

WESTERN WISDOM BIBLE STUDY

The Baptism

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. —*Matt. 3:13-17*

All four Gospels record the occurrence of the mystic rite of Baptism, this being a definite step on the Christian Mystic Path. It is also one of the Sacraments, which may be called keystones in the arch of evolution, for they inculcate morals of the loftiest nature. Just what constitutes baptism, however, is a question about which there have been arguments of great length and intensity.

In order to obtain a true idea of baptism it is necessary that we revert to the early history of the human race as recorded in the Memory of Nature. There was a time when humanity lived in the foggy atmosphere which surrounded the Earth at that stage in our evolution. They lived in one vast brotherhood, innocent and childlike. In time the fog condensed and water flooded the depressions upon the Earth's surface. Simultaneously, the atmosphere cleared, and the eyes of man were opened, and he perceived himself as a separate Ego. Then the universal Spirit of love was superseded by egotism and self-seeking. Today when a person is admitted to the spirit-

ual institution called a church, where love and brotherhood are the basis of action, it is appropriate to carry him *under the waters* of baptism in symbol of the beautiful condition of innocence and love which existed when man dwelt *under the mists* in that period long ago. As Max Heindel has described in *Ancient and Modern Initiation*:

“Then the Spirit is conducted under the waters of Atlantis, where it sees the primal condition of brotherly love and kindness; where it perceives God as the great Father of His children, who are there surrounded by His wonderful love. By the conscious return to this Ocean of Love, the candidate becomes so thoroughly imbued with the feeling of kinship that the spirit of egoism is banished from him forever. It is because of this saturation with the Universal Spirit that he is able later to say: ‘If a man takes your coat, give him your cloak also; if he asks you to walk one mile with him, go with him two miles.’ Feeling himself one with all, the candidate does not even consider the murder of himself as mistreatment, but can say: ‘Father, forgive them.’ They are identical with himself, who suffers by their action; he is the aggressor as well as the victim. Such is the true Spiritual Baptism of the Christian Mystic, and any other baptism that does not produce this universal fellow-feeling is not worthy of the name.”

This baptism may take place at any time and at any place, for it occurs at the moment when the candidate feels with sufficient intensity the longing to know the cause of sorrow and alleviate it.