

Dear Darryl,

We received your response to what we believe was our reply to a question which appeared on our website regarding consecration and baptism. We THINK the sentence that you found objectionable was, "Although one is encouraged to publically show that desire of his heart by baptism, the act of baptism itself is not necessary for consecration."

If we in some way caused you to misinterpret our response as making light of the importance of baptism by full water immersion, we would like to set the record straight. We totally agree with Brother Russell's comments, which you quoted. Everyone who has made a full consecration to the Lord in his heart should, by all means, symbolize that decision by water immersion, IF he is able to do so. For example, our Ecclesia recently had three individuals who had made a full consecration to the Lord. However, none of the three could be immersed, due to severe health issues. Does the fact that they were not immersed mean that God would hold them accountable to the symbol of consecration (baptism) rather than the change that had taken place in their hearts? Knowing the character of God, who is all-merciful, we believe he would not.

In Volume 6, of "Studies in the Scriptures, The New Creation", pages 449-450, Brother Russell states that the real baptism (that of death unto Christ) is acceptable to God whether baptized with water or not. We quote below.

"Meantime, we shall rejoice with such that they have found the real baptism, and become participators in it, and we congratulate them upon the truth that it is far better to see and enjoy the real baptism while blind to the symbol, than it would be to see the symbol and be blind to the reality. In view of this, however strongly we favor the symbolical baptism, we could not base Christian fellowship upon it, but only upon the real baptism into death with Christ. All, therefore, who confess the Lord as their Redeemer, and confess a full consecration of heart and life to him, we accept as brethren in Christ Jesus, members of the *Ecclesia*, whose names are written in heaven--New Creatures in Christ, whether by birth Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, male or female, baptized with water or not baptized with water."

However, in the next paragraph, Brother Russell, states how important full water immersion is once it is fully understood. Failure to symbolize would mean a withdrawal of sacrifice. We agree with him and quote that paragraph below.

“On the other hand, let it not be forgotten that every item of knowledge brings not only an increase of privilege and joy, but also an increase of responsibility. Whoever, therefore, comes to see the beauty and authority of the water symbol, comes at the same time to another test respecting the *deadness* of his will--respecting his real baptism into death with his Lord. A failure to obey as to the symbol under these circumstances, it will readily be seen, would mean a withdrawal of the sacrifice, and thus a failure to make the calling and election sure.”

Since Christian Questions has always used Pastor Russell’s writings as our doctrinal base, we must say that we were a bit surprised by your question, “Does Christian Questions differ with Pastor Russell that those who consecrate should make haste to be water baptized?” No, we do not differ. We have never said that one should not be baptized. We only said, “the act of baptism itself is not necessary for consecration.” We realize, as does Brother Russell, that there are times when exceptions to water immersion prevail. The actual heart decision to make a consecration is always more important than its outward symbol. Some individuals, for various reasons, are unable to symbolize. We believe that God understands and accepts their sacrifice, nonetheless.

We hope we have clarified our position to you, which we feel is in harmony with Pastor Russell’s view.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio