

# THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM: AN ESSAY IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

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ACCORDING TO Paul, there are two sources upon which the apostolic Church drew in its attempts to express the various aspects of the Christian mystery: the experience of the first disciples, and the events of Israel's sacred history as they found them recorded in "the Scriptures." In the concluding doxology of his letter to Rome, Paul expresses his conviction that God will strengthen and deepen the Christian faith in that community "through my Gospel and the kerygma of Jesus Christ—the revelation of a mystery, wrapt in silence throughout countless ages, but now disclosed—and through the prophetic Scriptures" (Rom 16:25–26). The experience of Jesus' first disciples must be characterized by the events which formed its climax. It was predominantly Paschal and Pentecostal, an experience of the risen Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Yet it also included the happenings of Jesus' public life and even the career of John the Baptist. As for the insights into the meaning of Christianity which the inspired writers of the *NT* drew from the *OT*, they are the fruit of a profound and acute consciousness of the harmony existing between the two phases of the divine plan of salvation, the old and the new dispensations.<sup>1</sup> This awareness leads Paul to formulate the hermeneutical principle which is the foundation of any Christian reading of the *OT*: "these things occurred as examples of ourselves" (1 Cor 10:6); "whatever was written in the past has been written for our instruction" (Rom 15:4).

These two factors, which presided over the development of Christian theology as it makes its appearance in the *NT*, merit closer inspection.

## THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF SALVATION

As I have pointed out elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> the real novelty of the Christian notion of salvation lies in the primitive Church's realization of her

<sup>1</sup> C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* 2 (Paris, 1953) 372.

<sup>2</sup> "The Conception of Salvation in Primitive Christian Preaching," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 18 (1956) 231–54.

possession of the Holy Spirit, whose presence had formed her into the new Israel and had revealed to her the divinity of the exalted Lord Jesus. Accordingly, it is to the Pentecostal experience of the first disciples that the explicitation of their specifically Christian beliefs must be ascribed. Rudolf Bultmann has recently been insisting upon the character of Christianity as an event,<sup>3</sup> and it is thanks to him, as L. Malevez remarks,<sup>4</sup> that the modern theologian has been led to ask himself the question, "how, on the one hand, Christ, who has appeared historically and visibly before us, and, on the other, the Spirit, who operates invisibly, succeed in forming a single Word." This integration of the activity of the risen Christ with the operation of the Holy Spirit, which constitutes the unique character of the Christian encounter with God, springs historically and theologically from the events of the day of Pentecost—a point of which, perhaps, Bultmann has not taken sufficient cognizance.

Thus it is this transforming presence of the Spirit, at once the gift of the glorified Christ through the mediation of His risen humanity (Jn 7:39) and the witness to Christ's *sessio ad dexteram Patris* (Acts 2:33), which distinguishes Christianity, a radically eschatological religion, from the Judaism contemporary with Christian origins, characterized by a forward-looking messianism and a scrupulous devotion to the Mosaic code. Where the Jew looked to Yahweh for salvation through the sole intermediary of the Law, the apostolic Christian, aware that he already possessed salvation in part through the risen Christ's gift of the Spirit, hoped to obtain salvation's fulness through the one Mediator, his Lord Jesus, exalted at God's right hand. To appreciate how wide was the gulf which separated the messianic and legalistic outlook of the best circles of contemporary Judaism from apostolic Christianity, we have only to recall the contrast that exists between the exegesis of certain *OT* texts elaborated by the sectaries of Qumran and the understanding of those same texts which is evidenced by *NT* writers.

One passage is Is 40:3 ff., which holds such a prominent place in the Gospel traditions concerning John the Baptist's preaching. In the

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, "Neues Testament und Mythologie," in H. W. Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma und Mythos* 1 (Hamburg, 1951).

<sup>4</sup> L. Malevez, *Le message chrétien et le mythe* (Brussels-Bruges-Paris, 1954) p. 116.

Qumran community rule, it is explained in function of the Torah:<sup>5</sup> it is the assiduous study and scrupulous observance of the Mosaic Law which will prepare the covenanters for the coming of the Messias. According to our evangelists,<sup>6</sup> the Baptist employed this text not to inculcate the practice of the Law but rather to insist upon *metanoia*, a radical change in men's religious attitudes, finding expression in the social virtues of justice and charity, as the necessary preparation for the advent of the Christ. It is as heir of Israel's prophetic traditions, not of her legalism, that the *NT* portrays John the Baptist.<sup>7</sup>

A second passage, Jer 2:13,<sup>8</sup> is explained in the sectarian writings as follows. "The well is the Law, and they who digged it are the penitents of Israel who went forth out of the land of Judah and sojourned in the land of Damascus" (*CDC* 8, 6). The writer of the fourth Gospel, on the other hand, in what is almost surely a reference to this same text, indicates Christ as the well. "If any man thirsts, he must come to me and drink—that is, he who has faith in me. According to the scriptural saying, 'From His heart shall flow floods of living water'" (*Jn* 7:38).<sup>9</sup>

The immediate cause of this divergence of the Christian from the Jewish point of view was Pentecost, which transfigured the messianic expectations of the apostolic Church into a firm faith in the presence of their risen Lord among them through the Holy Spirit. Thanks to it, they are made aware of Jesus' divinity, of the Spirit's personality, of the inauguration of "the last times" in its first phase, which would

<sup>5</sup> 1QS 8, 12-16, tr. Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York, 1955) p. 382: "When these things come to pass for the community in Israel, by these regulations they shall be separated from the midst of the session of the men of error to go to the wilderness to prepare there the way of the Lord; as it is written, 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' This is the study of the law, as he commanded through Moses, to do according to all that has been revealed from time to time, and as the prophets revealed by his Holy Spirit."

<sup>6</sup> The silence of the evangelists concerning John's utterances about the observance of the Law is, we believe, highly significant.

<sup>7</sup> J. Schmitt, "Les écrits du Nouveau Testament et les textes de Qumran," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 30 (1956) 55-74.

<sup>8</sup> "For my people have committed two crimes:  
They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water,  
To hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns,  
That can hold no water."

<sup>9</sup> C. Lattey, "A Note on John VII.37-8," *Scripture* 6 (1954) 151-53.

extend until the eagerly awaited day of Christ's parousia. Moreover, they began, in the light of the Spirit, to reassess the theological significance<sup>10</sup> of the events of Jesus' earthly life and the work of the Baptist. This deeper penetration into the meaning of the events which formed the Christian kerygma of salvation would attain its full perfection in the fourth Gospel, but it can be seen already operative in the Synoptic literature.<sup>11</sup> That this whole development is the result of the apostles' encounter with the Spirit is attested by the last of the evangelists: "the advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in place of myself, will teach you everything and will recall to you all I have myself spoken to you" (Jn 14:26).

#### THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF ISRAEL'S SACRED HISTORY

How early the Christian community began to seek, in the great events of *OT* salvation-history, clues for the interpretation of the *res christiana*, is difficult to say. The first extensive use of the method, which Jesus had Himself undoubtedly employed in His public teaching and which the author of Hebrews will ultimately erect into a system of Christian hermeneutics, is credited in the *NT* to Stephen (Acts 7:2-53). It is very probable that it was further developed in the Hellenist-founded Church at Antioch (cf. Acts 13:16-41), which became the heir of Stephen's viewpoint and which was mainly responsible for the formation of Saul as future apostle of the Gentiles. The basis of this method of *OT* interpretation is the insight that there exists a fundamentally identical pattern in God's dialogue with His people in the old dispensation and in the new which supplanted it. This conviction is expressed in Hebrews' remark that, while the old Law was ephemeral and relative, and "brought nothing to fulfilment," still it served God's providential purpose as "introduction to a brighter hope" (Heb 7:19). Because they were aware that the *OT* history bore a transcendental relation to the Christ-event,<sup>12</sup> the preachers and inspired writers of

<sup>10</sup> "Didachē as a Constitutive Element of the Gospel-form," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 17 (1955) 223-44.

<sup>11</sup> The infancy narratives of Mt and Lk may serve as an example of this.

<sup>12</sup> Thus Christ had to repeat in His earthly life the experiences of Israel as a people (cf. Jesus' temptations, Mt 4:1-11) as well as those of the great *OT* figures (hence His characterization as the new Moses, new David, etc.).

the apostolic age made use of that history to express their experience of the Christian mystery in all its aspects.<sup>13</sup>

A concise formulation of this principle may be seen in St. Thomas' discussion of the *sensus spiritualis*. "The course of history is so ordered that such a meaning may be taken from it. This prerogative of so ordering history belongs solely to Him who through His providence governs history, God alone. Just as a man, in order to signify something, may employ words or imaginary comparisons, so God, for the expression of some things, employs the course of history, which is subject to His providence."<sup>14</sup> On the view of the *NT* authors, this sense of Israel's sacred history is revealed in "the Scriptures." Moreover, it is this interpretation of the events of this ancient salvation-history, *as it is recorded upon the sacred page*,<sup>15</sup> which unveils their true meaning. The characteristically modern question, "What 'really' happened in the crossing of the Red Sea, the capture of Jericho, the restoration after the exile, etc.?" is alien to the mind of these writers. To their way of looking at the sacred past, what *really* happened is what God has deigned to announce to them in the Book. It is crucial for any appreciation of this long-forgotten viewpoint to recognize how justified the *NT* authors were in employing that religious-historical perspective, which springs from a deep consciousness of the consistency of God's salvific action throughout the course of Hebrew and Christian history. Thanks to this insight, the prophets and inspired scribes of the *NT* were enabled to discern the full signification of Christ's redemptive activity.

#### FRAME OF REFERENCE OF NT SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY

In view of what we have thus far said, it will be not surprising to discover that the *NT* writers constantly employ as frame of reference

<sup>13</sup> J. Guillet, *Thèmes bibliques* (Paris, 1951) p. 21: "A lui seul, Jésus-Christ suffit à remplacer toute l'Écriture. L'Écriture pourtant demeure nécessaire. Non point à côté de Jésus, mais pour l'expliquer. Quel sens les chrétiens peuvent-ils donner à l'événement unique qui vient de bouleverser leur vie? Pour interpréter le fait chrétien, pas d'autre voie que l'Ancien Testament."

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Quodl.* 7, q. 6, a. 16 c.; *Sum. theol.* 1, q. 1, a. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Hence an investigation of contemporary Jewish ablutional practices, e.g., those of the Qumran community, will not help towards an understanding of the meaning of Christian baptism.

for their explanation of the meaning and efficacy of Christian sacramental symbolism a threefold division of the history of salvation. This division is related to the coming of Jesus Christ, which gives to the story of God's dealings with men its essential significance. It comprises (1) the period before Christ, (2) Christ's earthly and mortal life, (3) Christ's glorified and heavenly existence, which extends to include the life of His Body, the Church on earth. As we hope to demonstrate by a study of the *NT* doctrine of baptism, it was on this triple level that the inspired authors primarily sought to discover the meaning of the Christian sacraments, those "signs of the end"<sup>16</sup> which effectively reproduce, for subsequent generations of believers, the Pentecostal experience of the first disciples.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the "natural" symbolism of the sacramental elements, washing (water), food (bread, wine), healing or strengthening (oil), which strikes our modern mentality as so important,<sup>18</sup> does not appear to have constituted for the apostolic age the *prima facie* signification of the sacramental signs. If they employed such symbolism, as they occasionally did, it was simply because they had found it already designated by the events of their sacred history. At any rate, we venture to assert that this natural symbolism of the sacramental system never carried the same weight with the *NT* thinkers as did the other, to us less obvious, symbolism.<sup>19</sup>

One of the best examples of *NT* sacramental theology, in which these three levels of sacred history are employed, is found in the Johannine discourse on the Bread of Life (Jn 6:26-65), which teaches the efficacious symbolism of the Eucharist. The reader's attention is concen-

<sup>16</sup> "Baptism in the New Testament," *Scripture* 8 (1956) 46.

<sup>17</sup> This is particularly true of the sacramental teaching of the fourth Gospel.

<sup>18</sup> L. Bouyer, "Le symbolisme des rites baptismaux," *Maison-Dieu*, n. 32, p. 15: "Cela nous mène déjà vers une précision capitale touchant le symbolisme baptismal en général. C'est bien certainement un symbolisme naturel, car il n'y en a pas d'autre, encore une fois. Le Christ a pris l'eau où l'on plonge comme symbole d'initiation parce que d'abord il y a une liaison instinctive dans l'âme humaine entre les eaux et la vie maternelle. Mais il en a fait le sacrement baptismal parce que sa Parole a ajouté à cette signification naturelle la signification nouvelle d'une plongée dans sa propre mort pour émerger à la vie ressuscitée. Et c'est ainsi que toute la Parole divine, à travers la Bible entière comme dans la tradition vivante de l'Eglise, nous fait redécouvrir non seulement le monde matériel et le corps, mais l'esprit dans le corps et le monde invisible sous le visible."

<sup>19</sup> Thus, for instance, in the Johannine paragraph on the imparting of the power to forgive sins (Jn 20:19-23) the use of the verb *enepheysēsen* by the evangelist is a reference to Gn 2:7; this work of the risen Christ appears to him as a "new creation."

trated upon the importance of symbolism almost from the beginning of the sermon. "Then what sign (*sēmeion*) do you perform, that we may see and find faith in you?" (v. 30). A reference to a psalm, commemorative of the miracles of the Exodus and the wandering in the desert, gives Jesus the occasion to point out the true relation between the manna, "the bread from heaven" (Ps 78: 24-25), and the Eucharistic bread, "the truly divine bread from heaven" (Jn 6: 31-32). Next, the meaning of the Eucharist is sought in the life-giving Incarnation of the Son of God (vv. 33-35), in Jesus' public ministry (vv. 38-40),<sup>20</sup> in a reference to the words of institution and to Jesus' redemptive death: "It is my flesh, given for the life of the world" (v. 51).<sup>21</sup> In the sequel, the Eucharistic symbolism is shown to derive also from Christ's exaltation and His gift of the Spirit (vv. 61-63).<sup>22</sup> As is evident from a literary analysis,<sup>23</sup> the key-word in this dialogue-discourse, "bread," is used in four different senses to designate the bread of the miracle of multiplication, the manna, the Word Incarnate, and the Eucharist. What must be noted, however, is that these four meanings are closely interrelated. Each of the first three adds a new depth to the Eucharistic symbolism attaching to the fourth sense, the body of the exalted Christ, who bestows, in this sacrament, the Holy Spirit upon those who have faith in Him.

#### SYMBOLISM AND SACRAMENTAL EFFICACY

There are two important consequences which flow from this *NT* view of the symbolism of the Christian sacraments. It provides, in the first place, a vehicle for the expression of the efficacy of the sacraments in the order of grace. Secondly, it enables the inspired writers to distinguish sharply this sacramental efficacy from magic.

<sup>20</sup> The miracle of multiplication of the loaves plays an important role here: cf. Jn 6:26.

<sup>21</sup> This refashioning of the logia of Jesus, as found in the Synoptic Gospels, is characteristic of John's manner. In this same discourse we find similar references to the Synoptic accounts of Jesus' visit to Nazareth (Jn 6:42) and Peter's Caesarean profession (Jn 6:68-69).

<sup>22</sup> This appears to be the meaning of these difficult verses. The mention of Jesus' exaltation as the necessary preliminary to the gift of the Spirit (Jn 7:39) shows that John is well aware that the Eucharist is the sacrament of the glorified Christ in which He bestows the "life-giving Spirit." To think, as the Jews are here doing, of the Eucharist in terms of Jesus' mortal *sarx* "profits nothing": such absence of faith renders a man incapable of receiving the sacramental doctrine of this Gospel.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. that of M.-J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon saint Jean* (7th ed.; Paris, 1948) pp. 171-96.

Because of their sensitivity to the divine orientation of Israel's history towards the central events of salvation, the *NT* writers were well aware that behind the *OT* figures of the Christian sacraments lay the dynamic will of God with its creative power. Moreover, familiarity with the *OT* had taught them the efficacious value of the signs which Yahweh had granted to His people: the rainbow, circumcision, the sprinkled blood ratifying the covenant given through Moses.<sup>24</sup> This creation of effective symbolism was for them but another instance of a divine activity: the imposition of names, upon things at the creation of the world, upon persons in the course of *OT* history. On the biblical view, such God-given names were not equivocal (as in Greek philosophy) but expressed the reality of the things or persons to which they had been attached.<sup>25</sup> Thus, in regard to the sacramental symbols, whose meaning had been divinely determined by means of their types occurring throughout sacred history from the creation to the apostolic age, the *NT* authors found means to express their efficacy by relating them to the revealed salvation-history. The efficacious symbolism of the Eucharist, for example, as the divine "bread from heaven" "giving life to the world" comes not only from the words of institution but also from the feeding of God's people with manna, from Jesus' multiplication of the loaves during His public ministry, and, above all, from the glorification of His sacred humanity endowing it with the power of communicating the Spirit, author of the divine life of grace.

This linking of sacraments to sacred history also enabled the *NT* writer to remove any misapprehension that there was something magical about the operation of these signs. The Johannine discourse on the Eucharist warns the Christian emphatically against such a false view, by means of references to each of the three levels of sacred history from which the sacrament derives its effective symbolism. The first caveat is connected with the miracle of multiplication. "I can assure you that you are looking for me, not because you have seen signs, but because you ate some of the loaves and had your fill" (Jn 6:26). Instead of recognizing the sign of some deeper mystery in the miraculous bread, the Jews have eyes only for bread in the "sign," or

<sup>24</sup> J. van der Ploeg, "Old Testament Signs," *Scripture* 8 (1956) 33-44.

<sup>25</sup> Franz-J. Leenhardt, "La signification de la notion de parole dans la pensée chrétienne," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 35 (1955) 263-73.

miracle. Faith on the part of the recipient is necessary for full sacramental efficacy. The second warning, like that of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor 10:5), recalls an incident of OT history. "Your fathers ate manna in the desert, but they are dead" (v. 49). God's favor is not bestowed through the sacrament without man's cooperation. The final warning occurs through Jesus' remark which stresses the relation between His glorified humanity and the Spirit in this sacrament. "The Spirit it is who bestows life: the flesh counts for nothing" (v. 63). This statement refutes any crassly materialistic view of the consumption of Christ's body in the Eucharist, and indirectly stresses also the need of the proper dispositions in those who receive it.

#### OUR METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Given the attitude of the *NT* authors towards sacramental symbolism, we shall endeavor to present a synthesis of their teaching on the nature of baptism and its effects by relating it to the three levels of sacred history which we have already discussed. We shall begin by recalling the great episodes in the *OT* which contributed to the meaning of the sacrament. Then we shall discuss the events of Jesus' earthly life which the evangelists narrate in order to explain the origins of baptism. Finally, we shall review the effects of Christ's exaltation and His sending of the Spirit, upon the symbolism of this rite of initiation into His Body, the Church.

The method will be found to possess the advantage of removing certain false questions from a discussion of the origins of baptism. The imposition upon exegesis and theology, at the close of the Middle Ages, of a methodological viewpoint—the product of the enthusiasm of the discoverers of canonical law—which we may call "juridical," has long exercised a preponderance as unwarranted as it is deleterious.<sup>26</sup> Thus,

<sup>26</sup> A. Humbert, "Le problème des sources théologiques au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 1 (1907) 90-91: "Ce qui avait corrompu la théologie, surtout depuis la fin du quinzième siècle et au commencement du seizième, ce n'est pas tant, comme on le croit d'ordinaire, le retour indéfini des mêmes problèmes traités suivant une méthode qui avait depuis longtemps épuisé ses ressources. Du moins il ne semble pas que ce fut là ce qui produisit, chez les hommes de la Renaissance, leur dégoût violent des disputes scholastiques. Eux-mêmes passèrent leur vie en d'autres disputes qui ne tranchent pas sur celles de leurs adversaires. Ce qui paraît les avoir surtout révoltés, c'est la pénétration et peu à peu l'envahissement de la théologie proprement dite par les formules et les méthodes du droit ecclésiastique."

with reference to baptism, there is much effort spent in attempting to determine the precise moment at which Christ instituted it. Such legalism can, at times, lead to some rather bizarre "theological" conclusions: for example, insistence upon the reception of Christian baptism by the apostles some time before the first Holy Thursday, to safeguard the validity of their reception of orders and the Eucharist.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast with such methods, the one here adopted after the example of the *NT* writers themselves, has the merit of directing attention to the precise meaning of the sacramental sign which is baptism, and so revealing to us its purpose and its effects.

#### BAPTISMAL SYMBOLISM DRAWN FROM OT HISTORY

In the course of a striking description of the genesis of Christian thought as "essentially a transformation of images," effected by the death of Christ ("the decisive act of transformation") and the presence of the Spirit in the apostolic Church, Austin Farrer very aptly observes that "since the process is of the rebirth of images, it is to the matrix of images, the Old Testament, that the Spirit continually leads; for here are images awaiting rebirth; all this is Christ, could we but see how and why; the Spirit will teach us."<sup>28</sup>

When we turn to a consideration of the *OT* images exploited by the *NT* writers in their endeavor to describe the baptismal mystery, we find that in their works they lay under tribute almost all the great *gesta Dei* in Israel's salvation-history: the creation, the deluge, the promise to Abraham with its sign, circumcision, the exodus from Egypt, the wandering in the desert, the covenant established through Moses, together with the poignant presentation of it in the prophetic writings as Yahweh's espousals with His people, and (perhaps) even Israel's crossing of the Jordan under Joshua.

<sup>27</sup> J. Bellamy, "Baptême dans la sainte Ecriture," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 2/1, 169: "Il est pourtant assez probable que le sacrement a été institué avant la passion; et, si l'on tient compte de l'économie sacramentelle générale, on peut croire qu'au moins les apôtres ont été baptisés avant cette époque, puisqu'ils ont reçu l'eucharistie et l'ordre le soir du jeudi saint." A. d'Alès, "Baptême," *Dictionnaire de la bible: Supplément* 1, 858, remarks that, since Augustine, who held that the apostles administered Christian baptism before the passion, this has become common theological opinion. "Avec saint Augustin sont la plupart des théologiens modernes . . . et quelques exégètes. . ."

<sup>28</sup> Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images* (Westminster, 1949) p. 15.

*The Creation*

Because of the fact that the accounts of creation stand at the head of the biblical revelation in the beginning of Genesis, we have long been accustomed to open our catechetical instructions by the question, "Who made the world?", and to give to that problem a place of primacy which it never actually enjoyed in Israel's religious experiences of her God.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the logical structure of Scholastic theology has assigned to the treatise on creation a place which has led us to regard that divine activity as cosmological rather than soteriological.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, it comes as something of a surprise to find a theologian like Paul describing Christ's redemptive work as a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17). At best, we think it an arresting metaphor expressive of the novelty of the Christian order.

However, the *OT* view was that the covenant was primary in God's self-revelation to Israel. The point of departure of *OT* religion was, historically speaking, summed up in the dictum, "You shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Jer 31:33; Ex 19:5). God carried on His part of the dialogue with Israel through a long succession of saving acts performed in their favor. As a result, the *OT* places quite a different emphasis upon the doctrine of creation. Secondary in *OT* revelation, both historically and theologically, to the covenant-idea, the doctrine of creation was incorporated relatively late into the Hebrews' sacred accounts of their own origins, where it functioned as a kind of prologue to the story of that people's relations with their covenant-God.<sup>31</sup> And so it happened that creation was set forth in that literature as the beginning of the mighty wonders Yahweh had wrought for Israel. Because they were accustomed to consider cosmic origins as the beginning of the salvation-history, the later *OT* writers found it quite natural to express the eschatological salvation of "the last times," the climax of Yahweh's interventions on behalf of His chosen people, as a second and more marvelous creation. The view of Deutero-Isaiah is that Yahweh will work Israel's definitive salvation *as creator* (Is 43:18-19;

<sup>29</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Das erste Buch Mose: Kap. 1-12/9* (2nd ed.; Göttingen, 1950) p. 34.

<sup>30</sup> C. R. North, *The Thought of the Old Testament* (London, 1948) pp. 25-26.

<sup>31</sup> R. A. F. Mackenzie, "Before Abraham was . . .," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 15 (1953) 131-40.

48:6 ff.; cf. also Is 65:17 ff.), for the reason that God's creation of the universe is thought of as pertaining to the same theological category as His covenant (Is 52:15-16; cf. also Is 66:22). This conception of the creation as a saving event is, I believe, the basis of the biblical view that the *eschaton* must correspond to the beginning, that eschatology, in other words, is determined by protology or ktisiology.

What is true of *OT* literature holds good also for that of the *NT*, in which the creation-theme is pressed into the service of soteriology.<sup>32</sup> In fact, it may be asserted that the concept of "the new creation," together with its counterpart, the idea of regeneration or birth anew, forms the most apt expression of the salvation revealed in Jesus.<sup>33</sup> Paul portrays the Christian who has, through faith and baptism, found a share in Christ's redemption, as "a new creature" or "a new creation" (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17), while the notion of "rebirth" is found applied to various aspects of Christian salvation in a series of *NT* writings, (Mt 19:28; Jn 3:3 ff.; Eph 2:4-6; 1 Jn *passim*; 1 Pt 1:3, 23; 2:2). Paul is thinking of baptism in terms of creation when he states: "We are indeed His work, having been once created in Christ Jesus in view of good works, which God prepared beforehand for us to practice" (Eph 2:10). The thought of baptism is also perhaps implicit in James's remark: "Of set purpose, He engendered us through the message of truth, in order that we might be a kind of first-fruits among His creatures" (Jas 1:18). The very original Pauline conception of Christ as "the last Adam, new Adam, second Adam," which he first hit upon in a period of controversy (1 Cor 15: 22, 45), and then made the focal point in his soteriology (Rom 5: 12 ff.), was at a later period recast to express the mystery par excellence, the new Christian unity of Jew and Gentile in the Body of Christ (Eph 2:15; 4:12-13, 24). The inauguration of this "new Man" in the lives of individual Christians is the initerable rite<sup>34</sup> of baptism. "Do not play one another false, seeing that you once

<sup>32</sup> Gösta Lindeskog, *Studien zum neutestamentlichen Schöpfungsgedanken* 1 (Uppsala, 1952) 203.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 236, 251.

<sup>34</sup> The aorist tense employed in the participles *apekdysamenoī* and *endysamenoī* shows that Paul is thinking of the single, past act of receiving baptism.

stripped off the old man with his practices and put on the new man, newly formed in the image of his creator . . ." (Col 3:9-10).<sup>35</sup>

Of all the divine activities in the beginning, it was the creation of light which the author of the first creation-account in Genesis appears to have found most impressive and mysterious (Gn 1:3). It strikes the modern reader as strange that the priestly writer should have described light's creation before that of sun or moon. Apart from the motives dictated by a practical apologetic interest,<sup>36</sup> it would seem that light, in the author's estimation, held a paramount position amongst God's irrational creatures. It was considered of no less importance by the author of the fourth Gospel, who saw that the life emanating from the Word "was the light of men" (Jn 1:4). And he can think of no better way to describe the Word Himself than as "the true light which illuminates every man" (Jn 1:9). Accordingly, this biblical emphasis upon the creation of light provided an apt vehicle for the presentation of *NT* baptismal doctrine.

The whole episode of the healing of the man blind from birth (Jn 9:1-41) forms a kind of baptismal catechesis, in which Christ, the author of the sacrament, figures as "light of the world" (Jn 9:5). In what is primarily a reference to his own conversion by the Damascus road, Paul includes the baptismal experience of his readers, and recalls the biblical account of the creation of light. "The God who had said, 'Light, shine out of darkness,' is He who has shone into our hearts to produce the illumination of the knowledge of God's glory reflected upon the countenance of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). He urges the Colossians to persevere "in thanking the Father, who entitled you to share the lot of the saints by the light, who once rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the realm of His dear Son, in whom we possess the redemption, the remission of sins" (Col 1:12-14). After reminding the Gentile Ephesians that "once you were sheer darkness, but now light in the Lord," the apostle urges them to "conduct yourselves as children of light" and to avoid "the sterile works of darkness,"

<sup>35</sup> On the characteristically Christian idea of newness expressed in the *NT* by *kainos* and its compounds, cf. Johannes Behm, "*kainos*," etc., in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* 3, 450-56.

<sup>36</sup> This apologetic interest appears in the author's omission of the names, sun, moon, etc., revered as deities in the cultures surrounding Israel.

“since everything that comes to light is light” (Eph 5:8–13). This last obscure remark seems to contain a promise of victory for all believers through their rejection of pagan immorality, and thus forms an introduction to what is probably a fragment of a baptismal liturgy:

Awake, you slumberer,  
and rise from the dead!  
Then Christ will illuminate you. (Eph 5:14)

A clear reference to baptism as an illumination occurs in the famous Hebrews’ passage on “impossible repentance.” “It is in fact impossible to renew again, by bringing to repentance, those who have once been illuminated, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have received a share of the Holy Spirit, who have savored the glorious word of God and the dynamism of the world to come, and yet have fallen . . .” (Heb 6:4–6).

Finally, in connection with the use of the creation-theme to expound baptismal doctrine, we must mention the paradise-motif, which *NT* writers do not neglect. The very brief Marcan description of Christ sojourning in the desert amongst wild beasts after His baptism by John is couched in terms of the new Adam in the new paradise.<sup>37</sup> In the Apocalypse, baptism is called “the river of life” (possibly also “the tree of life”) by the adaptation of a text from Ezekiel,<sup>38</sup> which in turn draws on the descriptions of the terrestrial paradise in Gn 2–3.<sup>39</sup>

### *Noah: the Deluge and the Ark*

The Petrine letters make use of the symbolism of the deluge in exposing their teaching on baptism. The first instance occurs in a discussion of the cosmic effects of Christ’s death and resurrection: “God’s patience, in the days of Noah, waited eagerly while the ark was being made ready, in which a few people, eight persons to be exact, were saved by the water, which now saves you also—I mean its antitype, baptism” (1 Pt 3:20–21). Such a conception of the deluge as a saving act of Yahweh may be traced back to the book of Genesis itself. There, in fact, we may distinguish, skilfully interwoven in the account of the

<sup>37</sup> Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London, 1952) p. 164.

<sup>38</sup> Ap 22:1–2; Ez 47:1, 7.

<sup>39</sup> E.-B. Allo, *L’Apocalypse* (14th ed.; Paris, 1933) p. 353.

flood, two quite different emphases.<sup>40</sup> The Yahwist writer, more concerned with man's sinfulness, takes a pessimistic view of this destructive flood; the priestly writer, on the other hand, who loves to dwell on the divine activity, stresses it as a divine act of salvation, issuing in the Noachitic covenant which God plans to establish (Gn 6:18; 9:11, 16) with the man He has delivered from the midst of the wicked. There is, however, also one remark of the Yahwist which provides a probable source for the later theological developments on the deluge. "Yahweh did away with all beings existing on the surface of the earth, from man to beasts, reptiles and birds. They were blotted off the earth, *so that Noah alone was left*, and those who were with him in the ark" (Gn 7:23).

In late Judaism, there was a tendency to consider the deluge in its more positive and salutary aspects, and to connect it with the remnant-doctrine, as we see from Ben Sira's "Praise of the Fathers."

Noah was found perfectly just,  
in the time of wrath he was the offshoot.  
Thanks to him a remnant was left upon earth  
when the deluge occurred. (Sir 44:17)

A remarkable passage in Deutero-Isaias compares the return from the exile with the deluge: both are saving judgments of Yahweh executed in favor of His people.

"For a little moment did I forsake you:  
but with great pity will I bring you back to me.  
In an outburst of wrath I hid my face  
for a moment from you:  
but with eternal kindness will I take pity on you,"  
says the Lord, your redeemer.  
"Because like the days of Noah is this to me.  
As I swore that the waters of Noah  
should no more pass over the earth;  
so have I sworn to be angry no more with you,  
nor to rebuke you." (Is 54:7-9)

Israel's restoration thus appears as a "new deluge," a mighty act of salvation. It is this line of thought which culminates in the Petrine

<sup>40</sup> I have followed the distinction of sources given by R. de Vaux, *Genèse* (Paris, 1951) p. 57.

theology of baptism.<sup>41</sup> Jesus' own reference to the deluge in His description of His own divine visitation in triumph upon the ruins of the Temple (Mt 24:37-41)<sup>42</sup> undoubtedly was a formative factor in such a development.

The second Petrine passage does not make such a clearly baptismal use of the deluge story, although it does appear to regard the flood as a means of Noah's salvation: "He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved eight persons among whom was Noah, a preacher of holiness, by inflicting the deluge upon the godless world" (2 Pt 2:5).<sup>43</sup>

*Abraham: the Promise, Circumcision*

As the "father of us all" (Rom 4:16), Abraham commanded the attention of the inspired writers of the *NT* as he did those of the *OT*. "No one has been found equal to him in glory," says Ben Sira (Sir 44:19b). Paul, who likes to dwell upon Abraham's faith, describes its object as God the Creator, who "raises the dead and summons nothingness to existence" (Rom 4:17), thereby equivalating it to the Christian's faith in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom 4:23-25). Hebrews mentions this same aspect of Abraham's faith, and remarks that his recovery of his son Isaac, the result of his belief that "God is powerful enough even to raise the dead," was "a parable," or type—either of the general resurrection or of Christ's (Heb 11:17-19). However, the author of Hebrews devotes most of his praise of Abraham's faith to its connection with the divine promise (Heb 11:8-18), mentioned repeatedly in the book of Genesis (Gn 13:15-17; 15:5; 17:5-8; 18:18).

In Paul's earliest sketch of a baptismal theology (Gal 3:26-4:7), the sacrament figures as the means whereby the Gentiles, who cannot be considered Abraham's *sperma*, or heirs by blood of the divine promise made to him (cf. Gal 3:16), can lay claim to his inheritance. A parallel argument is worked out in Rom 4:9-12 in terms of faith and justification, the complementary elements in *NT* baptismal doctrine. As Paul

<sup>41</sup> E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London, 1949) pp. 333-34. Jean Daniélou, *Sacramentum futuri* (Paris, 1950) pp. 55-68.

<sup>42</sup> A. Feuillet, "La synthèse eschatologique de saint Matthieu," *Revue biblique* 56 (1949) 340-64; 57 (1950) 62-91, 180-211.

<sup>43</sup> This same letter contains a very interesting, though tantalizingly obscure, reference to the role of water as instrument of the creation of the universe: 2 Pt 3:5.

Démann has pointed out,<sup>44</sup> the question of descendance from Abraham became an acute problem in predominantly Gentile Christian communities, whose members, unlike the Jewish Christians, had no racial ties with the greatest of the patriarchs: what basis of hope had they of sharing the blessings God had promised to Abraham? In answering that question, Paul shows how important was Abraham's promise in the biblical doctrine of salvation, and how it enters into the signification of baptism. He lays the groundwork for his argument by providing his reader with a typically rabbinical piece of exegesis on the use of *sperma* in the singular. "Now it was to Abraham that the promises were addressed, and to his descendant. Scripture does not say 'and to his descendants,' as if there were question of more than one. It points only to one, 'and to your descendant,' that is, to Christ" (Gal 3:16). The argument, which involves baptism, is stated somewhat later in the same chapter. "You are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus. You have all indeed, because baptized in Christ, put on Christ. There is no room for 'Jew' or 'Greek,' no room for 'slave' or 'free,' no room for 'male' or 'female': all of you constitute but one Man in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:26-29). The "putting on Christ," an effect of baptism, is clearly intended by Paul as equivalent to "constituting one Man in Christ Jesus."<sup>45</sup> In other words, we are dealing here with an instance of the doctrine habitually taught by Paul: the identification of the Christian with Christ (1 Cor 6:17; 2 Cor 5:14; Gal 2:20). It is essential to his line of argumentation here. This adoptive Abrahamitic filiation of the Gentiles becomes in turn a type of the divine adoption which it was Christ's mission to bestow through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:4-6). Thus one might say that, on Paul's view, Abraham's significance in baptismal theology is a profound one: he forms, with Christ, a link in the supernatural chain uniting the Christian to the Father as an adoptive son. Hence there is no break in the history of salvation as it is unfolded in sacred history.<sup>46</sup> God's part in the dialogue

<sup>44</sup> Paul Démann, "La signification d'Abraham dans la perspective du Nouveau Testament," *Cahiers Sioniens* 5 (1951) no. 2, 44-67.

<sup>45</sup> S. Lyonnet, *Les épîtres de saint Paul aux Galates, aux Romains* (Paris, 1953) p. 31.

<sup>46</sup> A. Grail, "Le baptême dans l'épître aux Galates III, 26-IV, 7," *Revue biblique* 58 (1951) 503-20.

between Himself and men is a consistent one, and Abraham is not without his influence upon the meaning of baptism.

The Pauline description of baptism as a "circumcision of the soul in the Spirit" (Rom 2:29), or "a circumcision not operated by human hand, the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11), further reveals the importance of Abraham for our study. It is indeed, as Charles Masson remarks, "a singular way of speaking to Christians."<sup>47</sup> Yet, in the ensemble of Pauline teaching, it is natural enough. In Rom 4:9-12, Paul has proven that Abraham's circumcision was a sign (*sēmeion*) and a seal (*sphragis*) of his justification by faith. In calling baptism a spiritual circumcision, Paul is affirming that it is the sign and seal of Christian faith, relating all believers to their father, Abraham (Rom 4:16). The *sphragis*-motif, at least as found in Pauline letters, is most probably connected with the theme of Abraham and his circumcision (cf. the use of *sphragizein* in the context of "the promises" in 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; also Eph 4:30).

#### *Moses: the Exodus, the Wandering, the Covenant*

Of all the saving judgments of Yahweh recorded in the OT, it is the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage which provides the NT writers with the basic analogue for Christ's redemptive work. When they employ the terms, *lytron*, *apolytrōsis*, *agorazein*, *peripoiēsis*, in attempting to expose the meaning of Christian salvation, they are thinking primarily of the exodus by which Yahweh purchases for Himself a people "of His own acquiring" by assuming the onerous task of freeing them from Pharaoh's power, and leading them through the desert, to the promised land. Given the first-rate importance of these episodes in Israel's salvation-history for NT soteriology, it is natural that they should bulk large in the formation of baptismal symbolism.

The figure of Moses is glorified in the NT, and his importance as a type of Christ is dwelt on repeatedly. Stephen depicts him as dispenser of salvation to his people, though rejected by them (Acts 7:25), and gives him a title nowhere predicated of him in the OT, that of "savior"

<sup>47</sup> Yet it is difficult to see how Masson can conclude to the practice of circumcision by the Colossians on the evidence provided by this verse; cf. Charles Masson, *L'Épître de saint Paul aux Colossiens (Commentaire du Nouveau Testament 10; Neuchâtel-Paris, 1950) p. 125.*

(Acts 7:35). Hebrews praises Moses' faith through which he "esteemed the opprobrium of the Christ as riches superior to the treasures of Egypt" (Heb 11:26).

For Paul, it is the passage through the Red Sea and the protection afforded the Hebrew people by the cloud which gives a deep insight into the meaning of baptism. "I would not have you forget, brothers, that our fathers—all of them—dwelt under the protection of the cloud. All of them passed safely through the sea. And all of them, in the cloud and in the sea, were baptized into union with Moses" (1 Cor 10:1-2). The tradition Paul follows regarding the cloud, which varies from that of Exodus (cf. Ex 13:21; 14:19-20), is preserved in Ps 104:39.<sup>48</sup> Nor does he think too closely, in describing the Hebrews' baptism in the sea, of the detail recorded in Ex 14:22, where the crossing is made dryshod. Jacques Guillet describes Paul's almost ruthless manner of dealing with OT typology. When he assigns a typical value to extrinsic analogies which the modern mind finds difficult to accept, Paul does so in virtue of his fundamental insight. Israel, by leaving Egypt at Moses' word to follow Yahweh in the desert, took a step which, religiously speaking, is comparable to the Christian renunciation of the world and adherence to Christ through baptism.<sup>49</sup>

The author of Hebrews makes use of Israel's march through the desert to present his conception of the Christian life here below.<sup>50</sup> In such an original comparison, baptism figures as the Christian point of departure on this pilgrimage: it is "the initial assurance." "We have become confederates with Christ, provided we preserve, firm until the end, the initial assurance" (Heb 3:14).<sup>51</sup> Later in his letter the writer describes this Christian "wandering in the desert" as a sacred procession to the heavenly temple, in which baptism once more figures as the initial step. "Let us approach with an upright mind, in fulness of faith, our minds cleansed from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:22). In such a liturgical context the reference to baptism as pure or holy water recalls the ritual ablutions prescribed by the Mosaic code (cf. Num 5:17) and the purifying water

<sup>48</sup> "He spread out a cloud as a screen, / And fire to give light by night."

<sup>49</sup> Jacques Guillet, *Thèmes bibliques*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>50</sup> C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* 1 (Paris, 1952) 269-80: "Le peuple de Dieu pérégrinant."

<sup>51</sup> C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* 2, 78.

promised to Israel in her regeneration during the messianic age (Ez 36:25). The verb *hrantizein*, here translated as cleanse, properly means "sprinkle," and its use here, especially in such proximity to Heb 9:20, evokes the sprinkling of the people by Moses with the blood of the covenant (Ex 24:8). The sacramental power of the water of baptism in purifying the soul is stressed in the present text.<sup>52</sup>

Since mention of Moses recalls the covenant made by God with the Hebrews, we must mention an *OT* image of that covenant which is employed by Paul in describing baptism: the figure of espousals. In exhorting husbands to love their wives, Paul remarks that "Christ loved the Church and handed Himself over for her, that He might sanctify her by cleansing her with the bath of water, accompanied by the word, in order to bring the Church to Himself in all beauty, without flaw or wrinkle or anything of the kind, but to be consecrated and faultless" (Eph 5:25-27). The same figure occurs in two other Pauline passages, in which the baptismal theme is at least implicit. "I experience a divine jealousy with regard to you, since I betrothed you to a single spouse: I presented you, as a pure virgin, to Christ" (2 Cor 11:2). In Romans, Paul depicts the Christian community's liberation from the Law in terms of a marriage dissolved by death. "And so, brothers, you likewise have been put to death so far as the Law is concerned by the Body of Christ, in order to belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might produce fruit for God" (Rom 7:1-6).

It was by means of this same image that Osee had expressed the love of Yahweh for His people, affianced to Him by the covenant. "That is why I shall lead her, by my seductions, into the desert, and shall speak to her heart. . . . And she shall respond there as in the days of her youth, as the day she came up from the land of Egypt. . . . I shall make for them a covenant. . . . And I will betroth you to myself forever" (Hos 2:14 ff.). This most expressive figure keeps reappearing in subsequent prophetic writing (Jer 2:1-3:22; Is 51:4-8; 61:10). There is one passage in Ezekiel's magnificent allegory, based on this theme, which may have influenced Paul's writing of the passage in Ephesians cited above. ". . . and I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you. . . . So you became mine. Then I bathed you with water

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 317.

and washed your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil" (Ez 16:8-9). The successive exploiting of the marriage symbol to express the meaning and vicissitudes of Yahweh's covenant with Israel reaches its climax in the Pauline letters, where it signifies Christ's union with the Church effected by the sacramental bath of baptism.

Here we might also mention the symbolism of anointing, which appears both in Paul and in John. "It is God who gives us as well as you our firm adherence to Christ. It is He who anointed us and also put His seal on us and gives us His guarantee by the Spirit in our souls" (2 Cor 1:21-22). "You have been anointed by the Holy One" (1 Jn 2:20). "You still retain in yourselves the anointing you received from Him, and you do not need to have anyone teach you" (1 Jn 2:27). The ritual of anointing was prescribed in the covenant given on Sinai for priests (Ex 29:7) and for the sacred furniture of the tent of testimony (Ex 30:25 ff.). At a later period the kings (1 S 10:1; 16:13) and sometimes the prophets (1 K 19:16) were anointed to signify their reception of Yahweh's Spirit for their office. This custom influenced the Johannine and Pauline descriptions of baptism as a *chrisma*, imparting the permanent possession of the Spirit (cf. also Is 61:1).

### *Joshua and the River Jordan*

The great *OT* miracle of the crossing of the Jordan by the chosen people to take possession of "the land" under Joshua is described in the same grand epic style as was the crossing of the Red Sea (Jos 1:11-4:18). In the *NT*, it is remarkable that the writers, apart from one or two passing references (Acts 7:45; cf. also Heb 4:8), do not appear to have made any use of it. However, it may not be out of place here to mention an episode in the fourth Gospel (Jn 10:40-42) which may contain a reminiscence of Joshua's crossing of the Jordan. The passage forms the prelude to what Louis Bouyer calls "the centre of the Gospel," the resurrection of Lazarus, which, if it does not contain any direct reference to baptism, is certainly baptismal in its general spirit.<sup>53</sup>

Rather abruptly, the evangelist places Jesus in Perea on the other side of the Jordan. As Sir Edwyn Hoskyns observes,<sup>54</sup> the author is not concerned to give any details of the Perea ministry (cf. Mt 19:1 ff.; Mk 10:1 ff.), but to draw attention to the significance of the

<sup>53</sup> Louis Bouyer, *Le quatrième évangile* (2nd ed.; Tournai-Paris, 1955) p. 31.

<sup>54</sup> E. C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (2nd ed.; London, 1948) p. 394.

locality by this topographical note. He takes cognizance of the fact that this was "where John had baptized" (v. 40), and that many, as a result of John's preaching, had found faith in Jesus "there" (v. 42). It is while Jesus is beyond the Jordan that word is brought to Him of Lazarus' illness in Bethany. Upon receiving it, Jesus "remained two days in the place where He was" (Jn 11:6), and finally sets out with a promise to His disciples that they will see an act of God's glory (11:4, 15). Upon His arrival in Bethany He finds Lazarus dead four days. Such attention to the time element recalls a feature of the narrative of the crossing of the Jordan (Jos 1:11; 3:1-5). As Jesus promised His followers that they should experience God's power, so Joshua informs the Hebrews that "tomorrow the Lord is going to perform wonders among you" (Jos 3:5). Admittedly, the connection between this *OT* story and the passage in the fourth Gospel is a tenuous one,<sup>55</sup> yet such typology would explain some of the obscure features of the narrative which follows in John, and would account for the baptismal use of both Joshua's crossing the Jordan and the resurrection of Lazarus in the patristic catecheses.<sup>56</sup>

### *Conclusions*

After this rapid review of those saving judgments of Yahweh in the course of *OT* history which, in the estimation of *NT* writers, have concurred in creating the symbolism and efficacy of baptism, we may now summarize the results of our investigation thus far.

Just as God created the world by His dynamic word, so through the rite of baptism this same creative activity is employed to produce in the neophyte a comparable renovation which makes of him "a new creature." Moreover, it is part of God's plan of salvation that the creation of the universe should affect the symbolism of this sacrament, which is a new exercise of the divine creative dynamism. More particularly, baptism's signification has been determined by God's creation of light and by the fact that the Word made flesh enters the world as "the true light, illuminating every man," to impart that life which is "the light of men." Jesus' own baptism by John, after which Christ

<sup>55</sup> A book, to which unfortunately I have not had access, defends this typology: Harald Sahlin, *Zur Typologie des Johannesevangeliums* (Uppsala, 1950).

<sup>56</sup> Jean Daniélou, *Bible et liturgie* (2nd ed.; Paris, 1951) pp. 136-44.

retires to the desert as the new Adam with dominion over the wild beasts, enjoying familiarity with the angels, gives Christian baptism the power to effect a return to the paradisiac life, and the sacrament may be compared with the "river of life" found in the earthly paradise. Yahweh's act of power in bringing salvation to Noah and his family by means of the deluge has imparted to the waters of baptism their meaningful efficacy, which consists not merely in removing bodily stains but in producing man's *engagement* to God through the cleansing of his conscience.

The fulfilment of the divine promise made to Abraham, by producing Jesus Christ as his *sperma* and heir of his inheritance, has bestowed on baptism the power to unite Gentile with Jew, making all Christians "joint heirs with Christ." The God-given *sēmeion* of Abraham's justification by faith, circumcision, enters also into baptismal symbolism, making it the sign and seal of God's favor in the new dispensation.

Israel's experiences on the journey out of Egypt through the desert to freedom and the true worship of Yahweh also influence baptismal symbolism. Thanks to the story of the crossing of the Red Sea, baptism takes on meaning as a plunging into Christ. The sprinkling with blood which inaugurated the Mosaic covenant, as well as the Hebrew custom of anointing, reach their fuller sense in the baptismal sprinkling and anointing with the Holy Spirit. That Yahweh's covenant with Israel was portrayed under the image of marriage made it possible in the *NT* to portray baptism as the espousals of Christ with His Church, the "bride adorned for her husband" (Ap 21:2).

#### BAPTISMAL SYMBOLISM EVOLVED FROM JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY

Just as the first Christians realized that, in the plan of God's providence, it was the *mirabilia Dei* recorded in the *OT* which concurred in the production of baptism as a sign, so also they were aware that the events of Jesus' public life were directed, in part at least, to that same divine purpose. Accordingly, we must now devote some space to an investigation of the meaning of John the Baptist's role in the *NT* story, to the teaching and miracles of Jesus which, in the Synoptic Gospels, are recorded for their relation to baptism, and to the sacramentalism of the fourth Gospel, which contains such a profound rethinking of the theology of baptism.

The important place which baptism will be found to occupy in the Gospels is primarily due to the essential function of that sacrament in the life of the Church. Thus, it is no accident, for instance, that the schema of the apostolic kerygma included the work of John the Baptist as "the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ" (Mk 1:1).<sup>57</sup> This interest in baptism is no doubt also due to the fact that in the Judaism contemporary with the *NT* ablutions of various kinds were widely practiced (Mk 7:4; Lk 11:38). The author of Hebrews includes "teaching about baptisms" (Heb 6:2), or the discrimination between various baptismal rites, among the rudiments of Christian instruction. The recent recovery of certain sectarian documents belonging to the Jewish community of Qumran reveals great insistence upon frequent lustrations. While these "baptisms" have practically no significance for an understanding of the Christian sacrament, one interesting point in rabbinical theology regarding proselyte baptism deserves mention. It appears that the reception of a Gentile convert into Judaism consisted of a threefold rite: circumcision, baptism, and a sacrifice. Thanks to circumcision and baptism, the non-Jew "entered the covenant" and became a full-fledged Israelite. Still, a burnt-offering had to be made by him before he could be admitted to any sacrificial meal. It seems that this ritual rose from Jewish consciousness of the necessity, for a Gentile proselyte, of repeating the triple experience of the *qahal* of Israel which prepared the people for the Sinaitic covenant. They were circumcised "a second time" (an inference from Jos 5:2-3); they were baptized in the desert (Ex 19:10); and they shared the covenant sacrifice (Ex 24:3-8).<sup>58</sup> This awareness of the need of repeating, in the life of the individual, the collective experience by Israel of God's saving judgments, we have already seen displayed by the *NT* writers who revert to *OT* events to express the mystery of Christian baptism.

### *John the Baptist and "the Restoration of All Things"*

The inclusion of John in the *NT* message of salvation must be credited neither to his personality nor to his teaching, about which so little is said, but to his divinely directed function, that of baptizing.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Burkhard Neunheuser, "Taufe und Firmung," in *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, ed. Schmaus-Geiselman-Grillmeier, 4/2 (Freiburg, 1956) 2.

<sup>58</sup> George Foot Moore, *Judaism* 1 (Cambridge, 1927) 334.

<sup>59</sup> The sobriquet "Baptist" is applied to John only by Mt and Lk; Mk and Jn simply apply to him the participle *baptizōn*.

In the Gospels Jesus points out the necessity and divine origin of this baptism (Lk 7:29-30) and appears to regard John's mission as comparable to His own (Mt 21:23-27). He also describes John's role in the history of *NT* salvation as somehow related to "the restoration of all things" (Mt 17:11; Mk 9:12). It is to be observed, however, that, while Jesus says "Elias has already come" and identifies him as John (Mt 17:12-13), He never actually says that John brought about "the restoration of all things." In order to grasp the precise meaning of this mysterious phrase, we must first recall John's mission as the Gospels present it, and investigate the nature of Johannine baptism.

John is clearly represented by the Synoptics as an *OT* prophet. Like his predecessor, he is a "herald" of the future Kingdom. He is Isaias "crying in the desert" (Mt 3:3), proclaiming "the Word of God" which "came to him" as it had come to the *OT* prophets (Lk 3:2). He is Elias, by his garb (Mt 3:4; 2 K 1:8) and by the angelic pronouncement that he will be "endowed with the spirit and power of Elias" (Lk 1:17), and by Jesus' declaration that he is "the Elias who is destined to come" (Mt 11:14). He is even "something more than a prophet" (Mt 11:9), because he is the messenger immediately preceding the Christ (Mal 3:1). According to the fourth Gospel, John's prophetic function is specifically "to give testimony" (Jn 1:7, 31).

John's baptism also pertains to the prophetic order. It was the visible sign of *metanoia*, the change of heart necessary for re-establishing good relations between Israel and Yahweh which the coming Kingdom demanded. It involved an act of faith and hope in Yahweh's anointed one. As Paul explains at Ephesus, "John practiced a baptism of repentance, telling the people they should make an act of faith in Him who was to come after him" (Acts 19:4). This *metanoia* was expressed by the public confession of sins (Mt 3:6; Mk 1:5) and immersion in the river Jordan. John himself described the rite as a lustration "with water, aimed at a change of heart" (Mt 3:11) or "a baptism in token of a change of heart, which looked to the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4). It was a symbol of the right dispositions for the coming Kingdom; it was not a rite of initiation into that Kingdom. It prepared men to receive the preaching of Jesus and to await a baptism of an entirely different order (Mt 3:11).

This doctrine of the two baptisms, one provisory, the other definitive, messianic, eschatological, is very important in *NT* baptismal theology

It has, however, long been a question with the *NT* critics whether such a conception really went back to the Baptist or whether it was an invention of early Christian apologetic interests. There has been a tendency to regard the phrase "in the Holy Spirit" (Mk 1:8; Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16) as put into John's mouth at a later period to prove the superiority of Christian baptism over Johannine. Joseph Schmitt has shown by a careful study of texts appearing in the Dead Sea literature that there is a good possibility that these Synoptic logia, ascribed to John, are authentic.<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to note also that the *OT* notion of fire as symbol of the divine judgment, which appears in John's description of Christ's baptism (Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16), finds an echo in the *Manual of Discipline*, where there is also question of an eschatological purification.<sup>61</sup>

The value of John's description of Christian baptism lies in its stress upon the essentially eschatological nature of the sacrament. *OT* prophecy characterizes the messianic age as an era when Yahweh will pour out His Spirit in abundance upon men (Jl 3:5 ff.), and also as the terrible "Day of Yahweh" (Amos 7:4; Is 33:27-30; Mal 3:2), when God is to pass a judgment, whose searching, relentless character is symbolized by fire. John's originality consists in his insight into the nature of Christian baptism as specified by these prophetic descriptions of the messianic times. This relation of baptism to the *eschaton* holds an important place in the *NT* conception of it. On Pentecost Peter would make it clear to his hearers that the "baptism with the Spirit" received by the apostolic group had inaugurated the days of the Messiah and was a sign of the imminence of the eschatological judgment (Acts 2:16-17). He was to point out, moreover, that the newly established means to "save yourselves from this perverse age" and to enter the new Israel of the "last days" was baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts

<sup>60</sup> Joseph Schmitt, *art. cit.* supra n. 7.

<sup>61</sup> IQS 4, 18-21, tr. Millar Burrows, *op. cit.* supra n. 5, pp. 375 f.: "But God in the mysteries of his understanding and in his glorious wisdom has ordained a period for the ruin of error, and in the appointed time of punishment he will destroy it forever. And then shall come out forever the truth of the world, for it has wallowed in the ways of wickedness in the dominion of error until the appointed time of judgment which has been decreed. And then God will refine in his truth all the deeds of a man, and will purify for himself the frame of man, consuming every spirit of error hidden in his flesh, and cleansing him with a Holy Spirit from all wicked deeds. And he will sprinkle upon him a Spirit of Truth, like water for impurity."

2:37–41). While the later experience of the apostolic Church would greatly clarify this eschatological aspect of baptism, still the credit for first describing it as a “sign of the end” rests with John.

According to the fourth Gospel, the Baptist also presents another facet of Christian baptism: its close relation to Christ’s death. The evangelist describes John as contrasting his baptism with the person, rather than the baptism, of Christ. “He who sent me to baptize with water had said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descend and rest, is He who baptizes with a Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen, and I have continued to testify that He is the Son of God” (Jn 1:33–34). This same Gospel records a Johannine saying which prophesies Jesus’ future, sacrificial death. “Here is the Lamb of God! He who is taking away the world’s sin” (Jn 1:29, 36). The context in which this is uttered makes it clear that a connection is intended between the baptism “with a Holy Spirit” brought by Jesus and His death for the sin of the world. Baptism’s efficacy stems from this future liberation by the Lamb of God.

We must now attempt to answer the question we raised earlier, as to the part played by John in “the restoration of all things.” The theme was, in late Judaism, connected with the return of Elias.

Remember, I am sending you Elias the Tishbite  
before the dawning of the great and manifest day of the Lord,  
who will re-establish (*apokatastēsei*) the right attitude of father to son,  
the right attitude of a man to his neighbour. (LXX: Mal 3:22–23)

Ben Sira repeats this doctrine, employing the same phraseology, in his praise of the prophet Elias:

Who, it is written, is to come with reproofs at the appointed time,  
to quiet anger before it becomes wrath,  
to correct (*epistrepsai*) the attitude of father to son  
and to establish (*katastēsei*) the tribes of Jacob. (Sir 48:10)

In the *NT* this same Elias-motif is recalled in the angel’s announcement to Zachary of John’s birth. “And he shall be His forerunner, inheriting the spirit and power of Elias, to correct (*epistrepsai*) the attitude of fathers to sons and the rebellious by the wisdom of holy men, to prepare for the Lord a readied people” (Lk 1:17).

While it is clear from this last citation that Elias’ work of “restor-

ing all things" falls upon John, the *NT* also ascribes the same function to Christ Himself. On ascension day the disciples evidently expect the risen Lord to perform this office: "Lord, are you at this time restoring (*apokathistaneis*) the sovereignty to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). In reply, while remarking that the revelation of this chosen time has been reserved by the Father's providence to Himself, Christ promises His own the gift of the Holy Spirit, who thus appears involved in this restoration. After Pentecost Peter is aware that the *apokatastasis pantōn* is to be the ultimate task of the parousiac Christ, "whom heaven must hold until the era of the restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21). Paul, in turn, connects it with the redemptive activity of the "second Adam" by whom "the rest of men will be restored (*katastathēsontai*) to holiness" (Rom 5:19). To the Ephesians he speaks of God's eternal plan of salvation, "which He decreed to put into effect in Him, as the economy of the fulness of time: to gather (*anakephalaiōsasthai*) all creation, in heaven as well as upon earth, under one head, Christ" (Eph 1:9-10).

Hence, on the one hand, it appears that the change of heart preached by John, with the external rite of baptism which symbolized it, begins "the restoration of all things" by preparing men to receive the Kingdom with the proper dispositions. On the other hand, the establishment of the Kingdom or sovereignty of Christ over all creation is effected by His death and resurrection, while His return in triumph at the end of the period during which His Kingdom is advanced in His Church, is to carry salvation to its perfection. Accordingly, "the restoration of all things" is a continuous process, initiated by John's baptism but carried on by the Church in obedience to the office imposed by the Master in virtue of the universal power conferred on Him by His death and resurrection:

Therefore, go and make disciples  
of all the nations,  
by baptizing them . . .  
and by teaching them  
to carry out everything  
that I have enjoined upon you. (Mt 28:19-20)

A deeper insight into the continuity between John's baptism and the Christian sacrament will be gained by the experience of the apostolic

Church during her first years, which will lead her to a fuller understanding of the antithesis "John with water—Christ with the Spirit." The discussion of this doctrinal development must be left for the next section of this study.

At the time of the Council of Trent there was a great deal of debate about a proposition which stated that "Christ's baptism did not nullify John's baptism, but merely added the promise to it." It is instructive to note that, while the wording of the proposition is open to criticism in certain respects, the Tridentine Fathers did not condemn it, but were content to anathematize the assertion that John's baptism had the same force as Christ's.<sup>62</sup> In point of fact, the *NT* would appear to make some sort of connection between the two baptisms, as will be seen from a study of the accounts of Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan.

### *Jesus' Baptism by John*

This important episode, narrated with some detail by each of the Synoptics (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22) and referred to by the fourth Gospel (Jn 1:32-33), enables us to clarify the relations seen by the *NT* writers between John's baptism and the Christian sacrament. That this narrative, so full of paradox, should have found a place at all in the Gospels, is proof of its essential value to Christian dogma. The author of Christian baptism accepts John's inferior baptism. Moreover, the theophany on this occasion of the Spirit who descends "like a dove" does not seem, from the accounts of the first two evangelists, to have been witnessed by any bystanders; and, presumably, the same holds true for the heavenly voice. The fourth Gospel adds that John also beheld the vision (Jn 1:32). What, then, is the purpose of this divine manifestation? While it was included in the apostolic preaching as Jesus' messianic anointing (Acts 10:38), it is for its significance to Christian belief that it is recounted in the written Gospels. According to the fourth Gospel, the episode shows the continuity between Johannine and Christian baptism. "That He might be made known in Israel—that is why I came baptizing with water" (Jn 1:31). The verses immediately following make it clear that it was

<sup>62</sup> H. Houbaut, "Jean-Baptiste (Baptême de saint)," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 8/1, 553-55. We shall point out the misconception in this proposition further on in our study.

precisely Jesus' manifestation as author of the sacrament of baptism of which John spoke. This scene, in which all the elements that are to constitute that sacrament are disclosed, the Spirit, the water, the presence of the triune Godhead, is the epiphany of baptism.<sup>63</sup>

*Baptismal Symbolism in Jesus' Public Ministry*

From the accounts of the public life in the Synoptics we can gather no more than obscure hints of the significance of Jesus' miracles and teaching for NT baptismal doctrine. Mark has preserved the account of two miracles in his Gospel which may contain some general sacramental teaching. The first, the cure of a deaf man whose speech was impaired (Mk 7:31-37), is of an unusually ritualistic nature, and its influence from earliest times upon the baptismal usages of Milan and Rome can be seen in the use of saliva and the word, *Ephphatha*.<sup>64</sup> The second miracle is the gradual healing of a blind man (Mk 8:22-26), narrated immediately after the disciples have displayed their lack of comprehension of the miracles of the multiplication of loaves (Mk 8:14-21). That the man recovers his sight only progressively in two stages seems intended to teach the disciples the deeper meaning and sacramental efficacy of Jesus' symbolic actions. However, it will be only in the fourth Gospel that the healing of blindness will be narrated because of its baptismal significance.

As regards Jesus' teaching in the first three Gospels, it is possible that the mysterious ejection of the man who came improperly clad to the wedding feast in the Matthean parable (Mt 22:11-14) indicates the necessity of baptism for entry into the Church.<sup>65</sup> There are also two logia of Jesus in which His future redemptive death is described as a "baptism" (Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50). They remind the reader of the essential relation of baptism to Jesus' death for men.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Albert Descamps, *Les justes et la justice dans les évangiles et le christianisme primitif hormis la doctrine proprement paulinienne* (Louvain-Gembloux, 1950) p. 115.

<sup>64</sup> H. B. Swete, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London, 1898) p. 152.

<sup>65</sup> Pierre Benoit, *L'Évangile selon saint Matthieu* (Paris, 1950) p. 126, considers that the wedding clothes symbolize "la pureté de vie (en théologie chrétienne, la Grâce) requise pour entrer dans la béatitude céleste." Is it not, however, a question here rather of entry into the Church?

<sup>66</sup> In addition to the Synoptic data here presented, one might conjecture that the references to the widow of Sarepta and to Naaman's cleansing (Lk 4:25-27) are to be taken as vague hints about the doctrine of the Eucharist and baptism. This becomes plausible when we recall that the whole scene is a Lucan reconstruction which forms the prologue in his Gospel to Jesus' public ministry.

While the only evident theological interpretation of Jesus' miracles by the Synoptics is that they constitute the initial attack upon Satan's hold on the world of men through deformity, disease, or death,<sup>67</sup> in the fourth Gospel several of the miraculous "signs" performed by Christ are interpreted as symbolic of baptism. At Cana the transformation of water used for "the purification of the Jews" into wine, which symbolizes the new dispensation of the Spirit,<sup>68</sup> is called a manifestation of Jesus' "glory" (Jn 2:1-11). This first sign given by Jesus to His disciples to evoke their faith in Him prepares the way for the doctrine of new birth in the dialogue with Nicodemus, for the self-effacement of the Baptist before Jesus, and for the substitution of "living water" for that from Jacob's well<sup>69</sup>—all of which are important for the theology of baptism.

The theme of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus is the mysterious rebirth effected by the Christian sacrament, and the author surrounds the scene with an air of mystery.<sup>70</sup> Nicodemus, a Pharisee, learned, upright, full of the earthy realism of Hebrew wisdom, learns the absolute necessity of baptism, described in characteristically Johannine *double entendre* as a birth "anew," or "from above" (Jn 3:3, 5). A proof of how closely, in the early preaching, baptism was related to the Kingdom-theme is shown by the fact that it is only here, in the entire fourth Gospel, that the phrase, "the Kingdom of God," occurs. This rebirth is effected by "water and Spirit." In this statement of Jesus, the most precise definition of baptism in the *NT*, we see how the material symbol realizes what it signifies, the communication of the Holy Spirit, of whom, in this Gospel, water is constantly presented as a symbol. The necessity of baptism arises from the hiatus existing between the natural (*sarx* for John connotes human nature in all its creaturely weakness) and the supernatural (Jn 3:6-7), whose mystery is described by a common biblical metaphor, the wind (Qoh 11:15; Sir 16:20-21). The efficacy of the sacrament is traced back to the harmony between the material sign and the heavenly reality, to which Jesus Himself testifies (vv. 10-13). This harmony will be established through Jesus' redemptive death and exaltation, of which Moses'

<sup>67</sup> "Baptism in the New Testament," p. 48.

<sup>68</sup> F. M. Braun, *La mère des fidèles* (2nd ed.; Tournai-Paris, 1954) p. 69.

<sup>69</sup> Donatien Mollat, "Le puits de Jacob," *Bible et vie chrétienne*, no. 6 (1954) pp. 83-91.

<sup>70</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (11th ed.; Göttingen, 1950) p. 93.

bronze serpent, "a symbol of salvation" (Wis 16:6), is the sign, and which in turn is a divine saving judgment or proof of the Father's love (vv. 14-19).

The fourth Gospel also mentions the practice, by Jesus' disciples during the public ministry, of a baptismal rite, which was doubtless akin to John's baptism, possibly a sign of attachment to Jesus as a disciple. This much is certain: it was not the Christian sacrament.<sup>71</sup> For one thing, John, who is represented here as still practicing his baptism (Jn 3:23), would have ceased his mission whose purpose would have thus been achieved. Moreover, as Père Lagrange remarks, the reason why the evangelist goes to such lengths to correct (Jn 4:2) a possible false impression (Jn 3:22) that Jesus Himself performed this rite is precisely to avoid giving this baptism the character of the Christian sacrament.<sup>72</sup>

These allusions to the Baptist and his baptism form the background against which the meeting of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well is introduced by the evangelist. John's last proclamation in this Gospel that Christ, as "God's ambassador, announces God's message, since He bestows the Spirit without stint" (Jn 3:34), and Jesus' desire to avoid the publicity which His ministry has caused by eclipsing that of John, as well as His decision to retire to Galilee through Samaria, are so many elements which form the prologue to the discourse on the "living water." This promise of "living water" which quenches the soul's desire for God and which becomes in the believer "a fountain of water welling up into eternal life" (Jn 4:13-14) is closely related to Christian baptism. In a later chapter the evangelist himself informs us that this "living water" is the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:39). Jesus' description of the future worship of God "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:23), far from promulgating a religion "of the heart," free from all external ceremonial, is complementary to the earlier sacra-

<sup>71</sup> A. d'Alès, *art. cit.* supra n. 27, col. 858, thinks it was: "Saint Augustin, aux prises avec le schisme donatiste, est heureux de pouvoir donner sa pleine valeur au principe théologique d'après lequel tout sacrement administré au nom du Christ est une oeuvre du Christ." Theologians might be well advised to show more reserve towards Augustinian exegesis when it is pressed into service as a hammer of the heretics.

<sup>72</sup> M.-J. Lagrange in his commentary on the fourth Gospel remarks (*op. cit.* supra n. 23, p. 91): "dire avec affectation qu'il ne baptisait pas, c'est éviter de donner à ce baptême le caractère du baptême chrétien, en parfaite conformité avec la doctrine de l'évangéliste que l'Esprit ne serait donné qu'après le départ du Christ (VII, 39; XVI, 7)."

mental teaching regarding the necessity of spiritual rebirth given to Nicodemus.<sup>73</sup>

The next scene in which a baptismal interest comes to the fore<sup>74</sup> is the cure of the man blind from birth who washes in the pool of Siloe (Jn 9:1-41).<sup>75</sup> As Jesus pronounces the words, "I am the light of the world," He "anoints" the blind eyes with mud and commands the man to go to a pool, the name of which is interpreted by the evangelist as "the One sent," that is, the Christ (the word actually means "conduit"). By the use of this symbolic etymology the writer shows that he has seen, in this command to wash in the pool which bears Christ's name, a symbol of baptism; and the reader is *ipso facto* given an insight into Jesus' reference to Himself as "light of the world." Christ's concluding remarks in this episode also draw attention to its baptismal signification. "I am come into this world for a judgment: that the sightless may see, and those who see may become blind" (Jn 9:39). The Johannine "judgment," which we have already seen mentioned in the Nicodemus *récit*, is the equivalent of the Pauline notion of redemption.<sup>76</sup> It is through baptism that the neophyte participates in this divine saving judgment of Christ.

A puzzling feature of the fourth Gospel's account of the Last Supper is, of course, the omission of the institution of the Eucharist; and the same might be said of the absence of any single scene which could be construed as the historical moment when baptism was instituted. C. K. Barrett has recently suggested a reason for this procedure which may well be correct. "The truth (in John's view) seems to be that they hang not upon one particular moment or command, but upon the whole fact of Christ in His life, death, and exaltation, and that they convey nothing less than this whole fact."<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> D. Mollat, *art. cit.* supra n. 69, p. 88.

<sup>74</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Les sacrements dans l'évangile johannique* (Paris, 1951) pp. 55-57, regards the scene at the pool of Bethesda also as baptismal.

<sup>75</sup> Even Père Lagrange admits the baptismal significance of this scene; cf. *op. cit.* supra n. 23, pp. 256-71.

<sup>76</sup> D. Mollat, *L'Évangile de saint Jean* (Paris, 1953) p. 22.

<sup>77</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London, 1955) p. 71. The author continues: "To suggest that on certain occasions, however august and solemn, Jesus said, 'Baptize,' or 'Do this in remembrance of me,' might be misleading. No one, when John wrote, questioned that Jesus had willed, and thus instituted, the sacraments; what was important was to safeguard them from petty and partial explanations."

There is, however, in the Johannine account of Christ's washing of the disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-15), a logion of Jesus which surely refers to baptism, and may also contain a veiled allusion to the Eucharist. The presence of such sacramental overtones would explain the evident importance of the incident in John's eyes, revealed by its solemn introduction (vv. 1-3), and by Jesus' concluding remark: "I have given you an example (*hypodeigma*),<sup>78</sup> in order that you may perform the same service as I have performed for you" (v. 15). The logion which touches on baptism is Jesus' observation that "the man who has taken a bath has no need of washing, but is entirely cleansed" (v. 10). This bath which needs no repetition is baptism, which can be received but once.<sup>79</sup> The *pedilavium* which is contrasted with it and which is declared to be a *sine qua non* of "having a part" with Christ (v. 8) is probably a symbol of the Eucharist.<sup>80</sup> John has thus juxtaposed the two principal Christian sacraments in order to point out their relation to each other.<sup>81</sup>

### Conclusions

The incidents of Jesus' public ministry which come into the written Gospels from the apostolic preaching have played their part in determining the NT theological developments on baptism. John's principal office, "the restoration of all things," which he performed by his baptism of repentance, gave Christianity its orientation as a "baptist" movement.<sup>82</sup> John's prophetic role is centered in his prediction of the future baptism with the Holy Spirit, whose eschatological nature he was the first to point out. He also drew attention to baptism's essential connection with Jesus' atoning death. In fact, John's providential mission and his part in the universal restoration is precisely to reveal to Israel the author of the Christian sacrament.<sup>83</sup> Thus it is in baptizing Jesus that John's activity reaches its consummation; and the theophany which occurs on that occasion is a divine revelation of the nature of baptism. The scene discloses the manner in which Christ will elevate

<sup>78</sup> C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* 2, 236.

<sup>79</sup> E. C. Hoskyns, *op. cit.* supra n. 54, pp. 436-39.

<sup>80</sup> L. Bouyer, *op. cit.* supra n. 53, p. 191.

<sup>81</sup> O. Cullmann, *op. cit.* supra n. 74, pp. 173-76.

<sup>82</sup> J. Schmitt, *art. cit.* supra n. 7, *Revue des sciences religieuses* 29 (1955) 394.

<sup>83</sup> P. van Imschoot, "Baptême d'eau et baptême d'Esprit saint," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 13 (1936) 653-65.

the Johannine symbol into an efficacious sign of the grace which, when once glorified, He will bestow by means of the Holy Spirit.

The baptismal significance of Jesus' public ministry, hinted at by the Synoptics, is highlighted in the fourth Gospel. Cana reveals the sacrament as the new wine of the messianic banquet, whose purifying powers surpass any of the "purifications of the Jews." The conversation with Nicodemus depicts baptism as a new birth or birth from above, effected by the water of baptism, an effective symbol of the presence of the Spirit. The Samaritan interlude insists upon this symbolic value by describing baptism as "living water" and Christianity as a religion "in spirit and in truth," or one whose sacramental practices are efficacious in the supernatural order. The cure of the blind man at the pool of Siloe shows how baptism produces the illumination of faith in a soul properly disposed to "the light of this world." The episode repeats an idea already present in the Nicodemus discourse: baptism is the sacramental symbol of that divine judgment which Jesus has entered the world to bring about. Jesus' remark to Peter during the *pedilavium* underscores the absolute necessity of baptism, yet its all-sufficient power to renovate the Christian. Finally, the omission of any words which suggest Jesus' institution of this sacrament at one specific moment, like the similar omission of the institution of the Eucharist, may be construed as an *argumentum confirmans* for the method we are employing in our investigation of *NT* baptismal doctrine. It is to the Christ-event in its totality, summing up in itself the whole *NT* and *OT* revelation of Him, that baptism and the other Christian sacraments owe their existence, their symbolism, and their efficacy.

#### BAPTISMAL SYMBOLISM AND CHRIST'S EXALTATION

In this final section we shall consider the effects upon baptismal symbolism of Christ's exaltation and of those experiences of the Body of Christ, His Church, which are revealed to us in the *NT* as the fruits of His *sessio ad dexteram Patris*. Under Christ's exaltation we include not only His resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Pentecostal Spirit, but also, following the conception found in the fourth Gospel, His salvific death on the cross. The experiences of the primitive Christian community which gave them, in the first years, a more pro-

found insight into the meaning of the sacrament which they began to confer on Pentecost, are likewise of paramount interest. Thus we shall be led to inquire into the signification they ascribed to baptism and its relation to the "imposition of hands," the sense of the obscure formula "baptism in Jesus' Name," the developments which caused a fuller understanding of the antithesis "John with water—Christ with the Spirit," and to review the earliest traces of primitive baptismal ritual found scattered through the *NT*.

### *Jesus' Death and Resurrection*

A salient feature of the Johannine view of the redemptive death of Christ is its character as the initial phase of Jesus' glorification.<sup>84</sup> John habitually thinks of Christ's salvific work as a "passing from this world to the Father" (Jn 13:1, 3), in which the first step is His "being lifted up from the earth" upon the cross. This theological viewpoint enables John to present Jesus' death as a foretaste of Pentecost and to show how it is related to the two sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. Accordingly, the episode of the piercing of Jesus' side with a lance is particularly significant in John's writings. The victory of the Christian faith rests ultimately upon Him "who came through water and blood and Spirit, Jesus Christ; not in water only, but in water and blood. And the Spirit is the one who attests this, since the Spirit is truth. The witnesses are three: the Spirit and the water and the blood. And these three are one" (1 Jn 5:6-8). The passage is a reminiscence of the eyewitness account of the scene on Calvary (Jn 19:35), written to deepen the faith of the Christian reader. "One of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance, and immediately blood and water issued forth" (Jn 19:34). There can be no doubt, given John's solemn attestation to the truth of this event and his reference to it in the first Johannine letter, that the evangelist attaches supreme importance to this symbolism. The whole sacramental orientation of the fourth Gospel, whose purpose is to show how, in baptism and the Eucharist, Jesus brings eternal life to the world, permits us to see in the water a symbol of baptism, in the blood a symbol of the Eucharist, the two sacraments which are primary "witnesses" to Christ's work of redemption. There

<sup>84</sup> Thus the passion is spoken of in terms of *doxa*: Jn 12:41; 17:5, 24; of *doxazein*: Jn 7:39; 12:16, 28; 13:31; of *hypsoun*: Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:32, 34.

is a third essential witness, the Spirit. Here we recall the singular expression used to describe Jesus' death: "and having bowed His head, He handed over the Spirit" (Jn 19:30). This departure from the normal and idiomatic Greek expressions found in the Synoptics<sup>86</sup> must be intentional on John's part. The evangelist has seen in Jesus' last breath the first outpouring of the Spirit. This detail adds further meaning to the blood and water issuing from Christ's side. It is by baptism and the Eucharist that the Spirit is principally communicated.

In Pauline theology the death and resurrection of Christ form one act by which the Father effects man's salvation: "He was handed over for our sins and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25). According to Paul, this double act of the redemption transcends time and terminates also in the Christian's dying and rising with Christ by means of baptism. Paul uses the baptismal rite of immersion to express this conception in a paragraph of Romans.

You are surely aware that we, who were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death. We were then buried together with Him by this baptism into His death that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may live by a new kind of life. For if we have grown together with Him into the likeness of His death, so also shall we grow with Him into the likeness of His resurrection. (Rom 6:3-5)

The expression of Paul's thought in the last sentence is complicated by the mixing of two metaphors: we have "grown into Christ," and we have been "fashioned after the pattern of His death and resurrection."<sup>86</sup> Paul probably did this deliberately to underscore the reality of what occurs in baptism.<sup>87</sup> Since we are dealing here with a transitional stage in Paul's thought, we do not find any explicit statement of the relation of the sacramental effects of baptism to Christ's resurrection. This aspect will be made clear in a subsequent stage of Pauline baptismal theology. "Buried together with Him in baptism, you have also been raised together with Him by it through faith in the power of God who raised Him from the dead. Yes, you who were dead because of your sins and physically uncircumcised, He has raised together with Him"

<sup>86</sup> Mt 27:50: *aphēken to pneuma*; Mk 15:37 and Lk 23:46: *exēpneusen*.

<sup>86</sup> Paul Gaechter, "Zur Exegese von Röm VI, 5," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 54 (1930) 88-92.

<sup>87</sup> Günther Bornkamm, "Taufe und neues Leben bei Paulus," *Theologische Blätter* 18 (1939) 235.

(Col 2:12–13). Of Paul's insight into the nature of baptism there can be no doubt: its symbolism has been made efficaciously sacramental by the twin events of Christ's death and resurrection.

*Christ's Ascension into Heaven*

Once Paul successfully integrated the resurrection into his baptismal theology, he was able to incorporate also Christ's ascension and His enthronement at God's right hand.

But God is so rich in mercy, that through the great love He had for us, even though we were dead because of our sins, He brought us back to life together with Christ (it is by His loving favor you have been saved), and raised us together with Him and made us sit down in heaven in union with Christ Jesus. (Eph 2:4–6)

The ascension of which Paul is speaking is that "theological ascension," as Pierre Benoit terms it,<sup>88</sup> the completion of Jesus' exaltation, His constitution as "Son of God in power through resurrection of the dead" (Rom 1:4). In virtue of this phase of the mystery of Christ the symbolism of baptism is further enhanced. The stark realism of the idea that the Christian has already been admitted to heavenly glory through baptismal union with the glorified Christ stresses Paul's realization of the Christian's present possession of the messianic blessings and his definitive triumph over the forces of evil. This latter element is probably also present in the mysterious reference in Petrine literature to Christ's *descensus ad inferos* to "make a proclamation to the spirits in prison" (1 Pt 3:19).

An important effect of Christ's ascension upon *NT* baptismal doctrine is, without any doubt, the creation of the first disciples' faith in His divinity, as Peter's first speech in Acts makes clear. "Now having been exalted to God's right hand and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you yourselves both see and hear. . . . Therefore, let the whole house of Israel know for a certainty that God has made Him Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you, for your part, have crucified" (Acts 2:33–36). But since the revelation of Christ's enthronement as God's Son belongs properly to Pentecost, it is to that mystery that we must now direct our attention.

<sup>88</sup> Pierre Benoit, "L'Ascension," *Revue biblique* 56 (1949) 161–203.

*Pentecost and the Practice of Christian Baptism*

The risen Jesus had, in virtue of His exaltation and universal dominion acquired through it, commanded His disciples to administer Christian baptism (Mt 28:18-20). He had likewise announced an event which was intended to prepare them for that ministry and for which they were to wait: "the promise of my Father," an investiture with "power from on high" (Lk 24:49), a baptism "with a Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). In expectation of its reception, the apostles elect Matthias to succeed the apostate Judas. While they thus seem to have been aware that the messianic era would be opened by this mysterious "baptism," they doubtless thought of it as the return of Christ in His parousia. It is important for the connection between Johannine and Christian baptism that they felt it necessary to choose a man who had been with Jesus Christ during the whole of His public ministry, "beginning from the baptism of John" (Acts 1:22). Whether this ambiguous phrase means (as it probably does) that the candidate must have received John's baptism, or whether it means that he had to have been present at John's baptism of Jesus, Johannine baptism was in some way involved in the prerequisites for apostleship. In the light of the fact that the only baptism received by the apostles was "baptism with a Holy Spirit" in the fires of Pentecost, this previous connection with Johannine baptism is highly significant for an understanding of Christian baptism.

The Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit produced a revolution: it created the Christian faith in the hearts of the disciples. They were made aware of Christ's divinity, of the personality of the Holy Spirit, of the inauguration of "the last times" by the Spirit's presence in their midst. Most important for our present study, they became conscious that they now formed, under the hegemony of the Spirit, the *qahal* of the new Israel.<sup>89</sup> This creation of what had been merely a group of Jesus' loyal adherents into the Church of the *NT* was the immediate result of their "baptism with a Holy Spirit." Since this unique experience, which could never be repeated in the lives of any other men, had constituted these disciples as the Church, they had no need of receiving the Christian sacrament of baptism. Yet this same con-

<sup>89</sup> "The Conception of Salvation in Primitive Christian Preaching," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 18 (1956) 231-54.

sciousness of the unique character of their own experience led them, according to the evidence of the *NT* (Acts 2:41), to impart Christian baptism to those who wished to be added "to the number of the saved" (Acts 2:47). In fact, we may say that the apostles looked upon the reception of this sacrament as reproducing, *so far as that was possible*, their own Pentecostal experience.

This view appears in Pauline baptismal theology as a theologoumenon. He declares to the Thessalonians that "God chose you from the beginning to be saved through consecration by the Spirit" (2 Th 2:13). His plea for unity at Philippi is based on "whatever participation there is in the Spirit" (Phil 2:1). To prevent the Galatians from succumbing to the temptation to accept circumcision, he asks: "Did you begin with the Spirit only to end now with the flesh?" (Gal 3:3). In enumerating for the Corinthians those sinners who "will not have any share in God's kingdom," he observes: "Some of you used to be like that. But you have been washed, you have been consecrated, you have been justified, by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and through the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). This last text implicitly shows how baptism, through its efficacious power to transmit the Spirit, is the sole rite of initiation into God's Kingdom. Later in this same epistle Paul expresses this idea in more characteristic terms. "We have all—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free men—been baptized by one Spirit to form one Body, and we have all drunk of the one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13).

Such theological development is the fruit of the earlier experiences of the primitive apostolic community, an important example of which is Peter's evangelization of Cornelius and his household at Caesarea. Before Peter had time to finish his catechetical instructions or to baptize this group, "the Holy Spirit fell upon all those listening to the gospel" (Acts 10:44), and they were caught up in ecstasy. Luke describes the phenomenon with the terms he had used for that of Pentecost. Peter himself, in giving an account of the happenings to the Jerusalem community somewhat later, is aware also of the similarity between the two situations. "The Holy Spirit fell upon them exactly as upon us in the beginning" (Acts 11:15).

Yet Peter's decision to have these Gentiles baptized seems to belie his words (Acts 10:48). He had in fact recognized an essential difference between this experience of Cornelius and his family, and that of

the disciples on Pentecost. While the Pentecostal event had transformed the apostolic assembly into the *ekklēsia*, the "new Israel," this later descent of the Spirit was simply proof to Peter that God willed to have these pagans admitted to the already existing Church by means of baptism.

An incident recounted much later in Acts also draws attention to this essential difference between the baptismal experience of the first disciples and those who subsequently joined the Church. Paul met a group of John's disciples living at Ephesus who had received Johannine baptism and who, after receiving baptism "in the Lord Jesus' Name," experienced, at the descent of the Holy Spirit, the same kind of ecstasy as that of the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 19:1-7). But the entry of these Johannites into the Church is evidently very different from the formation of the apostles into the Church. Both groups had received John's baptism; both had received the descending Spirit with charismatic effects. The difference between them lies in the necessary reception of Christian baptism by the Ephesian converts. Accordingly, we are now in a position to point out the dangerous inadequacy of the statement debated at Trent, that "Christ's baptism did not nullify John's baptism, but merely added the promise to it." While it is possible to apply this to the experience of the apostles, it is entirely misleading to predicate it of any others who joined the Church after it had been founded upon these first disciples.

Thus, from the earliest practices of the primitive community, baptism appears as the initiation rite into the "new Israel," the unique means of being saved from "this perverse age" (Acts 2:40). Like Johannine baptism, the Christian sacrament was necessarily to be received with *metanoia*. But in contrast to John's rite, baptism really effected the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Still, it would seem that in these early days a distinction was made (which certainly had disappeared by the time Jn 3:5 was written) between the effect of baptism and that of the imposition of hands. The one was regarded as the means of admission to the Church and it remitted sin; the other imparted the Spirit. This view is illustrated by Philip's apostolate in Samaria (Acts 8:5-17). The deacon Philip baptized those Samaritans who professed faith in the gospel; but a visit from Peter and John was necessary that they might lay their hands on them to communicate the

gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>90</sup> Yet even in these early years some awareness of the communication of the Spirit by baptism appears indicated in Acts. At Caesarea, after the Gentiles' reception of the Spirit, Peter says: "Surely no one *can hinder the water*, so that these men may not be baptized?" (Acts 10:46). It is difficult to explain this astonishing personification of the baptismal water except in terms of Peter's awareness that the water was the efficacious symbol of the living Spirit.

*"John with Water—Christ with the Holy Spirit"*

Another remark of Peter's in connection with the Cornelius episode makes it necessary to return to a consideration of the relations between Johannine and Christian baptism. Here it is a question of the evolution in the apostolic understanding of the antithesis "John with water—Christ with the Holy Spirit." In his account of the Caesarean miracle of tongues to the Jerusalem community, Peter describes how "the Holy Spirit descended upon them, just as upon us at the beginning. And I recalled the Lord's remark: 'John, He said, 'baptized with water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 11:15-16). Peter's apologia for admitting these pagan converts to Christian baptism is based upon his recollection of this logion of Christ's. To discover the logic in this train of thought we must realize the fuller sense which Peter has seen in this antithesis.

In the Gospel record where the saying occurs, it is put in the mouth of the Baptist (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:31-33) to point out the contrast between John's purely symbolic baptism and the efficacy of the future Christian sacrament. Peter had, as a disciple of John's (Jn 1:40-41), received his baptism. At Pentecost, he had undergone the "baptism with a Holy Spirit," whose effect, he was well aware, had been to create the Church out of himself and his fellow disciples. As a result, Peter saw a deeper meaning in this antithesis, which he had learned both from John and Jesus. Christian baptism owed something to John as well as to Christ. The ritual ablution with "flowing"

<sup>90</sup> The theological vagueness surrounding this primitive Christian view of the distinction between baptism and the imposition of hands makes it difficult to distinguish them, *sine addito* (as some modern theologians appear to do), as the two sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

water<sup>91</sup> was a legacy from Jesus' precursor; the efficacy of its newly created symbolism came from the risen Christ and His gift of the Spirit. John with water and Christ with the Spirit had each contributed (though on vastly different levels) to the sacrament.<sup>92</sup> The antithesis was henceforth to be understood as the definition of baptism (Jn 3:5). Cornelius' reception of the Spirit reminded Peter of his own Pentecostal experience, which had shed such light on the meaning of this antithesis and had been the signal to practice Christian baptism, and he had Cornelius baptized.

### *Baptism "in Jesus' Name"*

The meaning of the phrase, baptism "in Jesus' Name," has long been debated by *NT* scholars. St. Thomas appears to have thought that in the early years of the primitive Church baptism was so administered "by a special revelation of Christ" or a "dispensation," either to increase devotion to the holy Name or because, as Ambrose observes, the Name implies the whole Trinity.<sup>93</sup> The difficulty which St. Thomas and other Catholic theologians have experienced in explaining this disconcerting baptismal rite, unfortunately so well attested by the *NT*, arises from the supposition that they must explain how baptism could have another "form" (in the Scholastic sense) than the Trinitarian formula pronounced by the minister of the sacrament.<sup>94</sup> However, the *NT* evidence shows, I believe, that such an assumption is unwarranted.

Peter tells those who have come to the faith on Pentecost: "Repent, and let each of you have himself baptized in Jesus Christ's Name for the remission of his sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37-38). The Samaritans converted by Philip's preaching were "baptized in the Lord Jesus' Name" (Acts 8:10), as also were

<sup>91</sup> The ancient tradition that the water in baptism must "flow" goes back either to the fourth Gospel's "living water," i.e., spring-water (Jn 4:10, 14, etc.) or to the Johannine rite which was practiced in the "flowing water" of the Jordan. On the etymology of Jordan as "d. (immer) fliessende Strom," cf. Ludwig Koehler, in *Lexicon in veteris testamenti libros* (Leiden, 1953) p. 402.

<sup>92</sup> G. Jacquemet, "Baptême," *Catholicisme* 1 (Paris, 1948) 1207: "Jésus n'a donc pas eu à inventer le rite matériel du baptême. Mais c'est lui qui a décidé d'en faire le signe visible et efficace de l'entrée dans son royaume."

<sup>93</sup> *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 66, a. 6 ad 1m, 2m.

<sup>94</sup> L. Lercher, *Institutiones theologicae dogmaticae* 4/2 (3rd ed.; Innsbruck, 1948) 121, makes "Baptism in Jesus' Name" an objection to his thesis on the *forma baptismi*.

the Johannites of Ephesus by Paul (Acts 22:16). Ananias' remark to the blinded Saul after his conversion gives us a clue to the meaning of this descriptive formula. "Arise, be baptized, and be washed from your sins by invoking His Name" (Acts 22:16). This text shows that the invocation of Jesus' Name at baptism was made not by the minister of the sacrament but by the neophyte. A remark of Paul's to the Corinthian community, whose unity was menaced by a certain partisan spirit, gives another hint. "But was it Paul who was crucified for you? Or were you baptized in Paul's name?" (1 Cor 1:13). The invocation of Jesus' Name by the candidate for baptism was a declaration of his willingness to become a follower of Christ, a desire springing from his belief in the redemptive value of Jesus' death and leading him to seek entry into the unity of the Church. Baptism, for Paul, is the sacrament of the unity of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:4-6).

We must now ask what was meant in the early Church by the phrase "Jesus' Name." As the citation of an early hymn in the letter to the Philippians shows (Phil 2:9-11), it denoted not the holy Name, Jesus, but the new Name, *Kyrios*, conferred on the exalted Christ at His enthronement at God's right hand (cf. also Heb 1:4-5). The acclamation *Iēsous Kyrios*, was a popular credal formula, expressing faith in the divinity of Christ;<sup>95</sup> and the great devotion which is manifested in Acts towards this Name is a sign of the central position of this dogma from the beginning of the Church (Acts 2:21; 3:6; 4:12, 29-30, 31; 5:41).

Thus it becomes clear that baptism was referred to as "in Jesus' Name" because its reception was accompanied by the neophyte's act of faith in the principal mystery of Christianity. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that this revelation of Jesus' divinity, expressed as the Father's bestowal of the divine Name *Kyrios* on His Son, was given simultaneously, on Pentecost, with the revelation of the Spirit's personality. Accordingly, in confessing that "Jesus is *Kyrios*" (Phil 2:11; 1 Cor 8:6; 12:3; Rom 10:9; 2 Cor 4:5), the Christian implicitly acknowledged the Father as source of Jesus' glory and the Spirit as gift of his glorified Master.

By the time that Greek Matthew was written in the last decades of the first century, the Trinitarian formula, pronounced (it would seem)

<sup>95</sup> "Primitive Christian Preaching," pp. 245-48.

by the minister of baptism, had come to be regarded, at least in the community where that Gospel originated, as an essential part of the baptismal rite. It is for this reason that the evangelist places these highly important words in the mouth of the risen Christ (Mt 28:19). It is probable that in the early days, when it was almost entirely a question of admitting adults to the community, the religious meaning of baptism was regarded as sufficiently well designated by the candidate's profession of faith in the lordship of Christ.<sup>96</sup> With the introduction of infant baptism, however, the need of having this designation made by someone else (obviously the minister himself) resulted in a gradual change of custom.<sup>97</sup> With time also, the Trinitarian formula, which had been implicit in the early baptismal profession, was made explicit. This point of development had been reached well before the writing of the Greek edition of the first Gospel.

In this connection a word must be said about a Pauline text which is commonly supposed to refer to the "matter and form" of baptism: "Christ loved the Church and handed Himself over on her behalf, that He might consecrate her by purifying her in the bath of water accompanied by a word" (Eph 5:26-27). Are there any grounds for assuming that *en rēmati* designates the "form" of the sacrament? The word *rēma* is employed by Paul elsewhere in what is almost certainly a credal formula (probably used in the baptismal ceremony) to denote the profession of faith "*Iēsous Kyrios*." "But what does it (Scripture) say? 'The word (*to rēma*) is close to you, on your lips and in your mind!' It refers to the word of faith (*to rēma tēs pisteōs*) which we preach, namely, that if you confess with your lips 'Jesus is *Kyrios*' and you believe with your mind that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:8-9). In Hebrews the same term appears in a description of the neophyte at his baptism as "having

<sup>96</sup> Acts' account of Philip's baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch makes this point clear (Acts 8:36-38). In this *recit* in which the baptismal catechesis is reported in such detail, it is worthwhile observing that no formula is recorded as used by Philip in the administration of baptism. Moreover, given the fact that v. 37 is an interpolation from some very early baptismal interrogation (both Irenaeus and Cyprian read the verse in their editions of Acts), it is odd that the interpolator did not interject the missing formula into v. 38—if at the time there were words pronounced by the minister.

<sup>97</sup> I owe this suggestion to my colleague, R. A. F. MacKenzie, whose untiring help in the redaction of this article I should also like to acknowledge with gratitude.

tasted God's fair word (*kalon Theou rēma*)" (Heb 6:5). Both texts show that *rēma* is the ordinary expression for the baptismal profession of faith; and this is probably what the Ephesians text refers to also.

### *Conclusions*

Jesus' glorification, if by that term we understand the mysteries of His death, resurrection, ascension, enthronement as *Kyrios*, and the consequent sending of the Spirit to create His Kingdom, the Church, played a dominant role in shaping the symbolism of baptism. Indeed, as a passage in Acts (which, in the opinion of critics, comes from a primitive source) indicates, the apostolic community firmly believed that her risen Master's promise of continual presence in her midst as Emmanuel (Mt 28:20; cf. also Mt 1:23) was fulfilled in a dynamic way in the baptismal liturgy. This ancient text, referring to this liturgical presence of Christ, is found in a summary of one of Peter's early discourses. "By raising His Servant, *God has sent Him to you* first of all, *to bless you*, by turning each of you from your sins" (Acts 3:26). As has been shown elsewhere,<sup>98</sup> this presence of Christ is realized through the operations of the Holy Spirit in baptism. A similar notion is found in Paul's writing, where he speaks of the baptismal experience of a Jewish convert to Christianity:

Yet to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil hangs before their minds. "But when anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is snatched away." The Lord is the Spirit; and where the Lord's Spirit is present, there is freedom. And all of us, while with unveiled face we reflect, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image with ever-increasing glory, as (one would expect) by the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:15-18)<sup>99</sup>

This same theological conception we have already seen operative in the fourth Gospel, whose author desires to show, for the benefit of "those who have not seen" the Jesus of the public life but "have believed" the apostolic testimony, how the exalted Christ, who lives on in the Church, particularly through the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, is the same Jesus who lived amongst men, died, and rose from the dead.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup> "Primitive Christian Preaching," pp. 244-45.

<sup>99</sup> S. Lyonnet, "S. Cyrille d'Alexandrie et 2 Cor 3, 17," *Biblica* 32 (1951) 25-31, has cited some texts of Cyril which indicate that he understood this passage in a baptismal sense.

<sup>100</sup> O. Cullmann, *op. cit.* supra n. 74, pp. 26-27.

As a consequence of this truth that the risen Lord through His Spirit dwells in His Church and in the individual Christian, the experiences of the apostolic Church, reported in the *NT*, become formative factors in the development of baptismal symbolism. At Pentecost the apostles became aware that Christian baptism was the means of communicating the Spirit they themselves had received. If, at first, they did not express this doctrine with complete clarity, it is found enunciated in the Pauline and Johannine theologies. While they saw from the beginning the superiority of the Christian sacrament in comparison with John's rite, they gradually recognized the providential part John had played in the history of baptism. The signification of this sacrament as unique means of admission into the Body of the exalted Christ demanded on the part of the recipient a profession of faith in the divinity of the Lord Jesus. This led to its being commonly designated as "baptism in Jesus' Name." Before the close of the apostolic age, however, the practice of having the minister pronounce the liturgical formula, "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," became universally adopted. Had not the Church always been aware, at least implicitly—as the prominence given the baptismal credal formula in the *NT* shows—that such was her divine Lord's intention?