

Familiar Treatise on Christian Baptism

by
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Part One

WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURAL MODE OF ADMINISTERING THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM

It is supposed by some that unless the ordinance is administered in a particular way it cannot be properly called baptism or be regarded as valid, and that the person so receiving it is to be treated as unbaptized until it shall be administered to him by that particular mode. Those who maintain this ground practice immersion, which they consider essential to the ordinance.

It is not our design to advocate any one mode to the exclusion of every other. The validity of the ordinance consists, as we think, in its being administered by a person duly authorized and in the name of the Holy Trinity, and not in any particular way of applying the water. But while we regard the ordinance as valid in whatever way it is administered, our examination of the scriptures has led us to a very different conclusion in respect to the mode from that which is practiced by those first alluded to. Instead of finding that the Bible establishes immersion as the only mode, we think it furnishes much more evidence in favor of sprinkling than of immersion.

I. *The baptism of our Savior.*

There is no occurrence referred to so frequently to prove that Christians ought to be immersed as the baptism of our Savior. It is often said to young converts as well as to older Christians, "How can you expect to have much spiritual enjoyment so long as you neglect so plain and important a duty as following Christ into the water and being buried with him by baptism?" And such has been sometimes the effect of this appeal upon the ignorant and unreflecting that in one case, within our knowledge, a man who had been previously baptized by sprinkling was unwilling to defer being immersed for a single week for fear, as he said, he should die before he should have the opportunity of following his Lord into the water.

On this subject we may remark:

1. That it will appear from a consideration of the design of Christ's baptism that it was not intended as an example for us. What the design of it was we shall see hereafter. At present it is sufficient to observe that his command for us to be baptized was not given in connection with his own baptism but after his resurrection and just before his ascension

into heaven (see Matt. 28:19). But,

2. Inasmuch as Christ appointed baptism to be an ordinance in his church, his own baptism (which had taken place several years before), though it had a different design from Christian baptism, may be supposed to furnish some evidence as to the proper mode of administering it.

3. The evidence derived from Christ's baptism, so far from proving immersion to be the exclusive mode, is decidedly in favor of sprinkling.

The proof of this is short and simple. It rests upon two well established facts, viz: that the design of his baptism was to introduce him into his official work as the Messiah, particularly into the office of Priest, which was the basis of the other two offices; and that the priests were required, as a part of their consecration to their office, to be sprinkled with water. These two facts taken together show beyond any reasonable doubt that the ordinance was administered by sprinkling.

The design of Christ's baptism, we said, was to introduce him in a regular way according to the established usage of the Jewish Church into the office of Priest. At first John, not understanding his design, was unwilling to baptize him, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" But Jesus said to him, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). The answer was satisfactory to John, and he proceeded immediately to administer the ordinance.

But what did Christ mean by this reply, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness"? What righteousness? He meant the righteousness, i.e. the requirements of the law of Moses concerning the priesthood. As he had now arrived at thirty years of age (the time at which the priests were to enter upon their office) and as he was about to enter upon his official duties, it was necessary that he should be consecrated according to the Levitical law, so that when he should begin to preach and perform other official acts no objection could be made against his ministry from his not being properly authorized.

Do you inquire how we know this to have been his meaning? We reply that when "the chief priests and elders of the people came to him as he was teaching and said, By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority," he referred them to his baptism by John. "And Jesus answered and said to them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven or of men?" By this he evidently designed to be understood that if they would allow John's baptism to be from heaven, they must admit his, that is, Christ's authority, because John baptized him in order to introduce him into the Priest's office. And it is evident also that they did understand him in this manner, and hence they dared not answer the question lest they should be compelled to acknowledge that he was the Messiah (Matt. 21:23-27).

Another proof that his baptism was designed to induct him into the Priest's office is derived from the fact that that occurrence is identified in the scriptures with his anointing to this office. Very soon after that ordinance was administered to him he began to preach: "From that time Jesus began to preach" (Matt. 4:17). And having read the following passage in Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel," etc., he commenced his discourse by saying, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:16-21).

We ask how was that scripture then fulfilled? The connection clearly shows that it was fulfilled by his having been just anointed to preach the gospel. He had been designated to this office long before, even from everlasting. But he was not set apart until now. And hence he never appeared before the public as a teacher until this time. And now he would not do it without first showing to the people his authority lest they should say that he was assuming an office to which he had not been regularly consecrated. Accordingly he introduced himself by reading the prophecy concerning the anointing of the Messiah and by declaring that that scripture was then fulfilled, that he had been anointed to the work assigned him by his Father and would therefore on that occasion commence the discharge of his official duties.

But when did his anointing take place? Evidently at his baptism, which had occurred a little before this time when the Holy Spirit descended and sat upon him in the form of a dove. This, we believe, is not denied by any. But if proof is demanded, the following is sufficient: "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all;) that word I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began in Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:36-38).

Here John's baptism and Christ's anointing are referred to the same period. It is expressly said that the word declaring him to be anointed began after the commencement of John's baptism. And it is clearly implied that the act itself of anointing him to his office took place at that time, because immediately after his baptism by John and not before he began to work miracles; and his working of miracles is associated with his anointing--"Anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power." Now every reader of the Bible knows that anointing was a part of the consecration of the priests to their office. Consequently the baptism of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him must have been designed to induct him into that office.

Since then the design of Christ's baptism was to induct him into the Priest's office, we have only to refer, in order to show how he was baptized, to the consecration of the Priests as we find it recorded in the Bible.

"And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation and wash them with water. And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him and sanctify him that he may minister

unto me in the priest's office. And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats; and thou shalt anoint them as thou didst anoint their father that they may minister unto me in the priest's office; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generation" (Ex. 40:12-15).

Their anointing was to be performed as follows: "Then shalt thou take the anointing oil and pour it upon his head and anoint him" (Ex. 29:7). This we have already shown was done to our Savior by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him immediately after he was baptized. "And lo the heavens were opened unto him, and he [John] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him" (Matt. 3:16).

But the Priests were not only to be anointed with oil but washed with water. This was performed upon our Savior by his baptism, which corresponded even in the order of time with the washing of the priests. They were to be first washed and then anointed. So our Savior was first baptized and then the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him, thus "anointing him" in a miraculous manner "with the oil of gladness above his fellows."

The only question now is, by what mode were the priests to be washed? We reply, that in the consecration of Aaron and his sons all that is said by which we can determine the mode is that they were to be washed with water contained in a laver or basin that was placed at the door of the tabernacle, and which was to stand there from day to day for the priests to wash their hands and feet in when they were about to engage in their official duties (Ex. 40:30-32). This circumstance affords at least probable evidence that they were not immersed.

But the matter was not left here. The whole tribe of Levi were to be consecrated to the service of the sanctuary as well as Aaron and his sons. And in the account which is left of the consecration of the Levites, we have recorded in a specific and particular manner what in the case of the others was expressed in general terms. In the one case it simply says, "thou shalt wash them with water." But in the other it informs us in what way this must be done: "And thus shalt thou do unto them to cleanse them: sprinkle water of purifying upon them" (Num. 8:7). Thus the mode of applying the water was settled by divine appointment; which, it is fair to conclude, applied to the priests as well as to the Levites, since in the absence of scripture testimony no reason can be given why the latter were required to be sprinkled and the former immersed.

Now who can hesitate for a moment with this fact before him, unless there is express testimony to the contrary, to admit that Christ must have been baptized by sprinkling? Would he in his induction into the Priest's office deviate from the order of his Father's house when in every other respect he was so exact in the observance of the Levitical law? The supposition cannot be admitted. We repeat it then: he must, as appears to us, have been baptized by sprinkling. And consequently his baptism, so far as it affords any evidence on the subject, is decidedly in favor of that mode.

Those texts which are relied on to prove his immersion will be considered hereafter. We would notice them now if they affected the preceding argument, that by balancing the two together we might estimate their comparative weight. But as the above proof is entirely independent of those texts and, as we think, not contradicted by them, we shall defer the consideration of them in order to take them up in connection with some others of a similar character. The same course will also be pursued in relation to the baptism of the Eunuch, which we are now to consider.

II. *The Baptism of the Eunuch.*

The account of the Eunuch's baptism is recorded in the 8th chapter of the Acts, commencing at the 26th verse. By reading this account it will be perceived that when Philip joined himself to the chariot the Eunuch was reading a passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, and that Philip "began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus." The passage which he was reading is in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, the 7th and 8th verses. But if you consult the passage you will perceive that he was then in the very middle of the subject, which commenced at the 13th verse of the preceding chapter and extended to the end of the chapter which he was reading. All these verses then may be justly considered as forming the basis of Philip's discourse. As you read them, recollect that the Bible was not then divided, as it now is, into chapters and verses.

Now notice another fact, viz: that the proposal for the Eunuch to be baptized came from the Eunuch himself: "And as they went on their way they came to a certain water, and the Eunuch said, see here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Of course he must have known that baptism was an ordinance of the Christian church. But where did he obtain this knowledge? He had just been up to Jerusalem to worship, but not with the disciples of Christ. Though a Gentile by birth he was, as to his religion, a Jew; and while at Jerusalem he would be likely to mingle exclusively with the Jews, who thought too meanly of the infant-church of Christ to give him any account of its organization.

It is reasonable to suppose that they would studiously avoid giving him any information as to the existence of this new sect, lest by some means he might become tinctured with their doctrines and carry the knowledge of them to his own country. But if they spoke at all, it would be to mention such circumstances as would be calculated to fix upon his mind an invincible prejudice against the Savior and his disciples. Christian baptism would not therefore form any part of their conversation.

To us it seems quite clear that he could have received this information from no other source than from the preaching of Philip. And if not, then Philip, in expounding the Prophecy of the Messiah which the Eunuch was reading, must have preached baptism. Now read the whole prophecy beginning at the 52nd chapter and 13th verse and tell us in what part of it he found anything which led him to speak about baptism. He must have found it in the 15th verse of the 52nd chapter: "So shall he sprinkle many nations." By

analyzing this text we shall be able to ascertain how the Eunuch was baptized.

1. The word "he" refers to the Messiah. "Of whom spake the prophet this," said the Eunuch to Philip, "of himself or some other man? And Philip began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus."

2. The phrase "many nations" refers to the Gentiles, who, if they believed, were to receive the ordinance of baptism and be admitted into the Christian church no less than the Jews. This declaration was probably made by Philip, as we infer from the request of the Eunuch (who was a Gentile by birth) to be baptized--a request which would be very natural after such a declaration from Philip. "May the many Gentile nations be admitted as well as the Jews to the Messiah's kingdom, and is baptism the initiatory ordinance? What doth hinder me, who belongs to one of the many nations, from receiving the ordinance?" Then upon his declaring that he believed, Philip proceeded to baptize him.

3. The word "sprinkle" needs no explanation. The only question which can arise concerning it is whether it refers to water baptism or to spiritual cleansing. Probably it refers to both. But as this is not essential to our argument, we are not anxious at present to decide. If Philip gave the Eunuch his first ideas concerning Christian baptism by expounding to him that text, it is clear that he would teach him that mode of administering the ordinance which corresponded with the language of the prophecy whether the ordinance itself was primarily referred to or that spiritual cleansing of which the ordinance is a symbol. And it is equally clear (for consistency required it) that he must have practiced [administered it] according to the same mode--i.e., by sprinkling.

On the supposition that he immersed him, he must have addressed the Eunuch in language like the following: "My Gentile brother, I have been telling you of the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles, which is to take place under the gospel, and their introduction into the Christian church by baptism, agreeably to the prophecy "So shall he sprinkle many nations." But I must inform you that we do not in our practice adhere to the language of the prophecy in every particular. We do not sprinkle but immerse." How improbable, nay, how absurd is such a supposition as this! We appeal then to the candor of every reader whether the evidence is not strong, if not decisive, that the Eunuch was baptized by sprinkling.

III. *Other instances of Baptism recorded in the New Testament.*

Since we have established the fact that our Savior and the Eunuch were baptized by sprinkling, which are the only cases in the Bible in which the persons baptized are said to have gone into the water, it is unnecessary to refer to any other examples. For if those who went into the water in order to be baptized were sprinkled, we may safely conclude that those were also sprinkled who do not appear to have gone near any water but to have been baptized in the house. Such was the case with those who were converted on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2), with Paul (Acts 9:18), with Cornelius and his friends (Acts 10:48),

and with the jailor and his household (Acts 16:33). The only exception to this, besides what has been considered, is the baptism of Lydia, which it is probable was performed "by a riverside."

Concerning this, the following remark, we think, will be in point, viz: that in baptizing her there the apostles pursued what appears to have been their uniform course, which was to baptize their converts on the very spot where they were converted. We do not read of a single instance of their leaving the place where they happened to be when the individuals were converted in order to administer this ordinance. If they were in the city of Jerusalem (as they were on the day of Pentecost), the ordinance was administered there. If they were in a private dwelling (as in the case of Cornelius), it was attended to there. If they were in a prison (as was the fact when the jailor was converted), baptism was performed in the outer court of that building: "And brought them out" (Acts 16:30), i.e., from "the inner prison" (v. 24) into the outer court, or room for debtors and petty criminals. And if they were beside a brook or river as in the case of the Eunuch and of Lydia, this sacrament was administered there.

The fact therefore that she was baptized "by a riverside" (admitting it to be so though it is not stated explicitly, see Acts 16:13-15), is just what we should expect to hear inasmuch as that was the place of her conversion. This woman and certain other devout Jews were accustomed to resort there on the Sabbath for prayer, that in this pleasant and retired place without [outside] the walls of the city they might worship God without being disturbed in their devotions by the idolatrous and persecuting inhabitants of Philippi.

To this place Paul resorted, as was very natural, on the Sabbath after his arrival at that city, and preached the gospel. He was acquainted with the fact that his Jewish brethren who resided in that city were accustomed to assemble there for worship; and he went there to worship with them and to make known the religion of Christ. His was the first gospel sermon ever preached there and Lydia was the first Christian convert. Of course he did not select the spot for the purpose of baptizing, as some profess to believe, for it was not selected by him at all. It had been selected before by certain pious Jews, not for baptizing but for prayer: "Where prayer was wont to be made" (Acts 16:13). [In the Greek], "where there was wont to be a *proseuchæ*"--a Jewish place of prayer. Paul's presence there was wholly providential. And his preaching having been blessed to the conversion of Lydia, her baptism, according to the rule just given by which the apostles were usually governed, would follow as a matter of course, whether she had been in that place or in any other. But as not a syllable is said about the mode in which it was administered, we have reason to believe, judging from the examples which we have already considered, that it was performed by sprinkling. There is, to say the least, no evidence to the contrary.

IV. *Evidence concerning the mode of Baptism, derived from some Scripture facts in the history and customs of the Jews.*

The evidence is twofold: first, from the baptism of the Israelites in the cloud and in the sea, and, second, from their religious purifications. The account of the former is found in 1 Cor. 10:2: "And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."

The analogy between this and Christian baptism is the following, viz: that the Israelites are said to have been initiated by baptism into the Jewish church in the same manner as the disciples of Christ are into the Christian church. Compare the above passage with Rom. 6:3 and Gal. 3:27. In these texts Christians are said to be baptized "into Christ," a phraseology exactly corresponding with that which is used in regard to the Israelites: "unto or into Moses," "into or unto Christ." In the Greek the prepositions preceding Christ and Moses are one and the same, which is rendered either *into* or *unto* at pleasure.

This exact correspondence in the phraseology employed in the two cases shows that when the Apostle used the term baptism in relation to the Israelites he had Christian baptism in his mind, and that he considered the one as adapted to illustrate the other.

But how were they baptized in the sea? Not by immersion, for they went over on dry ground (Ex. 14:22-29). It must have been by the sprinkling of the spray from the water, which was "a wall unto them on their right hand on their left." Nor could they have been immersed in the cloud, for the cloud was before and above them: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud." Again, "He spread a cloud for a covering" (Ex. 13:21; Ps. 105:39). They could have been baptized in no other way, as we can perceive, than by the sprinkling of mist or rain from the cloud. So far, therefore, as this example proves anything on the subject, it goes to establish the fact that sprinkling is the most proper mode of Christian baptism.

The other particular to which we referred under this head was the Jewish purifications. These being of a religious nature, and the mode of performing them being of divine appointment, and being also called baptisms in several places of scripture, afford much proof as to the proper mode of administering that ordinance.

They are called baptisms in the following texts: "And when they come from the market, except they wash (Gr. *baptize*), they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washings (G. *baptisms*) of cups and pots and brazen vessels and tables" (Mark 7:4). Also Heb. 9:10: "Which stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings (Gr. *baptisms*) and carnal ordinances."

These texts show that Mark and Paul considered the word baptism a fit term to employ in order to describe the Jewish purifications. Or in other words, they prove that baptism was regarded by the writers of the New Testament as essentially the same thing with the religious washings of the Jews. It is therefore proper for us in speaking on the subject to reason from the one to the other.

Now it is well known to those who have carefully read the scriptures that the Jewish

purifications were performed in most cases by sprinkling. See Lev. 14:7, 16, 27, 51; Num. 8:7 and 19:18, 19. The inference then is that sprinkling is a scriptural mode of Christian baptism.

V. *Evidence concerning the mode of Baptism derived from the blood of Christ and the influences of the Holy Spirit.*

First, the blood of Christ. This is never called in scripture the blood of dipping or immersion but the blood of sprinkling: "To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling" (Heb. 12:24); "Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:2). This has allusion to the sprinkling of blood so often practiced in the Jewish sacrifices, and it represents the purification of the conscience through the application of Christ's blood. In like manner baptism is designed to represent something very similar, viz: the purification of the heart. The fact, therefore, that the former is denominated the blood of sprinkling is a proof that the latter ought to be administered in the same way.

Secondly, the influences of the Holy Spirit are likewise represented in scripture by sprinkling or pouring,¹ never by immersion. The following texts among many others are in point: "I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed" (Isa. 44:3); "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28); "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean" (Ezek. 36:25). In accordance with these texts, Peter said on the day of Pentecost, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth . . ." Mark [note], *shed forth* "this which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33). Now this shedding forth of the Holy Spirit is called baptism: "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). And immediately after, three thousand of them had been thus baptized, i.e. with the Holy Ghost shed forth upon them; they received water baptism as the symbol of it. Of course, if the symbol corresponded with the manner of the Spirit's descent, it must have been performed by sprinkling or pouring.

Again, the *design* of baptism is to represent the work of the Holy Spirit. This is evident from such texts as the following: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13); "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27); "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38); "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16); "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

1 We have not before now used the term *pouring*, because the Bible does not use it, we believe, in relation to any of the points which we have yet treated. To describe the influences of the Holy Spirit, this term is used as well as sprinkling, and we therefore introduce it. These two modes, however, are essentially the same, both being performed by applying the water to the subject, and not the subject to the water as in the case of immersion.

In some of these texts the word baptize is used figuratively and is evidently designed to represent the work of the Holy Spirit. In the others it refers to water baptism but is used (as appears plain from the connection) as the external sign of the same internal work of the Spirit, which is represented by the word in its figurative sense--a coincidence that shows this to be the design of the ordinance. But the Spirit's influences, as we have just seen, are expressed in the scriptures by sprinkling or pouring, never by immersion. Since, then, baptism is an ordinance which is designed to represent those influences, it is manifest that the most appropriate mode of administering it is by sprinkling or pouring.

VI. *A consideration of the word Baptize.*

We shall now proceed to consider those words and phrases which are relied upon to prove immersion.

The word *baptize* is claimed as furnishing clear proof in favor of immersion. Some are so confident that it signifies *immerse* that in administering the ordinance they say (at least one is known to have said thus) "I immerse thee" instead of "I baptize thee." But we think it will be found on examination that the etymology of the word is by no means decisive in favor of immersion. "While we do not deny," says an able writer,

that this word often signifies to dip, we maintain that it is also frequently used with much greater latitude and may mean any application of a body to a liquid, by which any portion of the liquid, however small, is imbibed. In confirmation of this position, we appeal to all the Greek lexicons of credit. In these the original word is explained as meaning not only to dip but to wash, to stain, to dye, etc. And we have fully satisfied ourselves that the primary radical sense of this word is not to immerse but to dye; that to dip is a secondary signification derived from the circumstance that dying was usually performed by immersing the substance to be colored in a vat; that, nevertheless, the word is by no means confined to dying by immersion but with equal propriety signifies the staining or coloring of a thing in any other way, even where the idea of dipping is out of the question.

We have introduced the above quotation because those for whom we now write are not able to appreciate critical remarks, but must depend for information concerning the original word upon the authority of the learned.

But though you may not be able to trace the etymology of the word, there is another method of arriving at its meaning, which you can understand as well as those who are acquainted with the Greek. It consists in comparing together those texts of scripture in which the word occurs and ascertaining how it is applied by the sacred writers. If the word means primarily and uniformly *to immerse*, why do we find it employed to represent the Jewish purifications which were usually performed by sprinkling, and also to describe

the influences of the Holy Spirit which are always expressed (where water is alluded to at all) by sprinkling or pouring?

You are able also, as well as the learned, to reason from the design of baptism. It is designed to signify, as has been shown, the work of the Holy Spirit. This is so clear from the various uses of the word in scripture that we wonder how any can entertain a different opinion. But if the operations of the Holy Spirit are designed to be represented by it, and these operations are uniformly described where water is referred to by sprinkling or pouring, then it cannot be supposed that the sacred writers would have selected a word to represent those operations which uniformly signifies to immerse.

There are likewise some *facts* which have a bearing on this point, and the force of which every reader can appreciate. One is that there is strong evidence that Christ was not immersed, and yet the word baptize is employed to express the ordinance by which he was inducted into his priestly office. Another is that Christ employed the word in his last commission to his disciples, saying, "go teach all nations, baptizing them"; and yet, but a few weeks before this commission was given, he discountenanced the practice of immersion in religious purifications: "He that is washed," said he to Peter, "need not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John 13:9, 10). By reading this text in its connection we shall perceive that so far from introducing the practice of washing the body all over as a religious rite, he discouraged it by declaring it unnecessary and by refusing to gratify Peter, who wished to have water applied to him in a more profuse manner than our Savior was using it.

A third fact is that in the use of other words employed to express the same things which are represented by baptism, the sacred writers very seldom make use of words that signify immersion but very frequently those that signify sprinkling or pouring. The word *immerse* never occurs a single time in the Bible, and the word *dip* is never used but in a single instance where religious cleansing is referred to, except for the purpose of sprinkling the blood or water thus dipped up upon the person or thing to be cleansed. See Lev. 4:6 and 14:6,7; also Num. 19:18.

The single case referred to is that of Naaman, who to be cured of the leprosy dipped himself seven times in Jordan (2 Kings 5:14). Besides this, there is not a single example in the Bible of purification being performed by dipping or immersing the body in water. And it is not clear that Naaman's dipping himself consisted in immersing the whole body.

On the other hand, words which represent a sparing application of water are of very frequent occurrence: the term *sprinkle*, used either in a literal or figurative sense and in reference either to blood or water; the term *pour*, referring generally to the influences of the Holy Spirit. And other similar terms, such as *drop*, *distil*, *shed*, etc., occur (taken all together) more than thirty times, including in the enumeration only those texts which throw light on the subject of baptism. There are many other passages where some of these words occur which are not embraced in this statement.

Now is it probable that the inspired writers would adopt a word to express the ordinance of baptism which, on the supposition that it signifies nothing but *immerse*, bears so little analogy to the common phraseology of the Bible? If not, and if the other facts mentioned are allowed to have any weight, then we may conclude that the use of the word *baptize*, to say the least, is not decisive in favor of immersion but that it is perfectly consistent with the adoption of a different mode.

VII. *A consideration of the phrases "went down into the water;" "Because there was much water there," etc.*

The phrases "went down into the water" and "come up out of the water" occur nowhere in the Bible in connection with this subject except in the account of the baptism of our Savior and of the Eunuch. They will, therefore, (after what has been said concerning those cases) require but a few remarks.

1. It is capable of being shown by a critical examination of the original text that these phrases do not necessarily imply that the persons referred to actually went into the water at all but might have been baptized standing or kneeling by the side of it. But without insisting upon this, since it can only be understood by the Greek scholar, we observe,

2. That allowing them all the force which they have as they read in our English Bibles, they cannot be supposed even by the advocates of immersion to furnish anything more than the evidence of probability. It is not pretended by anybody that "going into the water" is baptism, for the administrators themselves went into the water as well as the persons baptized. All that can be said is that as they went into the water, it is probable they were immersed; for if they were not immersed, why did they go into the water at all? This is the whole strength of the argument.

But can no reason be assigned why they did this except for the purpose of immersion? In the case of the Eunuch, an obvious and probable reason was that he was traveling in a desert, and it may be presumed [he] had no vessel to dip up the water and bring it to the chariot. And the reason for our Savior's doing it may be found in close connection with that which might be given for John's preaching in the open air. The latter was done from necessity on account of the great multitudes who attended on his ministry. And in the selection of a spot for this purpose, he would naturally select one that would be the most convenient for his hearers, viz: near that noble river--the only one in the land--which rendered the country around it productive, the atmosphere salubrious, and would contribute otherwise to the convenience of the people. And being assembled on that spot it was more natural for them (considering the manners and customs in the east at that time) to descend the bank of the river to receive baptism than to have the water brought to them. This they probably did; and our Savior, in conformity with their example, pursued the same course.

3. But if no satisfactory reason could be given why they went down into the water, the evidence from this fact in favor of immersion does not amount even to probability when it is recollected that we have proved from other sources that both Christ and the Eunuch were baptized by sprinkling. The circumstance of their going into the water weighs nothing in our estimation against the proof which has already been adduced. The same may be said concerning the phrase "in Jordan." Jesus "was baptized of John in Jordan" (Mark 1:9), and yet he was sprinkled. If then the multitudes whom John baptized "in Jordan" followed the example of their Savior in every particular, they were sprinkled too.

Nor does John's "baptizing in Enon because there was much water there" prove that he immersed. There were other reasons besides immersion which might have induced him to select that spot, particularly the accommodation of the multitude who resorted to him and who would need "much water" to wash and cook with, and for themselves and camels to drink. And again, whatever might have been the reason for taking his stand there, we may infer that it was not for the purpose of immersion, from the fact that at the very time when he was baptizing in Enon "because there was much water there," Christ and his disciples were baptizing greater numbers than he was in another part of the land, viz: in Judea, where large streams did not exist, and where it does not appear from the account that they were beside any stream at all. Compare John 3:22,23 with John 4:1.

We admit, however, that the mention of "much water in Enon" seems to imply that John occupied a peculiarly favorable spot for his ministry. If the use of water for *ordinary* purposes is not deemed by all a sufficient reason for his selecting that place, we will add another, which may divest the subject of any remaining difficulty. Besides the use of water for ordinary purposes, it is highly probable that it was used *as a preparation* for the ordinance of baptism. The Jews, in case of bodily disease or other ceremonial defilement, were required in order to their purification to bathe themselves in water as a preparation for the sprinkling of water or blood, which succeeded or accompanied the other (see Lev. 14:8-14 and Num. 19:19,20). The strictly religious part of the ceremony was performed by sprinkling. Without this, the previous preparatory bathing passed for nothing (see again Num. 19:20).

The object in requiring them to bathe their flesh appears to have been to make them physically clean, because the performance of the rite of sprinkling while their persons were dirty and defiled would indicate a state of mind which was dishonorable to God. For this reason they were likewise required to wash or change their garments as a preparation for any solemn act of devotion (see Gen. 35:2; Ex. 19:10,11,14). If the people who attended John's ministry conformed in this respect to Jewish usage under similar circumstances, "much water" would be a great convenience for bathing their persons and washing their garments as preliminary to the ordinance of baptism.

In the volume already referred to (Taylor's Apostolic Baptism) there are found twelve engravings taken from different churches in the east, some of them bearing date as early as A.D. 401 and 454, which represent our blessed Savior, the Emperor Constantine, and

others in the act of receiving baptism. From these cuts it appears that the candidate for baptism first bathed himself in water and then baptism was administered by pouring or sprinkling. In several of them the person receiving the ordinance is represented as standing in a vase up to the waste [sic.] in water (Christ is standing in the Jordan) and the administrator is sprinkling or pouring water on the head. In one of them the candidate has left the vase in which he seems to have bathed himself and is kneeling near it receiving upon his head the baptismal water.

Where did the Christians of those times obtain this idea? May they not have received it from the Apostles? If so, and if the Apostles conformed in this respect to John the Baptist and John conformed to the Mosaic ritual with regard to ceremonial cleansing, most of those words and phrases which appear to favor immersion can be easily explained by referring them to this preparatory bathing. Though it is not certain that even that was performed by immersing the whole body, it was an approximation to it, and hence it might become the basis of some allusions in the sacred writings connected with the ordinance of baptism which appear to favor immersion.

It may also give us a clue to the manner in which immersion began to be practiced in administering the ordinance of baptism. This preparatory bathing was confounded with the ordinance itself and substituted for it, and the sprinkling or pouring of water which succeeded the other was laid aside. And yet if we reason from the analogy of the case, that which was thus laid aside is essential to the ordinance without which the bathing of the flesh or the immersion of the body (supposing this to have been the mode of performing it) is to be accounted as nothing. We do not affirm that immersion is invalid, and yet we would much sooner undertake to prove it than to prove sprinkling or pouring to be so.

The phrase, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," may require one or two remarks. The first is that if the mode of baptism is referred to, as some suppose, then I should be inclined to the opinion that sprinkling and not immersion is the only proper way of administering that ordinance. I consider the evidence contained in the Bible in favor of sprinkling to be tenfold stronger than for any other mode.

But secondly, it is clear from another text of scripture that no reference is had to the mode. It is declared in Heb. 9:10 that there were divers modes of baptism: "which stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings" (Gr. divers *baptisms*). This shows that the ordinance may be properly administered in more ways than one, which could not be the case if the passage under consideration referred to the mode. The meaning of the passage is sufficiently explained by another penned by the same Apostle: "Now this I say that every one of you saith I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" Surely not--"There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

Paul never baptized in his own name nor did Apollos or Peter, but in the name of Christ.

What room was there then for division? The apostles had not certainly given occasion for it, because their preaching and their administration of the ordinances pointed invariably not to themselves but to Christ, who is all and in all (compare Eph. 4:3-5 with 1 Cor. 1:12,13).

Again, the phrase, "having our bodies washed with pure water," should not be unnoticed. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22). Upon this we remark:

(1) That the term "*washed*" is very general and is consistent with any mode of applying the water. But in the present instance the preceding clause appears to fix its meaning: "Having our hearts *sprinkled*, etc." This requires us, on the principle of analogy, to understand the washing of the body in the last clause to be by sprinkling.

(2) The use of the word "*bodies*" forms no valid objection to this interpretation. By a common figure of speech called synecdoche, the whole of a thing is often employed to express a part and a part is taken for the whole, according to which the body may be said to be washed when water has been applied only to some part of it. As an example of this see Matt. 26:7-12 and Mark 14:3-8. A woman brought an alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it on Christ's head. The Savior commended her for this pious act and said, "She is come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying." Notice, she poured it on Christ's *head* but he said it was poured on his *body*, because the head is the principal part of the body. For this reason the forehead is the most appropriate place to sprinkle or pour the water in the administration of baptism. Perhaps this is the foundation of those allusions in Rev. 14:1 and 22:4, where the one-hundred and forty-four thousand whom John saw on Mount Zion in company with the Lamb had "his Father's name written in their foreheads."

Again, we may employ the word "*bodies*" without a figure and still understand "*washed*" in the sense of sprinkle. Water sprinkled or poured on the head, if done profusely, will flow down upon the body, in which case the body may be said to be washed as truly in a religious sense as though it were performed by immersion. Thus it was in the anointing of the Jewish high priest, allusion to which is made by the Psalmist to illustrate the delightful duty of brotherly love: "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments" (Psalm 133:2).

VIII. *A consideration of the phrase, "Buried with him by baptism."*

The phrase "buried with him by baptism" occurs in two places, viz: Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12, and is very often referred to to prove the necessity of immersion.

1. It is supposed by some to show that Christ was immersed and that, therefore, we cannot be properly baptized in any other mode. But so far from proving that Christ was

baptized by immersion, *his* baptism is not the subject of discourse but *their baptism into Christ*. Nor is Christ's baptism referred to even by way of allusion. The imagery employed does not lead us to the river Jordan but to Mount Calvary. Christ's death on the cross and his burial in the grave together with his resurrection from the dead--and not his baptism--are the circumstances alluded to by the apostle; and from these circumstances the whole figure is borrowed. This is manifest from a moment's examination of the passage with its connection.

But if it should be insisted that Christ's baptism in some sense of the word must be referred to, we observe that his sufferings and death are denominated baptism: "I have a baptism," said he, "to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Luke 12:50; see also Mark 10:38,39). In these texts his sufferings in the garden and on the cross are evidently referred to; and they confirm the opinion which we have advanced, since they show that if the word baptism in the phrase under consideration refers to Christ at all, it is used in a figurative sense and alludes to the agonies both of body and soul which he endured in his last moments.

All that we intend in the preceding remarks is that no allusion is made to his baptism by water. This is indeed acknowledged by some who, nevertheless, rely upon the passage to prove immersion. By such it is supposed,

2. To furnish evidence concerning the design of baptism, which is, say they, to exhibit the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and it ought therefore, in order to be analogous to the thing signified, to be performed by immersion.

But if baptism is designated to exhibit Christ's burial and resurrection, there was in the church a standing memorial of those events for several years before they took place, which, unless baptism was a type, would have been absurd. And if it was a type, then what was the propriety of continuing it after the occurring of the events which it typified? And farther, if that was the design of it, then baptism and the Lord's supper signify nearly the same thing, and the practice of both of them at the same is therefore superfluous. The idea is likewise refuted by the general language of scripture, which does not favor such a sentiment but gives an entirely different view of the design of baptism. But again,

3. This phrase is supposed to prove that the Roman and Colossian Christians were baptized by immersion; and if so, then this must have been the primitive mode. Suppose we admit that immersion was practiced in primitive times and allow this text to afford proof of it; [still] it would not follow that immersion was the only mode practiced in those times. And of course this text cannot be adduced to prove that immersion is the only and exclusive mode which it is proper to use at the present time.

But what if it should appear that the apostle has no reference to the mode? The connection as it stands in Romans is as follows:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:3-6).

A careful perusal of this passage will show that we are not to look to it for the mode of administering the ordinance of baptism, but for the solemn obligations which it imposes upon those who receive it to be dead to sin and alive unto God. The apostle's design in referring to their baptism at all was to furnish a strong dissuasive against their living in sin, which would lead him to speak not of the mode of baptism but of its nature and import.

This fact alone will account for the character of the figure here used and assist us to understand it. If he had intended to refer to the mode, we can hardly suppose that he would have drawn his figure from Christ's sufferings and burial. What resemblance has any mode of baptism by water to the exquisite agony and death of our Savior on the cross? But if the nature and obligations of baptism were the theme of discourse, the figure was well chosen and highly striking. Nor can we conceive how the mode of baptism could be urged as a motive to induce believers to forsake sin. But a reference to its spiritual import was exactly in point.

The language here employed seems to denote that water baptism administered in any form is not the chief thing referred to, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism here spoken of is represented as resulting in the destruction of the body of sin and their walking in newness of life--in the crucifixion and burial (called here "planting") of the old man and the resurrection or renewal of the soul to a spiritual and holy life.

Now such a baptism, it is evident, cannot be water baptism solely, for this possesses no such efficacy. It is, however, consistent with the usual language of scripture to include both, the one expressing the work of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts in their conversion and partial sanctification, and the other their solemn duty and engagement to be entirely devoted to the Lord. In each of these senses, the manner in which the subject is treated was calculated to produce a powerful effect upon their minds.

4. A very few remarks will now be sufficient to show the import and propriety of the phrase under consideration. To the death of Christ succeeded his burial. It was perfectly natural therefore for the apostle, after having spoken of the former, to advert to the latter, which was a continuation of the figure that he had begun and necessary in order to complete it. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his *death*? Therefore we are *buried* with him by baptism into *death*." The

latter is mentioned as a consequence of the former. "Therefore," i.e., because we were baptized into his death--were brought by our baptism under the most solemn obligations to die unto sin in the same manner as he died for it; "therefore" we are to be considered henceforth by profession and engagement as completely crucified to the world with its affections and lusts, as though we had been buried with Christ in the grave. Burial is a token that the person is considered to be really dead. The apostle therefore alludes to it in order to give additional strength to the figure, asserting thereby that unless their profession of religion was hypocritical, they were in fact as well as by engagement "dead to sin."

And farther, as Christ's burial was succeeded by his resurrection to a holy and exalted life in heaven, so they were baptized into his death and burial that the old man of sin being destroyed, they might live a new life of holiness: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" (v. 1 and 12). Such, if we understand it, is the import of the Apostle's reasoning. And what more forcible exhortation could he have given to influence those whom he addressed to live holy lives? Christian professor, will you not consider the exhortation as addressed to you and strive every day of your life to put it into practice?

To conclude this part of the subject, we remark that the preceding discussion shows how little reason those who advocate immersion as the exclusive mode of baptism have for that confidence which they generally manifest on this subject--as though it was perfectly plain that they are right and everybody else is wrong. In order to substantiate their sentiments they must prove [1] not merely that immersion was sometimes or even generally practiced in primitive times, but always without a single exception; [2] not merely that the scriptures favor immersion more than any other mode, but that they teach that mode alone while they furnish no support for any other; [3] not merely that immersion is to be preferred and therefore practiced rather than any other mode, but that it is essential to the validity of the ordinance; [4] and consequently that those who have been baptized in any other way are to be considered and treated as unbaptized persons until they are immersed.

If it can be proved that a single person was ever sprinkled by the apostles, their system is destroyed. If it can be shown from the general language of scripture that any other mode is valid, even though no example of baptism by any such mode could be adduced, this would also be sufficient to destroy their scheme. And has not such evidence been adduced? We do not profess to have answered every question which may be asked in relation to this subject nor to have solved every difficulty that may arise in the mind of the reader. This was impracticable, unless we had extended our remarks beyond the limits which we prescribed for ourselves. But the prominent things have been stated on both sides, and we are persuaded that enough has been said to satisfy every unprejudiced reader that those who have adopted the practice of sprinkling or pouring in preference to immersion have not done so without some reason.

There is at least sufficient proof in favor of sprinkling to warrant us in demanding of the advocates of exclusive immersion to manifest a little less confidence in their own sentiments and a little more respect for the opinion of others. As long as so much evidence exists in favor of sprinkling, we cannot but think it a little arrogant in them to consider themselves as the only church that is established agreeably to "gospel order," and to treat all others, though they may acknowledge them to be associations of true believers, as being nevertheless without the pale of the visible church and not entitled to the privilege of Christian communion.

So far indeed are the scriptures from proving immersion to be the exclusive mode, that in our opinion it cannot be positively proved from the Bible that baptism was ever administered in that way. This we think will appear by a recurrence to those texts which are relied upon to prove immersion and which we have considered in the preceding pages. Those, therefore, who generally practice sprinkling have as much reason to adopt this as the only proper mode and to exclude from their communion all who practice immersion as the latter have to exclude the former.

But we would rather conciliate than censure those with whom we differ on this subject. Though in this particular we consider them as being in an error, we nevertheless regard them as Christians; and we will cherish towards them those kind and fraternal feelings which ought ever to exist between members of the same family. If they reciprocate these feelings, we shall rejoice; but if it shall be otherwise, we will remember that they belong to the same brotherhood of Christ with ourselves. And [we] will still love them and cooperate with them so far as it is practicable in the advancement of the kingdom, believing that in proportion as we become holy and increase in the knowledge of God we shall approximate towards each other in Christian fellowship, until in heaven, if not before, "the middle wall of partition" between us will be completely broken down and we shall stand together in the "holy place" of the celestial temple. [There we shall] offer our sacrifices of praise upon the same altar, eat of the same "peace offerings," and emulate each other in nothing else but in devout adoration before the throne of God and the Lamb.

This is Part I in *A Familiar Treatise on Christian Baptism*, by James Wood, D. D., published by John B. Anderson, New Albany, Indiana, 1850. **Note:** No changes have been made to the text except for updating punctuation and dividing long paragraphs.