

ARTICLE VII.

Ἐργὸν βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι. — JOHN I. 26.

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OUR English version of the scriptures, it is said by some, errs in translating these words: "I baptize with water." The preposition *ἐν*, it is said, should be translated "in"; and when the dative *ὕδατι* is used without a preposition, *ἐν* should be understood, and the phrase should be rendered, "in water." Instead of this, we are told, they have translated it, "with water," as if *σύν* were understood. The correction of these errors, it is claimed, would show, even to the mere English reader, that "baptize" means "to plunge."¹

The question thus raised concerning the meaning of *βαπτίζω*, as shown by its grammatical construction, is certainly a fair one, and we propose to examine it carefully.

In the first place, then, it is a mistake to suppose that where *ὕδατι* is used without a preposition the translators understood *σύν*. The dative with *σύν* never designates the instrument, but always a companion, or accompaniment, or co-operator. *Βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς σύν ὕδατι* must mean, "I baptize you and water, both together," or, "I and water, acting together, baptize you." It could not mean, "I baptize you, using water as an instrument"; for *σύν* never means "with, as an instrument." The few apparent exceptions are cases where the instrument is personified and spoken of as a companion or an assistant.

The fact is, that in such phrases no preposition at all is understood in the Greek, though we must supply one in English. By one of the best-known idioms of the Greek language, the relation of instrumentality is expressed by putting the name of the instrument in the dative without a

¹ *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Jan. 1869, p. 43.

preposition, as we, in English, express the relation of ownership, by putting the owner's name in the possessive case without a preposition. So Luke, the purest Greek writer in the New Testament, writes: 'Εγὼ μὲν ὕδατι βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς (Luke iii. 16), which are the very words which the rules of the language required him to use, if he meant to say: "I baptize you with water," as an instrument. So, in the next verse: "But the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable" — *πυρὶ ἀσβέστω*, the dative of the instrument without a preposition.

It is another mistake to suppose that the sacred writers, if they meant to mention water as the instrument, must have used the genitive, *ὑδατος*, with *μετά*. They need not do it, because, as we have seen, the simple dative without a preposition is the proper form of expression for that idea. And they could not do it, because *μετά* with the genitive would not express their meaning. It never expresses the relation of instrumentality, but always accompaniment, like *σύν*, except that *σύν* may express a closer relation.

We conclude, therefore, that "I baptize with water" is the correct translation of *βαπτίζω ὕδατι*, and that the evangelists did deliberately record the fact that John baptized with water as an instrument. But how is it where they use the preposition, and write, *βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι*?

Doubtless, *ἐν* primarily expresses locality, and means *in*, *on*, *at*, or more loosely, *among*. From this the transition is easy to the idea of time, as *at* such a time, or *in* such a year, or *during* the occurrence of such events; to the employments *in* which one is engaged; to the manner or spirit *in* which one does anything; and finally, in some cases, to the means *by* or *with* which a thing is done. So in Matt. viii. 32, the swine died *ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι*, *by the waters*; 1 Cor. iii. 13, Every man's work shall be revealed *ἐν πυρὶ*, *by fire*; Rom. x. 9, "If thou shall confess (*ἐν τῷ στόματι σου*) with thy mouth." Luke xxii. 49, "Shall we smite (*ἐν μαχαίρᾳ*) with the sword." Rev. vi. 8, *ἀποκτεῖναι . . . ἐν ῥομφαίᾳ*, "to kill with sword." In this last sense it is seldom used

by classical writers. They commonly express the same idea by the dative without the preposition. Among later writers it is more common, and in the New Testament its use was probably favored by its resemblance to a well-known Hebrew idiom.

Ἐν ὕδατι, therefore, may mean either *in* water or *with* water, as the context may determine.

In some cases, in connection with βαπτίζω, *ἐν* is used in its most primitive sense, denoting locality; as John i. 28, where it is said that John was baptizing *in* (*ἐν*) Bethabara, and, iii. 23, *in* Enon, and Matt. iii. 6, *ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ*, *in* the Jordan. So, also, Mark i. 4, John was baptizing *ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ*, *in* the wilderness, and the next verse, *ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ*, *in* the river Jordan.

In other cases, *ἐν ὕδατι* means simply *ὕδατι*, *with water*. The same discourse of John is reported in Matt. iii. 11, Mark i. 8, and Luke iii. 16. According to the reports of Matthew and Mark, he said, *ἐν ὕδατι*; but according to Luke, simply *ὕδατι*, without the preposition. John probably spoke in the Hebrew, as they called it, of that age; and the three evangelists translated it, each in his own way, into Greek. The three reports, therefore, very naturally differ in several words, but agree in meaning. Luke, the most classical in style, translates John's word by the simple instrumental dative, *ὕδατι*, *with water*. If the three writers have all given John's meaning correctly, Matthew and Mark must have used *ἐν ὕδατι* to mean exactly what *ὕδατι* means in Luke, that is, with water. In John i. 26, *ἐν ὕδατι* is used, evidently in the same sense, though the conversation there reported probably occurred at a different time.

It is certain, therefore, that *ἐν*, in this connection, may be rendered *in*, locally, or *with*, instrumentally, as the context may require.

But it cannot be rendered *into*, or by any form of speech which expresses the idea of motion *into*. That idea must be expressed by *εἰς*, with the accusative. See John i. 9, *εἰς τὸν κόσμον*, *into the world*; and in vs. 11, *εἰς τὰ ἴδια*, *to*

his own. The only apparent exceptions to this distinction between *εἰς* and *ἐν* are merely apparent. A verb describing motion *to* or *into* a place *to stay there*, may be followed by *ἐν* with the dative, if the idea of staying there is most prominent in the mind when the preposition is used. Matt. xiv. 3, *ἔθετο ἐν φυλακῇ*, "put him in prison," where he was still confined. Mark xv. 46, *κατέθηκεν αὐτὸν ἐν μνημείῳ*, "placed him in a tomb." In these passages, *ἔθετο* and *κατέθηκεν* describe motion *into*, and would require *εἰς* with the accusative; but the mind passes from that idea to the idea of continuance *in* the prison, or the tomb, which requires *ἐν* with the dative. But when the idea of coming *to* or *into* is not thus crowded out of mind, *εἰς* with the accusative must be used. Luke xxiv. 36, it is said that Jesus *ἔστη ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν*. No mention is made of his coming, but only of his presence, which is expressed by *ἐν* with the dative. But in John xx. 19 we are told that in the evening, the doors being shut [locked] for fear of the Jews, on purpose to prevent anybody from *coming* in, *ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον*, "Jesus came into the midst of them, and stood there," as we should arrange these words in English; and vs. 26, Jesus came, the doors being locked, and stood, *εἰς τὸ μέσον*, *into* the midst of them. His coming notwithstanding the locked doors was the remarkable fact, and controlled the choice of the preposition. The passage cannot be translated, *ad verbum*, into elegant, idiomatic English; for we have no preposition which can at once express the relation of both verbs to *midst*; nor does the genius of our language permit a preposition to pass over the nearest verb and show relation to the preceding one. Hence, to give the exact and entire meaning of the Greek in good English, we must change the order of the words, and translate, as above: "He came into the midst of them, and stood there."

There is one instance of this kind in connection with John's baptism (Mark i. 4-9). Having told how people resorted to him from Jerusalem and all the region of Judea, he mentions the remarkable fact that Jesus made the long journey from

Nazareth in Galilee to the Jordan (at Bethabara, as we know from John), and was baptized there by John. In speaking of those from a short distance, whose walk was an easy task, not worth notice, he says, *ἐβαπτίζοντο ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ*; using *ἐν* with the dative of locality. If Jesus had been a resident of the same neighborhood, his baptism might have been recorded in the same form. But his coming from a comparatively distant region, where less was known of John, and where there was no general movement towards him, demanded notice, and the preposition must be changed accordingly. He therefore writes: *ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ Ναζαρετ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου, εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην*. The *ἦλθεν*, "came," required *εἰς* with the accusative. The *ἐβαπτίσθη* did not require it, any more than did *ἐβαπτίζοντο*, in the fifth verse. Apart from that long journey, the relation of the baptizing to the Jordan was the same in the case of Jesus as of the others, expressed by *ἐν* with the dative. It was not the relation of *motion into*.

And this is the only mention of baptism in the New Testament in which the name of the element used is in the accusative with *εἰς*. In every other instance the complement of the verb is the local or instrumental dative with *ἐν*, or the simple instrumental dative without a preposition.

In another class of instances, where baptism is mentioned as a coming, or promising to come, or profession of having come, into some new relation or condition, *εἰς* with the accusative is commonly used, if not always; as *εἰς μετανόαν*, "unto repentance"; *εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν*, "for the remission of sins"; *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*, "unto the name," and the like.

Both idioms are illustrated in 1 Cor. x. 2: "And were all baptized unto Moses (*εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν*), in the cloud, and in the sea (*ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ, καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ*)." The idea that they came *into* a new relation to Moses is expressed by *εἰς* with the accusative — *εἰς Μωϋσῆν*. The idea that the cloud and the sea were the means by which this was done is expressed by *ἐν* with the datives *νεφέλῃ* and *θαλάσῃ*.

It has been said that this passage describes a complete

immersion, as the cloud was over them and the sea on each side of them. This, if true, would be nothing to the purpose, as it would still be true that *ἐν* expresses the relation of instrumentality. But the comment is untrue, and even ridiculous. It represents them not as completely surrounded by water, but as in a tunnel open at both ends. And Paul does not say that they were baptized in or by *the cloud and sea*, as if cloud and sea co-operated in effecting one baptism. He speaks of two baptisms, "in the cloud, and in the sea"; and they certainly were not immersed in either. If the object were to describe one baptism, effected by the joint action of cloud and sea, the repeating of the preposition *ἐν* would be such a grammatical blunder as Paul never commits.

In classical Greek *βαπτίζω* may mean *plunge*, implying motion *into* the water; but when used in that sense, it imperatively requires, as its complement, *εἰς* with the accusative; as when Plutarch says, *βάπτισον σεαυτὸν εἰς θάλασσαν*, "plunge yourself *into* the sea. But in such cases the whole meaning, including the idea of *motion into*, is not inherent in the verb alone, but in the verb and its complement.

We conclude, therefore, that the Greek verb *βαπτίζω*, when not followed by *εἰς* with the accusative, cannot be truly rendered by any word or words signifying or implying *motion to* or *into*. The idea of *motion into* is not in it; and to translate it by any word which contains that idea is to introduce an idea into the translation which is not in the original Greek, and is therefore a false translation. The authors of our common English version were right in not interpolating that idea.

This argument does not settle the question whether John baptized by immersion. It only shows that the fact of immersion is not asserted in the words and phrases now under consideration. So far as this argument shows, it may be that the evangelists thought that question sufficiently settled by other proofs, or that they did not think it worth settling at all. On either of these suppositions, they would naturally write just as they did. But if it should be shown, by proof derived from other sources, that John and the apostles did

sometimes, or always, baptize by immersion, it would still remain true that these passages do not teach it, and cannot be so translated into any language as to teach it without introducing into the translation an idea not in the original, and that the faithfulness of our English version in these passages is fully vindicated.

ARTICLE VIII.

CHURCH CREEDS.

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IN all ages, Christian churches must have had creeds. As every Christian who believes anything has a creed, so every society of Christians which holds any articles of belief in common must have a common creed. Where there is no creed, a profession of *faith* cannot, in the nature of things, be made. Faith in what, if nothing is believed? And if anything is believed, then, of course, there is a creed.

A creed is as necessary to a church as the truths of the gospel are to the individual believer. As Christian piety cannot exist but in connection with some Christian truth, no more can a church exist without a professed reception of the gospel. The truths of the gospel are the basis on which it stands, the substance which it holds, the means, the aliment by which it is nourished and sustained. Without some truth to feed and rest upon, the church would vanish into nothing.

The churches of the apostles undoubtedly had a creed. It may have been, a short one at first; it may not have been reduced to writing. But there was a creed, else those who joined these churches could have made no profession of faith at all. Martha professed her faith, and recited her creed, when she said: "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John xi. 27). And the eunuch did the same, when he said: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts viii. 37). These