

# **A Modern Shibboleth!**

The Theory of Immersion  
Considered

In its relation to the truth,  
as displayed by the words of

SCRIPTURE

PROPHECY

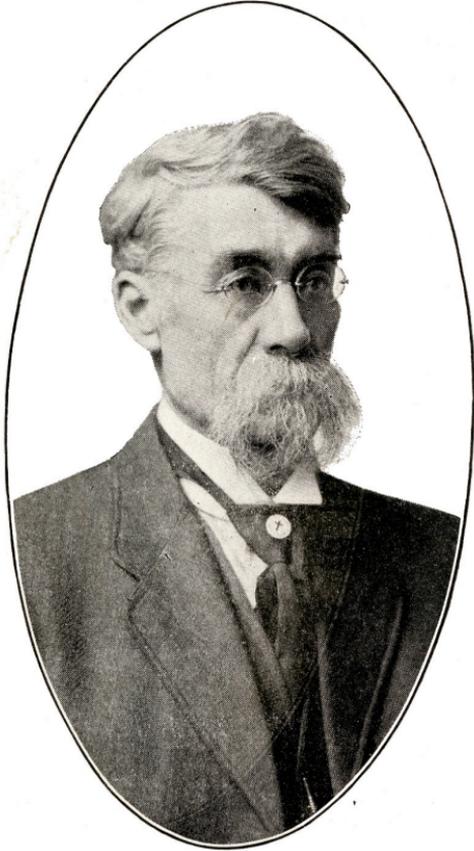
and

HISTORY



A Study

By Wilbur A. Christy



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A Renaissance of an ancient; “And he said to him ‘say now, Shibboleth,’ but he could not frame to pronounce it right, so he slew him there.” Judges 12:6

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The scan of Shibboleth was done September, 2013 for WWW.IMARC.CC. There was great care taken so as not to alter words, sentences and meaning that he wrote. Also care was given to keep the content of each page the same as it was in his book along with the page numbers. There was no date of its printing in the copy that I hold. It is hoped that the reader will enjoy Rev. Christy's Biblical insight on Baptism as much as I.

Pastor Hartman

To many dear Christian friends, whom I have known and cherished, whose beautiful, but unquestioning acceptance of the theory herein considered, was the influence that first led me, in the hope of finding some common ground on which to unite our mutual faith and devotion, to enter upon a searching study of the question, to find, if possible, such harmony here with the Divine Truth as every religious propaganda must have to entitle it to the faith of believers and the acceptance of the Church, these pages must be inscribed.

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CHAPTER I.  
THE BAPTISM TAUGHT IN SCRIPTURE  
AND ITS RELATION TO  
THE THEORY OF IMMERSION.  
A FEW WORDS BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION.

It may well be asked by any one—and no doubt will be by many—"Why another book upon this fruitless discussion?" Has it not gone on long enough? Why stir up continued strife and contention and ill-feeling among Christian peoples, for no apparent good result? And indeed there might seem to be somewhat worthy of consideration in this view of the matter. At least, it is evident that whoever, for any reason would undertake at this time the consideration of a subject so prolific of discussion as that referred to above must expect to meet adverse criticism and opposition more or less violent—violent from those whose minds do not run in the same channel. And this, no matter what view he may take, or what conclusion he may espouse or oppose. Indeed, such an one may think himself fortunate if he be not assailed by censure, or condemned on charges of even a personal nature. This may appear strange, and indeed it ought not to be so, and yet in my intercourse with many whom

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I had come to regard as personal friends, I have sometimes found that the introduction of this subject was quite enough to break down the bonds of cordiality, and soon I have been met with such unwelcome charges as that of being intolerant, uncharitable, obstinate, ignorant and unkind.

Now however this may be, I am willing to leave to the judgment of the future, only saying that no personal feeling has been permitted to enter into the motives for writing these words. What I have here set down is not written from a mere love of contention, a desire of controversy, or the thought of "disputing about words to no profit." My motive has been only to bear witness to the Truth in regard to this much disputed question, and to record in connected form for the use of others, and mayhap of some dear to me whose minds are given over to a diverse belief, so that they would not hear my words. So I am giving here the results of a careful and somewhat extended study of this subject, as I have found it taught in the Scriptures as also some necessary Corollaries drawn from the plain statements of the Word itself.

I have already stated that one of the principal motives leading to the undertaking of this work, without which I am quite sure it would never have been begun, was the hope of finding a common ground for the faith and devotion of those holding opposite views in regard to this question.

But I may as well admit, before going farther,

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that I had not carried my study to any great length, until it became evident to me that all such hope was futile. That in the spiritual geography, so to speak, of the Inspired Word, there existed no such "*terra, incognita*" as this would be—in fact, it was as unreal as the fabled Atlantis, or the Fountain of Eternal Youth, and any investment of energy or time in search of it could only result in failure and disappointment. When one can construct a square circle, or construct a perpetual machine that will operate constantly without any expenditure of force, then possibly there may be discovered a common ground where Truth and Error may unite in such a way as to commend themselves equally to the human intellect, but until then we must be content to accept the Everlasting Truth that there is an everlasting distinction existing now and forever as a great gulf fixed, and impassable in the very nature of things between Truth and Error—the Real and the Unreal. Any mental attribute other than this would unhinge the judgment and wreck the tie that holds the universe together.

I will not attempt to deny that it was a severe blow to all my optimism to accept this position, but I was unable, and yet am just as helpless in the attempt to find a common ground on which opposing factions were to meet. In yielding this I had much to lose, every tie of family affection, and much of religious teaching had to be given up at the insistent demand of Truth, and all rest-

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ed on the final decision to the question which Pilate propounded to the One source of Truth, and so I felt driven back here in the beginning of my work and stopped by the search for infallible Truth, and where to find it?

So, at this point I ceased perforce, to seek for a common ground on which to marshal as friends the two lines: of belief, and could only regard them as opposing and irreconcilable lines of thought, and sought instead only to follow the trail of Truth to trace it to its lair, and then to point out plainly the way that others might follow after.

And this, at last, has been the only motive that has led me—without a thought of whether this was the doctrine taught by this church or that church, my only thought and desire has been to learn what does the Scripture teach. If I can learn that it is all I care to know.

Starting then with an absolute faith in the infallible word, I have been led with irresistible force to the conclusion reached and recorded in these pages. Those who seek another must go another way, but to me this stands out plainly as the path blazed by the hand of the Divine Engineer, and I can follow no other.

And though these studies and conclusions may by some be considered controversial, though I must disclaim any such intent for, it is hardly possible to maintain the Truth on any subject without at the same time discrediting the opposing Error.

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And this I shall not hesitate to do as may seem suitable and right, though my real aim is rather constructive than destructive, seeking to build up the Truth so to leave no room for the Fallacy, whose real name is Heresy. It shall *be* my purpose not so much to destroy as to displace Error, that the Truth may appear in the simplicity and strength of its setting forth in the Inspired Word.

I am confirmed in my belief that such a testimony as this is not only timely, but needed by a long observation and experience of the evil results attendant upon the belief and practice of the erroneous views held by many in regard to this subject. The thought of the present need is emphasized by a knowledge of the greatly increased growth and spread of unscriptural rites and practices and the foothold they are finding among those who should be free from their influence.

Where they are held in the most outspoken and definite form, and consistently adhered to by their followers, this belief is always, as it has always been in the past, a cause of division among believers, even to the extent of a complete separation at the loss of Christian fellowship and brotherhood, and the denial by some to others even the communion of saints at the table of the Lord Jesus, in obedience to His last command.

In referring to the evils following in the train of this belief I do not refer to the physical evils resulting from the course of those will even break the ice of frozen streams in order to carry out

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their (to say the least) mistaken ideas of Baptism, but to the far greater evils in the spiritual realm, brought upon the church and the cause of the Kingdom. These physical ills are insignificant compared with the spiritual, though while I write these lines the daily press is giving publicity to a case of death caused by immersion administered to an invalid. (See the issue of the Cleveland Plain Dealer of April 10, 1925).

In these "Last Days" when the Holy Spirit seems to be impressing more and more upon the hearts of believers the grief and shame and infinite loss to the cause of Christ, arising from their numberless and wholly unjustifiable divisions, in open disregard of the last prayer of the Savior, that they "might all be one," it is impossible to ignore the tremendous influence in thwarting that Divine Will and Prayer growing out of the belief and practice under consideration, as it goes on its way creating and perpetuating divisions in "The Church, which is His body." We can only regard it as one of the things which must be "taken out of the way," ere the Kingdom can come in its power and glory.

CHAPTER II.  
THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY,—ULTIMATE  
AND SUPREME AUTHORITY.

As a necessary preliminary to any effective or acceptable study of the matter in hand I am presuming that all will be ready to admit that baptism, as a religious form of ceremony, is not a mere human invention, but is beyond question, of an origin superhuman and Divine.

If this be conceded then it follows, also without question, that whatever in the way of information, instruction, or authority, may be essential to its proper and acceptable observance, must be sought from the One who first ordained and instituted it.

It may as well be granted here also, that in its original installation, it must have conformed in all its particulars to the will of its Founder, its Originator, and First Administrator. In fact, it would be impossible to think otherwise. The Ceremony is still observed, and remains after the lapse of many years, centuries even, because of this belief in its Divine origin, character and obligation. Had it been of merely human origin, an institution of man, it would undoubtedly have manifested its human source by the inevitable differences that have arisen, and always will arise, especially in regard to matters of religious observance.

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Most certainly there would have been many and great diversity of opinion in regard to its real meaning and manner, time and place of its observance, or other of the numberless things about which men have always differed, just as there have been in regard to the theory of Immersion, and the practice, as well, as will be noted later.

But if its Divine Origin be conceded, then uniformity in its observance must also be granted, as it is not conceivable, and at least the supposition would not be defensible, that there were more modes or methods than one, in the first instance of its administration, which, even without any specific command must be taken as the Divine model for all subsequent observance of the Ordinance.

To this Divine Example, and to the teaching of the Scripture as our Inspired rule of Faith and Practice, I shall almost entirely confine this study, feeling assured that for accurate and reliable information upon this, as well as on other matters, whether in dispute or not, we must needs resort to the Revelation of His will, as made known to us in His Word. What it teaches may be accepted as trustworthy—infallible. Compared with it, all merely human knowledge, especially that of known heathen or pagan sources, must be subject to doubt, and, at the best, is but "As chaff to the wheat." Jer. 23:28.

For this reason I am but little concerned as to the definitions of lexicons, or the so-called "Clas-

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sic usage" of words, no matter how highly these things may rank in literary merit, or in that worldly wisdom which is "foolishness with God." 1 Cor. 3:19. It matters not how highly they may be esteemed by the scholarship of the world, or of a worldly church, one word from the Book is of greater value than all other books that have ever been written, and its plain statements are to be accepted as "the conclusion of the whole matter." Eccl. 12:13. Therefore, I will not quibble with any over the exact meaning of the word *baptizo*, nor of the "Classic usage" of a language used by pagan idolaters who flourished many centuries after the Lord had established the Ordinance of Baptism as a "sign and statute forever between Himself and His chosen people."

At the time of its institution, centuries before there was a Greek nation or a Greek language, the Hebrew language contained a word exactly descriptive of the manner by which this Ordinance was instituted, and this word—and no other—is used throughout the entire Dispensation of the Jewish people. Just what the Greek language, at that time unformed, may mean or the Hindoo, or the Chinese, is of absolutely no significance or authority whatever. An established ordinance, by Divine Authority, had existed for an entire millennium of years, before ever the meaning of the Greek was called in to serve as an argument, and its place was secure.

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**Human Testimony and its Value.—secondary and Historical Only.**

While I may, as occasion calls, introduce human testimony in some instances, mainly historical and corroborative, I shall rely for my conclusions almost wholly upon the Word of Inspiration, as the "Impregnable Rock" on which to build. I am well aware that this will not be satisfactory to some. The class who "will not believe Moses and the Prophets," who all testify of Baptism, and not of them all can by any kind of treatment be invoked to approve of Immersion. The only baptism they speak of, and they all do so, is the baptism instituted by Divine authority, there are still those who will not be persuaded, "though one rose from the dead."

CHAPTER III.  
BAPTISM AT ITS ORIGIN.—THE EARLIEST  
PERIOD IN ITS HISTORY.

It will surely be Tight and proper to begin our study of Baptism at the beginning, rather than any intermediate point in its history. Like every other earthly institution, the Ordinance of Baptism must have had a beginning. There must have been a time, previous to which no such rite had any existence. This must be plain at once, without argument, and the importance of a correct knowledge of its beginning will therefore easily be recognized at once.

But strange as it may seem, I have found the greatest confusion of thought in regard to this very subject prevailing in the minds of the advocates of Immersion. At least those with whom I have conferred, few will allow themselves to assign any definite date for its origin, while most will say, as the most probable assumption, that it was (probably) originated by John the Baptist at, or just preceding the Advent of Jesus the Messiah. It really seems they are led into this conclusion by the name given the Fore-runner, and that had he borne some other cognomen he would not have been made the originator of the rite by their mode of reasoning. In reply to an inquiry, the statement was made as by authority, in the

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columns of one of the leading religious journals of this country, that this being (probably) the case, John was himself baptized by one of his own disciples. And this sort of loose reasoning is altogether characteristic of those who have never really studied the subject.

**A Word about Prejudice for Those Who Need It.**

Let me say that those who give to John the Baptist the credit of originating the Ordinance of Baptism do him too much honor. At the same time they show that they have not gone to the proper source for information. They, like many others, have simply formed, or accepted such an opinion without any study or investigation for themselves. In fact, it would be difficult to find a more typical instance of real prejudice than this mere conjecture affords.

For just what is Prejudice? Define the word and see what it means. Pre- and Judice- to judge or decide beforehand. The word simply means to decide or judge a case before hearing the evidence, which we are told is "a shame and reproach" to one who does so. This is a sort of "Jedburgh Justice" which would "First hang a man and try him after," but how many are involved in this charge? How many have been content to adopt the ready-made opinion of some one else, in preference to taking the time of investigating the matter and sifting the evidence for themselves. "It was their father's belief." Or a "or their church always taught it, and it's good

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enough for me." And thus it goes—prejudice, and nothing else camouflaged under the name of a good loyal church member. Such are beyond reach. Their minds are made up, once and forever, and no argument or proof can reach them, even though it is in the very words of the holy Book itself. But it is not for such as these I write. What I say, if it does not convince, will only excite antagonism and dislike.

It might be noted here in passing, though it will be noted more fully in a later section of these studies, that John the Baptist lived and labored as a specific messenger with a Divine message, at a most momentous era in the history of the Jewish Nation—the era that was to mark the Advent of the long-promised Messiah, and also to define the closing of the Dispensation, and the end of the children of Israel as a people—the time limit assigned to them in one of the first Prophecies.

Now indeed, had elapsed the time when "the scepter was to depart from Jacob, and the crown from beneath his feet;" when the supremacy should be given over to the Gentiles, and the change made to the "New Dispensation," and with the rending of the veil of the Temple the old ceremonial legislation should be repealed, as having accomplished its purpose in the maintaining the service of the types until the coming of the great Anti-Type, who was "once for all to make of himself an offering for sin" of all the world. While the revocation of the Law of Ceremonies no long-

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ger obligatory on either the chosen people or the Gentile world—circumcision going<sup>1</sup> with all the rest—still there was one exception made as will be noted in a section yet to be considered, a most important one by which the Ordinance of Baptism was preserved for all the world and for all time.

However this may be said, that John the Baptist was simply empowered to make use of an ordinance of long standing—at least a thousand years—among his own people, and to which he had himself submitted in assuming the prerogatives of his official life, as will be noted later in its proper place.

But we may not pass this place without observing how very fortunate it is—or should we not rather say providential—that the Scripture itself leaves us in no doubt whatever as to the origin of Baptism or its installation as a religious Rite. It is written so plain that "he who reads may run." It would indeed be well if all who read would run in the way of Truth, for here at least there is little room for difference of opinion. Here it becomes no longer a question as to "mode" of baptism for it is made plain that there is no such question. One thing, and one only, is Baptism. Nothing else is, or can be, if the Scriptures be taken as our guide.

### **The Scripture Record of its Origin.**

In the book of 1 Cor. 10:1, we are instructed as to the original Ordination and Administration of the Rite of Baptism, in terms so plain, so com-

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prehensive, and yet so concise, as to admit of neither doubt nor misunderstanding. Here the inspired apostle, speaking from the standpoint of a Jew, trained in the "most straightest sect" to observance of the Law, tells his Gentile converts what the Jewish converts did not need to be told, for they had known and kept the Law in regard to it for untold generations. Here he was teaching these converts from the worship of idols in regard to the origin and obligation of that Rite of Baptism which he, in common with the other apostles, was requiring of them in obedience to the Great Commission of Christ. This was something which their former worship of Diana, and the countless other deities they had heretofore "ignorantly" worshipped, had not required of them, and which was therefore unknown to them. This is proof enough that Baptism did not have a heathen origin as some equally ignorant among our Encyclopedic writers endeavor to show, but that it was inculcated among the heathen Gentiles by the Jewish Christians who had been, like Paul, strict in the observance of the Law of Moses. He tells these Gentile converts that "Our fathers were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea."

This is certainly a somewhat remarkable and conclusive statement. It tells us too, as it told these Gentile idolaters, that baptism was of Jewish origin—nay, more, that it was of Divine origin. And this passage, taken together with one or

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two others relating to the same subject leaves absolutely nothing further to be desired as far as information is to be gained from the Scriptures.

Suppose we examine it still more closely. Here, then we are, given, let us note, the Time, the Place, the Founder, and the Subjects of the first instance of Baptism that ever took place. I might add, that only one other feature is omitted here, to make the description complete, and that one, very fortunately, is supplied in another place, having reference to this same event, and found in Psa. 77:16.

Looking at this passage still more closely (1 Cor. 10:1) with a view to ascertain exactly and fully what its meaning is, and if possible, all that it means to us on the subject, for we shall not be well informed unless we do this, I shall take it for granted here as elsewhere without argument, that Scripture means exactly what it says, and that it is not for us to seek for any cryptic or symbolic interpretation in a plain historical record. This is simple history, and as such we will read and interpret it.

Besides—this was written by inspiration, for the information and instruction of the members of the early Christian church who were mainly, if not wholly, Gentiles, at this time and place, and two inferences 'are fairly drawn from this fact, First, that such instruction was not heretofore, or even at this time, necessary for the Jewish converts, for to them this knowledge had descended

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by tradition from the Fathers, and also from their possession of the written Law on this subject, and from their constant observance of the same for all the untold generations of the past, more scrupulously remembered and recorded by the Jews than by any other living people on the face of the earth.

And second, that the Ordinance of Baptism was continued in the Early Apostolic Church, by the example and teaching of the Apostle Paul, (and it is to be taken for granted, *by* the other apostles, as well) under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, without change, exactly as it had been instituted at the first, to which example and pattern the apostle here refers as his sole and sufficient authority and which the Law guaranteed as its permanent character from the beginning.

Now by an unavoidable conclusion from this, the advocates of Immersion are under obligation to prove one or both of these two propositions— First. That Baptism was originally instituted by Immersion. Or, failing to do this, they must show that sometime and somewhere during the lapse of the passing centuries a change has been made, and so unnoticed, Immersion has been substituted for the original form, whatever that may have been.

I believe in the following pages it will be made sufficiently clear that neither of these two propositions is susceptible of proof.

For, as to the First Proposition—The Time of the first administration of the Ordinance of Bap-

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tism is altogether beyond the reach of doubt or question. Its witnesses were innumerable and the circumstances were such as to render any mistake impossible. Plainly, it was immediately after the Celebration of the Passover the last Rite that was observed in the Land of Egypt, an observance that has survived for all the intervening years, and through all the changes of Dynasties, so imbedded in the national memories is it, and it took place during the passage of the Host of Israel through that marvelous pathway made for their use through the waters of the Red Sea. Only a few hours had elapsed since they had despaired of escaping from the grip of their former taskmasters, and now the Lord Jehovah "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" had made for them a pathway through the Sea.

This was indeed a mighty miracle. Note that some seem to think of the driving back of the water as the great miracle, but truly this was but half the wonder. We are told that "they went over dry-shod." The bed of the sea was, and is today a soft, oozy, miry bottom, but it was now for a brief time, miraculously dried and solidified so as to form a perfectly dry pathway for the fleeing Israelites. But as soon as they were safely over, the sea bottom, even before the waters had returned to their former place, became soft and treacherous as before so that the chariots of their pursuers sunk down in it until they were unable to proceed, either to advance or retreat.

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And before the children of Israel had emerged from that path through the sea, the Lord Jehovah claimed and consecrated this redeemed people for His own, and established the Ordinance of Baptism, as the sign and symbol of their consecration, to be observed by his chosen people forever.

Second. As to the Place. This also is quite definitely stated. It was neither in the land of Egypt, nor even in the wilderness. It was "in the Sea" through which such a marvelous highway had been prepared for their passage from slavery to freedom. As they passed over this wondrous roadway, they were protected from the weight of the waters on either hand, and from the forces of an infuriated enemy following closely after. And thus we are told that they "went over dryshod," which "the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned."

Who it was that were immersed on this occasion, needs no comment. But this much may well be observed—because of its bearing on the general subject—those who were immersed were not baptized—and those who were baptized were not immersed. This is on the authority of Scripture, which takes note of and records the fact that "they went over dryshod, even while the baptism was taking place. And not only this, but the Inspired Record also tells us exactly in what way the Rite was administered, as I shall presently show.

**As to the Subjects of this First and Original Baptism.**

The apostle, himself a Jew, and of "the most straightest" sect, zealous of the Law, and speaking still as a Jew, for all the early Christians as yet hardly felt themselves to be other than merely a "sect" of the Jews. The apostle, I say, seeking to enlighten these Gentile Idol worshippers speaks of those to whom he was referring as "our Fathers." This is no doubt an important point, both as an historical fact, and as establishing a precedent for the future, as will be shown later, for this "future" as will appear from prophetic foretelling, includes the entire Church Dispensation. Scripture is very plain in regard to this, and its statements must be taken at their face value, though some of the conclusions deduced therefrom are very unacceptable to those who argue in favor of immersion today.

The subjects of this Divinely inspired and administered Rite, which the Holy Ghost by the word of Paul, here calls baptism, are here denned and described "as our Fathers." In reference to the Jewish people, there should be no difficulty in understanding the phrase. Those to whom the words were addressed would no doubt understand it in its generic sense, as no doubt the writer meant it, thus referring in the larger sense to the assembled multitude who were then crossing the Sea on their way to freedom. Very few, I apprehend, would contend for the narrow literal inter-

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pretation that would restrict the meaning of the phrase to those only who were literally and only actually "fathers" of children, consequently limiting the actual observance of the Rite to a small portion—perhaps one-fifth, or one-tenth, of the host. The absurdity of such a supposition needs no refuting. We should understand that the description is not a selective one, but comprehensive and inclusive. I take the meaning to be here exactly the same as that in which we speak of "Our Pilgrim Fathers," a term perfectly legitimate, and sanctioned by usage of long standing. To the ordinary mind, this descriptive phrase is intended to include the entire host of Israel, irrespective of age or sex, fathers, mothers, young and old. The use of the inclusive word "all" immediately after, not only seems to justify, but to require this interpretation.

An unavoidable corollary to this, however, requires us to believe that here was granted the privilege to children, as no known method of computation will permit us to doubt that there were many thousands of such in that fleeing host. It is plain they were not excluded from this, the original dispensation of Baptism, and if we are to accept this as an example and a precedent, as we cannot refuse to do without offering gratuitous affront to the one who officiated here, the inference is plain, they should not be excluded now. The manner in which Immersionists insist upon what they call "believer's baptism," mainly, as it

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would seem, for the object of justifying the exclusion of children, has, at least no support in this, the first instance on record of its administration. Indeed, we might well say that this was a notable example of "believer's baptism," as it would hardly be less than insult to reason and common sense to argue otherwise. We may confidently assert that all who were here baptized were "believers." They had seen and known all the wonderful works of the Lord in their behalf, they were cognizant of the terrible plagues that had been brought upon the land of Egypt, upon their oppressors, they had seen their own first-born spared to them by the sprinkled blood of the Paschal Lamb, they had felt the grip of despair when hemmed in by the sea, the mountains, and the madly pursuing army, and then at the last moment they had seen the way opened for their escape through the mighty deep, and they were even now—at that very moment—walking "dry shod" over that supernatural roadway, when the drops of that heavenly baptism fell upon them from the cloud in which Jehovah their glorious leader had His abode, and surely it would be a rash and unreasonable disputant who would dare, even for the sake of a pet theory, to assert that they were not real believers in these thrilling life-experiences.

It certainly would seem that in truth if there were ever to be staged such an event as a Baptism of believers, we may find it here, in this initial and exemplary observance of the Ordinance. To

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assume otherwise is to insult not only the intelligence and faith of that escaping multitude, but our own as well. Such an hypothesis is simply incredible, and it must seem that no one can honestly maintain it.

### **The Place Op Children in this First Baptism.**

Now note the inflexible corollary. On the authority of the Inspired Record, this "believer's baptism" included the children also, for they were "all" baptized. This harmonizes perfectly with the declaration of the Apostle Peter who, in his introductory sermon to the first converts who were to form the nucleus of the Early Church, tells them that "the promise is to you, and to your children" Acts 2:29, thus showing that there had been no change in this respect from the observance of Baptism down thus far even to the formation of the Early Apostolic Church.

But, what boldness—almost insolence—one might say, of those who would claim one-half of the promise—that for themselves—and reject the other half—for their children. And how can such avoid the imputation of seeming or seeking to be wiser than others, in rejecting those whom He had accepted? Other scriptures having reference to this subject might be quoted here, both from the Old and New Testaments, but for the present I will leave the matter, as it may recur again.

CHAPTER IV.  
AS TO THE FOUNDER AND ORIGINATOR OF  
THIS FIRST BAPTISM.

It may be said here, that while Moses, as the Divinely appointed leader of the people, may have taken some part, such as would justify the reference to him in our text, perhaps imparting to the host such instruction as would lead them to understand and appreciate the Rite of which they were to be the passive recipients it is unmistakably plain that the hand of the Lord Himself administered this Baptism. There was no precedent to be followed, there was yet no priesthood established, such as that to which was afterward committed the administering of the Law, including the Ordinance of Baptism. This was to come at a later date, for the Law had not yet been given. A plain interpretation of Psalm 77:16 will leave us in no doubt on this point, and supply the needed information.

**The Mode Employed by the Lord in His First Baptism.**

The Psalm spoken of makes it plain that it was by the sprinkling with water from the cloud in which the Lord Jehovah made His abode during the journey of His redeemed people that they were baptized. The passage is as follows: "The clouds saw Thee, they were afraid, they poured

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out water upon the people." This is a poetic description, for this is a poetic Psalm, and this is the language of poetry, recounting the wonderful deliverance of the people of Israel, and evidently refers to this very event. In fact, it cannot be understood as referring to any other event in the whole course of their current history in its poetic form of expression. It simply indicates and declares that in this point of their deliverance the Lord Jehovah sprinkled them with water from the cloud in which He had taken up His abode for their guidance and protection.

And the Holy Spirit, by the pen of Paul, calls it Baptism, and not only this but distinguishes it as being a Divine act to be observed as such even after many centuries have passed by, in the formation of the church of Promise and so on down to end of time, as we will see later.

### **Note Here the Holy Spirit Calls it Baptism.**

There can be no question as to the meaning of the word *baptizo*, for that word was not in existence at that time, nor for centuries later. However, the Hebrew language was not lacking in such an emergency—it had a word meaning "to sprinkle" and strange as it may seem the meaning of this word has never been called in question. It occurs in many places throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, and we can let it go at that. At any rate, it was the word used here and was wisely chosen to describe the event. I should offer a correction at this point—I find that the meaning

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of this word has been called in question in one place only—Isa. 52:15,—but the motive is obvious, and will be considered in its proper place.

It will not be out of place to remember here that this event occurred in a region where rain was unknown. These people had dwelt there for more than two hundred years, and had never seen it rain, and this occurrence would necessarily be regarded by them as a supernatural one, as indeed it was truly the work of the Lord's own hand. It should properly be viewed by us as it was by them, as simply another feature in the long series of miracles which culminated in their deliverance from their oppressors. It would not be too much to believe that Moses, their great leader, instructed by Jehovah, led them to a fuller understanding of this baptismal consecration of themselves to the service of the Lord and His claim upon them as His people. If not that time there is little room to doubt that they were thus instructed later in the Law, and by their Priests in regard to this Ordinance, as, forty years after this time, Moses instructed by the Divine Command, as one of his very last and latest official acts "sprinkled" "all the people." At this time it was an entirely new generation that had come upon the stage, the older having all, with two or three exceptions, passed away during their sojourn in the Wilderness and, before their entrance into the Promised Land. The Lord would have them re-consecrated to Him as at the first.

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We may well note here that if there be in the minds of any a lingering doubt as to the "mode" of the original administration of this Ordinance a little consideration of the conduct of Moses at this time should dispel it forever. Remembering that Moses was present at that original baptism—and that he had no order nor permission to change it in any way whatever—in fact, he was explicitly directed to "make everything after the pattern showed to him in the mount," that in the mount of God he had been given the Law during forty days withdrawn from the world and in direct intercourse with the most High, as recorded in the Pentateuch, including the Law of Baptism for the subsequent guidance of the Priesthood, in which they were directed, among other observances to "sprinkle with clean water"—remembering all this, it is impossible to think anything other than that he would imitate and repeat the order of that First Baptism as far as it lay within his power. This was a second administration of the Ordinance, and without any change, or reason to apprehend any, and this stability rendered more positive by the words of the Law which were the words of the Lawgiver Himself—"this shall be a statute forever, through all your generations, and it shall never be changed."

CHAPTER V.  
BAPTISM IN HISTORY.— SACRED HISTORY  
FIRST.

From this first installation of baptism as an Ordinance of Divine appointment, we can follow its course down through the life of the chosen people, even until the time of Christ, and later, and always without change.

A short time after the baptism of the host of Israel in their passage through the Red Sea, we find them at the foot of Mount Sinai, where Moses was taken up upon the Mount, into the presence of the Lord, and during the period of forty days received from Him the Law which he recorded in the books of the Pentateuch, and in these books we find provisions regarding the Rite of Baptism, for various ends, but without a single exception, as far as I have been able to ascertain, always administered by sprinkling, and always, as a symbol of the same purpose, that—of cleansing or consecration. Here, for instance, we find it employed in signaling the recovery of one afflicted with leprosy, who was directed to show himself to the Priest, and among other services and offerings was to be sprinkled by the Priest with "clean water." Lev. 14:6.

The typology here is remarkable. Throughout the entire Jewish history leprosy was always regarded as the special type of sin. Many points

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of resemblance could be noted, and when the afflicted one was healed the Law required that he should receive from the hands of the Priest, this sprinkling with clean water, as a sign and token of his cleansing.

How closely this type is fulfilled in Redemption may readily be seen, when we consider that the first requirement of those redeemed by the Gospel message to men, was, and is, that they receive the sign and token of baptism, and, we have a right to believe, this was to be according to the form prescribed by the Law for the cleansing of the healed leper. How absurd it would have been for such an one to have resorted to some convenient stream or pond, where he could have been immersed, and then claiming that he was fulfilling the Law which expressly demanded that he should be sprinkled. Even so, the absurdity at that day, under such circumstances, could have been no greater than that of the Immersionists today.

Jesus recognized this Law as being in force in His day, and still obligatory, and when He healed lepers, He enjoined them to obey it. "Go, show yourselves to the Priests, and offer the offering which Moses commanded you." Luke 17:14. The bearing of this fact upon the baptism of Jesus Himself will be noted in its proper place.

Again, in reference to the admission and installation of candidates for the Priesthood, as also for the office of the Levites, the requirements of the Law are no less explicit. Other conditions

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having been complied with the applicant was to present himself to the acting priest, and here we may quote from the Law itself—"thus shall he do to them, he shall sprinkle them with clean water." Num. 8:7. This was the Law for all the Priests and Levites of the Jewish nation, and for at least fifteen centuries it was faithfully observed by them. This was their Law at the coming of the Messiah the Christ, and its obvious application to His own Baptism will be considered on another page.

Again, David, the King, the Psalmist, after his great sin and his following repentance, prays that he might be "purged with Hyssop," Psa. 51:7. This carries us back in mind to the Trespass Offering, which was to be brought by the wrongdoer to the Priest, and offered by him, and then, in token of the acceptance of the penitent's plea for pardon, and the cleansing of the soul from its guilt, the Priest was directed to sprinkle him with clean water, with a spray of Hyssop.

This reference establishes the fact that, down to this time, at least, five hundred years after the giving of the Law, it was the rule for all, King as well as people. Evidently, this use of sprinkling as a religious Rite, was so well known and observed that its very commonness is the reason we do not find more frequent reference to it in the history of these times, such as we do find, however, are quite sufficient to establish its observance throughout the intermediate period, knowing as

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we do, aside from this, that this was the only form of baptism known and observed by the Jews at this time and even down to the time of Christ. Enough is preserved to show that it runs through the entire scope of Jewish history.

### **Baptism as a Subject of Prophecy.**

Now, leaving for a little the historical view presented in sacred history, to take up later the record of Secular History on this subject, we may turn to see if there is a special place in the realm of Prophecy relating to the subject of our study.

Perhaps the first unmistakable note of prophecy revealed in connection with the subject of baptism is almost simultaneous with its institution and like an illuminating light discloses the Divine purpose in its ordination. It is found in connection with the giving of the Law to Moses in the Mount shortly after the original administration of the Ordinance in the Red Sea. It is in that portion of the Law relating to the observance of this Rite, Num. 8:7, and elsewhere it stipulates that the requirements of the Law "shall be a statute forever" and shall not be changed. Lev. 3:31, 3, 34.

Later prophecies may widen its scope and extend its application, but never is any essential change authorized or sanctioned. We may commend this fact to those advocates of Immersion, and they are many, who realizing their inability to trace the origin of their theory to the antiquity they desire, contend strenuously that "there has been a change," though they are not by any means

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agreed as to the time when it took place. It should be enough to ask, "What saith the Lord?" "This shall be a statute forever, and it shall not be changed." Num. 10; Jer. 3:16. The Jews observed this Ordinance according to this "forever" statute, therefore John the Baptist, a Jew and also a Priest also observed it thus, sprinkling with water, and this declaration is itself both a proof and a fulfilling of prophecy.

But there are other and more specific statements which are of fuller meaning and wider significance and application. In Isaiah 52:15" is a chapter of universally admitted Messianic prediction. We read that the Messiah "when He comes, shall sprinkle many nations." This declaration in its direct connection with other statements in the same chapter, furnishes us with at least one plain and outstanding distinguishing characteristic of the Coming One which cannot possibly be mistaken or misunderstood. The Jews, at and previous to the coming of Christ were most careful students of their prophetic books, and were not under the slightest misapprehension of the true application of this passage. Indeed, they made use of this very passage in their search after Truth in the efforts they made to identify the Messiah, as will be noted on a following page.

It is at least evident that they were not so misled by devotion to some pet theory as to read this word "startle," as some of our modern devotees of Immersion have felt compelled to do to evade

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its force. This is only one of several instances that might be quoted in which people have shown their willingness even to distort the Word to make it fit their preconceived notions, unwilling as they seem to be to modify their ideas to make them harmonize with Scripture. There are still those who will "make the Word of God of none effect through their traditions" Matt. 16:9, just as in the days when Jesus was on earth.

There can scarcely be a doubt that this prophecy was in the minds of that Delegation of Scribes and Pharisees who were sent from Jerusalem to interview John the Baptist in regard to this very matter. The difficulty confronting them was that of distinguishing between the two—John and Jesus. They were both baptizing, and how could these Scribes and Pharisees, or those who sent them, assure themselves as to which of them should be regarded as fulfilling this particular prediction by which they expected to be able to identify the Messiah at His coming.

And this was really and truly what they inquired about of John, "Master, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, is baptizing, and thy disciples also." The implied, if as yet unspoken question being "Which of you is the One spoken of in this passage"? And this was exactly the question John answered, saying, "I am but a voice in the wilderness, I am not worthy to unloose His shoes."

I speak of this particularly in this place to note the dilemma in which it places the advocates of

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Immersion. This prediction is spoken only of the Messiah and states that "He, when He comes, shall sprinkle many nations." I submit that the question is a fair one—Has this prophecy been fulfilled? We know that it was not fulfilled personally by Jesus Himself, "For Jesus himself baptized not, but His disciples." John 4:2. The prediction was expressly timed to have its fulfillment "when He cometh." The fulfillment was plainly and inseparably associated with the Advent of the Messiah of the Jews, and beyond question they so regarded it. They even used it in their effort to determine the identity of the long expected One.

That their Messiah was to come they positively and passionately believed and this Prophecy was one they could use to identify Him, and they were indeed expecting Him. They built their faith upon the predictions of their prophets in regard to His coming and were assured that by this they could recognize Him, that: "when He cometh He shall sprinkle many nations, or as the margin reads, "Much people."

At this time John was "baptizing multitudes," and therefore they thought he might possibly be the Chosen One. They could not think of any other character to apply to him, but another factor was complicating the situation and preventing them from reaching a satisfactory conclusion. Jesus also was baptizing, and in fact, making more disciples than John. It is not strange that they were confused. But here was the key to

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their problem. Which of these two should they regard as matching up to this word of Isaiah? That once settled all else was clear.

At this time it should be remembered the opposition which afterward arose against Jesus had not yet made its appearance, this being still the period of His popularity, and the Jews in general were favorably inclined toward both these Rabbis. They did not however, wish to be led astray, and were anxiously seeking for correct and reliable information. So their present query was, Which of these two should be accepted as fulfilling the word of their great prophet in this Messianic prediction? And this was the very query John answered in a way that left no room for doubt. It evidently did not occur to them that the true answer to their question was to be found along a different line altogether. This solution we have now in the fact that, while Baptism had heretofore been an exclusively Jewish institution, it was, by the coming of Jesus and, as the result of His earthly mission, to be extended to include "the Nations," the Gentiles also, always regarded by the Jews as being outside the realm of the Divine favor and blessing. To the Jewish mind, there were but two classes—Jews and Gentiles. All religious privileges belonged to the former and none whatever to the latter.

But not blinded by Jewish prejudice, we can see clearly now how thus was fulfilled in a wonderful way this remarkable prophecy of Isaiah,

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though neither the Jews nor His own Disciples understood it at the time. And so now, with this explanation, the difficulty is gone for ever.

Gone for all—except the advocates of Immersion. They cannot admit that the prophecy has been fulfilled—as to so would compel them to admit sprinkling for Baptism, and by Divine appointment too, and extended to and through the Church Dispensation also, as a continuance of the Old and the opening act of the New Dispensations, certified by Inspired Prophecy while, if they would deny its fulfilment, they must face the claim that here is an inspired word of the Lord which has failed of fulfilment, and which now never can be fulfilled, because the "set time" for its realization has gone by. It is indeed the word of Jesus Himself, that "Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle shall ever fail to come to pass." And shall we accept the teaching of those who to maintain their own opinion, are forced to assert that here at least, is one instance where Jesus was mistaken? And that this word of the Lord was not fulfilled when promised, and cannot now possibly ever be fulfilled, for not only has the specified time gone by for centuries, but it cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be considered as being fulfilled by immersion, for the prediction specifically states that is to be a fulfilment by "sprinkling." And if it does not find its fulfilment in the sprinkling for baptism of the nearly universal Christian church from its first or-

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ganization down to the present time, we are shut up to the conclusion that this Word of the Lord has really failed, and "returned to Him void," the set time for its fulfilment has gone by, and no other would serve, for any other would be centuries too late.

There is only one event in the history of the world that can reasonably be considered as a real fulfilment of this prediction, and that is the granting to the world of Nations by the word of the world's Redeemer, by His own command; in the Great Commission when He commanded His disciples to "baptize all nations," giving to them this rite which had heretofore been the exclusive right, we might say the charter right, of the chosen people. Who is it that can see this actually accomplished and yet refuse to believe? And yet this is precisely the attitude into which the advocates of immersion are forced by the most pitiless logic—the logic of facts—the *fait accompli*—things done, actually done and finished and past, beyond recall, and should be beyond dispute or denial. One must not only deny the word of Scripture in prophecy and history as well, nay even facts transpiring under their own observation, to advocate such a theory as this.

**Other Prophecies Also to Be Considered Here.**

There are other prophecies as well that are worthy of our consideration. Those who think of the events recorded upon the Day of Pentecost

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usually associate them with the words of the Prophet Joel, and this is no doubt a proper exegesis, but we find in the book of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 30:24), a complete description in advance, of what took place that day. Centuries before the events took place they were foreseen, and described in all their marvelous significance, in the following striking way.

Dr. Mahaffey compares the Prophecy and the Fulfilment in this way:

### **The Word of the Prophet and Their Fulfilment**

#### The Prophecy.

"For I will take you from the Nations, and gather you out of all countries, into your own land." Ezek. 30:24.

#### The Fulfilment.

"And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." Acts 2:5.

This is certainly a most exact and literal fulfilment of the prediction noted above.

Turning to next item, we read as follows:

"Then (at that time) will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." Ezek. 36:25.

"Then (at that time) they that received the Lord were baptized." Acts 2:41.

Another plain and literal fulfilment of Prophecy—that is if the baptism was by sprinkling—as the Prophecy—the Law, and History require us to believe it was. Unless indeed, this was the time when the Apostles invented and substituted

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Immersion for the legal and Scriptural mode which it was plainly foretold should on this occasion be made use of. And even if they had desired to do this, the next verse would have rendered it impossible. See verse 26.

"A new heart will I give you, and I will take away the stony heart, and give you a heart of flesh."

Conversion could not be more plainly indicated than by these words, and verse 27 places the matter beyond all possible doubt—"And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes." What statutes? The "forever" statutes given to Moses, which included the law of baptism by sprinkling and which we are told should "never be changed." For these were all the statutes the Jews possessed, in regard to conduct and morals, and incidentally the only law in regard to baptism that they had, or had any knowledge of.

How absurd to suppose gratuitously in the face of these things that the Apostles on this occasion invented and substituted immersion for an age-old and immemorial custom, even if that had been possible. We shall presently see that it would have been quite impossible, even had they wished to do so.

CHAPTER VI.  
BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND IN THE  
EARLY APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

We have already seen that Baptism, after continuing' without change throughout the entire Dispensation of the Jews, or at least down to the advent of the Messiah, and the Dispensation of the Church, as the special and distinguishing mark and rite of the Jewish people, is at this stage by Divine direction, transferred to the Church, and enlarged to include the "Nations"—the Gentile world, by the authority of the inspired prophets, speaking for the Lord of both Jew and Gentile. And we cannot forget that it was made an obligation of the Church, by the command of Jesus, in the Great Commision which really can only be regarded as the Constitution of the Church. Here it is made the duty of the church to receive and administer this Ordinance, as a sign and seal of Redemption to the end of time.

And as it is claimed by some that immersion became the rule and practice of the church at this time, and was the form used by the apostles and the early fathers of the church, it will be necessary for us to inquire into the foundation for this belief, and ascertain if possible whether it be well founded.

We may then consider such instances of Bap-

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tism in the early church as are recorded by the sacred Historians as at the very beginning of the activities of the church, and which are supposed, and indeed claimed by some as undoubted cases of immersion in the formative period of the early or apostolic church,

**The Baptism of Jesus Himself at or near the River Jordan.**

Here we may as well begin with the most important and prominent of all, that of Jesus Himself.

By those who believe in immersion this is claimed to have been administered according to that form.

It must be admitted that this view is supported by very little in the way of argument or proof, and depends almost altogether on mere assumption. In fact those with whom it has been my privilege to hold converse on this subject, including ministers to whose sermons on this subject I have listened, have only this statement to offer—"of course, we assume that he was immersed." One minister even advanced the claim in regard to the original baptism of the Host of Israel in the Red Sea, his own words, (all the comment he had to offer on the text as given in 1 Cor. 10:1, and I quote his words *verbwm et literatum*). "Of course we assume they were all immersed." I need hardly say that I was simply astonished at such "begging the question," inasmuch as the Scripture

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tells an entirely different story. In any case, a little study of the Scripture account will demonstrate how groundless—even foolish—all such assumptions are.

In considering the baptism of Jesus we must remember that Jesus was a Jew, "made under the Law" as far as His human personality was concerned, and that He became subject to the same laws which the Jews had acknowledged and obeyed ever since the time when it was given to, and by Moses, of which the Law of Baptism was a part. Frequently did He express His desire and purpose to obey perfectly the Law, and to do the will of His Father and we may well believe that His example is surely a safe one for us to follow. We are expressly told that He "left us an ensample that we should follow in His steps." 1 Pet. 2:21. Many there are who regard the Baptism of Jesus merely as the setting forth by the great Founder of the church as what He would have its baptism to be, and with these I have no quarrel, although I find a different, and a higher purpose in it than this. But my principal reason for taking this matter into consideration is that those who believe in immersion always seem to think that in the example of Jesus they have an argument for their faith that cannot be met. In my own experience, in converse with those who accept that belief, I find they almost invariably gravitate to this statement as a seeming finality, and say, "Well, the way Jesus was baptized is good enough

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far me." And they say this with a satisfied air, as if really there was nothing more to be said! This is the "last word"—this settles the question. They do not, or will not, see that they are simply "begging the question"—assuming—as I have noted before, the point at issue without offering any proof whatever as to the fact.

From this point of view, I also can say the same, and most sincerely. "Yes, the way Jesus was baptized is good enough for me." For I am assured and will proceed to show that it was according to the requirement of Scripture, and that was not by immersion.

Now let us consider more fully the baptism of Jesus, in its various bearings, as we find the record given us by the sacred writers. What, then, is the plain and simple story, as we find it recorded by the Evangelists?

Simply this, John had been preaching and baptizing for some time and "many came unto him (Matt. 3:6) to be baptized of him," when one day Jesus also came desiring to be baptized. To this request, however, John demurred, practically refusing to comply. Then Jesus spoke a few words of explanation, upon which John's reluctance vanished, and without further objection he responded freely to the request, "and he baptized Him." This is the simple outline as we find it in the inspired record. There are, however, some things not so clearly stated, which it is very desirable we should know, if we would have a full

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and clear understanding of this most important event.

First. Why did Jesus wish to be baptized?

Second. Why was John unwilling to do this?

Third. Why did he change his mind about it?

If we can find the true answers to these questions it will go far towards giving us a satisfactory explanation of what seems a very mysterious situation.

Now it is often true that the most direct way to arrive at the solution of a difficult problem is to eliminate the extraneous factors. It may be to our advantage to make use of this method here. It may, at any rate, relieve us of some pre-conceived opinions, and thus bring us nearer to the truth we are seeking.

In the first place, the baptism of Jesus was distinctly and emphatically NOT an instance of that which is commonly referred to as "the baptism of John." Matt. 3:6; Luke 1:4; Acts 19:4. This, I am aware, is not in accord with a very widespread and quite popular belief, but it ought not to require very much in the way of argument to substantiate this statement.

For these reasons—first, the mere fact of John's unwillingness alone would indicate that he considered it an unfitting and improper thing that Jesus should receive the same baptism which he was administering to the multitudes as a mere matter of course, and indeed as the object and aim of his ministry. To the mind of John there

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was a radical difference between Jesus and other men, that would render inappropriate and unbecoming for Him, that which would be quite proper and suitable for them. And we have no reason to think that John ever changed his mind on this point. Something that Jesus said to Him so changed his point of view that he could, and did, readily grant His request, and perform the rite, but with a new purpose and a significance not at all comprehended in the ordinary service, but his original objection remained with all its primal force, and in fact never was removed.

In the second place, it was impossible for Jesus to receive the baptism conferred by John on "the multitude that came to him from Jerusalem, and all Judea" because he could not comply with the conditions required of those who might receive it. The preaching of the Fore-runner was a message of Repentance and Reform only, and the effect produced by it, and indeed sought to be produced by it, was conviction of sin and the seeking after a better life. Its real significance was in making it plain to the Jews that they had failed to live up to the requirements of the Law and the Covenant of Obedience, and thus to prepare their hearts and minds for "the way of the Lord." Luke 1:56; Luke 3:4. And as a result of his work, we find that "Great multitudes came unto him, confessing their sins, and were baptized of him." John knew that Jesus certainly could not do this. He who before His birth was spoken of as "that

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Holy Thing" (Luke 1:36) and later as "that holy child" (Acts 4:27), and who during all His earthly life was "Holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners" and who though in all points tempted as we are and "yet without sin," manifestly could not come to John confessing His sin, and pledging Himself to a better life. Such a course would be utterly beyond the bounds of even our acceptance or belief, and surely that of John.

And yet, in order to receive "the baptism of John," He must necessarily do just this. John was offering to the people at large only the Baptism of Repentance, and these two considerations fully justify us in concluding that Jesus did not receive what is usually understood and spoken of as "the Baptism of John."

The first shows that John refused to confer it, and the second shows that Jesus could not receive it, and when, as here, both the principals to a hypothesis repudiate it, this is sufficient evidence that it did not take place. And so we may consider this supposition eliminated.

Again, the Baptism of Jesus was not that which we now recognize and observe as Christian or church baptism, or the baptism administered by the church since its organization, and to continue through the Gospel Dispensation.

As before, two considerations will suffice us to make this clear.

The first is that the church was not yet in ex-

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istence, having not yet been organized. It really existed only in the mind and thought of its founder, and was only spoken of by Him long after this time, as a thing of the future, which was to find its place and work on earth after His mission here should have ended. It still remained to be established at the descent of the Holy Spirit, after His death, resurrection and ascension. Its Order, its Methods, its Ordinances, must of necessity be subsequent to its organization, else we must admit that an entity may exist before it has a beginning. Whatever men may do we may be sure that our Lord enacts no *ex post facto* legislation, and Jesus could not be baptized by way of admission to a body that had not yet come into being. And while we may, and do, admit and believe that as to its form, this baptism did not differ from that enacted in the beginning, and still administered in accordance with the Divine Will and command, yet its actual passing over to the Gentiles had not yet taken place.

In the second place, we find that the apostles, in the early and formative period of the church, did not regard the baptism of John as Christian baptism—as that—*de facto*, of the Church.

Similar in form, it is true, but in its significance quite different. This is the reason why the apostles with one consent re-baptized for admission into the church those who had already received the Baptism of John.

This we do not take as an argument in favor

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of repeated observance of this Ordinance, for in the minds of the Apostles these persons were regarded as precisely on the same footing as those who had never been baptized at all. The teaching of the greatest of them all is that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor un-circumcision." Col. 3:11. This plainly means that none of the Jewish rites and ceremonies are to be accepted as continuing over into the Gospel Dispensation, the Ceremonial Law having already been abolished at the death of Jesus, and, in fact, never having been obligatory upon the Gentiles, and therefore the baptism of John, both in type and significance, was without binding force upon the church, the "called out" body from the Gentile world. It was indeed to serve a special purpose, but that had already been accomplished.

These disciples whom the apostles re-baptized, while accepting of John as to repentance and reformation of life, knew nothing of Jesus as the Savior the Messiah of the Redemption by the Cross, or of the work of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of believers, and so they were taught these essential truths, and baptized into the faith just as any other converts would have been. It is true now, as it was then, that the church requires more as a pre-requisite for baptism than a mere sense of sin and a desire for a better life. Even the Covenant of Works, by which the Jews hoped to gain acceptance with God, has never been offered to the Gentile world.

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These two proven facts—that John did not administer the Baptism of the church which he knew nothing, and that the church with its ordinances was, as yet, a non-existent body, awaiting the descent of the Holy Spirit, make it very plain that the baptism of John was not what is now known as Christian baptism.

### **But Then What Was the Baptism of Jesus?**

Let us now cease the method of elimination and seek a direct answer to this question. The one fact that must first arrest our attention is that John, though at first far from willing and indeed practically refusing to officiate, soon laid aside this attitude, to take a directly opposite one. The only cause for this strange and sudden change, we may confidently believe to have been the words spoken to him by Jesus, What could have been their meaning to the mind of John? Here they are—"and Jesus said unto him, suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."

This certainly gives a new view and shall we not say—the view that was in the mind of Christ, "to fulfill all righteousness." And so variant from the previous thought of John and so compelling was its force that he yielded to it at once, "and he baptized him."

Now, if we can get for ourselves this "mind which was in Christ" at this time, it will go far toward giving us the solution of the problem, for Jesus based His request upon some reason that

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brought instant compliance from the hitherto unwilling fore-runner.

What was that reason? Let the words of Jesus 'be as plain to us as they were to John, "To fulfill all righteousness." What righteousness? Undoubtedly the "righteousness which is of the Law" (Gal. 2:21) for, we must remember that the New Testament—which is the law of the church was not yet given and the only righteousness the Jew knew was the Law—the Law of Moses. But what law? In this particular instance, it must have been some law relating to baptism, and one, too, with which John was familiar, for Jesus was not here inculcating new rules, but desiring to "fulfill" some Law that was already in force. In the Book of the Law, then, we must expect to find what is here meant. And so, indeed, we do.

But let us leave this line of thought for a moment, and take up another which with this, like the spokes of a great wheel, converge in one common center.

John was a priest, the son of a priest, of the line of Aaron, the father officiating in the temple service, and John himself had without doubt been installed in the duties of the sacred office according to the manner prescribed in the Law, the manner in which all the priests of the Jews from the days of Moses down through those of Samuel to Caiaphas and hundreds of others at that very time as well as the long line of their predecessors and ancestors in office had been according to the

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form and manner prescribed by the law. And this law had never been laid aside. Even if, in some troublous time of the past as well may have been during the years of the Captivity, or the many lapses into wrong-doing, so common to the Jewish people there might have been some laxity in the observance of the law, still we may be sure that at this time when Jesus was led to invoke the law in His appeal to John, the law was not in desuetude, for never during the existence of the nation were the Jews so solicitous in regard to the keeping of the law as at this very period.

Now there was a specific provision of the law, directing an officiating priest in regard to the reception of candidates for the priesthood into their official position. This law is prominent in the Book and must have been observed through all the centuries since its promulgation upon Mount Sinai. There is no room to doubt that John himself had participated in the observance of this provision but a few months before this time, at his own ordination to the sacred office whose functions he was now exercising. If we turn to that Law as recorded in the book of Numbers, we will find its requirements and directions plainly set forth. The first requirement is that of ancestry. The candidate must be of the house of Aaron if for the Priesthood, or that of Levi if for the Temple Service. Then comes a specification as to age. He must be thirty years of age. Num. 4:5. Then in clean raiment he must present himself to the

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Priest to receive the final portion of the inducting ceremony — and here the instruction is to the officiating Priest—"Thus shall he do to them, He shall sprinkle them with clean water." Num. 8:7.

Now the fact that this was the Law that Jesus had in mind in his appeal to John, is evident from the fact that He Himself obeyed its every requirement. It is true He could not trace His ancestry to the house of Aaron, but this is fully explained by an authority that we may not question, as will presently be noted.

He met the requirement as to his age, this fact explaining the otherwise apparently irrelevant statement, "now when Jesus began to be about thirty years of age," to which attention is called at this time. Luke 3:23. Here He presented Himself to John, as an officiating Priest, asking for the completing' rite of baptism, and we are justified in believing that both He and John consciously complied with the remaining injunction of the law and that He was "sprinkled with clean water" as the law required. Num. 8:7; Matt. 3:10. Thus was He made "a Priest forever, after the Order of Melchizedek." Heb. 5:6, 6:20; Psa. 110:4.

As to the question of ancestry and lineage— there seems to be, at first sight, a difficulty not easily to be overcome. The right to enter the Jewish Priesthood was rigidly confined to the descendants of Aaron, and we know that Jesus could not count His descent from that line, nor even

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from that of Levi, so closely related to the Priestly line in the Temple service. But New Testament authority meets and surmounts this difficulty in a way that must excite our admiration. Referring to the Old Testament authority (Psa. 110:4), we learn that Jesus was not inducted into the Jewish or Aaronic Priesthood, but into the Order of Melchizedek, as a Priest of the whole world. Heb. 5:6. He thus became our High Priest, not that He might, as the priests in the temple, "offer continually sacrifices and offerings, which could never take away sin," and this is shown in Heb. 7:17-21, "that he might once for all offer up himself a sacrifice for sin to take away the sin of the world." The enlarging purpose of God in taking in the Gentile world required an enlarged Priesthood, and a Divine High Priest. This is the argument of inspiration, and it admits of no denial. And yet Jesus, in entering upon a greater sphere than that of the Jewish High Priest did not feel Himself absolved from the obligation imposed upon Him by the law of the Jews. For that law was the law of God, and Jesus, recognizing always the fact of His obligations under the law, as a Jew was ever solicitous to observe in every detail, throughout all his life, the Ceremonial Law as given to Israel. The law was yet in force, and it was only abrogated when, as His Spirit took its flight from His bruised and broken body upon the tree, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, and he could say, "It is finished." All the long

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way through His long life and labors it was His declared will and purpose to fulfill the law, and in this instance we are compelled to believe that He did in every detail of His baptism, thus completely meet all its requirements.

Now, we may ask, reverently, is it conceivable that He would deliberately, or could ignorantly, disregard and disobey the law of God? Jesus who said, "for this cause was I born," and said that he "came not to destroy, but to fulfill," who "magnified the law and made it honorable," who said that He "came to do the will of the Father," and that He always "did those things which were pleasing in His sight,"—who became "obedient unto death" crowning thus a spotless life—we may well ask is it conceivable that such an One as this, should here, at the very beginning of His earthly career and indeed as the very first act of that ministry and mission, should here disregard and disobey the law of God, well known to Him, as indeed it was well known to the entire nation of the Jews? And, is it possible that John should conspire with Him to aid and abet Him in such a course, and boldly substitute some other, and hitherto unknown observance for that which the law of God had prescribed? And this, too, without any apparent or conceivable motive? And that God would honor Him from heaven and seal such conduct with His approval? And that the Holy Spirit should add the sanction of His approving presence to such a flagrant flouting of the divine

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law, after it had been obediently observed for more than a thousand years? And last, though least of all, if this took place in the full view of assembled multitudes, as seems to have been the case, that these observant Jews, zealous for the law, would ignore this breaking of their law which they held in idolatrous reverence, and while most deeply interested in the conduct of both John and Jesus, even sending delegations for the sole purpose of reporting about them, should apparently take no notice of such a remarkable proceeding? Is not this asking too much of Christian credulity?

*But this is exactly what one must accept and believe who would assert that Jesus was immersed in the River Jordan—for this fact is self-evident. IF JESUS WAS IMMersed HE DID NOT KEEP THE LAW.*

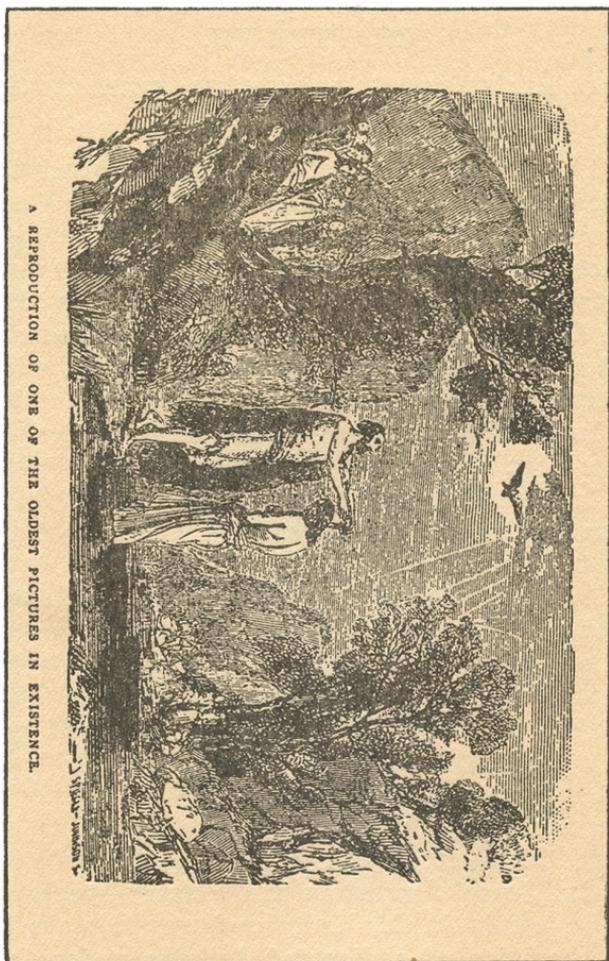
Now if there be any dissent from this conclusion let us see again "what saith the law." "To the law and to the Testimony" be our recourse. We have seen how all the conditions for entering the Priestly Order, had all been met by Jesus— Age, Lineage—(this is explained for us by the Holy Spirit in the Book of Psalms and by the letter to the Hebrews), at last presenting Himself to the Officiating Priest for the concluding rite of His ordination and installation—which the law prescribed for just such occasions, expressly demanding that it should be by "sprinkling with clean water." And after all this, are we to think

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that here a new and as yet unknown method—that of immersion—would be brought on the stage? Or that by this procedure the law was being complied with? The law which expressly says, "He (the officiating priest) shall sprinkle them with clean water"?

Such a supposition admits of only one reply, by any candid, unprejudiced mind, Jesus certainly obeyed the Law in His baptism and therefore HE WAS NOT IMMersed.

On the opposite page is a reproduction of one of the oldest pictures in existence, probably the most ancient known, in fact so ancient that no date can be given for it, and may be regarded as purely a work of imagination on the part of the artist, and nothing more be claimed for it than that, yet this much may be claimed in regard to it. It must be granted that even so it must be regarded as fairly representing the common sentiment at the time of its production, and no one can see here any evidence of immersion, plainly no such thought was in the artist's mind at all; the action depicted here is simply that of sprinkling or pouring, according to the manner prescribed in the law, and this is circumstantial evidence of the very first order as to the fact that in the belief of the Early Church Jesus was thus baptized as the Law required.



A REPRODUCTION OF ONE OF THE OLDEST PICTURES IN EXISTENCE.

CHAPTER VII.  
PAUL AS THE FIRST IMMERSIONIST IN THE  
EARLY CHURCH.

I had not supposed after the inspired and detailed account given by the Apostle to the Gentiles for the instruction of his Gentile converts.— followed 'by his plain statement to these same converts that in his teaching to them there was only one Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism." I surely had not thought any defence of Paul from the indictment of being the first to embrace the mode of Immersion could be either called for or in place—but here at the very last moment as I give the last finishing touches to my copy for the press I am confronted by a statement that I cannot allow to pass without challenge.

And while it may seem presumptuous in me as one of the mere "*hoi polloi*" to dare to break a lance with so noted a writer as Dr. Howard Banks yet my only defence must be—"Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel just," or this, "God and one are a majority;" and I am obliged to meet these statements with a bare unqualified denial of their accuracy, and might question the good taste of using the most popular and widely circulated Sunday School Journal in this country—perhaps in the world—in this underhand way to make it the champion of a disputed doctrine under the

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shield of interdenominationalism, but-let that go—the name of interdenominationalism can be used—and indeed often is—to cover up a multitude of sins, literary and historic, and I perhaps should not have been greatly surprised to note Dr. Banks deserting the Scripture record to go over—horse, foot and dragoons—to join the camp of the immersion army as he has done, but to do this under the flag of *interdenominationalism*" seems like violating a flag of truce.

But we will let him speak for himself—The Sunday-School Times issue of May 2, 1925.

"From Naaman to Paul (v. 18). 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?' asks indignant Naaman. No, Naaman, the Ark of the Covenant has been through Jordan, forecasting Christ in resurrection, a symbolism now fulfilled; and Paul is doubtless baptized in Abana or one of its small tributaries! Of course Naaman's seven-time dip and Christian baptism are not the same, but the comparison may suggest the importance of expecting different divine emphases in different dispensations."

Well, this settles the question, at least for all immersionists, but there are still a few "doubting Thomases" who will discount his "doubtless" and ask for the proof. For one I must say, making use of a gun captured from the enemy on the field in this same article, "the analogies of Scripture are all against it," and I assert that there is abso-

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lutely nothing in the inspired record that will justify his statement "to the law and to the testimony," if they speak not according to them it is because there is no truth in them. Consider for a moment the situation. Saul had been for years carefully and thoroughly educated in the Rabbinical school under the cautious and conservative Gamaliel, and without doubt educated in the law, which included the law of baptism which could be as well administered by Ananias, under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit who seemed to direct both him and Philip at this time, and there is not even a suggestion in this record of any change, or that Saul made any such change, or even suggested He had been educated to obey the law, and knew perfectly what it demanded, and we may believe carried out its instructions.

Aside from this, we see here the outcropping of that unfounded symbolism which makes the crossing of the Jordan by the Ark of the Covenant, a symbol of the resurrection of Jesus, adopted pell-mell by later advocates of immersion without the slightest Scriptural authority. As I have spoken of this elsewhere I will pass it by now as a mere monkish fable. Then it is intimated that Saul was properly punished for his association with a Sadducee who believed in none of the things that made up the life of Paul.

The whole section is a tissue of blunders. It simply goes to show how hard-lived is the error that from first to last has begun with pure as-

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sumption and has neither argument nor authority to uphold it. The different "Dispensations" as we have shown from the Prophecy of Isaiah, entailed no change as is suggested here, and Paul's own words of suggesting the "emphases" of different dispensations as suggested here.

It is simply assumed, and I think most readers would so understand it to teach that Saul was immersed in the River Abana or some of its tributaries and I am moved to say that there is absolutely nothing in the record to suggest such a thing and that it would not have been introduced into the teaching of this lesson under the false pretense of "interdenominationalism" had it not been for the pre-conceived opinion of one who saw here a chance to exploit a circumstance to the advantage of that opinion.

There seems to be an inevitable association of ideas in the minds of devotees of immersion— they cannot think of baptism without thinking of a river—the river Jordan seems to have the preference, but any river will do. Abana is made to serve here and even a hypothetical river serve if no geographical river presents itself. The wonder in this case is that Saul was not treated to a sevenfold dip as was Naaman. This surely was a neglected opportunity to say the least.

CHAPTER VIII.  
WHY JESUS WAS BAPTIZED, THUS FULFILLING  
ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It seems strange that the advocates of immersion when they adduce the example of Jesus, should so evidently fail to perceive, or at least to direct attention to the real purpose embodied in His act. And yet it is not strange after all, for if they should but perceive that it was simply in accordance with the requirements of the law, as preliminary to His entering-upon His priestly office, they would surely be confronted by the fact that such Ordination must of necessity conform to the specific procedure enjoined by that law, which is so plainly stated therein as to be beyond question or denial, that He should be "sprinkled with clean water" by the officiating Priest, and here they would meet with an insurmountable obstacle to their belief at the very outset.

But it is certainly strange that anyone familiar with Scripture should fail to perceive this element entering into the Baptism of Jesus. Especially so when this was the very argument advanced by Jesus Himself to overcome the scruples of John.

It is indeed strange, it is more than strange— it is almost inexplicable that anyone understanding these facts should for a moment think that

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immersion, in any of its variant forms, could be regarded as a compliance with the law in regard to such a procedure, which expressly stipulates the "sprinkling with clean water."

And yet, strange as it may appear, such an eminent scholar and student as Dr. G. Campbell Morgan appears to be quite blind to this, the great central point and purpose of His baptism, and can see nothing more in it than an opportunity for the signal approval of the Trinity, the Father and the Holy Spirit bearing witness to the mission and character of the Son.

This it undoubtedly was, but this was not all nor even the principal part of this event. The occasion which called forth this heavenly testimony was the entrance of the Savior upon the active period of His ministry, in accordance with the method prescribed by the law, *and His taking to Himself the dignity of the High Priestly Office to which He was fore-ordained*, and in doing so, as in all that He ever did, "fulfilling the law and making it honorable." There is no other possible explanation of His baptism, and it has been an unexplained mystery to Bible students of all ages, simply because they have rejected the true explanation, the only one that will solve the mystery.

It might be helpful to remember at this point that Jesus Himself at a later period of His ministry, furnished a most unmistakable proof that He recognized the Law as still existing in binding force, and obligatory as when first given, and as

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occasion arose He directed others to observe and comply with its injunctions, (Matt. 3:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 6:14), the bearing of this outstanding fact is obvious. Is it conceivable that He Himself would have violated and disregarded this law while he so plainly recognized it, and enjoined its observance upon others? And yet no other conclusion is left to us, if Jesus was immersed at His baptism.

And in addition to this is it possible that had the fact of His immersion been publicly known, as it must have been, outraging the law-abiding elements of the Jewish Hierarchy, could they, or would they have ignored such an affront to their law and their religion, with all its observances, built upon the law? And would they pass it by without notice or opposition? This is a most impossible supposition, and yet it must be accepted, if the "change" from sprinkling to immersion took place as some contend by following the example of Jesus. And for this belief, we may be sure, in the case of many, if not of most of its adherents, a preconceived bias to the theory of immersion is principally responsible.

CHAPTER IX.  
OTHER INSTANCES WHICH ABE RELIED UPON  
BY SOME ADVOCATES OF IMMERSION.

It would seem hardly needful to adduce anything farther here. After the citadel has fallen the outposts may be regarded with comparative indifference, yet there is much that is sometimes brought in as reserve corps to save the flags when the cause is lost, and something may be offered to meet the arguments that are sometimes advanced. In the history of the Early Church there have been various instances that are sometimes distorted to make them appear to favor immersion. Let us then notice some of these early instances.

At the day of Pentecost which is rightfully the birthplace of the Early Apostolic Church, we learn of the descent of the Holy Spirit, and are told that three thousand were baptized and the claim is made by some that these were all immersed. In this case it is plain that the "wish is father to the thought."

As there is absolutely nothing in the record to indicate what form of baptism was used on this occasion, the presumption is certainly that in the absence of any definite description the ordinary mode employed among the Jews would be employed, and this, as we have seen, was by the time-honored method of sprinkling with water. Still,

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to those whose minds are made up beforehand no conclusion other than the one which is favored will be accepted. It is easy to believe according to the wish, apparently to establish the possibility of immersion in this instance considerable mathematical calculation has been indulged in to prove that such observance could have taken place within the specified time allotted by the Record and an allotment of so much time and so many minutes to each has been made lest the service overlap the time employed. This all seems to verge on the ridiculous, when we consider that whatever the possibilities may have been, the probabilities, nay the actual certainty, is, that no such event as is thus supposed, ever occurred.

It is supposed, in the interest of the immersion theory that this ceremony took place at, or in, the pool of Solomon, as the only practical place both on account of its immediate location and the necessary quantity of water required as in this case the river Jordan, a favorite location with the advocates of immersion, was too far away to be available. In regard to this pool it may be said that the water was brought by an aqueduct from a very considerable distance, some say from Mount Libanus and was carefully guarded as one of the principal sources of supply for the wants of the inhabitants, who resorted thither to fill their vessels for home use, and for drinking and that no such use of it as that of a mob of three thousand rushing down to and through it would

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have been tolerated by the Jews. Especially would this have been the case, when done by a sect that was already in ill favor with the Jewish leaders who were very jealous of their prerogatives, and only too ready from the first to use all possible forms of repression, and were almost ready even now to begin a persecution against these "Fanatics" which did really follow soon after.

Further, this would have taken place under the direct observation and surveillance of a body of Roman soldiers quartered in the Tower of Antonia directly overlooking this section of the city whose business it was to repress any disturbance, or suspicious assemblies among the people, always more or less turbulent, and who would certainly have taken note of any such proceeding as this. It is in violent contradiction to all the probabilities in the case to imagine any such transaction as is here assumed. And we are justified in asking, Why should this have been done anyway? Immersion was neither known nor practiced by the Jews nor by any other people, so far as is known nor was it observed for centuries after this time. We have already seen that Jesus did not introduce it; these converts now drawn to faith in Christ were Jews from all the surrounding countries, we are told (Acts 2:6-11), but they took their religious observances from Jerusalem and the law of Baptism there, as has been shown, was just what it had been for centuries, fifteen of

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them, that of sprinkling according to its original institution, and by the law.

If these three thousand converts were baptized after the usual and accepted manner, the occurrence would not have attracted notice nor required any calculation as to the time necessary for its accomplishment. Many years after this time, the Apostle Paul, when teaching his Gentile converts, did not mention immersion but did teach the baptism of sprinkling as by the Jewish example. He did not mention immersion nor anything that could be construed in favor of it. Altogether, it is too much to ask us to believe that the baptism of these Jewish converts took place as the advocates of immersion contend.

**The Baptism of the Eunuch by Philip the Evangelist.**

Next in course of time and in order we find the story of Philip and the Eunuch which occurred a little later. Here we find that the eunuch who had been in all probability a Jewish Proselyte and had been spending some time in Jerusalem observing the Feast of the Passover, was now on his way home. The route which he was following lay through the "negeb," a fringe of the desert and unpopulated land lying south of the land of Judea. The record distinctly assures us that it "was desert." Here Philip was led by the Spirit to a meeting with the Eunuch on his way. The latter was reading as he rode, the place of his reading being the word of the prophet Isaiah, and

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wishing for aid in understanding what he read, he asked of Philip the meaning of the passage relating to the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom. Beginning at that place his reading would soon come to the words, "He shall sprinkle many nations," and naturally and properly understanding this to refer to the rite of baptism, which he had no doubt witnessed among the Jews, for there was no other place where he could have seen it, and probably desiring to take part in this emblem of his new faith as they passed a little spring whose flow of water sinks into the sands, the Eunuch is led to exclaim, "See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" And here and now Philip baptized him.

Now the only baptism known to Philip and the Eunuch as well, and the baptism Isaiah was writing about was the baptism of sprinkling—the baptism Philip had been preaching about was sprinkling. He could not possibly have preached immersion from such a text as this of Isaiah, and it was by sprinkling the Eunuch was baptized. Everything compels such a conclusion. There is certainly not a hint of immersion in the entire transaction, nor anything that could be construed in that direction.

On the contrary, sprinkling is expressly demanded by the Scripture under consideration at this time, and I take notice that Philip who was familiar enough with the Scriptures to become a teacher and interpreter of them, and who was,

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also besides, under the direct and special guidance of the Holy Spirit, and probably for this purpose, did not attempt to translate this word as "startle" —this translation—or mistranslation, we must say, was left for advocates of immersion in the Nineteenth Century, to discover or invent.

Of course they, "both Philip and the Eunuch," had to "go down" from the chariot, but to say that Philip, after preaching baptism by sprinkling as he would have been obliged to do from this Scripture, then went "down" and plunged the Eunuch under water contrary to what he had been reading and preaching, and contrary as well to all the past knowledge of baptism familiar to either of them, seems the height of absurdity.

Besides, as an absolute fact, there was not water enough there sufficient for an immersion even if that had been their intention. I am aware that some are quite willing to suppose a river was there for that purpose, but if there were one it must have been miraculously supplied, and for that occasion only, for neither before nor since has it been visible. The Scripture emphasizes the fact that the locality was "desert" and does not mention any supernatural supply of water, and a "desert" with rivers convenient for travelers is something unknown as yet. And it is an established fact, that no river or stream is to be found in that region now, and there is no geographical note of there ever having been one there. Dr. Godbey, a famous minister, missionary, explorer,

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author and traveler, states in one of his books, that he has traversed this region in various directions at six different times in successive seasons, during his extensive journeyings, and that there is absolutely no river there, nor any stream even, and no indication of there ever having been any. The only water to be found is that of an occasional little spring trickling from a bluff or hillside, and forming a little pool before losing itself in the sand. The Eunuch's exclamation, (in the original) *tina hudor*, "*a little water*," shows his surprise at the discovery.

We might remember that this was the "dry season" and this desert country, destitute of water in ordinary times, must have been even more so at this time. As a positive proof of Baptism by sprinkling the circumstances of this occasion leaves nothing to be desired.

**The Baptism of Cornelius and His Household.**

When Peter, in the house of Cornelius, saw that the Holy Ghost had been given, after his wonderful vision showing that the bar had been lifted for the entrance of the Nations into the fold of Christ, he realized that the next step was that of Baptism. This was in perfect accordance with his Commission. Now the Mediterranean Sea was close at hand, writers even tell us that the waves of this sea actually washed the foundations of the house of Simon the tanner, where the Apostle was at this time. But we are not told

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that he ushered his converts down to the seaside in order to immerse them. There was certainly no lack of water there, and no one could forbid such use of it. In later days such use of rivers, streams and ponds has been everywhere assumed as a right of "public domain"—and this is what immersionists would have us believe was what he did.

But what he actually did according to the Record, was simply to ask for water. "Can any man forbid water that these should be baptized"? In plain, every day speech "will not somebody bring some water that these should be baptized."

**The Baptism Op the Jailer of Phillippi at Midnight.**

I will but refer, in passing, to what I can only consider or describe, as the audacity of some who would bend facts to match their theory. To ordinary readers it would seem quite beyond the realm of sober fact—indeed, a long way into that of pure conjecture—to presuppose the existence of a baptismal tank, or anything else that could be made to serve the purpose of one, appropriately situated, sufficient in capacity, and awaiting use in order to account for the unusual and difficult situation of an immersion at midnight, in an ancient jail. But the necessities of the case admit of nothing less, unless we adopt the supposition that Paul conducted his docile jailer, with his family, (the children of course, if there were any, being left behind), over the nine or ten miles to the

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nearest available sea coast where the Mediterranean was awaiting them. In this case it would not be needful to press into service a bath-tub, a swimming-pool, or even a horse-trough, to meet the exigencies of the situation, though all of these have been seriously proposed, in good faith. It has been said that it is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, but what of a religious dogma that is dependent on such expedients as these?

CHAPTER X.  
SOME OF THE MIS-USE OFTEN MADE OF THE  
SCRIPTURES.

I have already noted that the advocates of immersion are prone to make use of other authority than that of Scripture to establish their belief. I now call attention to more serious fault. When they invoke the aid of the inspired Word in support of their belief it would seem to be by way of perverting it from its real meaning. This they do in one or other of three ways, either by

*Mis-translation,*  
*Mis-interpreting.*  
*Mis-understanding.*

For instance. When they insist upon the literal meaning of the expression "they went down into the water" and "came up out of the water" as proof positive of immersion, they forget that no adequate Bible students, even of their own Denominational Schools, now attach to this passage the importance formerly claimed for it, for two reasons.

First. If it proves anything, it proves too much. If that was the only proof to be had for immersion, it would show that all were immersed, for they "both" "went down" and both alike "came up," and if this shows immersion, then all were immersed, and as to the mode of baptism it is of no value whatever.

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Second. This is not admitted by any as being a true and sufficient translation of the words used here. The Greek prepositions *eis* and *apo* are ordinarily and adequately rendered into English in the New Testament by the prepositions *to* and *from* and only when the intensive "down into" and "up out of" is intended this is indicated by a duplication of the preposition, but this form is not used here, thus the real and true meaning of the words in this place, and all the meaning that can properly be attached to them is simply that "they went down to the water" and "came up from the water" which, while perfectly natural and open to no dispute, proves nothing in any case pro or con, as to immersion, sprinkling or affusion. Thus this expression, so convincing to the minds of many loses all its unsubstantial force when correctly translated, and no more than the appellation of "John the Baptist" might mean to those who have looked in vain for any reference to "John the Methodist." All scholarly advocates of immersion admit this.

Another, and perhaps unintentional mistranslation, is found in the passage, John 3:28, which states that John the Baptist went from the Jordan where he had been preaching and baptizing to Enon, near to Salim because there was "much water" there. Here, the absurdity of leaving the great river Jordan to seek, in a distant locality for water, should be so manifest as to need no explanation, yet there are those who find here proofs of

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immersion. Correct translation clears this difficulty up entirely. The marginal reading, which should have been the text, is that "there were many springs there." Unfortunately for those who are accustomed to find here proof of immersion, these springs trickling through marshy meadow land on their way to the Jordan, as they do to this day, offer little or no facilities for immersion. Far less, indeed than the River Jordan, which he had just quitted. It was not for this purpose that he was there, but for the "clean water" both for his own use and that of the multitudes that followed him. He had been baptizing in the Jordan, that muddy, turbulent stream, and now, it is suggested, had gone farther up the valley and quite a way from the River in order to find sufficient water in which to immerse his converts. This appears to be a real case of *reductio ad absurdum*.

The thought that was no doubt in the mind of John leading to this change of location was the contrast of the cool clear water of these "many springs" with the foul, muddy flood of the Jordan "overflowing all its banks," as it usually did at this season of the year (Joshua 3:16), and then the insistent requirement of the law, that he should use clean water for baptism, altogether render it easy to account for his presence at this time. Here again, simply the use of the correct translation is sufficient to remove all the difficulty. John was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, be-

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cause there was much water or many springs there, as there are at this time, and that is all there is of it. It really proves nothing either way, except perhaps, that John was endeavoring to comply with the law, which, as he knew said that "he should sprinkle them with clean water."

Now, before our attention is diverted from the subject of verbal usage, we might notice that John who is claimed by many to be the originator of baptism by immersion, when speaking on the subject of baptism said: "I indeed baptize you with water," and a little later Jesus, referring to the same subject, said, "John indeed baptized you with water."

I wish to call attention to the preposition by both of these,—"with" and not "in." It must be conceded that both John and Jesus understood the correct use of language, and when both alike said "with" instead of "in," we can hardly miss the significance of their words. It would evidently be safe to say that one had been "immersed" with water. No one would make use of such an expression. It would be just as absurd to say that he had been "sprinkled" in water. The ordinary and proper use of language requires to believe that both John and Jesus referred to the use of water by sprinkling, the mode with which they and those who heard them were familiar, but their words are meaningless and irrelevant if understood as applying to immersion.

In the writings of some later advocates of im-

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mersion I note an argument which they seem to regard as conclusive and seems convincing to many and therefore deserves some notice. When traced down to bottom facts, it is found to be, like so many other arguments made use of in this cause, pure assumption—i. e., assertion without proof, and may be taken for what it is worth.

I refer to the statement that wherever it occurs in the New Testament, the Greek word *baptizo* and its derivatives invariably mean *go immerse*, and should have been so translated. In our present version the word itself is not really translated, but simply transferred, or transliterated, and used as an English speaking word derived from the Greek.

This contention simply assumes and asserts that in its use in the Greek Classics the word always had the meaning of immerse, and therefore the meaning as well the word should be transferred into English.

It would be a debatable question as to just what word should be adopted to express exactly the meaning of this word *baptizo*. Probably no one word could be used as it would require so many synonyms. But this argument may be dismissed with but two observations. First, if accepted as true, it would not be relevant. And second, if accepted as relevant it would not be true. As to the first, it would be absurd to think that a sacred ordinance, whose heavenly origin was beyond dispute or doubt, attested by miracle

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and revelation and proved by fulfilled prophecy, and observed by a whole people for a period of more than fifteen hundred years could now be subject to an entire change of both form significance, and application at the mere demand of a questionable interpretation from a language of a known pagan idolatrous usage originating centuries afterward.

And in the second place, the assertion is not true. All scholars know that the word in question is quite comprehensive in its meaning, as used by those who were contemporary with it in what are commonly known as The Classic Ages. These varied meanings include such divergences as to dip, to plunge, to pour, to tinge, to sprinkle, to dye, to color—and many others. To lay upon it such a burden as this is to load it beyond its capacity. Any Greek-English Lexicon will confirm my words and numberless classic writers furnish examples of its use, and seldom that of "immerse." Homer, in the battle of the Frogs, says, "The lake was sprinkled with their blood." *Baptizo* here, but not immerse. Numberless quotations might be given from such writers as Æschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Alcibiades, Herodotus, and many others. The claim that the word *baptizo* always means "to immerse" has absolutely no foundation in fact.

CHAPTER XI.  
A NEW VERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES IN  
PREPARATION.

With this plain and indisputable statement of the facts in mind it will be seen that the effort of some earnest advocates of immersion to furnish a better foundation for their belief by producing another version of the Scriptures in which the key-word *baptizo and its derivatives* shall be everywhere translated by "immerse" can only be used in bringing out an effort that will have a place together as a literary curiosity with the famous "Breeches Bible," probably to be known as the 'Dipping Bible," to become the creed of a church, or even of a denomination, a doctrine must have a more solid foundation than this.

It is indeed true that Jesus requires His followers to be baptized, but it is nowhere stated, nor even inferred, that He expected them to be immersed. No such manufactured evidence as that of such a prepared version of Scripture can ever have any intrinsic value.

While gathering up the scattered threads of argument on this subject we might notice the oft-repeated claim that immersion was substituted for some earlier form by John the Baptist, or some one under his authority. It will be at once apparent that the only date which could reasonably be assigned for such a change, if it ever took place,

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was at the transition between the Old and the New Dispensations. And it seems fair to say that the whole fabric of the immersion theory rests upon the assumption that such a change did take place at this time.

No earlier date can be possible, for the Mosaic law strictly forbade proving expressly the method of sprinkling, and no later date can be accepted for that would involve and require a radical change in the order of the early Christian church. It is a self-evident fact that the order of faith and worship as at first adopted by the followers of Jesus, was not a transient or temporary one but was intended to be permanent, and for such an absolute change as is here supposed no authority was ever conferred.

This gives greater significance to the fact that the earliest historical notice of the appearance of the immersion theory did not appear until centuries after the founding of the church. As supposed proof of the adoption of immersion by the Apostles, this belated voice can have weight, else it would have been regarded as it was, and still is, as a divergence from the established rule of faith and practice.

It seems to have been very properly placed at its first appearance among a number of other extremist views which found little favor in the church. Coming down to the time of Constantine, and later, and the beginning of real apostasy in the church, we find the arguments for immersion

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not at all in line with those relied upon today, but grew out of the view that as baptism was a sacrament for the cleansing from sin, by virtue of which one was freed from the guilt of all previous transgressions it was desirable to postpone an ordinance so efficacious, which could be administered but once, to the latest date possible that the soul might be purified to the greatest degree possible. It does not appear strange that out of this belief should have arisen the practice of extreme unction, which prevails in the Roman Catholic Church to the present time. This is indirect evidence, it is true, but it is scarcely possible that the thought and practice of the church should have taken the course noted if the present day belief in regard to immersion had been prevalent during the centuries that had intervened between the time of the apostles and that of Constantine. The two schools of thought are so diametrically opposite.

Another point to be taken notice of is that the baptism of children was the unchangeable rule of the apostolic church. For a full millennium of years after the death of Christ, absolutely no religious body had affirmed that it was not lawful to baptize children. This is the unanimous testimony so far as is known of all the early fathers.

Irenaus, who lived in the second century and was familiar with Polycarp, the greatest disciple of John the Evangelist and Revelator, declares explicitly that the church learned from the apostles to baptize infants.

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Origen, in the next century affirms that the custom of baptizing children was received from Christ and His apostles. Cyprian and a church council convened about A. D. 264, declared that children ought to be baptized. Ambrose, twenty years later, wrote that the baptism of children had been the custom of the apostles themselves, and of the church down to that time. Chrysostom, in the fifth century, said that the church everywhere declared that infants should be baptized. Augustine affirmed he had never heard of any church, but those held and taught that infants should be baptized. And so on. These are the early fathers and this is the voice of the apostolic church. This much is evident—that at no point in the history of the early church does the present day doctrine of (immersionists) in the baptism (by immersion) of adult believers only make its appearance, and indeed the system does not seem to have developed into anything like its present form until brought forward by Munzer, in Germany, at the close of the Fifteenth Century.

But some will say, "We must be buried with Him" in the waters of baptism. It is a sufficient reply to this to say that we are not taught anywhere that Jesus was "buried in a liquid grave," and we have shown that at His own baptism He was not immersed. These words are to be understood in the spiritual sense which characterizes the whole passage, and not in the narrow literal sense. This entire section is to be understood in this way else

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we should feel constrained to be in some undefined way "crucified with Him" as a succeeding verse directs us. The real and spiritual significance here is, that by being baptized into His body—the Church—in token of our faith in Him, we receive the benefit of His death and burial. The truth is here to be spiritually discerned and not to be bound in a blind literalism which would also require us to undergo some form that might be construed as typical crucifixion also as indicated in the immediate context, and with just as much reason as in the case of immersion, and both in a mistaken obedience to a wholly misunderstood Scripture, taking the gross literal instead of the truly spiritual meaning of the Word.

Another claim that is sometimes made in these late days, for immersion, is that it is a type of the death and resurrection of Christ. This sounds like a Swedenborgian fallacy, utterly devoid of sanction or support from Scripture, merely a human invention; its only effect is to change the significance, as its proponents have already changed the form of the ordinance, making it to mean something never intended by its Divine Founder. As noted in the law, its significance is to be unchangeable signifying cleansing and consecration only. And man has no right to assign to it any other meaning. It is simply a most daring presumption to change either the form or the significance of a divine ordinance. As for this attempted change in typology, there is absolutely no war-

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rant for such a thing. Christ left His followers the only symbol of His death when He said, "This bread is my body, broken for you," and "This wine is my blood, shed for you," and His disciples have no right to substitute any other for the means of His own appointment, after this Swedenborgian fashion. While this may seem to the minds of some to be a type, acceptable to them, it has absolutely no Scriptural ground, and is of force and value only to those who can use it to bolster up their belief in immersion.

And here, the theory of immersion leads its advocates into sheer conflict with Jesus' own command. His injunction and still is "eat ye all of it—drink ye all of it,"—but those who accept this immersion theory and strictly and consistently follow it, wiser than their Lord, are compelled to say, and many of them do, "No, you cannot come to the table of the Lord unless you be first immersed into the faith." It is easy to see that this is assuming a prerogative which neither Jesus nor His apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit, ever conferred upon His church. His command places the responsibility of sharing in the Lord's Supper wholly upon the disciple himself. Listen to the Word, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him come." But the immersionist contending comes between the disciple and his Lord, and denies the privilege of obeying this last command simply because this believer cannot "speak their Shibboleth." This is no doubt quite a logical de-

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velopment of the theory, and as such is defended and practiced by many who claim to be following in the footsteps of the Savior, but to the ordinary mind, especially if he be excluded by this modern Shibboleth, such a conclusion as this proves the premise to be utterly and indefensibly wrong.

**Other New Testament Evidence.**

The New Testament itself does not leave us in any doubt in regard to this. The apostle Paul tells us plainly that there is but "one baptism." Eph. 4:5. This alone ought to be a sufficient answer to those who hold that there are different "modes" of baptism, any of which may be chosen according to the caprice or will of the applicant, and it corroborates the truth of all other declarations of Scripture on the subject, and confirms the belief that one rite and only one, is baptism,, and all other forms are merely human substitutes and without divine sanction.

But, how daring, how rash, how inexcusably presumptuous thus to pervert, to change, a Divine ordinance, both as to its form and its significance, until in neither does it bear the slightest resemblance to the original as it came from the hand of the Lord who originated it.

These disciples seem to feel, like Peter in his earlier days, quite capable of giving advice to their Lord, (Matt. 16:22), and no half-way work will satisfy them. Bent on establishing their own rite, they put the seal of their condemnation on the baptism of Scripture. I have even heard some

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declare that they believed that it would be very doubtful if one who had not been immersed could ever gain entrance into the world of light.

I might ask attention here to the testimony of a still later witness on this subject—one having a most unusual knowledge of the whole ceremonial system, having a very remarkable insight into its typology and deep significance.

### **The Testimony Of the Writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews.**

And when, in addition to this, he was also inspired by the Ghost, as we believe him to have been, we may surely accept his statements as conclusive. I refer to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He addresses his words to "the tribes which are scattered abroad," whom he plainly assumes to be familiar with the types and ceremonies of the Old Testament Dispensation, and so we find him referring to their "cleansing" in terms which we can only understand as referring to baptism, and baptism by sprinkling at that.

For he speaks to them as being "sprinkled" "from an evil conscience," words which it would have been utterly impossible for him to have used as referring to immersion, or indeed to have used at all, if he had been of the type of our modern believers in that theory.

Again he speaks of the "sprinkling of the unclean," to the purifying of the flesh," and shows how impossible it is, that sin be put away from the heart in this way, and goes on to contrast this

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with the "one offering" (Heb. 19:10), of the blood of Christ, by which He hath "forever perfected" those who are sanctified thereby, (Heb. 10:1), who have their hearts "sprinkled from an evil conscience," and proceeds to designate and describe the blood of redemption, the blood of Jesus,, by which we are saved, as "the blood of sprinkling" (Heb. 10:24) ; a phrase which is in perfect harmony with the usages of the ceremonial system, and also with the form of Scriptural baptism and with the declarations of inspired prophecy as connected with the Gospel Dispensation, (Isaiah 52: 15, Ezek. 36:25), but which is a mode of expression that would have been simply impossible to the mind of a believer in immersion, in that day, even as it is just as irreconcilable with such a belief in our day.

This shows, beyond reasonable doubt or cavil, that this inspired writer was not only familiar with the usages and significance of the rite of sprinkling as a Divinely appointed form of the Old Dispensation but that he understood that its symbolic character was to find its continuance and fulfillment in the New, and it also shows unmistakably that he accepted the rite of the original and long established form of sprinkling as having been duly transferred to the Gospel Dispensation as the fulfillment of the types and prophecies of the Old.

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**The Same Testimony in the Words of the Apostle Peter.**

It may also be noted that the Apostle Peter makes use of the same terms in regard to the blood of Jesus when he speaks of it as the "blood of sprinkling." And as we remember that the church had been in existence as an organized form for the life time of an ordinary generation when these words were written, two things must infallibly appear. First, that the belief and practice of the church was plainly along the line of sprinkling for baptism and, second, that neither Paul, nor Peter, nor Apollos—if he was, as some think, the writer of this epistle—nor yet the Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of it, approved the teaching of immersion, or gave the least intimation that they even knew of it.

If none of these believed or taught the doctrine of immersion at this age of the church, this should be final and convincing.

If such passages as these are to be taken as indicating the personal opinions of the writers, even then they render it impossible to believe that the practice of the apostles and the apostolic church had been to baptize by immersion.

Fifty years had elapsed, and so much of time must have settled the practice into uniformity, if indeed there had ever been any divergence, which can only be supposition at best, and contrary to the testimony of contemporary writers. The only acceptable supposition—and I feel that I state it

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mildly when I say—the only possible supposition is that at the inception of the church, while its members were almost all Jews, and the church itself was regarded by the believers themselves, as hardly other than a separate sect of the Jewish people, they would almost certainly continue their formal services as they had been accustomed to doing all their lives, at least until they had come to understand that the ceremonial law was no longer obligatory, and the Gentile converts began to come in, and thus continue the form as baptism in accordance with the law given them by Moses from the mount by sprinkling, as did the Jews. Of this fact we have abundant testimony from writers in the formative period of the early apostolic church. Lactantius, one of the early fathers, and a near successor of the apostles, expressly states in his writings that the apostles and the church under their direction baptized their converts by sprinkling. Many other authorities also testify to the same effect, and in fact, every line of available evidence, converges upon this same point.

But passages formerly referred to mean much more than simply the mere personal opinions of the writers themselves. We are assured that they wrote these things because they were inspired to do so, by the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, and hence we may well believe that we have here revealed to us the mind of the Spirit, which we are sure was "the mind that was in Christ." Surely this should be enough for the

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most exacting, when we can say with confidence that the Holy Spirit does not teach nor sanction the doctrine of immersion, but does teach that of sprinkling. According to the law, we need hardly search for further proof; this ought to satisfy us.

### **Other Authority to Be Quoted Aside Prom Scripture.**

If there be those who are not satisfied with the testimony of the inspired writers, either of the Old or New Testaments, it might not be out of place here to adduce that of some contemporary church writers. It may be said that of all the early fathers of the post-apostolic church, whose writings have come down to us, and they constitute a large number, *not one speaks in favor of immersion.*

Few of them, it is true, even refer to it. But this is the kind of evidence which "argues one's self unknown." Indeed we may say that none refer to it at all, as it had not even become a debatable question until the third or fourth century, when it was brought forward in some form by Tertullian, only to be condemned by the Council of Carthage in the year A. D. 264. As before, Lactantius a near successor to the apostles, has left us this testimony that "Peter, and all the apostles baptized by sprinkling." This was in the third century a full half century before the time of Constantine, and establishes the custom of the church at least as far as to that period. As confirming the words of these early authorities, history

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records that in the latter half of this (the fourth) century, while Roman Emperors were making every effort by fire and sword to stamp out the obnoxious sect of the Christians—and persecution was the fashion—and to be baptized was a stigma and a reproach. Tiridates, King of Armenia, which was then a large and flourishing kingdom, "doffed his crown" to be sprinkled in baptism by a Christian Presbyter. His conversion is referred to by Gibbon (*Gibbon's Decline and Fall*, Vol. 88, page 362), as almost as notable an event as that of Constantine himself, with whom he was contemporary.

This incidental and wholly unintentional notice by the historian is simply irrefutable evidence and confirms the belief that for four centuries at least, and certainly much longer, after the Day of Pentecost, the established and unquestioned usage of the church was to baptize its converts by sprinkling.

This un-named Presbyter was, it is almost certain, Eusebius, the celebrated Bishop of Nicomedia, at that time, but whoever he was he must have "builded better than he knew," for after all the lapse of time since then his work remains. The nation followed their king in the adoption of the Christian Faith. He became to them, Gibbon says, "Saint as well as hero." And Milman notes that "of all who at that time flocked to the banner of the Cross, these have held most firmly to the truth. During all the passing centuries in which

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they have lost their sovereignty, much of the time suffering cruel persecution, decimation, outrage and deportation at the hands of the Turk, while both the Eastern and Western church has become continually more and more corrupt, until at the present time it is a mooted question whether or not it should be identified as the Anti-Christ foretold in Scripture, this church has faithfully preserved the faith among the Armenian mountains."

In connection with this historical reference, and also with reference to the presbyter Eusebius, we may well take further note of the case of Constantine the great, as related by Eusebius himself. Constantine, after a long life of purely nominal Christianity, certainly devoid of anything like personal consecration, as it drew near, enfeebled by ill health, depressed by his domestic difficulties which had led him to order, like Herod, the execution of his own son, and appalled at the near approach of death, sought relief from the Baths of Nicomedia and there sought to make confession and personal consecration; and doing so, received the ordinance of baptism from the hands of Eusebius himself who was bishop of Nicomedia at that time. Abbotts Church History, page 322.

In view of these plain and incontrovertible historical facts we may well ask where do they gain the assumption that there had been a change from sprinkling to immersion ?

Other historians admit the force of the argu-

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ment along this line, even though, for personal reasons they might desire to accept a different conclusion. Among these we might mention Rev. Dr. J. H. Newman, D.D., LL.D., of the chair of Church History, and other chairs in McMaster University, who admits as the results of his researches that "The Church of the second century were not immersionists, and still less were those of the third and fourth."

Another of those noteworthy authorities who find themselves compelled by the truth of history to bear witness even contrary to the teachings of their own denomination is Rev. Dr. Whitsitt, of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, at Louisville, Ky. In his studies of Church History he states that the early Baptist churches were in the habit of sprinkling for baptism, and adds, "It was not until the year 1644 *three yewrs after the invention of immersion*, that any Baptist Confession prescribed dipping or plunging the body in water as the way or mode of dispensing this ordi-ance." So much from its own advocates.

But truth gathered from all sources show that the custom of the early church was not towards but consistently away from immersion and also that during the life-time of the Apostle John the last of them all, who lived till the closing years of the first century, the rule of the church was not immersion. If this be the case, and there is no reason to doubt it, there is no other conclusion possible than that the Church during this

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period baptized by sprinkling, according to the law, and the immemorial custom of the Jews. This leading immersionist historian finds no real avowal of that belief until toward the close of the fifteenth century, as I have stated previously and his statement may be accepted with implicit confidence as fixing the real beginning of the teaching and practice of immersion for baptism.

**This Is Conclusive Testimony Prom an Immersionist Source.**

This agrees with what has already been stated regarding the Renaissance of this teaching by the influence of the work of Munzer in Germany to-wards the end of the fifteenth century, which, though bitterly opposed by Luther and the other reformers took such hold in that country that spreading like other German heterodoxies into England was soon strong enough to make its influence felt in such influential lines as to influence the translation of the King James Version of the Bible, to an extent that still survives. But such testimony as this, and especially from immersionist sources, has weight that is not to be questioned.

Another historian relates as characteristic of the times and at least partially explaining the apparent failure of Protestantism at this period— "The fatal circumstance was that the Protestants were divided into angry and hostile camps, to one of which the doctrines of another were as abhorrent as those of the Papacy itself," so that even the Emperor Ferdinand though usually striving

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to maintain a non-partisan attitude between the opposing factions, felt compelled to say of them, "These Protestants are of so many minds that it is not possible that the God of Truth should be with them."

Not only men but whole communities were thus divided, "the thirty years' war would never have been undertaken had there been a united adversary comprising four-fifths of Germany." Parmelee, History of Germany, Chapter X, pages 59-90.

It does not require the eye of a seer to discern here at least one of the causes leading up to this destructive conflict, and the resulting set-back to the cause of the Reformation, and of Protestantism in the land of its birth, the divisive influence of the teaching of immersion just having been propagated by Thomas Munzer.

The Historian Macauley notes that it is a strange and significant fact that "Protestantism, after sweeping over four-fifths of Germany, should lose almost all it had gained and be confined to a comparatively small area." And this may be attributed to the same source.

## CHAPTER XII THE RECOURSE TO TRADITION.

Now that it has been shown that immersion has no support or sanction from Scripture, or from the early apostolic church, it can only have recourse to tradition in its search for aid of authority. As to the value of such authority, these facts may be noted,—the acceptance of tradition as of equal binding force with Scripture had its origin in the Roman Catholic Council of Trent, one of the latest Councils of that corrupt church held for a number of consecutive sessions occupying a series of successive years during the sixteenth century when this doctrine was first proclaimed, and a fearful curse pronounced against all who would dare to doubt or deny it. It is a singular coincidence that this grievous error should have occurred at a time nearly simultaneous with the introduction of immersion into the same region. Originating at the same time, and from the same source, came the teaching that baptism is a "saving ordinance" that is that it is essential to salvation, and this pronouncement was accompanied with the same fearful imprecations to insure its acceptance. It certainly seems strange to a leading tenet of any protestant organization thus finding its probable origin in the "edicts" of this "babylon" of the Scripture.

I shall note here one other line of argument

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often brought forward by way of rebuttal by advocates of immersion. And this I usually meet after the fallacy of all others has been demonstrated. It is this, "Oh, well, what difference does it make, any way?" "I am just as sincere in my belief as you can be in yours, so if it is just a matter of opinion after all, and is not a 'saving' ordinance either, what's the difference? Isn't one way as good as another?"

It seems hardly worth while to offer a real argument to such a childish proposition as this, but as some still cling to it we may as well say that the "difference" is simply that between obedience and disobedience, examples of which and of the way in which both are regarded by God, are numerous in Scripture. The question is not, simply between two "modes" of baptism. There is no such question.

Applicants for baptism are not offered their option as to which "mode" they prefer. There is but one baptism. And it would be as unwarranted to suppose there were more, contrary to the Word which couples together the truths of "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism." When we come to accept and understand the truth that there is one baptism taught in the Lord's Word, and that all others are mere human inventions, cheap substitutes, counterfeits, in fact, we can feel that the case is closed. One is the Lord's way, the others are of men. Indeed the suspicion is fairly raised whether they are not supported and strengthened

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by the great enemy, for some purposes of his to the infinite harm of the church and the kingdom.

Ever since the Garden of Eden there has been conflict between the two, the attempt to substitute sincerity and self wisdom for obedience has always been a failure (2 Sam. 6:7), and always will, even though it be carried before the judgment bar of God. The best of intentions will not serve in place of simply doing the will of God. A noted writer says that "it is the *sincere Errorists* who have always sown the seeds of schism in the church," and adds, that "their sincerity does not justify them, while it immeasurably adds to their power for evil."

Besides, the sincerity of immersionists is not called in question. Sincerity is no test of verity and truth. To be sincerely wrong, when the Lawgiver has made it possible for one to know the right, is not an adequate defense for being in the wrong. The Hindoo mother who throws her babe into the Ganges is quite as sincere as any devotee of immersion, but neither one is justified by that fact. Ignorance may excuse one who has not the light of the sacred Word, but what of the one who persists in disregard of its plain teaching? "To the law, and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no truth in them." Here we have the Divine Word—and if it does not command or commend our life and conduct, His word will be "Who hath required this at your hand?"

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It was a positive command that established the ordinance and it would require a positive command to change it. And without any such command, authority, or even permission, any attempt to change it, even if sincere, must be out of harmony with the Divine Will. It certainly is simply an attempt at will-worship and thus disregard the will of God, especially when we are told that "these statutes shall be forever and shall not be changed." Rev. 3:16. I might suggest that the burden of proof for any change rests upon those who claim such a change for in its present aspect such a claim seems to be pure assumption, and we have before shown its impossibility, as it has neither reason, proof, nor authority to assert in its behalf. If the method of sprinkling be acknowledged as having ever been divinely appointed, and humanly accepted, and used as a religious rite, (and who that reads the Scripture account can doubt or deny this) it will be quite impossible to show when, or where, or how, or why, the supposed change has taken place. But we are not left thus. After giving the law to the people, the Lawgiver said to them, "This shall be a statute unto you, through all your generations."

If any proof were needed that this ordinance is the Word and Will of God unchangeable, and that it has never been changed by Him and never will be, we find it here. Immersion has no foothold here, nor anywhere else in the Word.

CHAPTER XIII.  
IMMERSION, LIKE THE MASS, IS A PERVERSION  
OF A DIVINE ORDINANCE.

The prophecies already referred to establishing the place of baptism by sprinkling in the New Testament Dispensation as well as foretelling its world-wide extension, also forbid the thought of a change here, and establish the fact that it is to continue even to the close of that Dispensation. It is quite proper to say here that even as the Roman Catholic ceremony of the Mass is an unscriptural, unauthorized, and wholly a human perversion of a sacred and Divine Ordinance, even so precisely similar in character and claim, as a counterpart (perhaps I should also say, counterfeit) is the ceremony of immersion, wholly without sanction, authority of Scripture, a product of tradition and of human origin only, and as truly a caricature of baptism as the Roman Catholic mass of the Lord's Supper.

For the cases are precisely similar. Immersionists have done to one of the Ordinances and Sacraments just what the Roman Catholic Priesthood have done to the other. Each has changed the sacrament until it can no longer be recognized as it left the hand of its originator. In each case it has been changed, perverted, not only as to form but as to significance, purpose, requirement and conditions, and without Scriptural authority.

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Immersion as a substitute for baptism, and the mass as a substitute for the Lord's Supper, are precisely on the same plane as *quasi religious observances* destitute of the one element of Divine sanction which would give them all their value. It may be thought invidious to say this, but fidelity to truth not only justifies, but absolutely demands that it be said, Immersion, we conclude is of human origin only, unless it have an unseen spiritual actor and factor, which, we judge from some of its evident results, is quite possible. In this case it is as really and truly a caricature of the Lord's baptism as the mass is a caricature of the Lord's Supper.

Now with a few conclusions as the result of our study which may be presented herein in concise form we are ready to leave the subject.

1. God and not man, originated the Ordinance of Baptism.
2. He did this when He freed His people from bondage.
3. The form He chose and used was that of sprinkling.
4. He ordained that this should be a perpetual observance.
5. It was thus faithfully known and observed for at least fifteen centuries.
6. God inspired His prophets five centuries beforehand to predict its transfer, unchanged, to the Gospel Dispensation and its transfer and extension to the Gentile Nations.

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7. The fulfillment of these prophecies is to be found only in the almost universal practice of the Church in the use of sprinkling for Baptism.

8. If not thus fulfilled, they have never been fulfilled.

9. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ the Messiah, was without doubt baptized by sprinkling in order as was said to fulfill all righteousness.

10. No possible time or place appears for the introduction of immersion, nor is there any record of it in Scripture, nor in the history of the early apostolic church.

11. We do find the first authentic traces of it at a later period only a few centuries ago when it was bitterly opposed and denounced by the leaders of the Church.

12. We also find that its principal result has been to produce divisions in the Church, and promote sectarian bitterness and a lack of Christian charity among brethren.

13. Its invariable result has been to divide the Church into opposing factions, and thus to hinder and obstruct the carrying out of the Master's prayer, his last command, the great Commission of the church, and the unity of the work.

In view of all these considerations we feel justified in the conclusion that this belief, and its corresponding practice, has no sanction in the Word of God and cannot be accepted as any part of His mind and will, but must be regarded as one of

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those "traditions of men" which have at all times deserved, and when He was on earth received the-censure of the Master. We can regard such influence as always and only evil. No truly Christian grace can be traced to its influence. It has, in later ages of the church, been one of the greatest means of setting sects and denominations at variance, and of fostering the sectarian and exclusive spirit that is so largely defeating the desire and prayer of Jesus for the unity of His followers. What must be His thought when looking down upon the church for which He shed His blood He is compelled to see one branch denying to another, nay, to all others, the right to a seat at His table to obey His last command? And surely it must make the Arch-enemy rejoice to see how this doctrine has been used as a wedge to rive the church into fragments and stir up an uncharitable spirit between the children until one faction will even dare to shut others away from the common table of the common Lord, of which His word is,;—"eat ye all of it—drink ye all of it. Ye do show the Lord's death until He come." Am I then saying this doctrine is of the evil one ? I am saying that it surely is not of the Lord, since it is doing the work of the enemy of souls.

Not only in itself, but in its corollaries and in both its direct and indirect influence, is it antagonistic to the plain word of the Lord. It leads, as any initial error must, and will, to other errors that follow naturally, as deductions from their

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source. The denial of the Rite—yes, and the right of the children of believers, is so plainly contrary to the example of the original institution, to the words of Jesus, to the terms of the Covenant of Grace, that we are not able to reconcile them. The exclusion of fellow-Christians from the Sacrament which commemorates the dying love of Jesus, only because of the imposition of a mere human Shibboleth which immersion has become, cannot be justified. It is inconsistent with the spirit of brotherly love, it takes the attitude that the Table is theirs, not the Lord's, and that it is not to be shared equally by all His children, thus reversing His order and assuming an authority which He never bestowed upon the Church, simply make all its loud protestations in favor of unity, harmony, and the like, seem but a solemn mockery. It has already been stated that one of its chief characteristics is its divisive nature, essentially prominent and persistent, and continuing down to the present time as one of the greatest obstacles to church unity and fellowship, separating believers into many sects.

And while it can be readily verified that it was not known in the time of the apostles, yet it can be taken for granted that it would have merited and received the censure given in Rom. 16:17, 1 Cor. 3:3, and other similar passages in reference to such disturbers of the peace and unity of the church, the application is too plain to be mistaken, even though this special form of divisiveness had

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not yet arisen. And the apostolic injunction remains for all subsequent ages of the church. And the characteristics of this false teaching have remained unchanged even down to the present time in every instance introducing division and dissension among those for whom the prayer of Jesus was that "they might be one."

It is certainly a fair question—if the advent of this form of teaching had occurred during the time of the apostles, and thus meriting the censure given by them to all such divisive doctrines, does the lapse of time change the moral aspect of affairs so that while the character and results remain unchanged it is now to be accepted as of Divine authority? In other words, does that which would have been contrary to the teaching and practice of the apostles, and the welfare of the church in the first century, deserve our acceptance in the twentieth? Have the ethics of the church undergone such a complete change that a divine ordinance and law is to give place to a human tradition? The answer should not be far to seek.

It might be noted again, though attention has already been directed to the fact that this divisive spirit and its results were so evident from its first appearance in Europe, and its effect upon the progress of the Reformation there, that the historian Macauley notes it as a "most singular" fact, that after having gained possession of "nearly all of Europe the Reformation not only ceased to make further progress, but actually lost a large

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portion of the ground which it had once possessed." The reason assigned being that the movement lost the spirit of unity which had characterized it in its early years, and following after many diverse leaders became speedily divided into sects marked by bitter controversial spirit, so that its growth and progress almost wholly ceased.

When we consider that the date of this epoch is precisely that of the introduction of the doctrine of immersion which at once became the active cause of the divisions and dissensions so injurious to the cause of the Reformation, and which has continued to produce the same results wherever it has gone, even to the present time, as we can see, when intruding into the realm of church activity.

In view of the foregoing conclusions which are, as we believe fully demonstrated from the Word of God and by the voice of prophecy and history as well as by the corroborating testimony of contemporaries we feel not only justified, but compelled to the following conclusions:

First. That all Scripture sanction is denied to the doctrine of immersion while requiring the method of baptism by sprinkling.

Second. That no merely human tradition of men can be invoked in contravention of the teaching of inspired Scripture.

Third. That the doctrine of immersion, destitute of Scripture sanction, and indeed plainly antagonistic to the teaching of Scripture on this sub-

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ject, is not simply a mistake, a fallacy, but is a true heresy, and should be classed among the great heresies, if not the greatest heresy, of modern times. And the fact that the advocates of such heresy may assemble in great numbers and assume to themselves the name and form of a real church holding to many accepted truths, does not alter the case in the least, in regard to this belief.

This form of error was at its beginning, and still is, but a divisive heresy, however it may be accompanied by, or hidden under, forms of accepted truth.

It may be objected, and no doubt will be, that this judgment is harsh, heartless, uncharitable, and even unchristian. Indeed, I have personally been confronted by such criticism. In this so liberal age when almost any sort of teaching can gain a share of favor with or without proof, and when scruples are scouted, this view may indeed seem to many as too harsh.

But truth is most intolerant. It admits of no compromise, and will yield no ground to teaching of error, no matter what may be the spirit of the age, or the consensus of public opinion. And a teaching that sets up its dictum against the plain declaration of the Lord Himself, in undertaking to change a divine ordinance, as to both its form and its significance, that would substitute human authority, even that of tradition, or the usage of heathen idol-worshippers, for the command of inspiration—that would pervert and misinterpret

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Scripture to bolster up its own mistaken theory—that assumes what it is unable to prove—that divides the church into discordant sects; that stands as the great and immovable obstacle to the union of Christians—that denies to the major part of the Christian world the right to share in the commemorative sacrament of the common Lord of all for failure to accept their unproved Shibboleth,— that destroys the spirit of fraternal Christian charity—that denies to children of believers the privilege granted by the promise to even children of one believing parent—that denies genuine, sometimes even saving, faith to all who do not accept its unfounded theories. What can be said of such a teaching other than what I have said?

I am well aware that in this present liberal and complaisant age, the thought of heresy is very distasteful to multitudes, and that "heresy hunting" is even a worse evil than the heresy itself. But our study of this subject has irresistibly and, as we believe, without any false steps, led to this conclusion, and even though we would fain avoid it, this cannot in reason be done.

I may say, however, by way of palliation, if any were needed, that we do not have to "hunt" this particular heresy. It forces itself upon our attention. It courts our notice, and is so obtrusive that there is no such thing as evading it. It forces its way into the sheep-fold, and crowds the sheep from their racks. It intrudes itself into families and breaks the harmony of the home.

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It is an inexcusable weakness that under the guise of Christian charity and church comity, or courtesy has induced some of our present day churches, that do not themselves approve or practice immersion to compromise so far with its un-scriptural claims and the aggressive way in which they are propagated, as to admit it on equal terms with the ordinance of the Lord's own appointment in the order of church observance, making no difference between those truly and Scripturally baptized, according to the Lord's command and those who have been simply immersed in water after the teaching of men.

For it may be said once and for all, that no matter how often nor how deeply one may have been immersed, he has never thereby been truly baptized, and it should be the care of the church and indeed of all believers, to be obedient and loyal to the Word of Truth, and be no longer carried away by the insistence of those who are teaching false doctrine in the Master's name.

Now, whatever this brief study may or may not have made plain, one thing at least has been shown, and that is this: Before we grant unqualified acceptance to the theory of immersion in its present form of a Modern Shibboleth, we must perforce admit that there are texts, passages, and statements of Scripture, and many of them, which cannot possibly be true if the claims of immersion be accepted for all Scripture, all prophecy, and all history unite in its condemnation.