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Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle  
Baum Henry Flaubert Nietzsche Willis  
Leslie Dumas Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain  
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato  
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**Water Baptism A Pagan and  
Jewish Rite but not Christian,  
Proven By Scripture And History  
Confirmed By The Lives Of Saints  
Who Were Never Baptized With  
Water**

James H. Moon

# Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: James H. Moon

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-8366-8

[www.tredition.com](http://www.tredition.com)

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## "The Commission"

Did Christ command his disciples to baptize with water?

Let us search the New Testament and see what it says.

We find the four evangelists and Peter each render Christ's command to his apostles in very different language.

Matthew's version [1] is generally adduced to support water baptism.

We cannot assume that in Matthew, our Saviour's words are quoted verbatim, while Mark, Luke, John and Peter are all in error or less reliable, particularly as this part of Matthew claims for itself to have been written a long time after, as appears by the statement that "This saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." [2]

Seven different accounts of the "apostolic commission" are given in the New Testament. [3]

Did not each of these writers express in his own language what he understood to be Christ's command to his disciples and will not these seven different records all agree in substance if genuine?

Let us seek that interpretation which harmonizes them all and not pin our faith to the popular conception of one version alone.

[Pg 2]

We will turn first to the one only recorded allusion which our Saviour ever made to water baptism. [4]

We here find that he commanded his apostles not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father which, said he, ye have heard of me; for John truly baptised with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.

Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. [5]

These are given as the last words of our Saviour before his ascension. He speaks of John's baptism as the water baptism of the past,

and of Holy Spirit baptism as the baptism of the future. By this Holy Spirit baptism his apostles are to receive power to become his [Pg 3] witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth. There is nothing whatever which implies a command to baptize with water. This whole context militates against the belief that Christ ever gave such command. [6]

This version of the "apostolic commission" stands prominent and is worthy of double consideration because it is sustained by the testimony of Peter, [7] who remembered these words of our Lord, and quoted from them as being fulfilled when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the household of Cornelius as he preached. [8]

According to John's account of the commission, Christ said to his apostles, "As my Father hath sent Me even so send I you," and we read that He was sent to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Again, He commanded them to feed his lambs and feed his sheep. [9]

John never intimates that they were sent to baptize with water.

Had Christ commanded his disciples to baptize all nations with water, John would certainly have known it, and could not have failed to report a command of such [Pg 4] world-wide application, John's silence is further evidence that no such command was given.

There can be no baptism in the commission other than the baptism of the Holy Spirit according to John's record as we have it.

According to Luke [10]: Christ commanded his apostles to preach among all nations repentance and remission of sin in his name, after they should be endued with power from on high.

Luke does not mention baptism, only as power from on high. Nothing which even suggests a command to baptize with water.

If such command was given Luke surely knew it. He tells us about Christ's own baptism of the Holy Spirit and his command to preach among all nations; [11] why does he not tell us about this command to baptize these nations with water? Is it not plainly because there was no such command?

According to foot-note in our revised version, [12] and other authorities, the two oldest known copies of Mark's record omit the twelve last verses, and another [Pg 5] ancient manuscript, lately

found, also omits them and states that they were by Aristion the elder. As the authenticity of the account of the commission in Mark's record is questioned, we omit comment, altho' we see nothing to conflict with the other six versions.

According to Matthew Christ commanded his disciples to go, teach all nations, baptizing them (not *in* the name, but) *into* the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. [13]

No water is mentioned. He commanded them to baptize into the Divinity, not in water.

This harmonizes all the evangelists with both Peter and Paul.

If we reject this view and assume that in Matthew [14] water baptism is intended to be understood, then we are compelled to believe that this interpretation of Matthew, with its formula for baptism, was conceived after the apostles' time; was unknown to them, and is a human conception and not a correct rendering of the teachings of Jesus. Because with water introduced, it stands alone and is out of harmony with the whole of Christ's teachings [Pg 6] upon other occasions, and because it conflicts with all our other six versions of the commission; and because (as we read), the apostles and first Christians never did baptize with the formula prescribed in Matthew, which is conclusive evidence that to their understandings Christ never commanded them to do so. And again, because the apostles and first Christians did continue to baptize with water, sometimes without formula but mostly in the name of Jesus Lord or Christ. This they would not have done in defiance of Christ's command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Upon these and many other grounds we claim that Christ never did command his disciples to baptize with water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, nor in any way whatever. [15]

According to Peter's account of the commission, Christ commanded his apostles to preach to the people. He mentions no command to baptize. [16]

Peter did preach to the people and the Holy Spirit fell upon them as it had fallen upon others of them in the beginning, at Pentecost. [17] Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he said

"John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

[Pg 7]

Here Peter [18] was made instrumental in baptizing with the Holy Spirit through Gospel preaching, and he recognized this to be the same baptism which his Lord [19] had promised should supercede John's water baptism [20] and the same as that with which they were filled eight years before, in the beginning at Pentecost, and the Pentecost baptism [21] he said was that which the prophet Joel foretold should be poured out upon all flesh; upon sons and daughters, [22] servants and handmaidens, and that they should prophecy.

Can anything be plainer than that this Pentecost baptism [23] and that the baptism which was poured out upon the household of Cornelius as Peter preached [24], and the baptism which our Lord promised in the place of John's water baptism and the baptism which Joel foretold should be poured out upon all flesh are all one and the same baptism, and does it not follow that this is the baptism of the commission, the one baptism of the Gospel, and [Pg 8] that this is Christian baptism and that there is no water in it? [25]

Because Peter and others continued to baptize with water is no evidence to the contrary. They continued their old Jewish customs generally. They pronounced it necessary to abstain from certain meats. They insisted that Paul should adhere to circumcision. They refused to eat with Gentiles. With such Jewish proclivities how could they at once abandon water baptism? [26]

Some evidently realized that John's water baptism had ended at Pentecost, but they were not prepared to drop it entirely, so sought to perpetuate it by repeating the words, "In the name of Jesus, Lord or Christ." They claimed no divine authority for using this formula and the disciples of water baptism in our day mostly discard it. [27]

Baptism with the formula, "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" [28] is not to be considered in connection with the apostles and first Christians, as they never mention it and evidently never practised it. Such formula was unknown at that time. It came in as an after [Pg 9] thought; a human invention of later date.

The great diversity in the form of expression used by each of the evangelists and Peter in defining Christ's commission to his apostles is positive evidence that they understood him to prescribe no formula for baptism and it is confirmation that no formula was given that they and the first Christians for ages adhered to no one set form of words when baptizing with water.

"In His name," as Christ is quoted by Luke, and in substance by Mark, John and Peter, always implies in, into or with his Spirit or power, and not a common given name which mortals may utter. In this name or power Christ commanded his apostles to preach. [29]

"Into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit," as in Matthew [30] alone Christ's command is interpreted, has the same implication and not a mere name or formula which human lips may sound. To repeat these words in connection with baptism is to substitute the voice of man for the power of God.



## FOOTNOTES:

[1] Mat. 28.19

[2] Mat. 28.15

[3] Mat. 28.19; Mark 16.15; Luke 24.47; Jon. 20.21; Acts 1.8; Acts 10.42; 1 Cor. 1.17

[4] Acts 1.4,5; Acts 11.16

[5] Acts 1.8

[6] Acts 1.5; Acts 11.16; Acts 1.8

[7] Acts 11.15, 16

[8] Acts 10.42, 45

[9] Jon. 20.21; Jon. 1.33; Jon. 21.15, 17

[10] Luke 24.47, 49

[11] Luke 3.16; Luke 24.47, 49

[12] Mark 16.9, 20

[13] Mat. 28.19 R.v.

[14] Mat. 28.19

[15] Mat. 28.19; Acts 8.12, 13; Acts 8.38; Acts 9.18; Acts 16.15, 33; Acts 18.8, 25; Acts 2.38; Acts 8.16; Acts 10.48; Acts 19.5

[16] Acts 10.42

[17] Acts 11.15; Acts 10.44; Acts 11.16

[18] Acts 10.44

[19] Acts 11.16

[20] Acts 2.4

[21] Acts 2.16

[22] Joel 2.28

[23] Acts 2.4

[24] Acts 10.44, 45

[25] Acts 1.5; Acts 10.16; Acts 2.16, 18; Joel 2.28

[26] Acts 15.28, 29; Acts 21.21, 24; Acts 11.2, 3; Gal. 2.12, 14

[27] Acts 2.38; Acts 8.16; Acts 10.48; Acts 19.5

[28] Mat. 28.19

[29] Luke 24.47; Mark 16.17; Jon. 16.23; Acts 10.43

[30] Mat. 28.19 R.v.

[Pg 10]

## **PAUL'S "COMMISSION."**

Paul said of his own commission: "Christ send me not to baptize but to preach the gospel" and that "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe." [31]

Paul's commission was essentially the same as that given to other apostles to preach among all nations repentance and remission of sin in his name with power from on high; for there can be no salvation without repentance and remission of sin. [32]

Had our Saviour ordained water baptism to the end of the world the four evangelists would certainly have all known it and would have testified to it as they and Peter all bear testimony to Christ's own baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul would have known it and would not have denied it. Peter would not have said "Christ commanded us to preach to the people" without making any allusion to water baptism. [33]

That Peter should say Christ commanded his apostles to preach to the people and never at any time intimated that he commanded them to baptize with [Pg 11] water, certainly suggests that no such command was given and that the present popular conception of the apostolic commission has originated since Peter's time and is a human invention and has no divine authority.

Neither the apostles nor first Christians could have understood that Christ commanded them to baptize with water nor that he prescribed any formula therefor, otherwise they would have used this formula and have referred to this command as authority for their subsequent water baptism. But so far as Scripture informs, no one in

those early days ever did baptize with water in the name of "The Father, Son and Holy Spirit," nor ever heard of such formula.

Sometimes they baptized in the name Jesus, Lord or Christ, but never one word about the Father nor the Holy Spirit. [34]

Some baptized without formula, or if they did use formula it was not considered of sufficient importance to mention. [35]

They baptized with water before Christ gave them their commission, and continued to baptize in the same way after, [Pg 12] which is another proof that their authority for water baptism did not originate in Christ's command. [36] Nearly thirty years after Christ, some believers who were fervent in Spirit and instructed in the ways of the Lord, continued to baptize with John's baptism and we don't know how much longer it continued. [37]

When was Christ's command first quoted as authority for water baptism?

Not in apostolic times, not until long after.

When did man first presume to baptize with water, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

Some of our oldest writings [38] indicate the use of this formula in some places, probably in the early part or middle of the second century. Yet, Schaff, who was familiar with all these old records, says this formula is not traceable in its present shape earlier than the fourth century.

Evidently the apostles and first Christians continued to baptize with water, because it was a conspicuous feature in the special mission of John the Baptist as well as a Jewish rite in which they [Pg 13] and their fathers were educated. They had no thought of Christ's command as authority for water baptism.

Paul said plainly that he had no such authority. Christ sent him not to baptize but to preach the Gospel. [39]

Paul thanked God that he had baptized so few. [40] He could not have spoken thus slightly of Christian baptism. It must have dawned upon him that in the fulness of the Christian dispensation there was no place for water baptism; otherwise how could he thank God that he had baptized so few? What dispenser of water

baptism could give such thanks in this day? Paul circumcised Timothy, and perhaps Titus, because of the Jews. Did he not baptize those few with water for the same pacific purpose, or did he not at first receive full light upon this subject? [41]

Some assume that Christ gave others authority to baptize which did not extend to Paul.

We cannot believe that all Christ's ministers to the end of the world were commissioned to baptize with water, Paul only rejected. [42] This reflects unjustly upon Paul, the great apostle to us Gentiles. [43] Is it not a mere evasion of the gospel truth here and elsewhere inculcated, that Christ gave no commission to baptize with water? [44]

[Pg 14]

John the Baptist was sent or commissioned to baptize with water and the Holy Spirit once descended as John baptized with water. [45]

The apostles were commissioned to go preach the Gospel after they should be endued with power from on high. [46]

We read that the Holy Spirit descended as the apostles preached the Gospel. [47] Neither the apostles nor disciples were ever commissioned to baptize with water; and so far as we read, the Holy Spirit never descended as they did baptize with water.

## FOOTNOTES:

- [31] 1 Cor. 1.17; Acts 13.47; Rom. 1.16
- [32] Luke 24.47; Luke 24.49
- [33] Mat. 28.19; Mat. 3.11; Mark 1.8; Luke 3.16; Jon. 1.26, 33; Acts 11.16; 1 Cor. 1.17; Acts 10.42
- [34] Acts 2.38; Acts 8.16; Acts 10.48; Acts 19.5; Acts 8.12, 13
- [35] Acts 8.38; Acts 9.18; Acts 18.8, 25; Acts 16.15, 33
- [36] Jon. 4.2
- [37] Acts 18.25; Acts 19.3, 5
- [38] "The Ante-Nicene Fathers"; "The teachings of the twelve Apostles"; Ecclesiastical History Vol. 1, P. 164
- [39] 1 Cor. 1.17
- [40] 1 Cor. 1.14
- [41] Acts 16.3; Gal. 2.3, 5; 1 Cor. 1.14
- [42] 1 Tim. 2.7
- [43] 2 Tim. 1.11
- [44] 1 Cor. 1.17
- [45] Jon. 1.33; Mark 1.10; Luke 3.22
- [46] Luke 24.47, 49; Acts 1.4, 8; Acts 10.42, 45; Acts 11.15, 16
- [47] 1 Cor. 2.4; 1 Thes. 1.5; 1 Peter 1.12

## WATER BAPTISM IN HISTORY AS A PAGAN AND JEWISH RITE.

From the writings of Grotius we gather that some ancients baptized with water in memory of the world being saved from the waters of the deluge.

Bancroft says: It is related by all the old Spanish historians that when the [Pg 15] Spaniards first visited Yucatan they found baptism administered to both sexes between the ages of three and twelve: It

was the duty of all to have their children baptized, for by this ablution they believed they received a purer nature and were protected against evil spirits and misfortune. None could marry without it. [48]

Some baptised their children with ceremonies, which in many points resembled those in use among Christians. [49]

Smith in his Bible dictionary [50] says: It is well known that ablution or bathing was common in most ancient nations as a preparation for prayers and sacrifice or as expiatory of sin.

There is a natural connection in the mind between the thought of physical and spiritual pollution. In warm countries this connection is probably closer than in colder climates; hence the frequency of ablution in the religious rites of the East.

The history of Israel and the law of Moses abound with such lustrations. The consecration of the high priest deserves special notice. It was first by [Pg 16] baptism then by unction and lastly by sacrifice.

From the gospel history [51] we learn that at that time ceremonial washings had been greatly multiplied by traditions of the doctors and elders. The most important and probably one of the oldest of these traditional customs was the baptism of proselytes.

These usages of the Jews will account for the readiness with which all men flocked to the baptism of John the Baptist. [52]

Schürer in his history of the Jewish people [53] devotes several pages to giving reasons for believing that the Jews baptized proselytes long before the coming of Christ.

Dean Stanley says baptism is inherited from Judaism. [54]

Many other good authorities might be quoted to support the belief that water baptism and other ordinances were greatly multiplied among many Jews during the last few hundred years before Christ. There are no Scripture writings which cover this period.

Tylor says: The rites of lustration [Pg 17] which hold their places within the pale of Christianity are in well marked connection with Jewish and Gentile ritual. [55]

Baptism by water, the symbol of the initiation of the convert, history traces from the Jewish rite to that of John the Baptist and thence to the Christian ordinance.

As we understand, the Christian ordinance here referred to by Tylor, is traceable through many modifications back to those carnal ordinances, those weak and beggarly elements, which Paul says were imposed until the time of reformation. [56] It has no authority from Christ and is therefore not Christian baptism.

As we read: Pagans of old baptized the face. Under the law of Moses the hands were baptized. John the Baptist baptized the whole body. Our Saviour baptized the feet. [57] Now Christians complete the cycle and again as of old baptize the face.

Some early Christians deferred water baptism to middle life or old age and many were never so baptized. Now Christians insist upon infant baptism.

Some early Christian said: If only one [Pg 18] finger remains above water the baptism is not valid. Now Christians say: "A few drops of water are as good as a river."

What shall we say? Wisdom answers. Let us hold to what Christ says: "John indeed baptized with water but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." [58]

We learn from the Brahmins on the Ganges, and the dwellers by the Nile and from explorers all around the world that water baptism was administered as an ancient religious rite among many so called heathen nations when first discovered.

Some we read baptized to appease the wrath of the Gods and to expiate sin.

Some Christians now claim that by water baptism a child of wrath becomes a child of Grace and sins are washed away.

The similarity of these two ideas, one Pagan and the other Christian, suggests a common origin far back in the ages before man learned that God is love and that Jesus likened the Kingdom of Heaven to little children without baptism. [59]

[Pg 19] Augustine who, in the fifth century, formulated from previously conceived theories the dogma of original sin and baptismal

regeneration, was himself educated a Pagan and was well versed in that culture, and it impressed itself upon his writings and the church which adopted them. [60]

The little children which Jesus took in his arms and blessed and to whom he compared the heavenly kingdom were Jews, and Jews did not baptize their children. [61]

That, same loving Jesus, who blessed those children in Judea, we do believe now blesses our little ones and is watching over them for good and that to these also the heavenly kingdom is compared. To His tender care and keeping we reverently commit ourselves and them, and we do feel that for us it would be sinful to distrust this loving Saviour and turn to man for carnal baptism.

Justin Martyr, a prominent Christian writer of the second century said to Typho (a Jew) [62]: "John was a prophet among your nation after which no other [Pg 20] appeared among you. He cried as he sat by the River Jordan: I baptize you with water to repentance but he that is stronger than I shall come whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

In all the scriptures from Genesis to Revelations we find no intimation of any other Christian baptism, only this one baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Feet washing was administered by Christ [63] and impressively commended to his disciples but it is plainly not the one baptism of the gospel.

From time immemorial some Pagans all around the world baptized with water.

By the law given through Moses the Jews baptized with water. [64]

John the Baptist was sent to baptize Jews with water. [65] But no one was sent to Baptize us Gentiles with water. God sent his son to baptize us with the Holy Spirit. All flesh, Jews and Gentiles, are objects of this one baptism. [66]

This is the one baptism of the Gospel and we know of no other. [67]