and primitive. Christian baptism is thus represented as the completion of that of John. In a few cases the πνεῦμα ἅγιον is imparted prior to baptism (Ac. 10:44 ff.; 18:25), but in the majority either at baptism or shortly afterwards,⁶⁹ often by the laying on of hands (→ πνεῦμα, → χεῖρ). In Luke there are traces of Hellenistic influence on the pneumatic conception of baptism, but these are not constitutive, and do not crowd out either the thought of the forgiveness of sins or the basic ethical understanding. Deutero-Pauline (Tt. 3:5) and Johannine (Jn. 3:5) theology approximates rather more closely to the Hellenistic thought of regeneration from which Paul holds fundamentally aloof, but it does not abandon the main line of a theology of faith linked with salvation history. So far as leading circles are concerned, it is only with the older Catholic Church that baptism becomes a means of grace which is not specifically eschatological or christological, but physical or hyper-physical.

The preconditions for baptism of infants in apostolic Christianity are to be weighed in the light of the presuppositions developed above. It cannot be proved nor disproved that children were baptised with their families, though this is likely enough by contemporary analogies. Even then a distinction would have to be made between children and infants. Infant baptism, however, represents a departure from apostolic Christianity only where it is linked with superstitious views of the sacrament.⁷²

F. Baptism as a Syncretistic Mystery.

Already in the later strata of the NT we can see indications of an approach to Hellenism. These were not followed up in the NT itself, but increasingly so from the post-apostolic period onwards. The eschatological context in which baptism had been rooted from the very first thus came to lose its significance. It was not forgotten. It ceased, however, to be the basis or leaven. It simply became the concluding chapter or appendix. In its place, alien elements came in from the outside world. Hitherto these had been carefully held in check by the filter of prophetic and NT religion. But now, using external agreement as a channel, they came in full flood. Baptism became a syncretistic mystery.

For such the first essential is the matter. Ignatius (Eph., 18, 2) already speaks of Jesus purifying the water by His baptism in Jordan and His passion. Barn., 11 assembles several OT passages which speak of water as intimations of baptism. This sacramental materialism reaches a first climax with Tertullian, who in Bapt., 4 and 9 introduces considerations concerning the nature of the water which deviate widely from the true point at issue. Since the time when the Spirit of God hovered over the water at creation, this has been invested with supernatural powers.

Moreover, the rite as such is significant. As before the Isis consecration, so now before baptism a fast of many days is enjoined both on the one who baptises and on those baptised (Did., 7, 4). A magical transformation is expected through the fulfilment of the action. "We go down into the water full of sins and impurity, but then rise out again laden with fruits" (Barn., 11, 11). Similarly Herm. s., 9, 16, 4: ἡ → σφραγὶς τὸ ὕδωρ ἐστίν· εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ καταβαίνουσι νεκροί, καὶ ἀναβαίνουσι ζῶντες. Various ceremonies such as exorcism, anointing, first communion, confirmation, investiture and candles are added to the originally simple action. Relics of the Mysteries and OT allusions surround the action ever more closely. If the water of

baptism was formerly regarded as an antitype of the Flood (1 Pt. 3:21) and the Red Sea (1 C. 10:1 f.), it now flows as “Jordan” into the font. The baptism of blood, with which martyrdom is now equated, sheds an explanatory light on water baptism.⁷⁵ The thought of remission is not forgotten (Herm. m., 4, 3, 1), but it is almost submerged under that of vivification and regeneration. There thus arise complicated constructs like the Mandaean ritual, which it would be a strange *Quidproquo* of religious history to regard as the original form of Christian baptism.

The new approach finally comes to expression in the fact that baptism links the baptised with the organised Church and is thus requisitioned by the Church. Ignatius already forbids baptism without the bishop (Sm., 8, 2) and Tertullian will not allow women to baptise (Bapt., 17).

Two forces are at work in relation to the time of baptism. On the one hand, since baptism as a mode of attaining eternal bliss is absolutely efficacious but can be used only once, it is postponed even to the point of death notwithstanding Christian conviction. This does not preclude a certain seriousness in the understanding of the Christian life. The best known example is that of Constantine. On the other hand, since one cannot come to participate too soon in sacramental grace, it seems to be a duty to baptise infants at a tender age, and if possible on the day of birth. It cannot be proved that infant baptism was an innovation adopted in the middle of the 2nd century under the influence of a superstitious sacramental conception and an accommodation to the surrounding world. It is incontestable, however, that the sacramental thinking of the older Catholic Church contributed to the triumph of general infant baptism over previous obstacles. The famous saying of Tertullian: *Quid festinat innocens aetas ad remissionem peccatorum?* (Bapt., 18) occupies middle ground between the two trends. It can hardly be used as a witness to original practice on account of its practical bent and its sporadic character even in Tertullian.

The question whether there is any second repentance for those who have fallen again after being washed—there never seems to have been any thought of a second baptism—gradually became an urgent problem for the whole Church. There seem to be negative answers even in the NT (Hb. 6:4 ff.; 10:26; though cf. 2 C. 12:21). The more magical conception of baptism increased the problem. Later, however, a milder or even laxer view came to predominate.

Oepke, A. (1964–). [βάπτω](#), [βαπτίζω](#), [βαπτισμός](#), [βάπτισμα](#), [βαπτιστής](#). G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 1, pp. 529–545). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.