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Dr. Allan A. MacRae, Ph.D.
1205 Delaware Avenue
Wilmington, Delaware

Dear Dr. MacRae

Thank you for the copy of your very interesting letter on John 3:5. I thoroughly agree with you that it is not correct to interpret this verse as a direct reference to the sacrament of baptism.

As to details, I might say that I really believe the use of the definite article in English is thoroughly justifiable and, in fact, even required in this case. A.T. Robertson's section on "the absence of the article" where it would be used in English or German, begins on page 790 in his large grammar. At the bottom of that page he says "The translation of the expression into English or German is not determined by the mere presence or absence of the Greek article." In paragraph (k), page 795, in this same section Robertson brings out the fact that the words theos and pneuma are used either with the article or without the article when the reference is to a specific person. If these words are used with a preposition, the article is more likely to be omitted. Since we are accustomed to designating God as a person, not as generic deity, without the use of the article, we do not use the article even when it occurs in Greek. But since the third person of the Trinity is scarcely ever referred to without some use of the definite article in English, it seems necessary to insert the article whether it is found in Greek or not if there is a clear reference to the person of the Holy Spirit. About the middle of page 795 Robertson mentions this specific passage, John 3:5, as an illustration of the definite use of pneuma, the article being omitted probably as influenced by the use of the preposition.

The use of "water" in John 7:37,38 and the use of "water" throughout the fourth chapter of John (compare also I Corinthians 12:13) show that John frequently used the word "water" as a type and symbol of the Holy Spirit. Add to this the fact that the Greek word kai is very likely to mean "even." These considerations make me strongly incline to translate John 3:5 "Except a man be born of water, even of the Spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God." This translation seems to me to be substantiated by the next verse in which "water" drops out entirely and "that which is born